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The Listening Strategies of Tunisian University EFL Learners: A Strategy Based Approach to Listening to Oral English Texts

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THE LISTENING STRATEGIES OF TUNISIAN UNIVERSITY EFL LEARNERS: A STRATEGY BASED APPROACH TO LISTENING TO ORAL ENGLISH TEXTS

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Title: The Listening Strategies of Tunisian University EFL Learners: A Strategy Based Approach to Listening to Oral English Texts

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Effective listening comprehension skills are important as the world becomes increasingly global and television, radio, and the Internet become forums for English communication. However, many countries, such as Tunisia, do not use English as a first or second language, but as a foreign language. Therefore, realizing the importance of English, the Tunisian government encourages university students to specialize in the English language. Universities students, who elect to study English, are required to study oral subjects, such as listening comprehension, as part of their studies. However, these EFL learners struggle to understand oral English texts, in their listening comprehension classes. This present study studies the reasons that Tunisian EFL learners have difficulty understanding oral English transactional texts.

Using qualitative research and a cognitive, strategy-based theoretical framework, the study used a questionnaire, interviews, listening diaries, and think-aloud protocols with Tunisia university EFL learners to identify the listening strategies that they use and the obstacles that they encounter while they listen to oral English transactional texts. Based on the conviction that EFL learners are active in the listening comprehension

process, this research is grounded on a cognitive strategic model, which combines Anderson's (1993) memory model, Kintsch's comprehension model, and listening strategies (Oxford, 1990 and Wenden, 1991).

The findings of this study show that Tunisian EFL learners are active in the listening process and use some strategies to help them understand some texts. However, when they encounter listening obstacles during the listening process, they are unable to orchestrate their strategy use and fail to comprehend the texts. Furthermore, the study indicates that the learners have few reserve strategies to use when they are prevented from using their default strategies. I conclude by proposing ways for listening comprehension teachers to incorporate strategy teaching, graded oral texts, and culturally appropriate tasks so that listening obstacles can be minimized and strategy orchestration can be maximized.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the Lord God Almighty, who gave me the wisdom, strength, and help I needed to complete this dissertation. I also dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Houtef Ishler, the love of my life, who encouraged me to pursue a PhD, encouraged me to press on when I wanted to give up, and sacrificed her time and energy so that I could spend time collecting and analyzing data and writing up the results. She also gave me space so that I could spend countless hours writing, revising, refining, and writing again.

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INTRODUCTION

The main thesis of this study is that Tunisian EFL learners are active listeners and listening strategies are an integral part of their cognitive comprehension process. Unfortunately, instead of being empowered to use strategies that aid them to successfully understand oral transactional texts in English, they are treated by the educational establishment as vessels to be filled with the knowledge that comes from the representative of the establishment, the teacher. Because Tunisian EFL learners are not active in the listening process, they have difficulties comprehending oral English texts, and they often use ineffective listening strategies. In addition, they encounter obstacles that impede or prevent them from using listening strategies with little or no means to overcome these obstacles.

Teaching listening comprehension, like teaching other subjects in Tunisia, is based on a structural approach embodied in the audio-lingual method (Daoud, 1996, p. 600). Therefore, I first provide a short history of the audio-lingual method and the affect that the audio-lingual method has had on Tunisian EFL learners. After I give an overview of the audio-lingual method, I discuss the problem of the study and my central argument in more depth. I end this chapter by describing the specific details of my study and providing a brief summary of the chapter. In my description of the study I include the purpose of the study, present my research questions, describe the sites for my study, and discuss the significance of this study.

Background to the Study

Listening comprehension courses, which are required in all tertiary educational programs in Tunisia, are based on an approach called the audio-lingual method. Understanding the history of this teaching method is foundational to grasp the effect the audio-lingual method has had on the teaching of EFL learners in many educational institutions in the world, including Tunisia.

A Short History of the Audio-Lingual Method

The audio-lingual method was implemented in 1943, when the U.S. government started a language teaching program called the "Army Specialized Training Program." This program was replaced in 1946 with a similar program called the "Post-Hostilities Training Program" (Giuliano, 1947, p. 60). These language programs made certain assumptions about language teaching, such as teaching oral language before written language and teaching "receptive language skills" before "productive language skills." Oral language was the primary focus so that learners in the program would be able to understand and speak to native speakers of the target language (Lado, 1964, p. 50, 53, Scanio, 1944, p. 188). This program also relied on teachers who were native speakers, or near-native speakers of the target language. Therefore, it privileged the native speaker teacher over teachers who maybe knew the language but could not speak it fluently (Cowan, 1947, p. 58; Scanio, 1944, p. 190).

The audio-lingual method had the theoretical underpinning of structuralism and behavioral psychology (Cook, 2001, p. 209; Fries, 1964, p. 63-68; Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 99) and it had the support of many linguists, including Brooks, Fries and Fries,

and Lado, all of whom gave an important framework for the audio-lingual method (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.98). Even though the audio-lingual method lost its preeminence in the 1960s to "communicative language teaching" when Chomsky successfully refuted its theoretical support, the ideas of the audio-lingual method still continue to impact the way that language, especially oral language, is taught (Cook, 2001, p. 210).

A Description of the Audio-Lingual Method

The audio-lingual method stressed the controlled use of language to enable students to use the language outside the classroom, and it assumed that anything presented to students should be heard before being seen. It accomplished this by using controlled dialogues to teach language through concentrating on grammatical principles. Therefore, an underlying assumption of the audio-lingual method was that if the student learned these dialogues by heart, they could be used in conversations with native English speakers outside of the classroom (Cook, 2001, pp. 206-207, Lado, 1964, p. 61-62). Another underlying assumption was that native speakers should teach the language so that words and sentences were presented with the correct pronunciation and stress. A third principle was that a foreign language can be learned only with reference to the culture of the people who speak that language (Lado, 1964, p. 56). Therefore, as teachers from the United States taught English around the world, the culture of the United States was also taught (Cowan, 1947, p.58; Lado, 1964, p. 69).

Unfortunately, the audio-lingual method taught students to focus on the linguistic features of the language instead of providing language they could use outside the

classroom. Therefore, even though the proponents of the audio-lingual method expected that the students would use the phrases and vocabulary outside of class, in reality the students were unable to transfer what they learned from the classroom to their interactions with English speakers (Cook, 2001, pp . 209-210).

The Use of the Audio-Lingual Method in Secondary Schools in Tunisia

Even though the audio-lingual method's theoretical basis has been rejected, the audio-lingual method still influences policy decisions and pedagogy in many countries, including Tunisia (Anggraeni, 2007; Daoud, 1996, p. 600). The influence of the audio-lingual method is strongest in the primary and secondary schools, which provide the pedagogical foundation for the teaching of languages including English.

The educational system at the elementary and secondary school is centrally controlled by the Tunisian government's ministry of education. Since the education is controlled by the government, education policy, including teaching methods, are also passed down by the government. These policies change very slowly. In addition, even when government policies and approved education methods change, teachers are slow to implement these changes, preferring to continue to use their own methods. Thus, teachers often use the audio-lingual method in their teaching when the pupils start required, formal education at the age of six in primary schools and they continue to be exposed to this method through nine years of basic school education and fours of secondary school education (M. Damak, personal communication, April 1, 2010). Therefore, these pupils are accustomed to this method when they start to learn English in the sixth year of primary school. Pupils studying on the academic track, including those

who want to continue their English studies, finish their secondary school education by taking a college entrance exam called the "Tunisian Baccalaureate" (Tunisian Ministry of Education and Training, 2002).

Tunisians learn a dialectical form of Arabic from the time they are born until they enter school. Throughout the basic education of pupils, but especially in the first six years of their education, they learn Modern Standard Arabic, a standard form of Arabic which is common to all Arabic speakers throughout the world. This form of Arabic is used in writing and on television and radio. However, it is different from the spoken form of Arabic that Tunisians use. Therefore, they must learn a different form of Arabic, with a different grammar and vocabulary, than their mother language. When pupils enter the third year of primary school they begin to learn French, the second language in Tunisia; and when they enter the sixth year of primary school, they begin to learn English, which is taught from the last year of primary school to the last year of secondary school. In the primary school, most classes are taught in Modern Standard Arabic. However, in the secondary school, only language and liberal arts classes are taught using Modern Standard Arabic; most of the math and science classes are taught using French. English is taught as a foreign language and it is not used outside of English language classrooms (Tunisia Ministry of Education and Training, 2002).

A common textbook is used to teach English in both primary and secondary education. The previous textbook was called *Communicate in English* (Badri, Malki, Mammou, 1992). The preface to this book states, "[The book] teaches new language forms and their uses and practices receptive and productive skills. The main aim of the

course is to provide the learner with the language he/she might need to take an active part in a wide range of social situations. . . .We attempted to establish a balance between the four skills (Listening/Speaking/ Reading/Writing)" (p. 5). In the acknowledgments, the authors also thank the British Council and the American Cultural Center, "for providing us with different materials" (p. 7). Thus, it seems clear from the beginning of this book that the audio-lingual method has influenced the development of the book with the reference to the four language skills and the separation of the language skills into receptive skills and productive skills. Furthermore, it aims to provide language that could be used in social situations outside of the classroom, another objective of the audio-lingual method.

The most recent textbook for the first year of secondary school is called *Let's Learn English* (Ben Ali, Ben Msaddeg Jebahi, Souli, Abida; 2008). It contains five modules with each of the modules containing five lessons. The preface to the book states, "We have drawn upon various methodological principles. . . since no single approach or method can claim to be exhaustive and far-reaching. We have opted for principled eclecticism through the proposal of a variety of techniques, advocated by different approaches and methods" (NP). The textbook, for the second year of secondary school is called *Proceed with English* (Kaabachi, Mabrouk, Labidi, 2009). It contains six modules with each of the modules, containing five lessons. The introduction states, "As the learners work their way through the different steps that make up each part, they build up a better knowledge of the target language and culture. . . .Our main concern. . . has been to maximise the learning process by developing a sense of awareness as to how

he/she is going to be productive" (p. 4). Therefore, by comparing the textbook from 1992 with the current textbook, it is clear that the authors have distanced themselves from any one method by implementing the use of "principled eclecticism" (NP).

However, even though the authors have stated their use of a variety of methods, a closer examination of the book uncovers many similarities with the audio-lingual method. First, exercises are included in each section which give phrases to practice and sentences to complete. Second, the listening exercises in each section ask the pupils to fill in missing information from a paragraph or a table. Third, the speaking exercises ask the pupils to repeat fixed phrases, changing a word with each repetition. Fourth, most sections include a pronunciation part, with words and phrases to repeat. Therefore, even though the English curriculum used in the elementary and secondary levels denies using the audio-lingual method, many of its elements are present such as following set models, using pronunciation exercises, filling in missing information, and practicing speaking with particular phrases and vocabulary. Consequently, it seems there is lack of clarity as to the textbook writers' intentions and the actual content of the book.

Daoud (1996) states that the lack of clarity in policy-making and pedagogy exists because of the lack of teacher training and the predominant view by policy makers and teachers that language is primarily functional/structural and language learning is primarily behavioral (600). Therefore, without using the term audio-lingual, he is implying that the foundation of policy-making and pedagogy in primary education and secondary education is audio-lingual, which includes the way that English and listening comprehension is taught to the pupils.

English Language Learning at Universities in Tunisia

Once secondary school pupils pass the baccalaureate exam they can elect to continue their studies in the university. Many of the pupils who enroll in the university system study English. All university campuses and schools of higher education are under the authority of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This ministry approves all post-secondary programs and courses that are taught. Most liberal arts subjects, such as languages, are taught at campuses that are designated as liberal arts campuses ("facultés des lettres" in French). These liberal arts campuses, along with higher education language schools, teach English as a university major. All university campuses and schools of higher education generally have the same academic system, because the academic program is decided by the Ministry of Higher Education (Ministry of Higher Education, 2008).

Language teaching is an integral, required part of the program in the English departments. The language module is divided into two parts: written language and oral language. The oral language includes courses in listening comprehension, oral expression, and pronunciation. Each course has a coordinator who decides on the course curriculum. Listening comprehension teachers are not trained in teaching listening comprehension. Instead, they are often educated in teaching elements of written language: grammar, composition, or reading comprehension (Ministry of Higher Education, 2008).

An example of a textbook that has been used in listening comprehension classes is *Real Listening and Speaking 2* (Logan & Thaine, 2008). Each unit contains both

listening exercises and speaking exercises. The listening exercises have missing information that the students need to fill in. There are also exercises that have a conversation with missing words which need to be completed. The book also contains language phrases to be used and cultural snippets.

Like the textbooks that are used in the secondary schools, there are some influences of the audio-lingual method in this book. First, a tape is used that contains the voice of a native English speaker. Second, each of the chapters in the book has a listening text that relates to some aspect of British or American culture. Third, the listening exercise has task completion exercises in which some of the information is completed but other information is missing. In addition, the students are asked to fill in the missing information, including completing dialogues, which is similar to controlled practice in the audio-lingual method. Fourth, the students are asked to speak with other students using what they have learned in the lesson. This emphasis on oral communication is a key component of the audio-lingual method.

Even though according to Daoud (1996) the university teachers are being trained to implement new methods and move away from an audio-lingual approach (pp. 602-603), a report on higher education from the World Bank indicates that this is not the case. This report indicates that in the year 1995 to 1996 about 20% of the teachers at the university level were from the secondary schools. These secondary school teachers also were assigned to teach first- and second-year university students (World Bank, 1997, pp. 30-31). Since most of these secondary school teachers had taught for many years, they used the same audio-lingual teaching methods in the university that they had used in the

secondary schools. Many of these secondary school teachers, like those at my research site, are assigned to teach courses in the oral module, including listening comprehension.

Statement of the Problem

The Ineffectiveness of Listening Comprehension Pedagogy in Tunisian Universities

In the secondary school, the current curriculum that has been adopted has, to some degree, moved away from the audio-lingual method. However, as Daoud (1996) indicates, this adopted curriculum is being counteracted by the teachers' understanding that language is functional/structural and language learning is behavioral. Because of the teacher's understanding of language and the way that language should be taught, pupils who have completed the English program in the secondary school are exposed to an audio-lingual pedagogy. When Tunisian EFL learners enter the university they study a number of various subjects including listening comprehension. Even though there has been some movement away from past teaching methods such as the audio-lingual method in the university (pp. 602-603), it is clear from the universities' use of secondary school teachers to teach oral subjects such as listening comprehension that this method is still being used and it is not helping Tunisian EFL students to learn how to understand oral transactional texts in English.

Therefore, teacher-centered approaches, such as the audio-lingual approach, are being used by the listening comprehension teachers in the university, and my research has shown that these current methods for teaching listening comprehension in Tunisian universities are ineffective. They are ineffective because they do not consider the needs of the student. One example from my research of the teacher-centered approach is the

fear that participants mentioned while they described their experiences in their listening comprehension classes. One participant was afraid to answer the teacher because she was afraid that she might not have the right answer. Another participant concurred and said that even if she had the correct answer she could not raise her hand out of fear of the teacher. A second example of this teacher-centered approach is the use of boring or inappropriate topics or texts. For example, one participant said that the students in class were not allowed to tell the teacher that the oral text topics were boring. Another participant said that many students do not attend class because the same oral texts are used year after year.

It is clear from the participants comments that there is a disconnect between the teacher's pedagogical approach and the Tunisian EFL students' ability to effectively understand oral English transactional texts. In addition, the majority of the participants indicated that the teacher used the same texts and tasks year after year, without realizing that the students did not understand them. Participants said that they often did not understand in their classes and indicated that specific obstacles, such as the speed of the text, unfamiliar vocabulary and grammar in the text, poor audio quality, and confusing tasks, prevented them from understanding the texts and completing the tasks in their classes. Because of this disconnect between the teacher's perception of the students' needs and the students' perception of their needs, it is obvious that more research is needed to follow up on this study to provide them with better tools to help understand oral English texts.

It seems to me that there is not only a disconnect between the teachers and their students, but also between the policy-makers (international and national educational administrations) and the policy-implementers (the teachers). The policymakers are the stake holders and have an interest in what is taught and how it is taught. These stakeholders include not only the Tunisian government but also other international governments, such as the United States and Britain, and international bodies, such as the World Bank. Even though the policy- makers decide what should be taught (content) and how it should be taught (methodology), the teachers continue to use their own methodology and often their own content (M. Damak, personal communication, April 1, 2010). The students are the ones who suffer because teaching methodologies are based on the policy-makers or the policy-implementers decisions, instead of the students' needs.

This disconnect between the policy-makers, the policy-implementers, and the students is discussed by Kumaravadivelu (2001) in his article "Toward a postmethod pedagogy." In this article, he talks about three dimensions of pedagogy: particularity, practicality, and possibility. By particularity he means that each context is different. Different contexts have different needs based on their linguistic, sociocultural, and political nuances. Therefore, there is no one "best" method for all the students in Tunisia (pp. 538-539). The second dimension is practicality. This means that teachers should know what pedagogical approach is best for their students and they should be free to modify and develop different teaching approaches based on their students' learning needs (pp. 540-542). The third dimension is possibility. This means that the teacher's goal should be to empower students and help students in their learning process. Part of this

process is being aware of the students' needs and the different learning styles that they have. In this way, the teacher will empower the students by providing the tools they need to understand oral English texts and encouraging them to be competent users of the English language (pp. 542-544)

In Search of an Appropriate Postmethod Methodology

During the many years that I taught listening comprehension to university students in Tunisia, I noticed that EFL students had a very difficult time understanding oral texts in their listening comprehension classes. I also noticed that other teachers encountered these difficulties as well. Teachers would repeat an oral text recorded on an audio cassette many times, but the students were often unable to understand the words or the meaning of the text. From these observations, I began to think about researching the obstacles that these learners encountered in understanding oral English texts. I realized that an audio-lingual method, which still influences the Tunisian EFL educational system, is inadequate. The focus should move first to the students, allowing them to identify the obstacles they encounter when they listen to oral texts; and second to the teachers, giving them the freedom to implement a teaching plan that prioritizes the students' needs to encourage them in their ability to understand these texts.

From the outset of my research, I assumed that the strategies that Tunisian EFL learners used to understand oral texts were inadequate, causing them to have difficulties understanding the text. I also assumed that these learners encountered obstacles in the oral text, hindering or preventing their ability to understand the text. These two assumptions guided me during my research.

I conducted a qualitative research study and primarily used qualitative methods to allow the Tunisian EFL learners to describe the strategies they used and the obstacles they encountered. This qualitative methodology is the first step in finding solutions to help them better understand oral English transactional texts. By primarily considering the learners' perspective during this research, I have adopted a postmethod approach as defined by Kumaravadivelu (2001).

I chose to use a cognitive framework for comprehension, even though I realize that comprehension is a complex process. I have chosen this framework for three reasons. First, I am researching oral transactional texts in English because the primary focus is understanding the information in the text, not examining the interaction between the interlocutors. Second, my research is mainly concerned with the way that Tunisian EFL learners use cognitive strategies during the comprehension process. Third, Tunisian EFL learners primarily listen to oral English texts and understand them without interacting with other learners in the classroom. I present the cognitive framework I have chosen for this research in more detail in Chapter 2. This framework, which I call the Cognitive Strategic model, is a combination of Anderson's (1983, 1993) ACT model, Baddeley's (2002, 2009) working memory model, Kintsch's (1998) comprehension model, and integrated listening strategies that facilitate and guide the whole process. Since the models of Anderson, Baddeley, and Kintsch automatize the language learning process and consider language learners passive in cognitive process, I added strategies to my cognitive framework, believing that language learners are active in the comprehension process. Therefore the cognitive strategies that language learners use in

their comprehension process are an integral aspect of the human information processing model (Macaro, 2006).

Learning strategies can be divided into three groups: cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective. In my cognitive strategic model, I identified cognitive strategies as residing in working memory and facilitating the central executive's job of processing information and passing information from one process to another process (Macaro, 2006). Learners use metacognitive strategies to oversee comprehension and the transfer of information throughout the processing system, verifying that learning tasks are completed successfully. Learners use socio-affective strategies to help learners fill in missing information and confirm that the cognitive and metacognitive strategies have accomplished the learning task.

My argument in this research study is that EFL learners use specific cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective learning strategies to facilitate the listening comprehension process. However, if inappropriate strategies are used while listening to an oral text, strategies are not orchestrated effectively, or EFL learners encounter obstacles which prevent them from using their listening strategies then comprehension will not occur. Thus, I believe that the difficulties that Tunisian EFL learners have in understanding oral texts is related to their use of inappropriate, ineffective, or non-orchestrated strategies while they are listening to oral texts.

Definitions

Definition of Learning Strategies

There is a body of research that indicates that people actively listen to oral texts through using various learning strategies (Berne, J.E., 2004). When I use the term learning strategies, I refer to language learning strategies that are used by a learner to comprehend an oral text. Oxford (1990, p. 8) defines learning strategies as operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information. Wenden (1991) defines strategies as "mental steps or operations that learners use to learn a new language and to regulate their efforts to do so" (p.18).

However, instead of using the previous definitions, I will use Macaro's definition of learning strategies (2006, pp. 325, 327), which corresponds to the cognitive strategic model I am presenting. First, he says that a learning strategy is a conscious mental activity, or action that has been initiated by a goal and is measured against a learning situation. Second, a learning strategy is tied to a specific learning situation but should be transferable to other learning situations. Third, a number of strategies need to be orchestrated together so that a learning goal, or task, can be accomplished. To orchestrate strategies means that a listener combines different strategies together to create "a cycle of strategy deployment that promotes a greater depth of interaction with the text and results in more successful comprehension (Vandergrift, 2003b, p. 485). Fourth, learning strategies are located in working memory and allow the central executive to manage the processing resources at its disposal and to facilitate the perceiving, holding, encoding, and processing functions that it is required to do (Macaro, 2006, pp. 325, 327). Macaro

also states that learning strategies are simple cognitive actions that can be combined together to form clusters of strategies. Therefore, some learning strategies, such as note-taking, are clusters of simpler strategies such as “is this phrase that I just heard important?,” “should I write this phrase down?,” “what parts of the word should I write down?,” and “how can I write it down and also continue to listen to the text?” (p. 327).

Although researchers have many ways of grouping strategies, I have chosen to follow O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Wenden (1991) by dividing strategies into three groups: cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective. Listeners use these three types of strategies to capture, store, analyze, verify, and respond to the essential information from the aural stream of speech (Wenden, 1991, p. 19).

First, learners use cognitive learning strategies to process aural information and store the essential content from this information (Macaro, 2006; Wenden, 1991, Wenden, 1987). In addition, cognitive strategies aid the human mind in the comprehension process of decoding written or oral information, constructing a textbase and a situation model, and integrating the textbase and the situation model. In addition, cognitive strategies facilitate the tasks of cognitive components, such as the central executive and the episodic buffer (Wenden, 1991).

Second, learners use metacognitive strategies to help them regulate and orchestrate various activities they must perform in order to achieve successful learning. In addition, these types of strategies provide learners with knowledge of their own abilities, their strengths, their weaknesses, the value of alternative strategies in improving

their performance, and the way in which various strategies interact with each other and influence the outcome of their learning (Shuell, 1986).

Finally, learners employ a third group of strategies, known as socio-affective strategies, when they talk with others about what they have heard or when they identify and reflect on their emotions. Learners do this when they ask other learners or the teacher questions, or verify with other learners their understanding of an oral text. They also employ these strategies when they identify and reflect on their emotions to measure their ability to understand a text (Rubin, 1987).

Wenden (1987) suggests that these three types of strategies have five characteristics. (1) Some may be observable (i.e. note-taking) and others may not be observable (i.e. mental comparisons). (2) Strategies help the learner to solve problems. (3) Strategies allow people to regulate and control language learning, and contribute to the learning of languages. (4) Some strategies are consciously deployed; however, others become automatized. (5) Strategies can be changed, learned, and rejected (pp. 7-8).

Definition of Oral Texts

When I use the term "oral English texts," "oral texts," or "texts" I am referring to the recorded speeches of native English speakers from the U.S. and Britain. Two types of oral texts exist in language teaching: interactional and transactional. Interactional texts focus on the interaction or interplay between two or more interlocutors. Thus, understanding between the interlocutors occurs through collaboration (Cook, 2001). In transactional texts, the information that is understood from an aural text is the primary focus.

According to my experience, listening courses in Tunisia universities primarily use transactional texts. In these types of texts, there is no speaker to provide feedback, so EFL learners cannot rely on immediate feedback, as with interactional texts. Therefore, they need to establish another means to obtain feedback in order to establish whether they have effectively understood the transactional text and whether they have extracted the important information from that text. EFL learners often use the teacher or other students to obtain this feedback (Buck, 1995).

Definition of a Task

When I refer to tasks in this dissertation, I am referring to pedagogical tasks. From this point on, I will use the term "tasks" to refer to pedagogical tasks. In the *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*, a task is defined as ". . . an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language. . ." (Richards, Platt, and Weber, 1985, p. 289). Nunan defines a task as

> . . . a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, a middle and an end. (2004, p. 4)

When I use the term "task" I am referring to a written activity that helps examiners, researchers, teachers, or other type of assessors gauge the degree to which a listener has been able to understand an oral text.

Types of tasks. According to Rost (1990b), there are three types of tasks: on-line tasks, retrospective tasks, and prospective tasks. An on-line task is executed while the student is listening to an oral text. A retrospective task is performed after a student has listened to an oral text. Finally, a prospective task, like an on-line task, is done while the student is listening to an oral text. However, unlike on-line tasks, prospective tasks focus on predicting subsequent parts of the oral text (125, 134).

Each of these types of tasks can be identified as "open" or "closed." Open tasks do not specify the range of options for expression and often require listeners to summarize, in their own words, what they have understood. On the other hand, when listeners execute closed tasks, they must choose between various fixed alternatives. Grid completion, multiple choice, true and false, and matching exercises are all examples of closed tasks; note-taking and summarizing are examples of open tasks (Rost, 1990b, p. 124).

Description of the Study

In this section, I state the purpose of this study, identify the research questions that I have purposed, depict the setting for the study, and point out the significance of this study in Tunisia and world-wide.

Purpose and Research Questions

I had two purposes in conducting this study. First, I wanted to identify the listening strategies that Tunisian EFL learners use and the obstacles they encounter which prevent them from adequately understanding oral English transactional texts. Second, I wanted to observe whether the Tunisian EFL learners' use of strategies concurred with the strategic cognitive model that I proposed.

I think that strategy use is an essential component of learning a foreign language. The study of the type, extent, and range of learning strategies that are used by Tunisian EFL learners should provide a baseline for analyzing their listening comprehension abilities. The human information processing system contains a number of cognitive processes, and I believe that strategies are an integral part of each of these processes. If learners to not use certain types of strategies, it may indicate that they are having trouble understanding oral English texts.

Consequently, in my research, I employ a model of the human processing system combined with learning strategy use as a framework to attempt to guide the following research questions.

1. What listening strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective) do Tunisian EFL learners use when listening to oral English transactional texts? How wide and varied are these strategies?
2. What are the major obstacles that Tunisian EFL learners encounter when listening to oral English transactional texts?

Setting of the Study

Description of the research site. The setting for the study is at the "Higher Institute of Languages" (Institut Superieur des Langues) in Gabes, Tunisia, which is part of the University of Gabes. Gabes is the fifth largest city in Tunisia with a population of approximately 117,000 (Foreign Investment Promotion Agency – Tunisia, 2008). It is located 306 kilometers south of the capital, Tunis. Gabes is a coastal town, surrounded by olive and almond groves and farm land. It is also an important industrial city that processes phosphates that have been mined in the west of Tunisia. In addition, it contains a rare type of oasis that attracts many tourists. The people in Gabes are primarily rural and their economic status is primarily lower-middle class. The students who attend this institute are primarily from Gabes or the surrounding rural villages and come from a lower to lower-middle class background (Foreign Investment Promotion Agency – Tunisia, 2008).

At the Gabes institute, a director has overall responsibility for the running of the institute and a General Secretary has responsibility for many of the daily, routine activities. There are more than 4,000 students at this institute with about 1,700 of these students enrolled in the English department. These students are divided into 28 classes by the school's administration with about 60 students in each class. Other languages, such as French, German, and Italian, are also taught at this institute. The school also has quite a few students enrolled in a secretarial training program (Ministry of Higher Education, 2008). I conducted my study with students who were in the first or second year of studying English at this institute.

Summary of Findings

I had two purposes in conducting this research. I accomplished the first purpose through answering my research questions. I answered my first research question through identifying metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies that my participants used. The metacognitive strategies that I identified were a planning strategy and a monitoring strategy. The cognitive strategies that I identified were a selective attention strategy, an association strategy, a practicing strategy, an inferencing strategy, a note-taking strategy, and a repetition strategy. The socio-affective strategy that I identified was a questioning/clarification strategy. Although they used a variety of strategies, they did not have a large collection of strategies. If learners have a large collection of strategies, they will have a greater likelihood of successfully understanding oral texts. For example, if a learner is prevented from using a note-taking strategy, she can replace it with a summarizing strategy. However, my participants did not have a summarizing strategy, so they had no other strategy to take the place of their note-taking strategy; this phenomenon I call strategic-boundedness.

Not only did I answer my first research question by identifying the listening strategies that my participants used when listening to oral transactional texts in English, I also answered my second research question through identifying some important listening obstacles that hindered or prevented the participants from understanding the oral texts to which they listened. These obstacles relate to five features of listening comprehension: the text, comprehension of the text, the task, external factors, and negative disposition. The main obstacles that the participants mentioned were: a fast text speed, a long text, an

inability to understand the speaker's accent, a complex or confusing task, inability to listen to the text and write answers at the same time, and audio and external noise.

I also accomplished the second purpose of my research by observing that the participants used listening strategies as an integral part of the human information processing system. Transfer strategies, aided the movement of information through four distinct cognitive processes in the system, described by Wenden (1991): reception, recycling, retrieval, and storage. Comprehension strategies, were also used to assist the comprehension process. Comprehension strategies were language-specific, based on French. Because they used comprehension strategies based on French stress, rather than comprehension strategies based on English stress, they were not able to use these strategies to understand the texts to which they listened.

The participants were able to orchestrate their strategy use effectively, understanding texts and successfully completing tasks, when they did not encounter listening obstacles. However, listening obstacles, such as a fast text, a long text, a long task, and a confusing task, usually prevented them from understanding texts and successfully completing tasks.

Significance of the Study

Significance for Stakeholders, Educators, and Learners. This study is significant for the three entities that I have previously identified: the stakeholders of the English academic program in Tunisia, the educators, and the learners. The stakeholders include the Tunisian, British and, U.S. governments and other international organizations such as the World Bank. Listening comprehension is a required course for all first- and

second-year Tunisian university students and, consequently, it is important in the English program. Therefore, the difficulty Tunisian EFL students have understanding oral English texts and learning from those texts is a crucial problem for the stakeholders. These stakeholders have invested a lot of time and resources in establishing an EFL program so that Tunisians can compete in a world market that requires a high degree of competence in English.

A current example of the significance of my research for English academic stakeholders is the Tunisian government's encouragement of institutions throughout Tunisia to provide unemployed Tunisians with English language education to improve the Tunisians' opportunities to find employment with multinational companies in Tunisia. The participants of these training program take the TOEIC exam when they finish their training (L. Jack, personal communication, October 16, 2010). Since 25% of this exam tests learners ability to understand oral transactional texts, it behooves the Tunisian government to ensure that these participants understand these type of texts. According to my research, the current system of listening comprehension is not helping Tunisian EFL learners to understand oral transactional texts in English, and I hope that my research will encourage the stakeholders, including the Tunisian government, to reassess their teaching of listening comprehension and encourage a more bottom-up approach, involving learners in the educational process.

This research is also important for teachers of listening comprehension. Through observations of listening comprehension teachers during my research and observations of other listening comprehension teachers while I taught in Tunisia, it is clear that these

teachers are largely unaware of the extent to which Tunisian EFL learners have understood oral English transactional texts. This research will provide these teachers with a better understanding of the obstacles that these learners encounter and the strategies that these learners use when thy listen to these oral texts. I expect that this better understanding will encourage listening comprehension teachers to develop better approaches in teaching learners, improving both teaching and learning.

This research is also essential for Tunisian EFL learners, who have had no input into the educational reforms that have taken place. The results of my research have indicated that they are often unable to understand oral English transactional texts and they encounter many obstacles while they listen to these texts. Therefore, allowing them to elicit reasons for their inability to understand is essential so that an appropriate postmethod pedagogy can be developed which will help them understand oral English transactional texts and empower them to become full users of English in the world in which they live.

Tunisia is not the only place where a teacher-centered approach is used. Educators in other countries also promote an audio-lingual, teacher-centered approach (Anggraeni, 2007; Sadoon, 2009). Even though I have not conducted research outside of Tunisia, I believe that the obstacles that I have uncovered in this study also are applicable to other countries outside of Tunisia. I think that EFL learners throughout the world will improve their ability to understand oral English transactional texts as educators empower learners to share the strategies they use and the obstacles they encounter listening to these texts. EFL learners may improve their ability to understand these types of texts as

educators seriously consider the responses of these EFL learners and develop a curriculum based on minimizing the obstacles and maximizing their use of effective strategies, using the cognitive strategic model I have outlined in this chapter.

Significance for EFL research. As I began my research, I investigated other listening comprehension research among EFL learners in Tunisia and outside Tunisia. Through my investigation, I discovered that no research has been conducted in Tunisia in the field of listening comprehension and only limited research has been conducted outside of Tunisia. As I conducted my research, I realized that it was significant in two areas: L2 strategy research and L2 listening obstacle research. Because of the lack of research in these two areas, I realized that my study is not only very important to help Tunisian EFL learners better understand oral texts, it also enters territory where very few researchers in the TESOL field have delved before.

The first area where my research is very significant is strategy research. In Chapter 2, I review some of the research that has been done in the field of listening comprehension. In general, the majority of listening comprehension research is conducted in three areas. The first area is describing L2 learners' strategy use primarily through strategy inventories. The results of this research have provided a large list of strategies that can be broadly divided into three categories: cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective. The second area of research has focused on the degree to which metacognitive strategies are used and the extent to which metacognitive training helps L2 learners better understand oral English texts. The third area of research is learners' perceptions of their strategy use, especially their cognitive strategy use. This area has

focused on understanding to what degree learners are aware of their strategy use and clarifying the role of teachers in helping L2 learners become more aware of their strategy use.

Even though describing strategies and providing L2 learners with more awareness of their strategy use are important areas of research, few researchers have combined their strategy research with a cognitive model. Macaro (2006) mentioned that strategy research should be grounded in a cognitive model so that researchers will more completely understand the way in which L2 learners use strategies while listening to oral texts in English. My research has attempted to address this void by incorporating listening strategies into a cognitive model, which includes Anderson's (1983, 1993) ACT model, Baddeley's (2002, 2009) working memory model, and Kintsch's (1998) comprehension model.

Another important area that my research addresses is in identifying both universal strategies and also language specific strategies. As I have previously stated, most strategy research has involved describing strategies using a strategy inventory such as Oxford's (1990) *Strategy Inventory for Language Learners*. These inventories have assumed that all strategies apply to all language learners and, therefore, are universal in scope. However, my research shows that EFL learners use language-specific strategies in addition to using universal strategies. These language-specific strategies have been developed by learners as they learn their L1.

A third important area that my research addresses is identifying listening comprehension obstacles. Very few researchers have considered obstacles that L2

learners encounter while listening to oral texts. Those few researchers who have researched this area (Hasan, 2000; Vogely, 1995) have conducted mostly quantitative research. Goh (2000) conducted qualitative research and used self-reports as her data-collection method. However, her research used only one data-collection method and related mostly to the cognitive processes of perception and parsing of the auditory signal. Conversely, my research examines listening obstacles from a qualitative perspective, grounded in a cognitive model, and elicits responses through a wide range of data-collection methods.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter I have introduced the topic of my research. I began this chapter by providing an overview of the audio-lingual method and the way this method has been implemented in EFL programs throughout the world. An understanding of the audio-lingual method is important because it is this method which was introduced into Tunisian EFL programs and still influences the teaching of listening comprehension classes in Tunisia.

After providing a background to the study, I identified the central problem of this study: the current top-down approach to learning is not helping the Tunisian EFL learners to become users of English and is not helping them to understand oral transactional texts in English. Because I believe that a bottom-up approach is needed to understand the difficulties that Tunisian EFL learners encounter while listening to oral texts in English, I focused this research on the learners' perspective rather than the teachers' perspective. The data that I collected demonstrate that learners use ineffective listening strategies with

little knowledge of how to use more effective strategies. In addition, they encounter obstacles while listening to oral texts with little understanding of how to overcome these obstacles. The top-down development and implementation of teaching methodology and curriculum has perpetuated the problems that these learners have.

In my opinion, the solution to the difficulties that Tunisian EFL learners face is to implement a postmethod approach as described by Kumaravadivelu (2001). This approach encourages a three-dimensional pedagogy of particularity, practicality, and possibility(p. 538). This pedagogy encourages a bottom-up information flow rather than top-down. I believe that it is only through this bottom-up approach that educators will be able to understand the difficulties that EFL learners have while they listen to oral texts in English and be able to address these difficulties.

Because of the importance of grounding my strategy research in a cognitive model, I adopted a cognitive theoretical framework that includes Anderson's (1983, 1993) ACT model, Baddeley's (2002, 2009) working memory model, Kintsch's (1998) comprehension model, and listening strategies. I implemented this theoretical framework to identify the obstacles encountered by Tunisian EFL learners in listening comprehension and to identify the type, extent, and range of learning strategies they used.

After identifying the central problem of the study, I identified my research questions and I described the setting of the study where I conducted my research. In addition, I also reported the significance of this study. The significance of this study can be summarized in the following way. To my knowledge, no research has been done identifying listening strategies that Tunisian EFL learners use and obstacles they

encounter while they listen to oral texts. The primary stakeholders, the U.S., British, and Tunisian governments, as well as other international organizations such as the World Bank, have invested a lot of time and resources in developing a nation-wide EFL program which includes listening comprehension as a core component. This study is essential as a first step in improving the teaching of listening comprehension in educational settings throughout Tunisia and helping EFL learners to effectively listen to oral transactional texts in English. In addition, because I believe that EFL learners outside of Tunisia encounter similar difficulties and teacher-centered methods still exist in educational settings throughout the world, I believe this study can be transferred to other research settings that have similar characteristics to this research setting.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Often strategy research has been conducted without grounding it in a theoretical model. This is a short-coming that Macaro (2006) talks about in his article, “Strategies for language learning and for language use: Revising the theoretical framework.” Therefore, I have coupled a theoretical model with listening strategies. This model is composed of three elements, a cognitive model (Anderson, 1983, 1993), a working memory model (Baddeley, 2002, 2009) a comprehension model (Kintsch, 1998), and strategies.

In this chapter I describe this cognitive strategic comprehension model. In the first section, “Representation of Memory,” I describe Anderson's (1983, 1993) ACT model, a theory of the human information processing system explaining how information is stored in the human mind, and I also describe Baddeley's (2002, 2009) working memory model. In the second section, “Comprehension,” I describe the comprehension process from the time of perception until the point where the perceived information is 'understood,' and use Kinstch's (1998) Construction-Integration model as the core of this process. In the final section, “A Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model for Listening Comprehension,” I present learning strategy theory, connecting learning strategies with the human information processing system and the comprehension model that is presented in the first two sections. The chapter concludes by re-presenting my research questions and explaining the relationship between my research questions and my theoretical

framework.

Representation of Memory

In this section, I present two popular cognitive models, the ACT model (Anderson, 1983, 1993) and Baddeley's Working Memory model (Baddeley, 2009; Cook, 2001, p. 83-84) as a framework for understanding the way in which the brain processes aural information. These models are important because they describe the transfer of aural information throughout the cognitive processing system and are a foundational part of the cognitive strategic comprehension model, used as a basis of my research.

The Information-Processing System

In the 1960's many psychologists such as Ausubel, Bruner, Goodnow, Austin, Gagné, Atkinson and Shiffrin researched mental structures and processes (Gagné, Yekovich, & Yekovich, 1993; Schunk, 1996). This research was partially responsible for the advance of cognitive psychology and led to a description of the human information-processing system (Gagné, Yekovich, & Yekovich, 1993). Figure 1 diagrams the human information-processing system.

As is show in Figure 1, a general information-processing memory model basically includes sensory registers, which obtain information from the environment; working memory, an area where the information can be processed; and long-term memory, a storage area for information (Gagné, Yekovich, & Yekovich). The arrows in the diagram indicate how information flows throughout memory.

Working memory. As indicated in Figure 1, the human information-processing system begins processing information when a stimulus input is detected by one of the five senses (hearing, sight, touch, taste, or smell). The appropriate sensory receptors receive the input and hold it for a very brief period in its initial sensory form (Schunk, 1996). After the receptors receive the information they transmit it to working memory. Working memory roughly equates to awareness or what we are conscious of at a given time. Working memory is also the area where new and old information are combined and processed. As research has indicated, memory has a very limited capacity and duration with information starting to decay after about ten seconds. Most theorists hold that working memory contains approximately seven chunks or units of information, with some people able to retain one or two units less and others able to retain one or two units more (Baddeley, 2002, p. 91; Gagné, Yekovich, & Yekovich, 1993, p. 41; Miller, 1994, p. 348 ; Schunk, 1996, p. 151). A unit can be defined as any meaningful piece of information (a letter, a word, a number, or a common expression) (Schunk, p. 151).

Even though many researchers have followed Miller's description of working memory's capacity, at least two researchers, Cowan (2005) and Cook (2001), disagree with Miller's working memory limits. After performing extensive tests, Cowan maintains

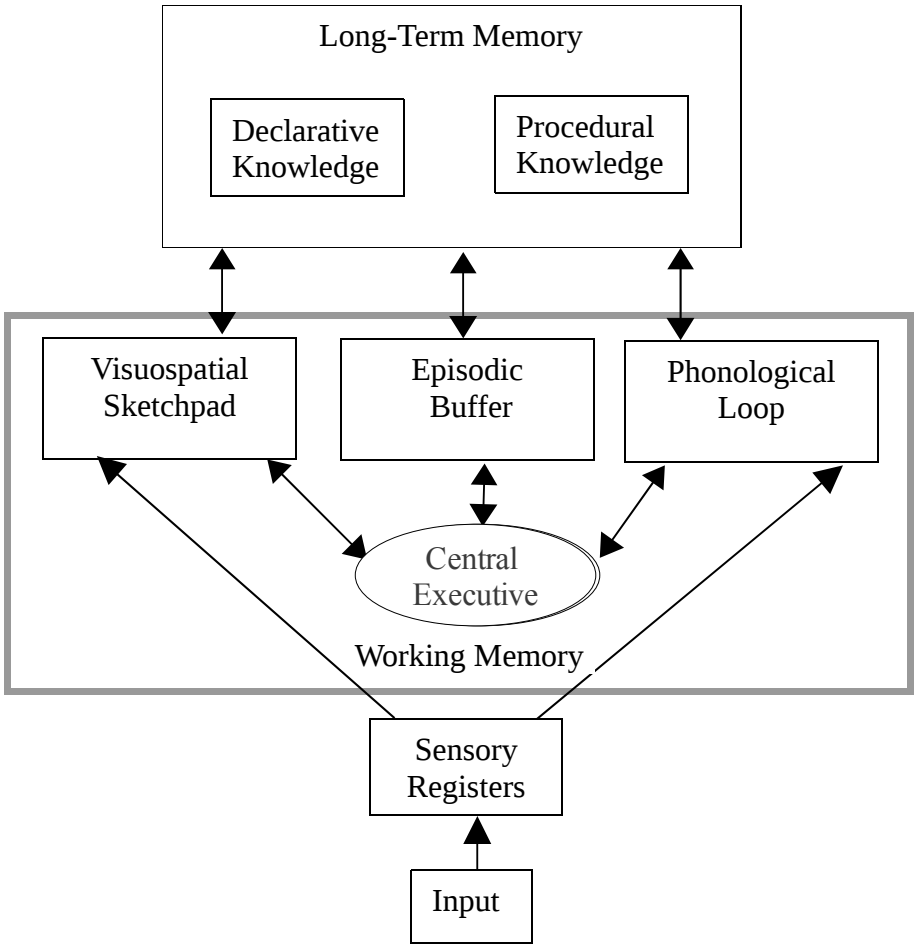

Figure 1. A diagram of the human information-processing system.

that the capacity of working memory is only four units of information (pp. 109-110), not seven as Miller claims. Cook also performed his own memory tests and found that native English speakers can remember eight units of information, while speakers who use English as a second language can only remember between five and six units of information in English (pp. 82-83). All three indicate that new information entering into working memory can be "recoded" into more compact chunks so that working memory can hold more information, as long as all of the chunks together are not more than the

maximum threshold. Information recoding makes processing easier and, therefore, associative processes, such as inferencing, become less-cognitively demanding (Kintsch, 1998; Rost, 2002). Regardless of the maximum capacity of working memory, it is evident that L2 learners have a working memory lag compared with native English speakers (Cook, 2001, pp. 82-83).

Baddeley and Hitch (1974) originally proposed that working memory was not a unitary entity but is composed of three different processes: the Phonological Loop, the Visuospatial Sketchpad, and the Central Executive. He and his colleagues have added a fourth process, the Episodic Buffer, after further research (Baddeley, 2002). I adopted Baddeley's most recent working memory model in my research.

According to Baddeley (2002), the Phonological Loop, the Visuospatial Sketchpad, the Episodic Buffer, and the Central Executive make up the short-term memory that most theorists call "working memory." Phonological information from the sensory registers is passed to the Phonological Loop. The Phonological Loop contains two parts: a short-term storage area and a rehearsal mechanism that allows working memory to maintain phonological information until it is processed. The sensory registers pass visual and spatial information to the Visuospatial Sketchpad, which temporarily stores this information until it is processed in working memory. The Episodic Buffer is an area where information from the Visuospatial Sketchpad and the Phonological Loop are combined with information from long-term memory and processed (p. 86). This buffer also conducts some of the control processes. Even though Baddeley does not talk specifically about comprehension in his model, the Episodic Buffer is the area where

comprehension most likely occurs as the textbase and the situation model are combined. The Central Executive is mostly an attentional system which allows the mind to attend to important information.

Control processes. There are control processes that guide the transfer of information from one area of memory to another area of memory. According to the Information Processing Model (Gagné, Yekovich, & Yekovich, 1993; Schunk, 1996), control processes help manipulate information in working memory. Schunk lists the control processes as rehearsing, coding, imaging, implementing decision rules, organizing information, monitoring one's level of understanding, and using retrieval strategies. Rehearsing means repeating information either vocally or subvocally so that the information is maintained in working memory. Coding means making information meaningful. Imaging means visually representing information. Most of these control processes that Shunk mentions, occur in the Episodic Buffer, with the possible exception of rehearsal, which primarily occurs in the Phonological Loop (Baddeley, 2009, p. 59).

Long-term memory. Information from working memory is stored in long-term memory, or permanent memory. Long-term memory is made up of two types of knowledge: declarative and procedural. Declarative knowledge is "factual knowledge that can be reported or described" (Anderson, 1993, p. 18). Procedural knowledge is knowledge that has been put into practice. Declarative knowledge is knowing about something, whereas procedural knowledge is knowing how to do something (Anderson, 1993; Gagné, Yekovich, & Yekovich, 1993, p. 60). Procedural knowledge consists of individual units called productions. Declarative knowledge consists of individual units of

static information. These units can be images, visceral information (from a human being's senses of smell, taste, and touch), or propositions. Images and sensory information in declarative memory are retained intact and maintain a close likeness to what they represent. However, propositions, which are abstract, do not necessarily represent information which is perceived by a person's five senses. Rather, propositions maintain the semantic sense of the experience (Gagné, Yekovich, & Yekovich; Kagan, 2002).

Declarative knowledge. Propositions stored in memory contain two elements, a relation and one or more arguments. The arguments are the topics of the proposition and are usually nouns and pronouns. Arguments can be "subjects, objects, goals (destinations), instruments (means), and recipients" (Gagné, Yekovich, & Yekovich, 1993, p. 62). The relation constrains the arguments and are usually verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. Generally, each verb, adjective, and adverb indicate the number of propositions and, therefore, the number of ideas. Thus propositions express single ideas and can be verb-based, adjective-based, or adverb-based propositions (Gagné, Yekovich, & Yekovich, 1993, p. 63).

These propositions are hypothetical representations that can be portrayed visually using nodes and links. Using this graphical method of representation, the node expresses the entire proposition and the links point to each element of the proposition. Each link is labeled with each argument's role within a specific proposition. A propositional network shows the way in which ideas can be shared between nodes (Gagné, Yekovich, &

Yekovich, 1993, p.66). An example of a propositional network, using the sentence, "Tom went to the large store yesterday," is shown in Figure 2.

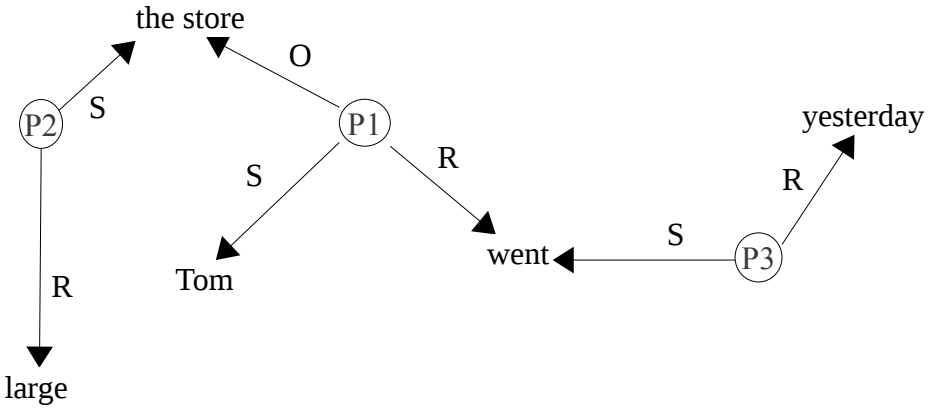

Figure 2. A propositional network showing interrelationships between propositions that share ideas. Adapted from *The cognitive psychology of school learning (2nd ed.)*. E. D. Gagné, C. W. Yekovich, & F. R. Yekovich, p. 65. Copyright [1993] by Harper Collins.

This figure is a depiction from a description of a node-link structure that Gagné, Yekovich, and Yekovich (1993) describe on page 65. In this figure, "S" signifies the subject of the proposition, "O" identifies the object, and "R"denotes the relation.

Procedural knowledge. Individual memory units of procedural knowledge are called productions which consist of conditions and actions. A condition is the argument that must be true for the production to be performed. An action is a piece of declarative knowledge that is acted on if the condition is true. Productions can be visually expressed through logical "IF-THEN" statements. The conditions are clauses in the "IF" portion of the statement and the actions are clauses in the "THEN" portion of the statement (Gagné, Yekovich, & Yekovich, 1993, p. 92). This is shown in Figure 3.

IF	Fred is walking down the road And Fred sees someone else walking down the road
THEN	Fred asks that person his or her name

Figure 3. A Sample production of a person asking someone his or her name. Adapted from *The cognitive psychology of school learning (2nd ed.)*. E. D. Gagné, C. W. Yekovich, & F. R. Yekovich, p. 92. Copyright [1993] by Harper Collins.

Figure 3 consists of an action, a piece of declarative knowledge, which is acted upon to produce a specific behavior, in this case asking the person their name.

Productions can also be combined to form more complex production systems. For example, Figure 4, gives a sample production of "dialing a telephone number."

	IF	Tom wants to talk to his friend on the telephone
P1	THEN	Tom picks up the telephone
	IF	Tom hears a dial tone coming from the telephone speaker
P2	THEN	Tom constructs a proposition that his friend's phone is not in use.
		Tom dials his friends number
	IF	Tom doesn't hear his friend's voice
P3	THEN	Tom constructs a proposition that his friend is not answering the phone and is, therefore, unavailable to talk on the phone
		Tom performs "No- Answer" production
	IF	"No-Answer" when calling his friend's telephone number
P4	THEN	Tom constructs a proposition that he may be able to leave an answer on his friend's answering machine.
		Tom listens for an answering machine to pick up
	IF	Telephone Answering machine picks up
P5	THEN	Tom leaves his friend a message indicating that he had called
	IF	Telephone Answering machine doesn't pick up
P6	THEN	Tom constructs a proposition that he can't leave his friend a message
		Tom constructs a proposition that he needs to hang up the telephone and try again later.
		Tom hangs up the telephone
	IF	Tom hears his friend answer with some sort of greeting
P7	THEN	Tom creates a proposition that his friend is available to talk on the telephone
		Tom talks to his friend on the telephone

Figure 4. Sample production system for calling a friend on the telephone. Adapted from *The cognitive psychology of school learning (2nd ed.)*. E. D. Gagné, C. W. Yekovich, & F. R. Yekovich, p. 95. Copyright [1993] by Harper Collins.

A production system consists of different productions that are linked together. Each production acts on declarative knowledge stored in long-term memory or constructed from available declarative information. Even though the procedural steps have been

listed step by step, often these steps become automated instead of controlled. Automated procedures are performed unconsciously, whereas controlled procedures are performed consciously (Gagné, Yekovich, & Yekovich, 1993, p.95).

Declarative knowledge vs. procedural knowledge. Some differences exist between declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. For example, declarative knowledge is represented in memory in a way that preserves meaning, temporal order, spatial relations, and sensory experiences. Procedural knowledge, on the other hand, is represented in memory in a way that preserves the rules that affects our behavior and actions. Declarative knowledge is static, whereas procedural knowledge is active and concrete. Declarative knowledge can be acquired relatively quickly, whereas procedural knowledge takes more time, effort, and practice before it is gained. Declarative knowledge can be modified relatively quickly, whereas procedural knowledge is very difficult to modify, once it has been acquired. Declarative knowledge accumulates in a human being's mind without causing him or her to behave in a certain way, whereas procedural knowledge causes someone to act or behave in a certain way (Anderson, 1983; Gagné, Yekovich, & Yekovich, 1993). Even though they are different in many ways, they are always interacting because procedural knowledge uses declarative knowledge to perform certain actions. Declarative knowledge could be considered the data that is in our mind and procedural knowledge to be the logic of what to do with that data (Anderson, 1983; Gagné, Yekovich, & Yekovich, 1993).

The structure of declarative knowledge in memory. Declarative knowledge in long-term memory is stored as cognitive units. These cognitive units are linked together

to form a vast declarative knowledge network. This network of cognitive units includes propositions, images, and visceral information, such as sounds, smells, and tastes. A good visual example of this is Figure 5.

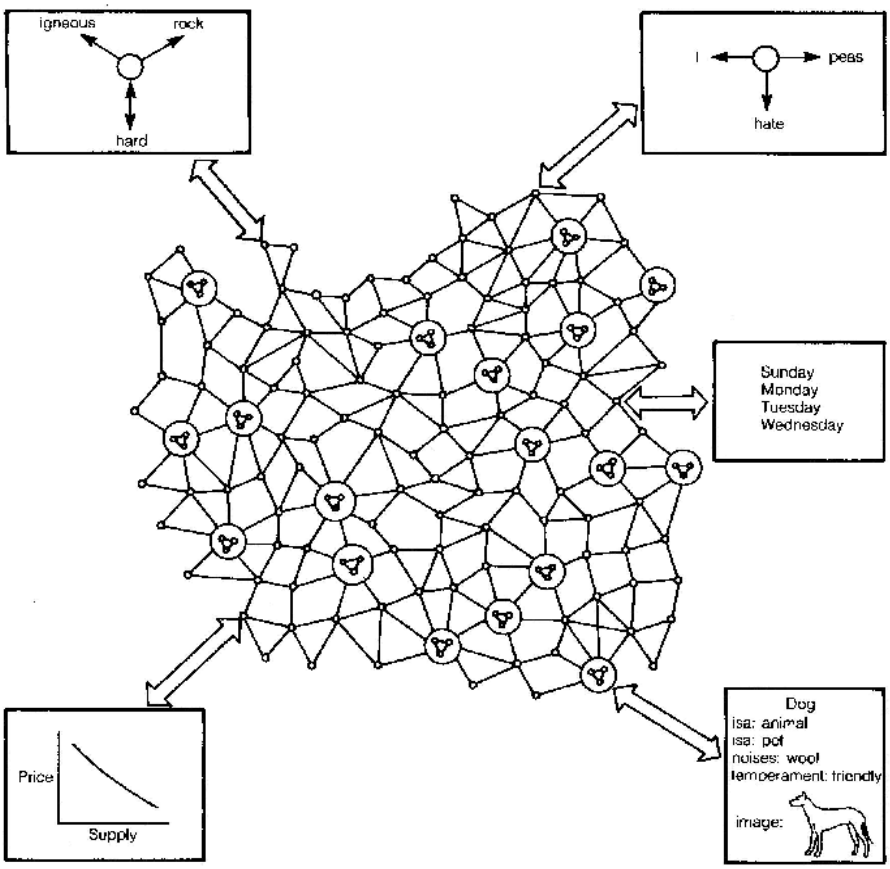

Figure 5. A network of propositional and non-propositional cognitive units. Taken from *The cognitive psychology of school learning (2nd ed.)*. E. D. Gagné, C. W. Yekovich, & F. R. Yekovich, p. 120. Copyright [1993] by Pearson Education, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 5 shows the way in which different types of cognitive units are linked together into a network. The small circles represent the cognitive units in memory and the larger circles represent micro-networks of cognitive units. This diagram of nodes and links is helpful in helping us visualize how declarative information is stored although it is not

clear whether individual neurons store cognitive units of information, or whether several neurons linked together store cognitive units of information (Anderson, 1983, p. 86).

Accessing Declarative Knowledge from Memory

In cognitive theory most nodes and links in the declarative knowledge network are inactive most of the time. Even though the information is stored in our minds, we are unaware of this information until it becomes activated. Information becomes activated when it is triggered from sensory input that has been decoded and transferred to working memory (Anderson. 1993).

Comprehension

In reading, many different subprocesses, such as decoding and word recognition, are coordinated in order for comprehension to occur. Comprehending oral information is even more complex since there is no written information to reference. Instead, the listener has an aural stream of information which disappears just as quickly as it appears. A listener must instantly be able to recognize English sounds, discriminate between various prosodic information, such as stress and intonation, segment the stream of sounds into words, and then transform the recognized words into meaningful information in order to comprehend an oral text. This process from recognition to transformation must occur in a matter of seconds, before the aural information disappears.

Comprehension and the Role of Attention

Our ears constantly hear sounds. However, these sounds do not equate to listening. Listening occurs when someone ignores other auditory input that is around him and directs her concentration on one auditory stream of input. This attention results in an

alertness and a readiness to consider the incoming auditory input. Attention makes the listener's cognitive processes available for the processing of the auditory input (Rost, 1990a). According to Baddeley (2009), the process of attending to someone or something is controlled by the Central Executive in working memory (p. 53).

Even though attention makes listening possible, the process of listening comprehension is still a very difficult task, made even more difficult by two important considerations. First, the average person speaks at about 160 words per minute or about eight words every two or three seconds, requiring the incoming auditory stream to be processed quickly (Rost, 1990a). Second, the working memory is very limited and can hold less than 10 seconds of acoustic input, requiring the information in working memory to be analyzed and comprehended before it is lost (Rost, 2002)

Definition of Comprehension

Comprehension is not a unitary process but consists of different processes. These different processes that occur during comprehension can be divided into two very important stages. The first stage is called word identification. During this stage, the human mind analyzes the incoming acoustic signal and maps this acoustic signal to an internal lexicon via various short-term registers. This lexicon is the internal store of words that a person has in his or her long-term memory.

The second stage of comprehension is integrating the internal lexicon with available syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and contextual declarative knowledge as well as procedural knowledge. This second stage is called meaning construction. These stages

most likely occur in parallel with meaning being constructed as soon as some words have been mapped to the internal lexicon.

Word Identification Stage

After the aural input has been attended to, word identification from that input occurs in two phases. The first phase is mapping the acoustic signal to an initial phonemic representation and the second phase is mapping the initial phonemic representation to the lexicon (Rost, 1990a, 2002).

Mapping the acoustic signal to an initial phonemic representation. When children are less than a year old, they have already been able to decode the acoustic signal they have heard when their family speaks to them. This process is very complex and researchers are not certain about the underlying mechanisms performing this process. The major reason for the complexity of this process is that phonemes are co-articulated, or overlapped, in the acoustic signal, instead of sequential. Co-articulation provides very efficient communication, but it makes the decoding process very complicated (Miller & Eimas, 1995).

Several theories have been presented that attempt to explain how the human mind can so effectively translate a variable, co-articulated acoustic signal into a fixed phonemic representation in the mind. One theory, the motor theory of speech perception, claims that there is a specialized processing system that calculates the acoustic signal and then translates it into phonemes. A second theory, the direct-realist view of speech perception, claims that there is no specialized processing system that handles the decoding of the acoustic signal. Instead, this theory speculates that the acoustic signal contains all the

information necessary for the human mind to decode the signal. A third set of theories hold that there is no specialized processing system and there is no recoverable information in the acoustic signal to perform the translation task. Instead, there are "general principles of auditory processing, learning, and categorization [that] underlie the listener's ability to map the acoustic signal onto phonetic catergories" (Miller & Eimas,1995, p. 470).

Mapping the initial phonemic representation to a person's internal lexicon. Mapping the initial phonemic representation to a person's internal lexicon is better understood and better explained than the acoustic signal mapping stage. A number of different theories attempt to explain this process, with two basic groups of theories. One group of theories takes a narrow, modular view of decoding; the acoustic signal is given an initial phonemic representation, as is described in the last paragraph, and then this representation is mapped to the internal lexicon. The second group of theories takes a broad, holistic view of decoding; these theories hold that the acoustic signal is mapped directly on the internal lexicon, thus bypassing the previous process of acoustic signal mapping. The majority of researchers agree with the narrow, modular view of decoding (Dahan & Magnuson; 2006; Miller & Eimas, 1995). Both the TRACE model and the Cohort model are narrow, modular perspectives of decoding, mapping preprocessed input to an internal lexicon:

The TRACE model. TRACE is an interactive-activation model. Because information flows "upward" from the segment level and is combined with information in long-term memory. Information from long-term memory also flows "downward" and is

combined with the preprocessed input. It is an activation model because certain information is activated based on evolving hypotheses (Dahan & Magnuson; 2006; Miller & Eimas, 1995). TRACE, therefore, combines bottom-up processing as well as top-down processing. Bottom-up processing is a data-driven process, starting with the phoneme at the lowest level and moving to the overall meaning of the utterance at the top level. Top-down processing is a knowledge-driven process, starting with background knowledge contained in long-term memory (Field, 1999).

Based on the hypotheses about the preprocessed input that TRACE develops, input is represented as a phonetic feature, a segment, or a word. The phonetic features are additional pieces of information that are found before or after the segment and are hypothesized in an attempt to cope with co-articulation. Thus, a hypothesis that is made about the input first activates a phonetic feature, then a segment, and finally a word. The more likely a particular hypothesis is, the stronger the activation of that particular feature, segment, or word. Because the preprocessed input is presented sequentially and is time-based, the constructed hypotheses are reconsidered over small periods of time based on new input (Dahan & Magnuson; 2006; Miller & Eimas, 1995).

As the hypotheses are modified, new representations are activated and old representations are either more strongly activated or deactivated. Thus, a particular representation's strength of activation is based on past input as well as current input; the context of the incoming input is also considered in this model. Since segmentation occurs as part of the activation process, a separate segmentation strategy is not necessary When a word reaches a certain activation level, that word is chosen as the representation

of the preprocessed input and is mapped to the internal lexicon, where it will be further processed during the meaning construction stage. Many of the processes mentioned here work in parallel to make the decoding and comprehension systems more efficient (Dahan & Magnuson; 2006; Miller & Eimas, 1995).

The Cohort model. The Cohort model (also known as the Selection-Access model) is the most common word recognition model and was originally hypothesized by Marslen-Wilson and Welsh in 1978 and revised by Marslen-Wilson in 1987 and 1989 (Dahan & Magnuson, 2006). This model has two phases: an initial access phase and a final selection phase. During the access phase, the preprocessed acoustic signal is mapped, phoneme by phoneme, into phonetic representations of words that have been stored in long-term memory (Rost, 2002). Through this process, words are recognized using word-initial phonological information. The listener encounters each phoneme sequentially, from beginning to end, and each phoneme is compared with a linguistic stored model, *accessing* all the eligible candidates that have the same initial phonological patterns (i.e. the cohorts). As more phonemes are isolated, the words with the same phonemic pattern are *accessed* and the others not matching that phonemic pattern are eliminated. This process continues until only one word matching the phonemic pattern of the input remains; this word is *selected* to represent the acoustic signal and is mapped to the internal lexicon for further processing (Dahan & Magnuson, 2006; Dahan & Tanenhaus, 2004; Miller & Eimas, 1995; Rost, 1990a).

Many researchers have criticized the Cohort model. Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) and Nunan (1991) criticized it because this model is an exclusive bottom-up process that

does not take into account the background knowledge of the listener. Nunan says that people don't remember the whole text, like a tape recorder, but only remember bits and pieces of information. Even the parts remembered won't be the exact words of the original message. He suggests that humans store the meaning in our minds, but not the linguistic forms. He defines a listener as a model builder who constructs an interpretation of the meaning through both bottom-up and top-down processing.

Dahan and Tanenhaus (2004) have also criticized the Cohort model because, in its initial form, it required a small time lag between access and selection. They state that the human mind is much more tolerant of mismatches than the Cohort model indicates; candidates that don't exactly match the lexical input, but are semantically equivalent, are activated as a word unfolds. Their research indicated that mapping the acoustic input to meaning is a continuous process with emerging representations that are continuously updated using multiple information sources. Furthermore, as is described in the TRACE model, they found that contextual constraints can affect even the earliest moments of mapping the input onto the developing representation. However, unlike Carrell and Eisterhold (1988), who insist that the schema always drives the process, Dahan and Tanenhaus argue that when contextual constraints are weak, the initial mapping will be primarily driven by bottom-up phonetic constraints. But, when contextual constraints are strong, the context will guide the mapping and development of the semantic representation.

Criticism of the initial cohort model was addressed by Gaskell and Marslen-Wilson (2002) and a revised distributed cohort model was devised. As Dahan and

Magnuson (2006) admit, in the revised distributed cohort model the process of access and selection is a continuous, instantaneous process with no time lag, and cohorts are no longer selected or eliminated. Instead, the revised cohort model uses an activation model, similar to the TRACE model, and cohorts have a particular activation strength based on the acoustic input. Therefore, cohorts can affect each other with either increasing or decreasing activation levels based on the incoming acoustic information, with the ultimate selection made based on the strength of the final activation levels. The revised cohort model also allows cohorts to accessed based on either lexical features or semantic features (Dahan & Magnuson).

Segmentation. This is one of the parallel processes occurring during the word-identification stage. Segmentation refers to a plan that the human mind devises to recognize word boundaries from the acoustic input, and is a highly debated issue among researchers. Some researchers have postulated that segmentation is a necessary, initial step in processing the acoustic signal. However, further research has shown that segmentation is not important for English speakers, especially in the initial acoustic mapping process (Miller & Eimas, 1995). The TRACE model and the revised cohort model do not require a segmentation strategy, since segmentation occurs in the course of the mapping process (Dahan & Magnuson, 2006; Miller & Eimas). However, if it does occur, it may occur during the phonemic mapping process and aid this process (Dahan & Magnuson). Additional views of segmentation can be found in Dahan and Magnuson and Miller and Eimas. One view of segmentation is discussed below.

When reading, a person focuses her eyes on white spaces in the text with the knowledge that these spaces divide the texts into words. However, segmenting an oral text is more complicated. According to Rost (2002), listeners of every language, including English, have a segmentation strategy for dividing aural speech into individual words. Because English is a stress-timed language, a regular metrical beat falls on the strongly stressed syllables, corresponding to information words. When native English listeners hear the rhythm of the English speech, they also hear the strong-stressed syllables and the information words that correspond to these syllables. This regular rhythmic speech allows Native English listeners to focus only on the information words in the aural stream. As the name indicates, these information words contain the information that the human mind needs to construct meaning from the text. (Sanders, Neville, & Woldorff, 2002, p. 520). According to Rost (2002), because 90 per cent of all information words are stressed on the first syllable, the normal segmentation strategy in English of recognizing words through strong-stressed syllables is a good indicator of word boundaries in an oral text.

Attentional signals. Along with segmentation, another parallel process to the phonemic mapping process is the focus that English language speakers give to certain attentional signals. The three attentional signals are volume, pitch direction, and discourse signaling clues.

If certain words or syllables are spoken with more or less volume than normal, this will carry a certain significance which the human mind will attempt to decode into meaning. For example, if the word “Tom” in the sentence, “Tom went with Julian

yesterday," is louder than the other stressed syllables in the sentence, the human mind will attach more significance to this word and attempt to construct the meaning of the sentence considering the extra volume of this word; for example, it was Tom who went with Julian, and not some other person (Rost, 1990a).

The height of the pitch and its falling or rising also has important significance. For example, if one interlocutor speaks to another one with a continuous high pitch (also known as the "high key"), the listener may get upset because he or she is interpreting the high key as an attempt by the speaker to dominate the situation. On the other hand, a native-English listener may interpret a lack of up and down pitch movement in a conversation as a speaker's disinterest or boredom (Rost, 1990a).

Discourse signaling cues are metalinguistic devices that function as structural guides to signal how readers and listeners should interpret the incoming information. They explicitly cue the organization of a discourse by signaling relationships between ideas, indicating the relative importance of ideas, and evaluating the given ideas. Such discourse signaling cues include previews, summarizers, emphasis markers, and logical connectives (Jung, 2003; Morra de la Peña & Soler, 2001).

Meaning Construction Stage

As has been previously mentioned, the processes that are involved in decoding, mapping, and meaning construction most likely occur in parallel. Therefore, once some words are identified from the acoustic signal and are successfully mapped to a person's internal lexicon, meaning is immediately constructed from all the available, activated information. Many competing theories discuss meaning construction. I discuss two of

these: schema theory and Kintsch's Construction-Integration model (1998). Schema theory, largely forgotten now, was very popular in the 1970's and 1980's. The Construction-Integration model uses Anderson's ACT theory (1983) of knowledge representation and expands on it to provide an intriguing comprehension model that I will use as a framework for my research.

Schema theory. Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) describe Schema Theory as a top-down, meaning construction model that takes into account the reader's or listener's background knowledge. According to this theory, the activated lexicon from the word-identification stage is mapped against the reader's or listener's previously acquired knowledge, or schema, to construct meaning. This theory proposes two basic modes of information processing: bottom-up and top-down. Through bottom-up processing, a schema is invoked from the activated lexicon by the incoming data. Top-down processing, on the other hand, occurs as general predictions are made based on higher-level general schemata, which locates lower-level data that fits into the partially-satisfied, higher-order schemata. Bottom-up processing is often called "data-driven and top-down processing is often "concept-driven," or "knowledge-driven." Carrell and Eisterhold indicate that top-down and bottom-up processing should occur simultaneously. According to Carrell & Eisterhold, comprehension happens when the text interacts with the listener's background knowledge. Therefore, listeners' understanding of a text, depends on their background (p. 76).

According to Anderson (1993), chunks are added to the schematic structure one at a time. Schemata are associated or linked with other knowledge structures and are

content-addressable and cross-referenced; therefore, information can be located based on content and related pieces of information can be retrieved through a cross-referencing system.

Learning can be categorized by how schemata are structured. Rumelhart and Norman (1981) talk about three types of learning. First, they define accretion as the encoding of new information into the existing schematic structure. Since new information is added with reference to pre-existing schemata, no new schemata are created; instead, learning happens through instantiation of existing schemata. Second, they define tuning or schema evolution as the modification and refinement of the schema. Thereby, "an existing schema can be slowly modified to conform better and better to the sorts of situations to which it is to apply" (p. 336). Third, they define restructuring or schema creation as the process of creating new schemata.

Schemata are not isolated entities. Many people, including Anderson (1993), say that schemata are hierarchically organized. In other words, there are schemata within schemata. Schallert, who is quoted by Richgels (1982, p. 1), also agrees, saying that schematic structures once formed can be imbedded within each other, forming hierarchies. These schematic structures, therefore, become inter-connected and cross-referenced with other structures and representations. These structures change and become more elaborate and more specific as a person grows in his or her experiences.

The Construction-Integration model. In 1978, Kintsch and van Dijk proposed a cognitive model that they posited as an alternative to Schema Theory (Kintsch and van Dijk, 1978; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). Since then Kintsch has refined this model and

called it the Construction-Integration Model(also used in its abbreviated form, the C-I model (1998). Schema Theory sees comprehension as a very structured, mostly top-down process; but, Kintsch claims that recent research has indicated that comprehension is a much more bottom-up, loosely structured process. He states that the comprehension is very sensitive to context and flexibly adjusts to shifts in the environment. He says that, in the beginning stages, comprehension is quite chaotic and only reaches order at the concluding stage (p. 94). Chaotic means that many different nodes, containing propositions, sensory information, and contextual situations, are linked together in the same network; some of these nodes logically relate with each other and others contradict each other. Even though the nodes in the network are not logically related to each other in the beginning stages, the network becomes stabilized and logically organized in the end, through a spreading activation process, (p. 98).

For example, Figure 6 visually depicts the sentence, “Two lions were loose in downtown Pittsburgh today,” with nodes and links.

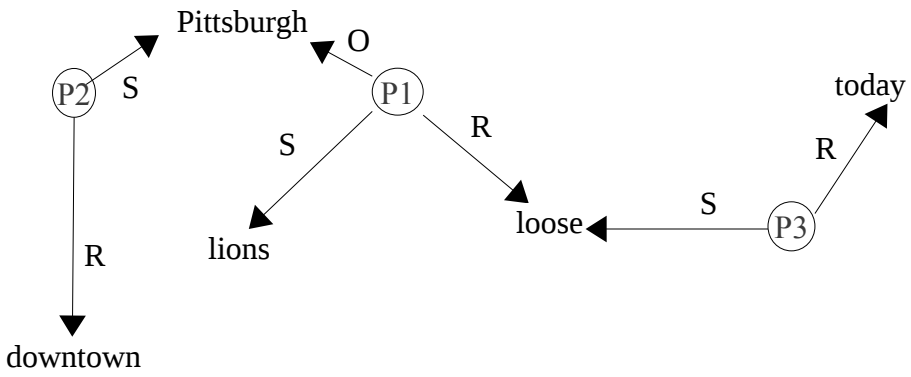

Figure 6. An example of a textbase. Adapted from *The cognitive psychology of school learning (2nd ed.)*. E. D. Gagné, C. W. Yekovich, & F. R. Yekovich, p. 65. Copyright [1993] by Harper Collins.

This figure is a depiction from a description of a node-link structure that Gagné, Yekovich, and Yekovich (1993) describe on page 65. This figure represents Kintsch's (1998) description of a textbase consisting "of those elements and relations that are directly derived from the text itself. . . . , but without adding anything that is not explicitly specified in the text" (p. 103).

When a textbase is formed, propositions from the text will activate information from long-term memory. This knowledge from long-term memory includes personal experience, "knowledge about the language, about the world in general, and about the specific communicative situation" (Kintsch, 1998, p. 103). Kintsch calls this knowledge from long-term memory the situation model. Johnson-Laird (1980) says that a situation model "represents a state of affairs and accordingly its structure is not arbitrary like that of a propositional representation, but plays a direct representational or analogical role. Its structure mirrors the relevant aspects of the corresponding state of affairs in the world"

(p. 98). This situational model is stored in a person's long-term memory and is activated along with the text in working memory. Thus, each node in this network will also link to other ideas from a person's previous knowledge of a situation that may or may not be related to the meaning of the sentence. I have depicted this network in Figure 7, based on a description of a node-link structure that Gagné, Yekovich, and Yekovich (1993) describe on page 65.

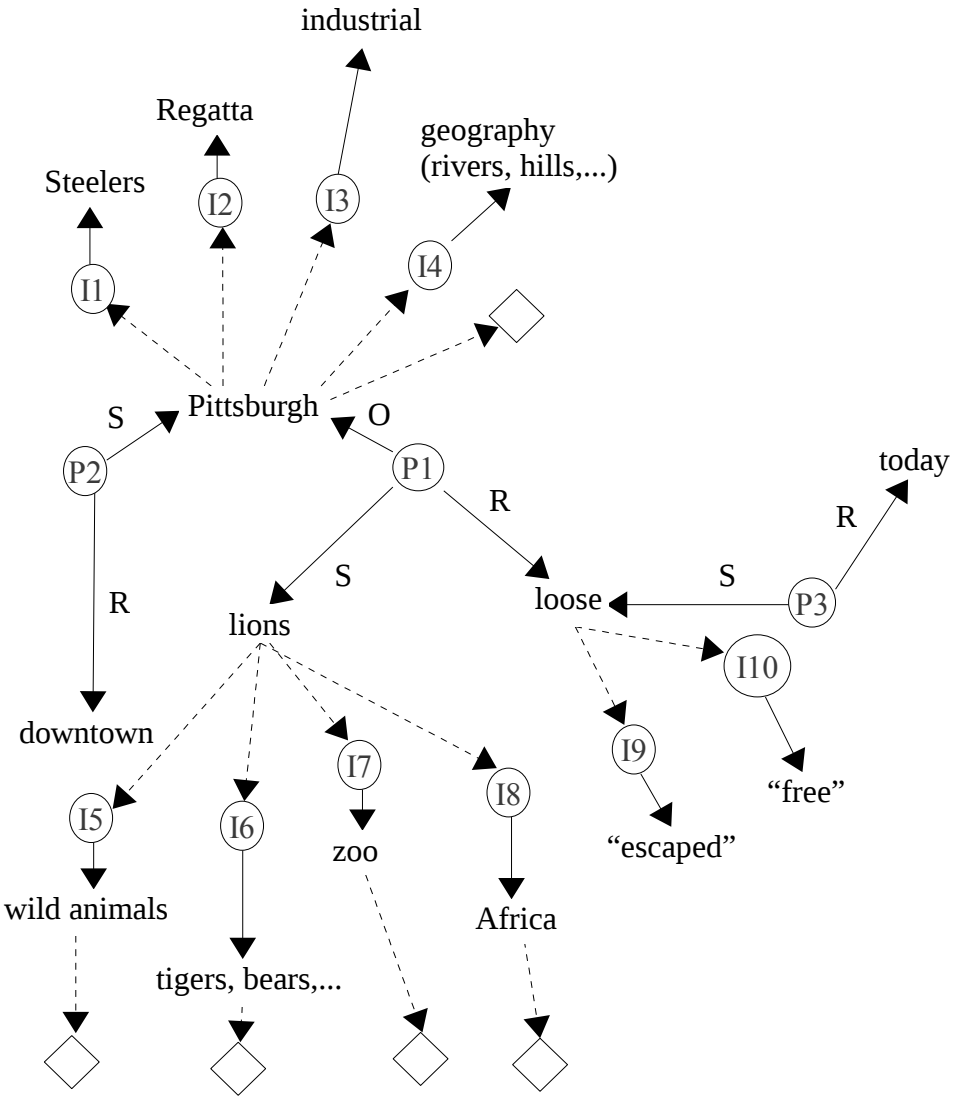

Figure 7. A propositional network with linked related information. Adapted from *The cognitive psychology of school learning (2nd ed.)*. E. D. Gagné, C. W. Yekovich, & F. R. Yekovich, p. 65. Copyright [1993] by Harper Collins.

Of course this is only an example and I would expect more related pieces of information to be linked with this sentence than I have included in this figure.

As is shown in Figure 7, this propositional network is a unitary structure. For purposes of explanation and analysis, there are two components to this network: the textbase and the situation model. The solid lines represent links to propositions,

beginning with P (P1, P2, etc.), that have been constructed from the text: the textbase. The dotted lines represent links to cognitive chunks of information, beginning with I (I1, I2, etc.), that represent knowledge from long-term memory. These cognitive chunks of information can be previously stored propositions. However, they can also be images, visceral representations, and spatial knowledge. Other types of non-propositional knowledge (such as images or visceral representations) may also be linked in to the network; a diamond is used in Figure 7 to indicate this non-propositional information.

Construction phase. According to the C-I Model, comprehension occurs in two stages: construction and integration. During the construction phase, propositions from the textbase activate background knowledge, forming the situation model, and this activated knowledge is linked into the network. Also included in the link is a probability that a particular node, or cognitive chunk, is relevant based on the textbase. Some cognitive chunks of knowledge that are linked are more relevant (i.e. they have a stronger link) than other cognitive chunks of knowledge, which may only be weakly linked.

During the construction process, certain rules are followed. There are rules for the way in which the nodes are interconnected into the network and the way that knowledge is activated. There are also rules for constructing inferences. Kintsch (1998, p. 96-97) states that there are three levels of connections among the nodes: directly related, indirectly related, or negatively related.

Integration Phase. During the integration phase a spreading activation process is used to stabilize the network ". . .in a way that takes account of the pattern of mutual constraints that exists among the nodes of the network" (Kintsch, 1998, p.98). Strong,

relevant nodes continue to be linked during the spreading activation process, while the weak, irrelevant nodes disappear from the network. The resulting network is a person's episodic text memory, a text that has integrated with the listener's or reader's personal store of knowledge and experience. Thus it is a person's understanding of the text to which he or she is reading or listening (Kintsch, 1998).

L2 Learners and Comprehension

Unlike L1 learners, L2 learners have the added complexity of having information from a different language in their lexicon. This complexity affects the process of the aural signal being segmented and decoded into words, the words being added to a learner's internal lexicon, and the process whereby meaning is constructed and integrated.

An L2 Selection-Access model. Dijkstra and van Heuven (1998) proposed a bilingual interactive activation model, similar to the selection-access model mentioned above, in which the learners' L2 internal lexicon is integrated with their L1 internal lexicon, activating lexical candidates in both languages whenever the input matches features of either language.

An L2 Construction-Integration model. Having briefly treated the bilingual interactive model, I now discuss the way in which L2 learners construct meaning from an L2 oral text within the C-I model. There are two views about L2 comprehension. The first view is that after L2 words are decoded they can only be accessed through the first language, instead of being accessed directly. This model is known as the word association model. The second view is that L2 words are connected to the concept directly without being connected to the first language word. This model is known as the

concept mediation model (Potter, So, Von Eckardt, & Feldman, 1984). Kroll and Stewart (1994) combined these two models into one model, the revised hierarchical model, to reflect not only the reliance on the L1 that most L2 learners experience initially, but also the ability that more proficient L2 learners have to access the concept directly without the necessity of associating it with the word in the first language (Kroll, Michael, Tokowicz, & Dufour; 2002).

The revised hierarchical model concurs with much of the research on proficiency reviewed below. This research argues that proficient L2 learners are better able to process and understand an L2 text than are less proficient learners. This model also agrees with the Construction-Integration model discussed above. Figure 8 illustrates this model.

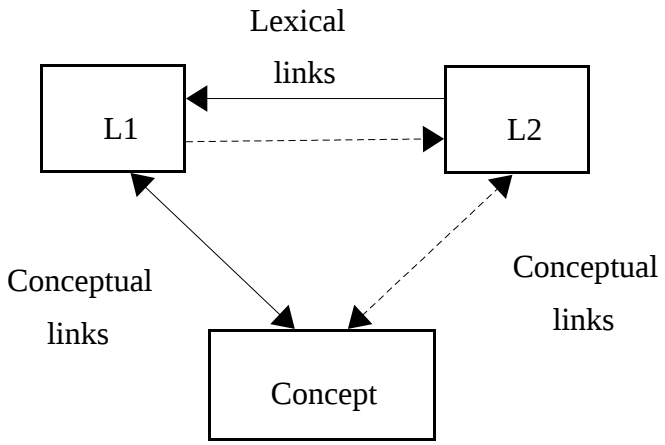

Figure 8. The revised hierarchical model. Taken from "The development of lexical fluency in a second language," by J. F. Kroll, E. Michael, N. Tokowicz, & R. Dufour, 2002, *Second Language Research, 18*(2), p. 139. Copyright [2002] by Sage Publications. Reprinted with Permission.

Figure 8 depicts the relationship between an L1 word, an L2 word, and the concept. The arrows depict the strength of the relationship between the nodes. This

figure depicts a less proficient L2 learner. The L2 word is strongly linked to the L1 word but only weakly linked to the concept. The L1 word is strongly linked to the concept but only weakly linked to the L2 word. The concept is strongly linked to the L1 word but only weakly linked to the L2 word. As the L2 learner becomes more proficient, the link between the L1 word and the L2 word may or may not become weaker while the link between the concept and the L1 word and the concept and the L2 word will become stronger.

To depict the comprehension process of L2 learners, I have adapted the propositional network in Figure 7 to include L2 learning. Figure 9 shows this adaptation.

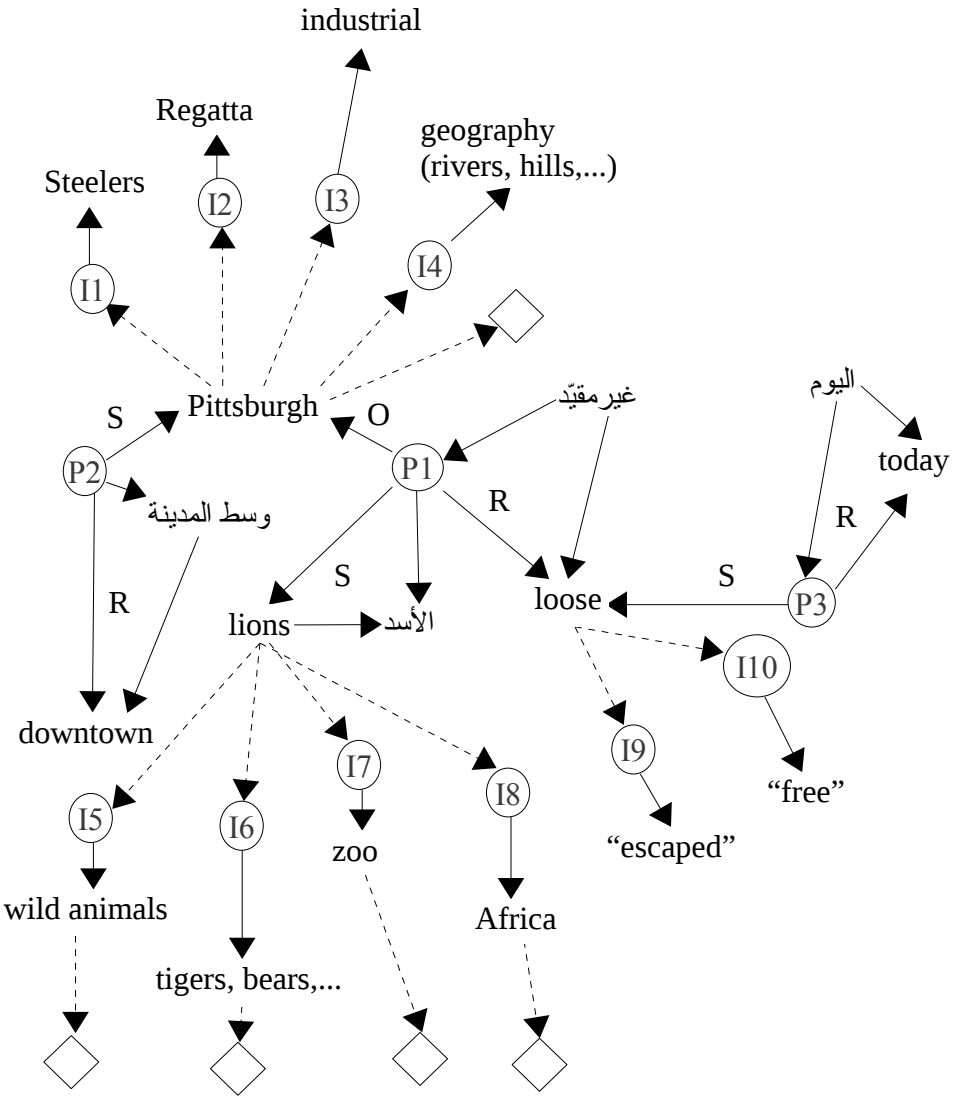

Figure 9. A theoretical L2 learner's propositional network with linked related information from both the L1 (English) and the L2 (Arabic). Adapted from *The cognitive psychology of school learning* (2nd ed.). E. D. Gagné, C. W. Yekovich, & F. R. Yekovich, p. 65. Copyright [1993] by Harper Collins.

Figure 9 is an example of a propositional network for an L2 learner, who has English as his or her L1 and Arabic as his or her L2. Note that the Arabic words are linked to both the proposition and the English word. In this example, there are strong links between the L2 words, the L1 words, and the proposition, which indicates a proficient learner.

Bearing the C-I model in mind, the strength of the link of a L2 word to a particular meaning depends on the probability of a particular cognitive chunk being relevant to the textbase. With less proficient L2 learners, many words will not be linked to the textbase during the construction phase or may be only very weakly linked. However, as L2 learners become more proficient in their language ability, L2 words in the internal lexicon will be more strongly linked into the textbase, with a higher probability associated with the link.

Not only will L2 words be linked to the textbase that is being created by the L2 learners, a situation model will also be created with links of varying strengths and probabilities. This situation model will include background knowledge from their L1 language context as well as their L2 context. As I have already mentioned, less proficient L2 learners will have weaker links attached to L2 contexts and stronger links attached to their L1 contexts. More proficient L2 learners will have stronger links attached to L2 contexts and have weaker links attached to L1 contexts.

During the integration phase, the spreading activation will stabilize the network by maintaining the strong relevant nodes and eliminating, weak irrelevant nodes. This will cause less proficient L2 learners to not understand or misunderstand an L2 oral text,

whereas more proficient L2 learners will have an easier time understanding an L2 oral text and less possibility of misunderstanding the text.

Working Memory and Comprehension

The comprehension process mentioned above occurs in working memory for both L1 learners and L2 learners. However, two aspects of comprehension, cognitive deficit and cognitive load, occur in an L2 learner's working memory but do not occur in an L1 learner's working memory.

Cognitive deficit. When looking at the issue of comprehension, the importance of comprehension occurring in an L2 learners' working memory should not be overlooked. According to Cook (2001) working memory is heavily involved in pronunciation and language use and is completely influenced by a person's first language. For example, the learner's L1 determines the size of working memory. Therefore, when a person learns another language, that second or third language must be learned through the restrictions of the working memory placed on it by the first language. These restrictions are what Cook calls "a cognitive deficit" (87). Because of these restrictions, a second language learner's cognitive processes work less efficiently in the second or third language than in the first language, as the decoding process in a second or third language puts a greater strain on working memory resources (Hagtvet, 2003; Tyler, 2001). The effect of this cognitive deficit is accentuated with less proficient learners and diminished with more proficient learners (Cook, 2001).

Cognitive load. Since working memory is generally less efficient when an EFL learner uses a second or third language, it is important to consider cognitive load.

Sweller first explored the concept of cognitive load in his article, “Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning” (Sweller, 1988). According to van Merriëboer and Sweller (2005, p. 148), working memory can hold just seven new pieces of information, and can only effectively process three or four of them at once. Any information that is not rehearsed is lost after about 10 seconds. Merriëboer and Sweller define cognitive load as the amount of new information that working memory can process at one time. Thus, cognitive load increases as more new pieces of information are introduced into working memory simultaneously (p. 148). This load on working memory impacts comprehension by making it more difficult for working memory to construct an appropriate textbase and situation model.

Brown (1995) gives six principles regarding cognitive load. 1) There will be less cognitive load on working memory when there are fewer referents (i.e. individuals and objects) in a text. She says that this is because more referents increase the likelihood that previous knowledge units will be strongly linked into a propositional network when they should only be weakly linked in or not linked in at all. 2) Texts are easier to understand when the referents in a text are clearly distinguishable from each other. 3) A text is easier to understand when texts contain simple spatial relations. 4) It is easier to understand a text when the sequence of events are ordered. 5) A text is easier to understand when it has fewer inferences. 6) It is easier to understand a text that is clear, unambiguous, and is compatible with the reader's or listener's existing knowledge. Therefore, when readers or listeners encounter texts that follow these principles, working memory will haves less

cognitive load, and when readers or listeners encounter texts that violate one or more of these principles, working memory will have more cognitive load.

L2 Listening Proficiency vs. L1 Listening Ability

I divided my research participants by proficiency to examine the extent to which their English proficiency affected their ability to understand L2 texts. I was interested in the research that discussed to what extent L2 learners' English proficiency indicated their ability to understand English texts. Reading specialists have been researching this issue for many years and this issue is now starting to become more important among listening specialists (Vandergrift, 2006).

The issue of proficiency, has led to the development of two theories. The first theory, the linguistic threshold hypothesis (LTH), claims that L2 learners must reach a certain threshold of proficiency in the L2 before they will be able to understand a written or an oral text. This theory is also called the short-circuit theory because, according to this theory, L1 language ability is "short-circuited," or prevented from being used in L2 language learning until a certain level of proficiency in the L2 language is attained. The second theory, the linguistic interdependence hypothesis (LIH) claims that L2 learners can use their ability in their first language to help them understand written or oral texts in their L2.

Even though this question has been researched at length in reading comprehension, this question has not been addressed adequately in listening comprehension. Vandergrift (2006) is the first researcher to explore this issue. In his article entitled, "Second language listening: Listening ability or language proficiency?,"

he reports on research that he conducted among English-speaking, eighth-graders in Canada who were learning French. There were 75 participants in the study. The results of the study indicated that even though both L2 proficiency and L1 listening ability were important in understanding the L2 oral texts, proficiency had twice as much influence on the L2 learners' ability as L1 listening ability. Furthermore, Vandergrift suggests that vocabulary development, both through context and in isolation, may help L2 learners improve their L2 proficiency.

Another researcher, Taillefer (1996) researched the effects of task complexity in an L2 context. In her research she conducted two different types of reading tasks with her participants: scanning, and receptive reading. With the scanning exercise, the participants were asked to locate certain words or phrases without understanding their meaning or their relationship to the text. With the receptive reading exercise, students were asked to read the text and understand the meaning of the text. She discovered that when the students performed the less cognitively demanding task of scanning, L1 reading ability was more of a factor than L2 proficiency. However, when the students carried out the more cognitively-demanding task of receptive reading, L2 proficiency was more a more important influence than L1 reading ability. Taillefer speculated that possibly both the linguistic threshold hypothesis and the linguistic interdependence hypothesis may interact. She indicated that there may be a language threshold for more difficult, more cognitively demanding tasks, for which an L2 learner's proficiency is a key factor in understanding the difficult tasks. On the other hand, L2 learners may be able to use their L1 ability when they are faced with easier, less cognitively demanding tasks.

The consensus of this research is that there is more evidence for the linguistic threshold hypothesis than the linguistic interdependence hypothesis and, therefore, proficiency is important especially with the use of learning strategies. In other words, more proficient learners are better able to use strategies to understand oral texts than less proficient learners.

Selected Research on Listening Comprehension and Learning Strategies.

Even though not much research has been conducted linking strategy use with cognitive processes, researchers have increased studies investigating L2 learners' ability to understand oral English texts. These studies have attempted to understand the reasons that for L2 learners have a difficult time understanding oral texts. Most of this research has been quantitative and has taken a cognitive approach, attempting to look at various aspects of the human information processing system.

Cognitive L2 Listening Comprehension Research

I have divided the research that as been done in the areas of listening comprehension and learning strategies into two areas. First, cognitive listening comprehension research that has been carried out with L2 learners. Second, research in learning strategy that has been conducted with L2 learners.

The aural signal. One facet of L2 listening comprehension research has examined specific aspects of the auditory signal like prosodic information, speed of the speech, the complexity of the speech, or the variability of speech tones and stress. For example, Jung (2003) looked at the role of discourse signaling cues among a group of Korean L2 learners. She divided the 80 participants into two groups. Both groups

listened to an academic lecture, one group benefited from discourse cues and the other group did not. The participants were then given summary tasks and recall tasks. Jung analyzed the tasks quantitatively and concluded that the discourse cues were important in helping these learners to better understand oral English texts.

McBride (2007) quantitatively researched the speed of the auditory signal. Participants were trained to use the computer, including how to increase and decrease the speed of speech. Then they participated in an experiment in which they listened to a text through a computer and controlled the speech's speed. Through the use of a questionnaire and retrospective interviews in her research, she concluded that L2 learners were better able to understand the text when the speech's delivery rate was slower.

Segmentation. Another aspect of L2 listening comprehension research has been an attempt to ascertain the methods L2 listeners use to segment the incoming auditory signal into recognizable words. Sanders, Neville, and Woldorff (2002) are among many that have been researching L2 learners' segmentation strategies. In their quantitative study, they conducted experiments with a group of native Japanese speakers, a group of native Spanish speakers, and a group of native English speakers. Their purpose in the study was to discover how these different groups of learners identified words from an aural input. Their research concluded that the speech-segmentation strategy of their first language affected how they segmented the oral English speech.

Cutler (2000) summarizes a large body of research in her article and concludes from this research that each language has a specific segmentation strategy. Therefore, an L2 learner will automatically segment aural speech in an oral English text in the same

way that he or she would in their first language. This will cause problems when the segmentation strategy of the first language is different from the segmentation strategy of English. Cutler says that this may not be changeable. However, she does say that it is possible to train L2 learners how to consciously prevent themselves from misapplying their first language segmentation when they listen to oral English texts.

Field (2003) also talks about segmentation. He says that L2 learners have a difficult time hearing word boundaries in English and often hear words that are between word boundaries, making a word from two partial words in the aural stream. However, he indicates that L2 learners can learn to emulate the segmentation strategy of native English speakers. He suggests that teaching reduced forms and dictating short phrases may help L2 learners with the rhythm or the oral English language.

Materials and teaching methodology. Another area of research has examined the materials that are used in L2 classrooms and the teaching methodology that is applied in those classrooms. McBride (2007), whose research I mentioned previously, maintained that the use of CALL (computer-aided language learning) could be used to slow down the speed of speech, thereby helping the learners to better understand it.

Thanajaro (2000) conducted a qualitative study with a group of ESL learners at a language training center. The instruments that she used for her research were a questionnaire, interviews, and observations. From her analysis of the data, she concluded that the use of authentic aural texts helped the learners to be more confident in their learning ability and had a positive affect on their comprehension ability.

Learners' listening proficiency. Some researchers have noticed that certain L2 learners are able to understand oral English texts better than other L2 learners. This has lead to a distinction of "more proficient" learners and "less proficient" learners. Researchers have tried to examine the more proficient learners to better understand what they do to understand oral English texts. These researchers have also compared the more proficient listeners with the less proficient listeners to diagnose the differences. Proficiency has been linked with strategy use, however, it also can relate to listening comprehension ability.

One researcher who examined the comprehension differences between more proficient and less proficient learners is Liu (2002). In her mixed quantitative/qualitative dissertation research, she looked at the differences between more proficient and less proficient L2 university students in Hong Kong and the way in which they processed speech. She used four data collecting instruments, a questionnaire, interviews, a partial transcription exercise, and introspective verbal reports. She concluded that the students' proficiency and the amount of time that they listened to oral English texts greatly affected the students' comprehension ability. The less proficient students' experienced what Liu describes as an "acoustic blur" (p. 285), in which the less proficient learners are unable to properly segment the incoming aural stream into meaningful words. She also concluded that there is a proficiency threshold among L2 learners. Those learners who pass the threshold are able to effectively understand oral English speech whereas those who are below the threshold are unable to comprehend oral English speech.

Another researcher, Jeon (2007) also examined more proficient and less proficient learners. He used Kintsch's construction-integration model (1998) and looked at how proficiency affected the establishment of a textbase and a situation model. Jeon conducted a quantitative, ex post facto study with 141 students from a U.S. university. He also conducted a qualitative, follow-up study in which 13 students, who had taken part in the study, were interviewed. He concluded that proficient L2 learners, as well as those learners who had knowledge of the content of the text, were better able to understand the text than other learners who were less proficient, or who had no knowledge of the content of the text.

Learning Strategy Research

Not only has cognitive listening comprehension research been conducted with L2 Learners, learning strategy research with L2 learners has also been conducted. I review some of this research below.

Learning strategies. Research has been conducted with L2 learners, examining the learning or listening strategies that they use when they listen to oral English texts. Many researchers, including Goh (1998), Green and Oxford (1995), Khalil (2005), Oxford (1994), and Vandergrift (2003a, 2003b) have indicated in their research that strategy use is important and helps L2 learners better understand oral English texts.

Khalil (2005) conducted his research with Palestinian Arab speakers in Bethlehem. He conducted Oxford's SILL (1990) with a total of 378 students. He analyzed the SILL quantitatively and concluded that female students used strategies more

often than male students and more proficient students used strategies more often than less proficient students.

Goh (1998) conducted a quantitative study among Chinese speakers studying English at a language institute in Singapore. All students studying at this institute initially take a listening and reading proficiency test called the Secondary Level English Proficiency Test (130). She used the results of the test to place 16 students into either a high-proficiency group or a low-proficiency group. She interviewed each of the 16 students and asked each of the students to record entries in a listening diary for eight weeks. During the interview, she read a text aloud, pausing periodically. During the pauses Goh asked the participant to verbalize the strategies that the students used to understand the text. From the interviews and the diaries, she made a list of strategies and converted the verbal information into numbers using coding and frequency counts. She then used descriptive statistics on the resulting information. From her analysis, Goh concluded that the high-proficiency group used a broad range of strategies to comprehend the text. In contrast, the low-proficiency group used a very small number of strategies.

Metacognitive strategy awareness. While some research has been done in the area of identifying cognitive strategies, other research has focused on identifying metacognitive strategies. The purpose of much of this strategy research has been to train learners to use more strategies, especially metacognitive strategies. Goh (1998), Mareschal (2007), and Vandergrift (2003b) are among those who have focused on training learners how to use metacognitive strategies to improve their listening comprehension ability.

Mareschal (2007) studied English L1 speakers, not English L2 speakers, who were studying French as a second language. She conducted a qualitative study for her doctoral dissertation with two small groups of government employees in Canada who were enrolled in a mandatory French L2 learning program. The instruments that she used were similar to the instruments that I used in my research: questionnaires, stimulated recalls, think-aloud protocols, interviews, listening note-books, and observations. She concluded from her research that the learners' knowledge of their strategies coupled with metacognitive training on how to manage those strategies was very effective in helping the learners in the study to improve their listening comprehension ability. She added that this improvement was especially noticeable with less proficient learners.

Learning strategy use. Some researchers have asked learners what strategies they think they use, while trying to discover what strategies they actually use. Zhang and Goh (2006) and Hwang (2003) are among those who have asked learners to report their listening comprehension problems as well as their strategy use. Zhang and Goh conducted a quantitative study among a large group of students in a university in Singapore (n=278). They used the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory in Listening and Speaking Strategies (MAILSS) to ascertain their perceptions of the usefulness and their use of the various learning strategies (p. 203). The inventory asked the participants to decide the usefulness of each of the listed strategies. The participants were also asked to decide to what extent they used each of the listed strategies. The researchers then compared those two factors of perceived usefulness and perceived use to identify whether the students indeed used the strategies that they indicated were important. Their results

indicated that practice strategies were deemed by the students to be the most important. However, students admitted that they did not use these strategies. The researchers concluded from this apparent inconsistency that the students "were not yet conscious and, confident strategy users" (p. 214). The researchers' recommendation is that more strategy training be implemented in language classrooms so that these learners become more aware of how to use strategies.

Hwang (2003) also examined problems that L2 learners have when listening to oral English texts and the strategies that they use to understand these texts. However, she disagreed with Zhang and Goh (2006) that more strategy training is needed. Instead she concluded that more focus is needed in using simpler texts and explicitly teaching oral decoding skills. In Hwang's mixed quantitative/qualitative study, she collected introspective and retrospective reports from participants while they listened to four different texts. She found that proficient listeners had no difficulty understanding different types of texts and these types of listeners also used a variety of various strategies. She discovered that less proficient listeners used less strategies and had difficulty decoding and understanding oral English texts. When simpler texts were used, less proficient learners were able to decode the text effectively. When more difficult texts were used, these learners were not able to decode the texts.

Listening comprehension problems. Hasan (2000) researched Arabic speaking students living in Damascus. He conducted a quantitative study with 81 students. These students completed a questionnaire about their learning strategy use and their listening comprehension problems. The learning strategy use results were mixed with students

using some “effective” strategies and other “ineffective” strategies (pp. 141-142). The students also reported a whole range of problems that affected their listening comprehension ability. These problems included difficult texts (especially difficult vocabulary, difficult grammatical structures, and lengthy texts), difficult tasks (especially difficulty with prediction, inferencing tasks), difficult speakers (especially fast speech, non-standard pronunciation, various accents, and no face to go with the words), and listeners' lack of interest. After listing the listening comprehension problems that the students identified, Hasan presented some suggestions to identify the students' problems and to focus on a teaching plan that will help students to overcome their problems.

Goh (2000) also researched problems that 40 students in China had while listening to oral texts. All of the participants wrote listening diaries. Some also participated in interviews and immediate retrospective verbalization procedures. However, unlike the results of Hasan's (2000) research, Goh's participants reported problems that related to comprehension of the text. In addition, her findings related mostly to the low-level cognitive processes of perception and parsing of the auditory signal.

A Cognitive Strategic Model for Listening Comprehension

Having reviewed some research dealing with listening comprehension and listening strategy use, I conclude the chapter by summarizing the theoretical model I have presented in this chapter and applying it specifically to Tunisian EFL learners.

The Importance of Strategies in Listening Comprehension

As the research community has explored the ramification of new insights into the information processing system, the focus of research has shifted away from learning as a behavioral process to learning as a cognitive process. Originally, researchers viewed comprehension as a passive activity. A person only needed to expose himself or herself to aural information in English, and, after enough exposure, the brain would automatically "understand" oral English without any conscious effort on the part of the listener (Brown, 1990, p. 8). But now researchers have concluded that listening is an active skill and that a person improves his or her listening comprehension through active engagement with the oral text (Oxford, 1990; Shuell, 1986).

The Use of Strategies in the Information-Processing System

Learning strategies are an integral part of working memory in the Information-Processing system described above. They assist the Central Executive in carrying out its functions and they coordinate the subprocesses involved in comprehension (Macaro, 2006). As I mentioned above, strategies can also be clustered together to perform higher level activities such as note-taking or memorization. In my research, I have combined information processing theory with cognitive strategies into a model which is depicted in Figure 10.

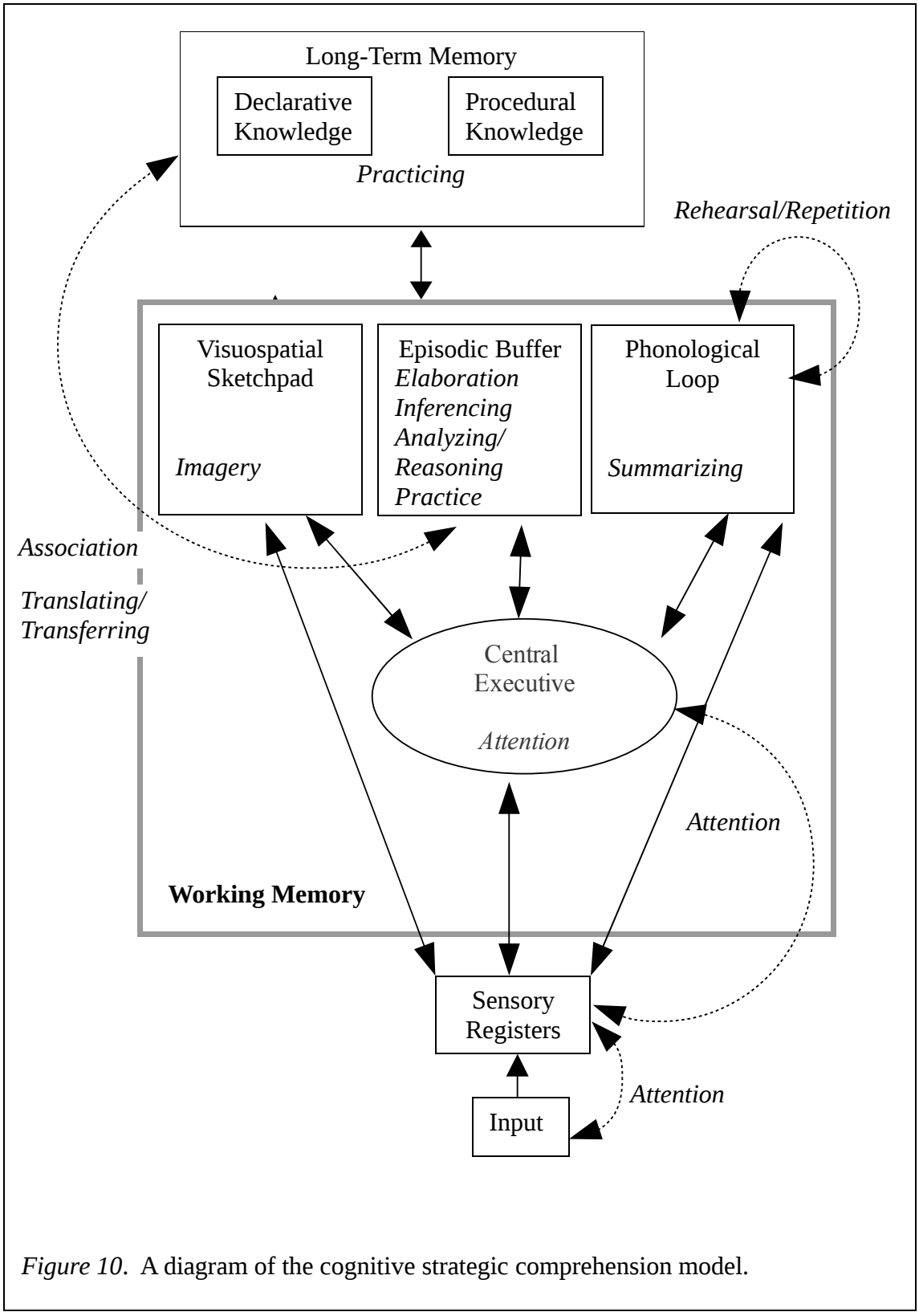

Figure 10. A diagram of the cognitive strategic comprehension model.

This model based on a description by Macaro (2006, p. 326) and Wenden (1991, p. 19) creates a fuller understanding of how information processing occurs. I have named this combination of cognitive information theory with strategy use the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model.

Cognitive strategies are used as an integral part of the human information processing system. First, *attention* helps the Central Executive attend to information from the incoming auditory stream. Second, the attended to information is maintained in working memory through the Phonological Loop recycling the information until it has been processed. *Rehearsal* enhances the task of the Phonological Loop. Third, while the Episodic Buffer combines new information from the Phonological Loop with information from long-term memory, learners use two other cognitive strategies, *association* and *translation*, to relate the information in short-term memory with information in long-term memory. Finally, information that is stored in long-term memory should be easily retrieved when needed. *Practicing* is used to help increase the speed of the retrieval process. In addition to strategies aiding the human information-processing system, strategies such as *elaboration* and *inferencing*, aid the construction of the textbase during the comprehension process.

Besides the importance of cognitive strategies, it is also important that learners use metacognitive and socio-affective strategies to oversee and reinforce the transferring of information throughout the information processing system and verify that perceived aural information has been understood accurately and that reasonable meanings have been attached to the comprehended information (Macaro 2006 ; Wenden, 1991).

To further illustrate the relationship between strategies and their cognitive processes, I have created two tables. Table 1 lists different types of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies along with a brief description of each strategy.

Table 1
A List and Description of Metacognitive, Cognitive, and Socio-affective Strategies

Strategy Group	**Strategy Set**	**Description**
Metacognitive	Planning	Planning and organizing in advance so that a task can be successfully completed.
	Monitoring	Overseeing the ongoing listening process so that a task can be successfully completed.
	Evaluation	Checking comprehension after listening to a text to verify that a task has been successfully completed.
Cognitive	Selective attention	Focusing on specific information, in a text.
	Rehearsal/Repetition	Repeating information to facilitate retention.
	Inferencing/Guessing	Using understood information in text to guess, predict, or complete missing information.
	Summarizing/ Note-taking	Periodically synthesizing what has been heard to facilitate retention of the information.
	Imagery	Using visual images to assist in the comprehension of new verbal information.
	Associating/ Elaborating/Grouping/ Combining	Linking, integrating, grouping, or combining new ideas with known information according to logical principles.
	Practicing	Using language to communicate, which facilitates and expedites the retrieval of appropriate information from long-term memory.
	Analyzing and Reasoning	Constructing rules, or comparing and contrasting words or expressions between the target language and the EFL learner's primary language to make language learning easier.

Strategy Group	Strategy Set	Description
	Translating/ Transferring	Converting words or expressions from the primary language into the target language; or using words, concepts, or structures from the learner's primary language to understand the target language.
Socio-affective	Cooperation	Working with peers to check comprehension, resolve a question with a text, share information, check notes, or obtain feedback on a learning task.
	Questioning/ Clarification	Asking a teacher or a peer for additional explanation, rephrasing, or examples.
	Encouragement	Using rewards, supportive statements, and prodding to take risks, either from oneself or from others
	Monitoring Emotions/Lowering Anxiety	Understanding one's feelings, motivations, and attitudes about learning the target language and finding ways of lessening apprehensions and negative attitudes toward the target language.

Note: Adapted from Wenden,1991, p. 22; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p.46; and Oxford, 1990, pp. 18-21, 40-50,138-147

Table 2 associates the cognitive strategies with different areas of the human information-processing system.

Table 2

Cognitive Strategies Grouped According to Cognitive Processes/Areas

Cognitive Process	**Area in the Mind**	**Strategy Set**
"Getting"/Reception	Sensory Registers	Selective Attention
	Central Executive	Selective Attention
"Holding"/Recycling	Phonological Buffer	Rehearsal/Repetition
		Note-taking
	Visuospatial Sketchpad	Imagery
"Using"/Retrieval	Episodic Buffer	Practicing
		Associating/Elaborating/Grouping
		Summarizing/Note-taking
		Inferencing/Guessing
		Analyzing/Reasoning
		Translating/Transferring
"Saving"/Storage	Long-term Memory	Associating/Elaborating/Grouping
		Inferencing/Guessing
		Analyzing/Reasoning
		Practicing
		Translating/Transferring

Note: Adapted from Wenden, 1991, p. 22 and Oxford, 1990, p. 19

The attention strategies are associated with both the Central Executive and the sensory registers. The Central Executive, which controls attention, coordinates with the sensory registers to "latch onto" or "get" information from the aural stream and transfer verbal information to the Phonological Loop. It also transfers visual or spatial information to the Visuospatial Sketchpad. Rehearsal and summarizing strategies are used by the phonological buffer to "hold" information in the phonological buffer until it has been

comprehended. The Episodic Buffer is the main area in working memory that "uses" the information from long-term memory and combines it with information from the Phonological Loop and the Visuospatial Sketchpad. This is also the area where comprehension occurs. Thus, activated information from long-term memory is combined with information from short-term memory in the Episodic Buffer. Listeners use strategies such as association, elaborating, inferencing/guessing, analyzing, translating, and practicing to help the information move between the Episodic Buffer and long-term memory. Once information has been understood, it is "saved" or stored in long-term memory for future use (Wenden, 1991).

As is evident from Table 2 and Figure 10, cognitive strategies are essential to the comprehension process. Metacognitive strategies and socio-affective strategies are also important. Metacognitive strategies are used by the listener to oversee, monitor, and control the movement of information throughout the processing system and also aid the comprehension process. Socio-affective strategies are used by the listener to help clarify and verify with others what the listener has understood from the text (Wenden, 1991).

The Use of Tasks in Listening Comprehension

Understanding an oral text is a cognitive process and, therefore, inaccessible. Using listening tasks is the conventional method that researchers and teachers use to attempt accessing cognitive processes. These tasks are then evaluated to ascertain the extent to which learners have understood the texts. I used tasks to assist in the assessment of the EFL learners' understanding of oral texts. Since my research is primarily pedagogical and not theoretical, the proper selection, use, and evaluation of

tasks is paramount. Two important considerations for an assessor when selecting, using, and evaluating tasks are the task difficulty and task distortion.

Task difficulty. Nunan (2004, p. 86) discusses six factors that affect the difficulty of the task. 1) The task's cognitive complexity. This means the amount of thinking required for an EFL learner to understand a task. Tasks which are familiar to an EFL learner are, therefore, cognitively easier, whereas tasks that are unfamiliar are cognitively more difficult. 2) The number of questions and parts the task contains. 3) The third factor is how many references to the text the task provides. 4) The amount of help, whether it be a teacher or a fellow learner, that is available. 5) The grammatical accuracy that is required in completing the task. 6) The amount of time that an EFL learner has to complete a task. Nunan as well as others (Field, 2009; Oxford, Cho, Leung, and Kim; 2004; Robinson and Gilabert, 2007) indicate that the most important factor affecting the task's complexity is the familiarity that a learner has with a particular task (Nunan, 2004, p. 86).

Task distortion. No task can accurately and completely identify what a listener has understood from a text. All tasks only approximate the understanding of a listener. However, Rost (1990b) says that the less distortion a task causes, the better an assessor can approximate a listener's understanding of a text (p. 123). Distortion occurs when there is a delay between the time of listening to a task and the execution of a task, when the task is open instead of closed, or when the response to a task must be formulated in the listener's own words rather than the original words of the text. Therefore, open,

retrospective, original tasks cause more distortion than closed, on-line, veridical tasks (Rost, 1990b, p. 124).

Strategies and Foreign Language Learners

As Taillefer (1996) and Vandergrift (2006) both concluded in their research, L1 listening ability is a factor when L2 learners read or listen to second language texts. Taillefer indicated that L1 ability can only be used by L2 learners when they are faced with less cognitively-demanding tasks, and presumably less cognitively demanding texts. She concludes that the Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis applies when L2 learners complete more cognitively-demanding tasks. Vandergrift also supports the claim that L1 listening ability can be used by L2 learners when they listen to oral English texts, although he did not identify whether that use is contingent on the degree of difficulty of the task or text.

In addition, much research has been conducted in the area of learning strategy use. Regarding L1 learning, both researchers and teachers have indicated that all learners use learning strategies to complete a learning task or activity (Lyke & Young, 2006; Oxford, 1990; Riding & Rayner, 1998; Rost, 2002; Vermunt & Vermetten; 2004; Vinther, 2005). Anderson and Vandergrift (1996) and Rubin (1987) claim that EFL students can be made aware of their L1 learning strategies, thereby incorporating these strategies to help them learn a foreign language. These strategies can give EFL learners the tools they need to understand and learn a foreign language.

Anderson and Vandergrift (1996), Oxford (1990), Rubin (1987), and Wenden (1987, 1991) concur with L1 strategy research that has been conducted and state that the

use of strategies is essential for foreign language learners to effectively learn a foreign language. Oxford states that strategies are tools that language learners use to be actively involved in their language learning. Rubin argues that it is not helpful for language students to be "just given information" (p. 17). Instead, she claims that learning strategies are the best way for language students to be active in their language learning because they give these students "opportunities to internalize information in ways which are meaningful to them" (p. 17). Wenden (1991) agrees by stating that successful language learners have discovered that employing strategies helps them in their language acquisition.

According to research in listening comprehension (Berne, J., 2004; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Goh, 2000; Mendelsohn, 1995; Vandergrift, 2003a), all EFL learners use some strategies to help them understand an oral English text. More proficient EFL learners are more aware of the strategies that they use and employ these strategies more effectively than less proficient EFL learners.

Many researchers (Berne, J. 2004; Goh, 2000; Mendelsohn, 1995; Vandergrift, 2003a) encourage EFL learners to identify what strategies they use when listening in their first language and then to employ these strategies when listening to English. This process helps EFL learners become aware of the strategies that they have automatized when listening to their first language. Once they are cognizant of these strategies, they can intentionally use these strategies when listening to a foreign language. When students are aware of these strategies, they will have the confidence and ability to effectively listen to texts in English. Vandergrift (2003b) adds that EFL learners should be encouraged to

focus more on metacognitive strategies when they listen to oral English texts, thereby providing them with more control over their comprehension.

Learning Strategies in Listening Comprehension

I will close this chapter by relating the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model to listening comprehension in an EFL context. At times when I refer to strategies that are used specifically in a listening context, I will refer to strategies as listening strategies instead of learning strategies. This approach is taken by a number of researchers including J. Berne (2004), Goh (1998, 2000), Mendelsohn (1994, 1995), and Vandergrift (2003a, 2003b).

Listening comprehension in a Tunisian context. I have previously mentioned that L1 learners have developed learning strategies to help them comprehend texts in their first language. Tunisians, like all L1 learners, have also developed learning strategies to help them comprehend texts in their own language. However, when Tunisian EFL learners listen to oral texts in English they often experience difficulties. Sometimes they find that the strategies they have relied on to understand oral texts in an L1 context do not help them in an EFL context. Furthermore, these learners may face new contexts and new challenges that they did not face when they listen to oral texts in an L1 context.

I have based by research on a cognitive model that includes Anderson's (1983, 1993) ACT model, Baddeley's (2009) working memory model, and Kitsch's (1998) Construction-Integration model. Based on the Construction-Integration model, comprehension occurs when a textbase, constructed from an oral text, is combined with a

situation model from a listener's long-term memory. The use of appropriate strategies is an integral part of this comprehension process. Since no listening comprehension research has been conducted with Tunisian EFL students, the types of listening strategies they use and the obstacles they encounter while listening to oral English texts is unknown. Therefore, I focused my research on identifying the listening strategies Tunisian EFL students use when they listen to oral transactional texts in a university context and the obstacles they encounter understanding these types of texts. I then examined the relationship between the listening strategies they used, the obstacles they encountered, and their ability to understand oral transactional texts in English. I assumed that if they encountered less obstacles, they would use more listening strategies and they would be more likely to understand the texts. Conversely, I assumed that if they encountered more obstacles, they would use less listening strategies and they would be less likely to understand the texts.

Throughout my research I took into account two other factors: the students' cognitive load on working memory and their proficiency level. First, I examined the extent to which the students were affected by cognitive load. I did this by presenting the students with different levels of tasks and different types of texts and analyzing the way in which the students' use of strategies were influenced by these different levels of tasks and texts. I expected that easier texts and tasks would decrease the students' cognitive load and more difficult texts and tasks would increase their cognitive load. Furthermore, I expected that they would use a broad range of effective listening strategies when they experienced a lower cognitive load. I expected that students would use a limited amount

of strategies that were ineffective in helping them understand the oral texts when they experienced a higher cognitive load. Second, I examined the way in which students' proficiency level affected their use of strategies. Throughout my research I expected that less proficient students would use less effective listening strategies and more proficient students would use more effective listening strategies.

Relationship of Research Questions to the Theoretical Perspective

To reiterate, I approached this study from a cognitive perspective which combines the human information processing system with the use of learning strategies. I refer to this theoretical perspective as the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension model. I had two purposes in conducting this study. 1) I wanted to identify the listening strategies that Tunisian EFL learners use and the obstacles they encounter which prevent them from adequately understanding oral English transactional texts. 2) I wanted to observe whether the Tunisian EFL learners' use of strategies concurred with the model that I proposed. Based on these two purposes, I asked the following research questions.

Question 1, "What listening strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective) do Tunisian EFL students use when listening to oral English transactional texts?," centered on identifying the learning strategies students use when they listen to oral texts. I used questionnaires, classroom observations, individual interviews, and the think-aloud protocol to answer this question. Question 2, "What are the major difficulties that Tunisian EFL students encounter when listening to oral English transactional texts?," focused on identifying the hindrances that students indicated that they had in

understanding oral texts. I used questionnaires, interviews, and listening diaries to answer this question.

Since I believe that strategies are an integral part of the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model, I expected that a wide variety of strategies integrated with the various processes in the human information-processing system may indicate a greater comprehension ability. On the other hand, a lack of strategies, both transfer strategies and comprehension strategies, in key areas of the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model may indicate a lack of comprehension. In addition, missing transfer strategies in the human information-processing system may indicate that the information cannot be transferred to the various components of the system, resulting in a lack of comprehension. Conversely, missing comprehension strategies in the comprehension process may indicate that an appropriate textbase could not be constructed, resulting in a lack of comprehension.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter I presented the theoretical framework for my study, the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model. I began this chapter by presenting the information-processing system, as has been theorized by Anderson (1983, 1993). Anderson's model effectively presents a description of long-term memory and the way in which information moves between long-term memory and working memory, also known as short-term memory. However, I do not think that he adequately describes working memory. Therefore, I have added to Anderson's model, Baddeley's (2009) working memory model. I also presented in this chapter a cognitive comprehension model that includes a

description of the decoding process and the meaning construction process. I chose to use Kintsch's (1998) comprehension model as a model to depict how comprehension occurs.

However, I pointed out that the above cognitive models that I have assumed in my research, consider the comprehension process to be automatic and that learners are passive in this process. Since this idea is incompatible with my assumption that EFL learners are active in the comprehension process, I have added the use of listening strategies to the above models to create a cognitive strategic model of EFL learners' comprehension. It is this model I employed during my research to understand the problems that Tunisian EFL students have in understanding oral texts used in a university context. Also, I outlined the relationship between my research questions and my theoretical model and the way in which these research questions aided me in determining the feasibility of my proposed model among Tunisian EFL students who are attempting to understand oral transactional texts in a university environment.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY FOR STUDY

Introduction

This dissertation is a descriptive qualitative research project. The purpose of this research was to identify and describe the obstacles that Tunisian EFL learners have in understanding oral English texts and identify the learning strategies that they use to comprehend those texts.

I have chosen a qualitative methodological approach because the participants in my research have a specific culture, background, and educational history. Each of the participants also has a unique context that significantly impacts the way in which he or she listens and understands oral texts. Through a qualitative methodology, I use examples from individual participants, instead of statistical averages from the group, that identify the specific ways that each participant listens to oral texts and the specific needs of each one. In my view, the learners' specific culture, background, educational situation, and educational context can only emerge through qualitative research.

In order for me to answer the research questions that I have posed, I used various data-collection methods and type of analysis. The data-collection methods I used were: a questionnaire, group interviews, individual interviews, think-aloud protocols, listening diaries, and classroom observations. The types of data analysis I used were: typology, coding, and hermeneutical analysis. Through using these different types of analysis at different times and with different learners, I was able to triangulate the results, increasing the validity and transferability of my study.

I used both offline and online data-collection methods in my research. Offline means that the participants did not listen to an oral English transactional text nor complete an associated task during the data-collection method. Online means that the participants listened to texts and completed associated tasks during the data-collection method. The five offline methods I used were: a questionnaire, observations, group interviews, listening diaries, and classroom observations. The two online methods I used were individual interviews and think-aloud protocols. The offline methods provided me with an overall understanding of the listening strategies that Tunisian EFL learners use and the obstacles they encounter while they listened to oral texts. My observations of the teacher-student interaction in the listening comprehension classes provided me with first-hand knowledge of the way in which learners use some strategies during their classes. In addition, the online methods allowed me to observe the listening strategies that Tunisian EFL learners use and the obstacles they encounter while they listened to oral texts in a controlled environment. Because think-aloud protocols are self-revelation, at best or self-observation, at worst, I assumed that the participants may identify different strategies than during the individual interviews, which are self-reports. I was also able to corroborate the strategies that the learners reported using in the offline methods with the strategies that they actually used during these two online methods.

Definition of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a method of studying human action in its natural setting instead of a setting which is "contrived, manipulated, or artificially fashioned by the inquirer" (Schwandt, 1997, p. 174). This type of research assumes an emic perspective rather than an etic perspective. In other words, I realize that I cannot separate myself

from my research context, where I have lived and taught for many years. Moreover, I do not want to separate myself from this context because being an insider provides me with opportunities to collect data that I may not be able to collect if I were an outsider. For example, I was able to introduce myself to learners and to the teachers as a teacher from Sfax, who was familiar with the educational system in Tunisia. Once the learners and teachers realized I was a teacher in Tunisia, they were comfortable in answering my questions and volunteering for my research, which they may have been reluctant to do if I had been an outsider.

Also, I realize that as a researcher, I approach this context with specific assumptions. These assumptions come from my personal, social, and educational backgrounds from my home country, the United States, as well as my social, educational, and occupational background from living in Tunisia for about 20 years. The participants of my research also respond to their situation from a particular context. They also have personal, social, and educational backgrounds that are different from my background. Realizing this, I approached my research acknowledging that Tunisian EFL learners may understand their difficulties when listening to oral texts differently from the expectations that I have formed. Consequently, as a qualitative researcher, understanding my context and assumptions has enabled me to set them aside, giving me a better understanding of the context of the learners and the way in which they approach listening to oral texts (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993; Maxwell, 2005).

Another key component of qualitative research is that, since my research has been grounded in a particular context, my findings cannot necessarily be generalized to other contexts. However, even though the results of my research may not be generalized they

may be transferred, if other contexts are similar to my research context. For example, other researchers, who are researching university EFL learners listening to oral transactional texts, could transfer my strategy use findings and my obstacle findings to their research context. These findings may be especially applicable to research in another Arab context, which often has similarities to the Tunisian context.

Purpose for Using Qualitative Methodology for this Research

Much of the research that has been done in the fields of listening comprehension and learning strategies has used quantitative methodology; I reviewed some of this research in Chapter 2. Quantitative research with a pre-test/experiment/post-test model is typical of research that is done in L2 listening. In particular, learning strategy research projects have relied on strategy inventories that are based on a Western, predominantly U.S., culture. In addition, many of these quantitative studies, especially in strategy research, have relied on frequency counts or analysis of variance. However, quantitative methodology strips the individual participants and their culture out of the research (Macaro, 2006, pp. 321-322).

The strategies that EFL learners use and the obstacles that they encounter while they listen to oral texts are very complex. Macaro (2006) states that the complexity found in L2 listening research requires a qualitative, rather than a quantitative methodology. It is my belief that it is important to bring the human dimension into strategy research so that answers can be found to the specific problems of EFL learners. This is one of the strengths of qualitative research and a primary reason that I chose a qualitative framework rather than a quantitative framework.

Another strength of my research is that it is grounded in a cognitive model, which I explain in detail in Chapter 2. Macaro (2006) claims that strategy research up until now has not been grounded in a cognitive model. He says that, in the past, strategy research has claimed a cognitive model as its foundation but then paradoxically this research has stated that strategies are tools that are outside of the cognitive realm; thus, they have often been classified as skills to be learned rather than cognitive processes that are part of the human information processing system. He identifies a cognitive strategic framework, without naming it as such, that places strategies in working memory. He says that more research is needed to confirm his claim (pp. 323-325).

Therefore, my research is an attempt to bring a much needed qualitative approach to strategy research that includes the EFL learner's human dimension and situates strategies as an integral part of their cognitive processing. I believe that this research is an important contribution to L2 listening research. I hope that this research will inspire others to produce more of this type of research in other areas of the world, especially in non-Western EFL situations.

Theoretical Frame

In this research, I have presented Anderson's (1983, 1993) ACT theory, Baddeley's (2009) working memory model, and Kintsch's (1998) Construction-Integration model as working theories to explain the cognitive listening process that occurs when Tunisian EFL learners are exposed to an oral English text in a university context. However, I think that Macaro's (2006) strategy model that places strategies in working memory needs to be added to the above models. In this research, I examined the process of listening

comprehension from the learners' viewpoint, trying to understand their difficulties in understanding oral English texts in a university context.

Relationship of Research Questions to Methodology

In this section, I want to briefly describe how my research questions, introduced in Chapter 1, are related to my methodology. In Chapter 2 I mentioned that I have used a cognitive strategic comprehension model to guide me in my research. This model assumes the importance of listening strategies to aid the comprehension process. I had two research questions that guided my research.

1. What listening strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective) do Tunisian EFL learners use when listening to oral English transactional texts? How wide and varied are these strategies?
2. What are the major obstacles that Tunisian EFL learners encounter when listening to oral English transactional texts?

Data collected through a questionnaire, interviews, think-aloud protocols, and student diaries answered these questions.

I asked the first question to discover the strategies that learners used when they listen to oral transactional texts. Through this process, I expected to find that learners did not use certain strategies, which could have aided them in the listening comprehension process. I also suspected that some of their strategy use was ineffective, possibly causing the listening comprehension difficulties they experienced. I used the data from the questionnaire, the interviews, the think-aloud protocol, and the listening diaries to answer this question.

I asked the second question to attempt to uncover the obstacles that learners encounter when they listened to oral transactional texts. I also tried to relate those difficulties to specific areas of the cognitive strategic comprehension model that I have outlined. For example if learners indicated the text was too fast or too long, these obstacles may have prevented them from using rehearsal or repetition strategies which are used to maintain information in the phonological loop. I used data from the interviews, the think-aloud protocol, and the listening diaries to answer this question.

Researcher's Background and Role

Before I describe my data-collection methods, I want to relate my background and role as a researcher. As I previously noted, it is not possible for any researcher to be completely objective in a research setting. Instead, the researcher will see a particular research setting through a specific world view, containing his personal, social, and educational background. Because I approach a research setting with a particular world view, I will unconsciously make certain assumptions based on that world view (Erlandson et al., 1993; Maxwell, 2005).

Researcher's Background

My background is conservative, and my religious background is Judeo-Christian. I grew up with friends from many different ethnic backgrounds and became aware of cultures and world views different from my own. This openness to other cultures and different world views became more pronounced when I attended university and came in contact with learners from other areas of the United States and other countries throughout the world.

In 1988, I moved to Tunisia. After studying Arabic and the Tunisian culture, I started to teach English; primarily teaching oral language courses such as pronunciation, speaking, and listening. The method that I was initially exposed to was the audio-lingual method where I modeled phrases and the learners repeated what I had said. The audio-lingual method dominated my teaching methodology. In my eighteen years of teaching English, I have predominantly communicated to Tunisians around me in spoken Tunisian Arabic instead of English. Because of my initial desire to communicate to those around me in their language, I not only studied Modern Standard Arabic and Tunisian Arabic, but I have continuously developed my ability in those languages. I have become further integrated into the culture through marrying a Tunisian woman and fathering three bilingual children. These linguistic experiences in Tunisia have developed my fluency in Arabic, have given me a greater awareness of the multi-faceted culture that Tunisians are privileged to possess, and have given me the ability to understand and question Tunisian EFL learners whether they chose to speak to me in English or Arabic.

Because of the long period I have been teaching in Tunisia, I fulfill an important requirement of qualitative study, prolonged engagement. Moreover, even though I have a conservative, Judeo-Christian, working class background, this background has been tempered by the prolonged time that I have lived and taught in Tunisia. I am, therefore, able to understand the Tunisian context and sympathize with the Tunisian EFL learners' situation.

Researcher's Role

Not only do I, as a qualitative researcher, have a specific background which influences how I conduct my research, I also have a specific role in my research context.

Erlandson et al. (1993) define the researcher's possible roles on a continuum from a complete observer on one side to a complete participant on the other side. However, Erlandson et al. state that normally researchers are not complete observers or complete participants. Instead they are in the middle of the continuum, taking on the role of either an observer-participant or the role of a participant-observer. They define an observer-participant as a participant in the group and their role as a researcher is known to the group. However, his or her role as participant is secondary to his or her role as an "information-gatherer" (p. 97). On the other hand, a participant-observer as a participant in the group and their role as a researcher is known to the group. However, his or her role as observer is secondary to his or her role as a participant (p. 96).

Since I have lived and taught for many years in Tunisia, I would consider myself a participant at the research site that I am studying. Yet, I do not want to camouflage my role as an observer and I consider my role as a participant to be secondary to my role as an observer. Therefore, I consider my role in this study to be that of an observer-participant.

Ethical Considerations

A key ingredient in qualitative research studies is considering the participants' welfare when conducting the study. The purpose of this study is to discover the problems that Tunisian EFL learners have when listening to oral texts so that, eventually, I might be able to incorporate different ways of teaching and different ways of student learning. Therefore, the ultimate purpose of this study is to benefit the Tunisian EFL learners by improving their learning and teaching environment so that they will eventually be able to understand oral English transactional texts.

Before I conducted this study, I expected the learners to become more aware of their problems and the way they approach these problems. I also anticipated they would realize their problems in understanding oral English texts are not insurmountable. I hoped they would discover that the way they approached listening to an oral English text and the tools they used to understand it made a difference in whether they were able to understand it.

Before I began my research, I received written permission from the director of the Gabes campus, oral permission from the head of the English department, oral permission from the listening comprehension teachers to observe their classes, and written permission from each of the participants participating in the study. A copy of the request for written permission from the director is in Appendix A. A copy of the written student participant permission form is in Appendix B. I also obtained written permission to conduct this study from the Internal Review Board (IRB) at Indiana University of Pennsylvania on November 6, 2008.

During this research, I explained its purpose to the participants, that all the interviews and protocols are recorded, and all the information is confidential. Since the information in the research is confidential, any names or personal information that I used in my study would be changed. In addition, I explained to them that their involvement in the research was entirely voluntary and their involvement would not positively or negatively affect their grades in their classes. I also stressed to all participants in the study that they were under no obligation to take part in any of the data-collection methods and that they could withdrawal at any time if they no longer wished to participate.

Participants and Selection Procedure

This study has sought a broad understanding of the difficulties that Tunisian EFL learners have in listening to oral texts in English. I selected learners using two methods. The first method was attending each of the first- and second-year listening comprehension classes, explaining the purpose of the research, and asking for volunteers for the research. The second method was posting an announcement, which asked for volunteers to participate in the interviews, diary writing, and the think-aloud protocols. This announcement was written in both English and Arabic. Samples of the English versions are in Appendix C.

I obtained volunteers to complete the questionnaire by attending each of the first- and second-year listening comprehension classes, explaining the purpose of the questionnaire to the learners, and asking for volunteers to complete the questionnaire. The selection process for the interviews, diaries, and think-aloud protocols was different from the process for obtaining volunteers to complete the questionnaire. The selection process is depicted in Figure 11.

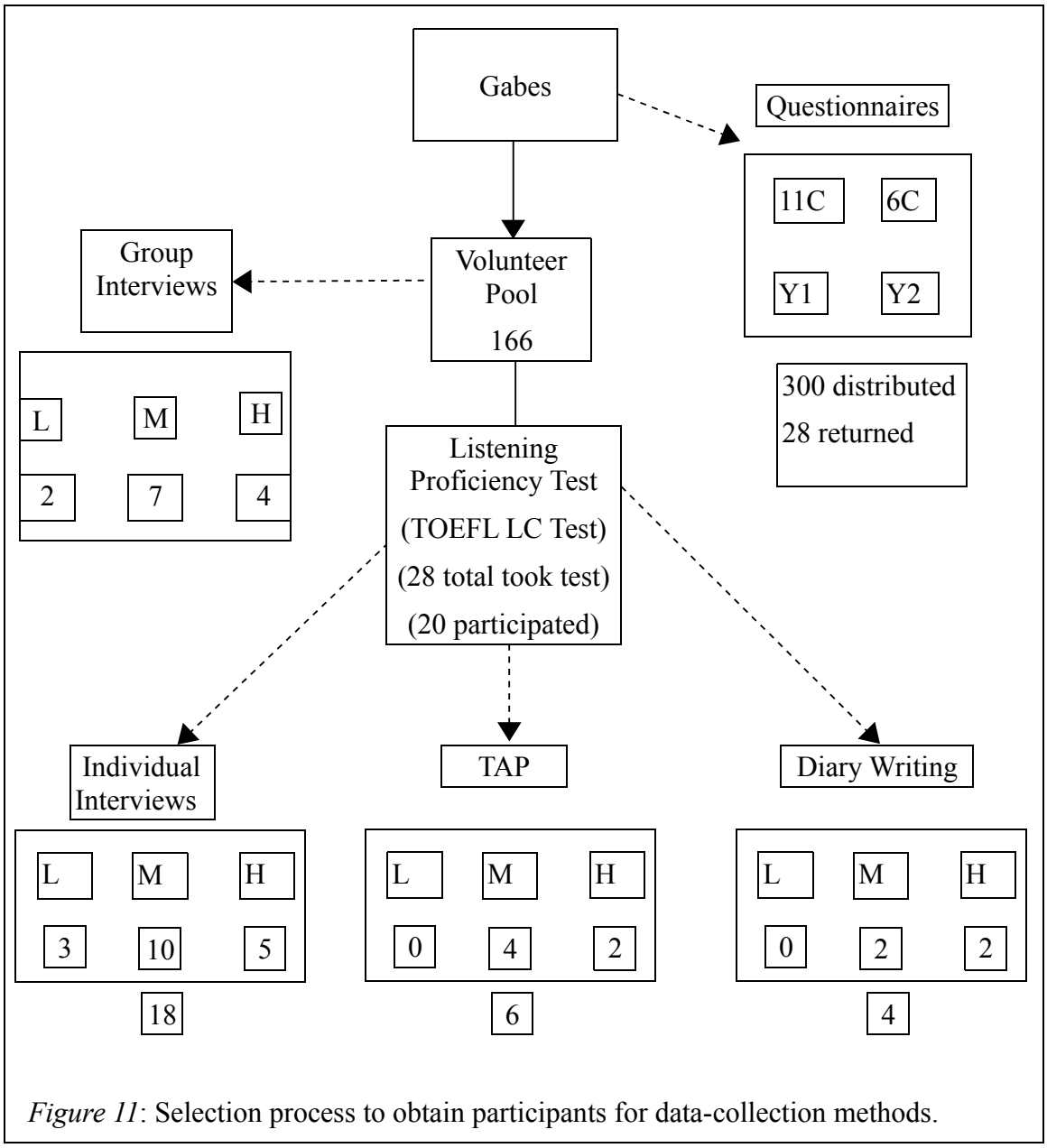

Figure 11: Selection process to obtain participants for data-collection methods.

I began the selection process for the interviews, diaries, and think-aloud protocols by creating a pool of volunteers from those students who had volunteered for the research during my visits to each of the listening comprehension classes. I then added to this pool by selecting students who volunteered via a posted announcement that explained who I was, the purpose of my research, and the need for participants for interviews, diaries, and

think aloud protocols. The announcement also indicated that participation in the research was completely voluntary and gave my contact information for those who wished to respond to the announcement (see Appendix C). I expected that at least 48 students would attend this meeting and that I would be able to select students for the data-collection methods based on the plan I had designed in Figure 11.

I piloted the questionnaire with some EFL speakers to determine the accessibility of the questionnaire before distributing the questionnaire and to obtain the maximum amount of responses possible. After piloting the questionnaire, I made some changes based on the comments I received. I then distributed 300 questionnaires to the first- and second-year students in each of the 17 listening comprehension classes. I received 28 completed returns from the 300 questionnaires I distributed. I analyzed the results of the questionnaire quantitatively, using descriptive statistics to provide a broad description of problems that Tunisian EFL learners have in understanding oral texts and the strategies that they reported while listening to oral transactional texts. I included two copies of a consent form at the beginning of the questionnaire for each respondent to complete.

For each of the classes, I obtained permission from the teacher to allow me to distribute the questionnaire during class time. I used the last 10 minutes of the class to explain the purpose of the research and the questionnaire and to distribute the questionnaires to the students. I informed them that their involvement in the research would not affect their grade in the class. I then asked them to complete the questionnaire and return it to the university administration office. I told the students who completed the questionnaire to keep a copy of the consent form for their records.

From the posted announcement and the questionnaire, I received consent forms from 166 students volunteering for my research. I contacted each and asked them to attend a meeting where I further explained my research and gave them a proficiency test to divide them into three groups based on their proficiency in English. 28 students attended the meeting, even though I hoped to have at least 48 students attend to provide a larger sample and a more even distribution of low-, medium-, and high-proficiency students. I divided the 28 students by the results of the proficiency test, listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Proficiency Assignment of Student Volunteers Based on Test Scores

Proficiency Test Score	**Level Assigned**	**# of learners Tested**	**# of Research Participants**
30-50	High Proficiency	6	6
20-29	Medium Proficiency	14	11
0-19	Low Proficiency	8	3

Eight of the students who took the proficiency test subsequently dropped out of the research, leaving 20 participants; five were from the first year, 14 were from the second year, and one was from the fourth year. 13 participants were involved in the group interviews, 18 in the individual interviews, six in the think-aloud protocol, and four in listening diary writing. I used pseudonyms for all of my participants to protect their identity. Table 4 lists the names of the 20 participants and indicates the data-collection method in which each participant was involved.

Table 4

Pseudonyms of Participants

#	Participant	Proficiency	Group Interviews	Individual Interviews	Think-Aloud Protocol	Listening Diaries
1	Abir	High	X	X		
2	Adela	Medium	X			
3	Ahlem	Medium		X	X	
4	Ahmed	Medium		X		
5	Basam	Medium	X	X	X	
6	Dhakra	High		X		X
7	Fatma	Medium	X	X		
8	Hatem	Medium	X	X	X	
9	Houda	High	X	X	X	
10	Karima	High			X	
11	Khadija	Medium		X		
12	Moufida	Low		X		
13	Mounir	Medium	X	X		X
14	Nourzed	Low	X	X		
15	Salah	Medium	X	X	X	
16	Samia	High	X	X		X
17	Samir	High	X	X		
18	Saoussen	Medium	X	X		X
19	Sheima	Low	X	X		
20	Zohra	Medium		X		

Data-Collection Methods

The methods I chose to collect data were classroom observations, a questionnaire, group interviews, individual interviews, think-aloud protocols, and

listening diaries. These methods are further defined and explained below. For all of the methods, the participants were encouraged to speak in the language in which they were most comfortable: Arabic, English, or French. However, even though they were encouraged to use the language in which they were the most comfortable, all of the learners chose to speak and write in English.

The questionnaire was written in both English and Arabic. I used a questionnaire to get an overall perspective of the respondents' perceptions of their listening comprehension problems and the strategies they thought they used.

I used semi-structured, group interviews to obtain more specific information and details from a small segment of the student population, details that I would be unable to obtain from a tightly-structured questionnaire. I also used individual interviews with participants to observe their performance with specific listening texts and tasks.

I chose diary writing to identify strategies and problems that participants described when they were listening to oral English texts. Even though they may not be aware of these strategies during an interview, they may be aware of these problems and strategies during their listening comprehension classes and may be better able to describe these experiences in diary entries.

The think-aloud protocol allowed me, a researcher, to identify strategies that participants used while they listened to an oral English text. I expected that this would reveal further strategies that they used but which were not identified during the interviews and the diary writing. The data from the think-aloud protocol was especially helpful in revealing strategies that participants used during the textbase construction.

Each of these data-collection methods was specifically chosen to allow me to triangulate my results and identify the maximum number of difficulties and strategies that participants encountered when listening to an oral English text. Each of these methods are further defined and explained below.

Classroom Observations

Since, as far as I am aware, no research has been done on difficulties that Tunisian EFL learners have in understanding oral texts, I conducted observations of listening comprehension classes. It was important to observe the classes at the Gabes site even though I have taught listening comprehension classes for a number of years. Gabes has a different approach to teaching than the university where I taught, as well as different context, teachers, texts and tasks. I needed a general understanding of the type of texts that the students listen to, the type of tasks that they complete, and the interaction between the teacher and the students. These observations gave me some preliminary information regarding how Tunisian EFL students learn in a classroom environment even though they did not provide a lot of information about learners' listening comprehension processes (Anderson & Vandergrift, 1996). I also was able to observe some socio-affective strategies, such as asking for clarification, cooperating with peers, and improvising by using non-verbal language such as mime (Oxford, 1990, p.194).

There were three listening comprehension teachers at the Gabes site. One teacher taught listening comprehension to both first- and second-year students. The other two teachers only taught listening comprehension to first-year students. I observed each of the listening comprehension teachers during a total of four classes, three first-year classes and one second-year class.

I attended and observed each class with the teacher's permission, I used an observation rubric (Appendix D) as a starting point for focusing my inquiry while observing the students, the teacher, and the interaction between the students and the teacher. I took note of what the students were doing while they were listening to oral texts, the extent to which they sought information from other students when they answered assessment exercises, and the amount of questions they asked to clarify information.

I also observed the teacher and various aspects of her interaction with the students. First, I attempted to notice the teacher's actions while the students were listening to an oral text. Second, I observed the teacher's method of presenting an oral text, (i.e. whether the students were asked to listen to the whole oral text without interruption, or whether the students listened to certain parts of the text). Third, I observed whether the teacher divided the students into groups and encouraged the students to complete the task exercises with other students, or the teacher elicited answers from individual students without collaboration with others. Finally, I observed the teacher's response when the students could not complete a task or answer comprehension questions; encouraging student participation by playing the audio again, or discouraging student participation by giving the students the answer.

The primary purpose of these observations was to notice teacher-student interactions, listening problems that students had during class, and socio-affective and metacognitive strategies that they were using while listening to an oral English text. These observations assisted me in gaining a surface understanding of how Tunisia EFL students learn. I was well aware that observation could not uncover these students'

internal learn processes, in other words it could not reveal cognitive strategies that the students used while they listened to oral English texts.

Questionnaire

I distributed a questionnaire to first and second-year students at the research site. The questionnaire was written in both English and Arabic. I have included the English version of the questionnaire in Appendix E. I administered the questionnaire to Tunisian EFL students to better understand the strategies that they think they use while they are learning in English. I expected that the data from this questionnaire would provide me with a broad range of viewpoints and help me to have a better understanding of the learning strategies that Tunisian EFL students thought they used. I also expected that the data would help me to better understand the problems they have in comprehending oral English texts in their classrooms.

The first part of the questionnaire requested demographic information from the students. The second part asked students to rank the difficulty of specific oral text features. The third part contained a strategy inventory. The fourth part asked about the students' listening habits outside of the class. The final part was opened-ended and gave the students the opportunity to list any specific problems they have while listening to oral English texts. The questionnaire was written in both English and Arabic, so that all the EFL respondents, especially those at a lower-intermediate level, would understand the questions and be able to answer them.

The main part of the questionnaire was a strategy inventory, which is a structured survey that contains statements relating to learning habits to which the respondent must make a fixed response; these individual Likert items each linked to particular listening

strategy (Oxford & Crookall, 1989). These statements were randomly ordered, not ordered by strategy type. In addition, some statements were repeated throughout the inventory. The random organization and the repetition was done to increase the internal reliability of the questionnaire.

The scale that I used in my questionnaires is similar to Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learners (SILL) (1990), which uses a five-level scale, except that my questionnaire had a range from "0" to "4," instead of Oxford's range from "1" to "5." In my strategy inventory, "0" corresponded to "Not at All" or "Never" and "4" corresponded to "Very True" or "Always." I also included a box entitled "Not Applicable" if the statement did not pertain to them. The strategy inventory focused on listening strategies used in an academic environment. I have included Oxford's SILL in Appendix F along with the SILL statements that I used in my questionnaire and the statements in my questionnaire that were adapted from the SILL.

I also developed a coded version of the inventory that I used in the questionnaire, listing all of the statements according to strategy type. This coded inventory is included in Appendix G. The strategy inventory in my questionnaire was linked to a list of strategies proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Wenden (1991). This list of strategies is in Chapter 2 (Tables 1 and 2). Since the statements in the inventory were randomly ordered and not ordered by strategy type, I used a coded version of the inventory so that I could later sort and categorize the inventory statements by strategy type, facilitating my analysis of the questionnaire.

I chose to base my inventory on Oxford's SILL because, according to research, it is one of the most popular strategy inventories with good reliability (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; Khalil, 2005; Nisbet, Tindall & Arroyo, 2005; and Nyikos & Oxford, 1993). The SILL is a 50-question inventory which is designed primarily for ESL learners, although it may be used for both ESL and EFL learners. It is a general purpose inventory which identifies learner strategies from reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Since I was interested in listening strategies for my research, many of the statements in the SILL were not appropriate for my research.

I adopted O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) three-category system of organizing strategies: cognitive, metacognative, and socio-affective. I believe that this system was more appropriate for my research than Oxford's six-category system. Since I decided to use this three-category system, I adapted Oxford's SILL to develop a more balanced inventory with an equal number, or a near equal number, of questions for each strategy set for which I was testing (see Table 5).

Table 5

A List of Strategies, Codes Assigned, and Number of Questions per Strategy in the Strategy Inventory

Strategy Group	**Strategy Set**	**Code Used in Strategy Inventory**	**# of EFL Student Strategy Inventory Questions**
Metacognitive	Planning	MP	5
	Monitoring	MM	5
	Evaluation	ME	5
Cognitive	Selective attention	CSA	5
	Rehearsal/Repetition	CR	5
	Inferencing/Guessing	CIG	5
	Summarizing/ Note-taking	CSN	6
	Imagery	CI	5
	Associating/ Elaborating/Grouping	CAE	5
	Practicing	CP	5
	Analyzing and Reasoning	CAR	6
	Translating/Transferring	CTX	6
Socio-affective	Cooperation	SC	3
	Questioning/ Clarification	SQC	3
	Encouragement	SE	3
	Monitoring Emotions/Lowering Anxiety	SML	3
Total			75

The strategy inventory that I used in my questionnaire included 20 statements from Oxford's SILL. Some of these statements were exactly the same as the SILL statements

and some were modified to fit the listening context of my research (see Appendix F for details). Each of the statements in the strategy inventory reflected a certain strategy set. To avoid making the inventory too long, I included fewer socio-affective strategy statements than the other two types of strategies.

Group Interviews

The purpose of the group interviews was to probe more deeply into the specific problems Tunisian EFL learners have understanding oral English texts in their classrooms, and the reasons for these problems. I also wanted to identify the specific learning strategies the learners used when they listened to oral English texts in their classrooms, and the reasons they used certain strategies and did not use other strategies.

I chose to conduct group interviews in addition to individual interviews so that I could uncover problems that all of the participants, in general, encountered and the listening strategies they used. This is a method suggested by O'Malley and Chamot (1990). 13 learners in four groups took part in the group interviews. Two participants had low proficiency, seven had moderate proficiency, and four had high proficiency. I conducted the interviews in English. However, if any participant did not understand a question or needed clarification, I used Tunisian Arabic to clarify the question. I also made it clear to the students that they were free to answer the questions in English or Arabic.

During the group interviews, I asked the participants guiding questions regarding their listening habits listening to oral texts, obstacles that they encountered in listening, and strategies that they found useful or not useful. I also asked them general questions about the usefulness of the listening comprehension course and the amount of exposure

they had to English outside of the campus. Finally, I asked them for suggestions about ways to improve the teaching methods for learning to listen in a classroom environment. The questions that I asked in the group interviews are listed in Appendix H.

Individual Interviews

I conducted individual interviews with 18 participants; 12 of the 18 also took part in group interviews. Three of these participants had low proficiency, ten had moderate proficiency, and five had high proficiency. Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe the process of choosing interviewees. According to their perspective interviewees should have relevant first-hand information about the subject and they should be well-informed about it. Rubin and Rubin also say the researcher should choose interviewees that represent a variety of perspectives so the researcher comes to understand an issue from a variety of perspectives and different points of view. In addition, they also indicate that the researcher should choose interviewees based on their ability to contribute to the researcher's theory that he or she is building or testing (pp. 65-68).

Based on Rubin and Rubin's (2005) advice, I chose interviewees that I thought would help me to better understand the issues that the Tunisian EFL learners were facing. I also expected that these interviewees would be able to convey some of the problems and describe some of the strategies that they used when listening to oral texts in a university environment.

Before the interview, I graded different texts according to Brown's (1995) six principles which I reviewed in Chapter 2. Thus, each text only had one or two speakers, the speakers were clearly distinguishable from each other, the texts were spoken at a moderate speed and were clear. The texts did not require a lot of inferences to be made,

and the subject of the texts were within the realm of the participant's experience. Based on her principles, I ranked these graded texts from “Very Easy” to “Very Difficult.” I administered the “easiest” texts to the low- proficiency participants, the most “difficult” texts to the high-proficiency participants, and the moderately “difficult” texts to the moderate-proficiency participants. Finally, I divided the texts in each of the three text groups into “Easy” and “Difficult.” Table 6 displays the list of texts that were used for the individual interviews, as well as the text number, the participant level for which the text was designed, and the type of text.

Table 6

Texts Used in Individual Interviews

Text #	Text Name	Participant Level	Text Level
1	Farmer & Sons	Low Proficiency	Visual
2	Laughter	"	Easy/Difficult
3	David's Neighbors	"	Difficult
4	Preparing a Turkey	"	Difficult
5	Women & War	"	Difficult
6	How was Vacation	Medium Proficiency	Visual
7	Malaysia	"	Visual
8	Participating in a Discussion	"	Easy
9	Strange & Unusual Things	"	Easy
10	Zoos	"	Easy
11	Choosing a Holiday	"	Difficult
12	Ethical Decisions	"	Difficult
13	Obesity	"	Difficult
14	On the Job	"	Difficult
15	Product Placement	"	Difficult
16	Staying Single	"	Difficult
17	Great Sites	High Proficiency	Visual
18	Strange Stories	"	Visual
11	Choosing Holiday	"	Easy
19	Discover Joy	"	Easy
20	Stating Opinions	"	Easy
21	Credit Card Debt	"	Difficult
22	Culture Shock	"	Difficult
23	Memory	"	Difficult

One text, "Choosing a Holiday," was used with both moderate and high proficiency participants, ranked difficult for the moderate proficiency students and easy for the high

proficiency students. In addition, two versions of the text "Laughter" were used, the original version and a version with the pauses between information units removed. I ranked these two versions differently: "Easy" for the original version and "Difficult" for the version with the pauses removed.

Each text that I used in my research had a task associated with it. I chose a variety of tasks and tried to chose tasks that were not cognitively difficult, based on Nunan's (2004) list of six factors that determine task complexity, reviewed in Chapter 2. Even though I used written tasks for the difficult texts, I used both written and visual tasks with the easy texts. I used the visual tasks to determine if the participants used different cognitive processes with these tasks than they did with the written tasks.

The tasks that I used for the individual interviews are listed in Appendix I. The texts that I used are listed in Appendix J. I gave each participants two texts, one easy text and one difficult text according to the above description. I began the interview by explaining the listening procedure. I then gave them two tasks, for each of the texts. In addition, I gave each participant the topic of the text before they listened to each text to enhance their abilities to use background knowledge. After they listened to each text, I asked them questions about the ease or difficulty of the task and the text, the strategies used to complete the task, obstacles they encountered when they listened to the texts, and their perception regarding their understanding of the text after the participants finished each task. I also asked them to compare their experience completing these tasks with completing tasks in the classroom. The questions that I asked them are in Appendix K. After I finished asking the participants questions about their experience listening to the text and completing the task, I scored the task to see whether they were able to

successfully complete the task. Then I asked them questions regarding any difference between their performance on the task and their perception of it.

In addition to interviewing these 18 participants, I also conducted follow-up interviews with four of them: one had high proficiency and the other three had moderate proficiency. I conducted these follow-up interviews to re-examine interesting findings, confirm emerging data, and test developing theories. For these follow-up interviews, I gave each participant two or three difficult tasks to complete. I also altered the text or disallowed certain common strategies that were emerging from my research so that I could test my evolving findings.

Listening Diaries

I employed listening diaries as another method to collect data. Diaries help learners to become more aware of their learning processes and the strategies used. Diaries are especially helpful in making learners aware of metacognitive and socio-affective strategies used (Oxford, Lavine, Felkins, Holloway, & Saleh, 1996, pp. 20-21).

According to Howell-Richardson and Parkinson (1988), diaries have many purposes. For my purposes, I had participants record in writing the strategies that they used while they were listening to oral English texts in class and outside of class. This gave me an additional method for collecting participants' listening strategies and listening obstacles. Howell-Richardson and Parkinson (1988) indicate that the researcher needs to specifically define what types of information are to be included in the diary with clear written guidelines. The guidelines I gave my participants are in Appendix L. Another important aspect of diary writing is for the researcher to maintain frequent contact with the participants to make sure that they are writing the entries according to the researcher's

written guidelines and to answer any questions that they may have (Gan, Humphreys, & Hamp-Lyons, 2004).

In my study, two high-proficiency participants and two moderate-proficiency participants volunteered to be involved in writing diaries for a duration of three months, between February and April 2009. I explained the purpose of the study and the purpose of the diaries to the participants. I also explained to the diary-writing participants the format of the diaries, and the content of the diaries. I gave them written procedures and example entries in addition to the oral instructions. I requested that they write their entries in English and if any participants had difficulty writing in English to inform me. I told them that they should write about listening strategies used and obstacles encountered when listening to oral texts in their listening comprehension classes. I also told them that grammar and spelling were not important for the purposes of my research. Bi-weekly, I contacted the participants to review their entries and to answer any questions.

The main reason for asking them to write in these self-reflective diaries was to discover how the participants used strategies while they were involved in listening to oral texts in a university listening comprehension context. However, I also encouraged them to write in their diaries when they were involved in listening to English in other situations, such as listening to lectures in other classes at the university or watching television. Through these diaries, I hoped that learners would become more aware of the listening strategies that they used while they listened to oral English texts.

Think-Aloud Protocols

In discussing my use of think-aloud protocols, I first review some research on think-aloud protocols. These protocols help the researcher to identify the use of cognitive strategies that learners use while listening to oral texts.

The use of think-aloud protocols in cognitive strategy research. Anderson and Vandergrift (1996) and Rubin (1987) describe a verbal report protocol as a procedure in which learners verbalize their thoughts while carrying out a task or immediately after finishing a task. Its purpose is to get as close as possible to a human being's thinking processes. Through this protocol, more information is obtained, regarding how comprehension happens in the mind and what cognitive and metacognitive strategies are involved in the comprehension process (Berne, J., 2004; Camps, 2003). It also allows the participant to describe how he or she is using particular strategies for particular tasks (Wenden, 1991).

Anderson and Vandergrift (1996) identify three types of verbal reports: self-report, self-observation, and self-revelation. They define a self-report as an individual, broad statement of how a person typically behaves. They specify a self-observation as an individual's disclosing of "specific processes used to accomplish a particular language task" concurrently while a task is being completed (introspection) or immediately after the task has been completed (retrospection) (p.4). Finally, they indicate that self-revelation is a "disclosure of thought processes in a stream of consciousness while the information is in the focus of the learner's attention" (p.4). In other words, self-revelation discloses thought processes while the information is still in working memory, without any interpretation or analysis. Self-observation, on the other hand, can be compared to a

commentator describing a sports match; it is the person analyzing or interpreting what they are doing while they are accomplishing a task.

Anderson and Vandergrift (1996) indicate that one type of verbal report, the think-aloud protocol, is usually self-revelatory (i.e. introspective) as long as the think-aloud protocol occurs simultaneously, or within a few seconds, of the task. However, if an informant tries to analyze or interpret his or her thought processes, during a task or after a task has been completed, it becomes self-observation (i.e. retrospective) (p. 4).

Oxford and Crookall (1989) reviewed strategy studies and found that think-aloud protocols allowed researchers to accurately determine the strategies that language learners used. Anderson and Vandergrift (1996) also discussed the importance of verbal report protocols in the book Language Learning Strategies around the World, where they gave examples of people who used verbal report protocols successfully. They also cited a study by Murphy (1987) who used verbal report protocols to examine the listening strategies of ESL learners.

Wenden admits that some researchers have raised objections about verbal reports, especially think-aloud protocols. These objections center on whether the participant is really reporting internal thinking processes, which are inaccessible, or only a description of how they use what they have learned (1987). However, Wenden claims states that these processes, which may be unconscious much of the time, become conscious when they enter into working memory during the comprehension process (p. 36-37). Wenden also states that think-aloud protocols must be conducted carefully. She encourages the researcher to plan his or her methodology conscientiously and train the participants carefully so that the participants will completely report what they are thinking while they

are listening to oral texts or reading written texts but not to report thinking processes which are incomplete or missing (p. 37).

Based on the research, I considered the think-aloud protocol to be very important and determined that it would help me in my research to identify learning strategies that the participants actually used when they listened to an oral English text, the way they used these strategies to help them understand oral English texts, and the problems they encountered when they attempted to understand these texts. I conducted think-aloud protocols with two high-proficiency learners and four moderate-proficiency learners, who had volunteered for the research.

Texts and tasks used for the protocol. The texts used in the protocol were similar to the types of texts used in the learners' listening comprehension classrooms. Table 7 displays the texts that I used during the think-aloud protocol, a text number, the participant level for which the text was designed, and the type of text.

Table 7

Texts Used in Think-aloud Protocols

Text #	Text Name	Participant Level	Text Level
24	Night Market	Medium Proficiency	Visual
25	Coming of Age	"	Visual
26	How Was Your Vacation?	"	Visual
27	Airline Reservations	"	Easy
28	Renting a Car	"	Easy
29	Newspapers	"	Difficult
30	Rap Music	"	Difficult
31	Why Americans Work Hard?	"	Difficult
32	Electronic Devices	High Proficiency	Visual
33	Reflexology	"	Visual
34	Body Disorders in Men	"	Difficult
35	Earth Day & Environmental Problems	"	Difficult
36	How English Acquires New Words	"	Difficult
37	Two Popular Diets	"	Difficult

After the training session for the think-aloud protocols, I modified my original research design in three ways. First, the participants mentioned that they could not concentrate on their thoughts while listening to a difficult text and completing the associated task simultaneously. They requested that they listen to the difficult texts without completing the associated tasks so they could concentrate on their thoughts during the protocol. Therefore, even though there was no change in the procedure for the easy texts, I changed it for the difficult text by not requiring them to complete the task. I told them that the most important part of the protocol was concentrating on the text and

identifying their thoughts during the protocol, not completing the task. Second, I allowed the participants to write their thoughts instead of verbalizing them when they were taking notes on the text. Third, because of the low number of participants involved in the think-aloud protocols, in addition to listening to the easy text, I asked each participant to listen to two difficult texts instead of one. Four of the participants agreed to this request and two requested to listen to two difficult texts and not listen to an easy text.

These modifications resulted in each of four participants, two having moderate proficiency and two having high proficiency, listening to one easy text and two difficult texts. The fifth participant, having moderate proficiency, listened to two difficult texts and produced one verbal report and one written report. The sixth participant, having moderate proficiency, also listened to two difficult texts and produced a written report from both of these texts. This process resulted in the creation of 16 think-aloud protocols. Nine of these protocols were transcribed verbal reports and seven were written reports.

Similar to the texts used for the individual interviews, the texts that were used in the think-aloud protocols were carefully chosen to reduce the learners' cognitive load, according to the principles that Brown (1995) mentions, reviewed in Chapter 2.
In addition, I gave the participants the topic of the text before the protocol was started to enhance their abilities to use background knowledge. The tasks that I used are in Appendix M. The transcripts of the texts that I used for the protocol are in Appendix N.

Equipment used for the protocol. The protocols were conducted at the research site using a Dell Inspiron E1505 laptop computer with high quality headphones for this exercise. I verified the smooth functioning of the equipment before I conducted the

protocol. The texts were copied from original CDs to the laptop computer with the tone signals and silent segments added to the texts using the software, *Audacity* (2008). The participants then listened to these texts directly from the laptop computer, without using CDs or other audio equipment.

Training conducted for the protocol. Anderson and Vandergrift (1996) mention that participant training is an important aspect of a think-aloud protocol. This training allows the participants to become familiar with what is required before the protocol is conducted. I trained all of the participants in the proper use of the computer equipment at the same time.

I conducted the training in English, although I told the participants that they could use either English or Arabic during the training. The training session had three parts. During the first part, I described the protocol and the way the protocol would be conducted and then I demonstrated the protocol. I conducted the demonstration by listening to a short text that I had never listened to before, and verbalized my thoughts while I listened to the text. I gave each of the participants time to practice "thinking aloud" with different sample texts.

During the practice session, each participant took a turn listening to a text and practicing "thinking aloud" while the others observed. I pointed out that they were to verbalize their thoughts and not try to add explanation or evaluation to their thoughts. This is in keeping with Anderson and Vandergrift's explanation of what the participants should verbalize (1996). After each participant had practiced the protocol, the others provided feedback on what happened during the exercise and how the process could have been improved. I gave them time to practice, and then discussed the process with the

participants. I answered their questions and I listened to their comments about the process.

The think-aloud process. An essential aspect of think-aloud protocols is that the participants "talk aloud" during the task or soon after completing the task. Various methods are used to allow the participants to verbalize their thoughts. In reading research, think-aloud protocols have been used quite extensively. During these protocols, red dots can be inserted in a reading passage to remind the participants to verbalize their thoughts at those points (Anderson and Vandergrift, 1996).

Think-aloud protocols for listening comprehension research have been used in various ways. Some researchers have used a more unstructured approach and given the participant the ability to indicate with a raised hand when to stop the audio text so that they can verbalize his or her thoughts. Other researchers have used a more structured approach and have imbedded tone signals into the oral text to indicate to participants when to stop and verbalize their thoughts (Anderson & Vandergrift, 1996).

For my study, I used a more structured approach during the think-aloud process. I inserted periodic silent segments into the listening passage at strategic places in the text. I used silent segments instead of tone signals because the participants indicated during the training session that tone signals were too intrusive and caused them to lose their thoughts.

I placed five second silent segments between audio segments of 10 to 30 seconds in length. I purposely divided audio segments based on the position of information units in the text. I divided some of these segments in the middle of an information unit. I divided some of them at the end of an information unit. I also purposely varied the length

of the segment to observe the relationship between a segments' length and the participant's ability to hold that segment in working memory. I assumed that they would not have much trouble maintaining a short segment in working memory but would "lose" information as the segment lengthened (over 20 seconds) and the storage capacity of working memory had been exceeded.

During the think-aloud protocol, I reminded the participants to verbalize their thoughts while they were listening to the text at each silent segment. I also reminded them to verbalize their thoughts if they failed to respond during those silent segments. In addition, I felt it was important to allow the participants to use the language of their choice when "talking aloud," in Arabic, French, or English (Anderson and Vandergrift, 1996). I also gave them the freedom to switch between languages, if they chose, during the protocol. Even though I gave them the choice of which language to use during the protocol, all the participants verbalized their thoughts, or wrote their thoughts in English.

Each think-aloud protocol session lasted for two hours. This two-hour session allowed time for the protocol itself and for the retrospective interview that immediately followed, described below. After being scheduled for a time, each participant entered the room and sat down in a chair across from me and next to the computer.

I asked the participant's permission before I started the recording of each protocol. During the protocol, I played each of the texts from the portable computer. At each silent interval, the participants would record into the headphone microphone their thoughts at that particular time. I stopped the recording at the silent segments to make sure that the participants had adequate time to express their thoughts. After they had verbalized their

thoughts, I resumed playing the CD. I continued this process until the text was finished. This same process was used for all of the participants.

Retrospective interviews. Immediately after the think-aloud protocol was finished, I conducted retrospective interviews with the participants to provide additional insights into the problems they faced with the protocol and the learning strategies they used during the protocol. Oxford and Crookall (1989) and Anderson and Vandergrift (1996) mentioned that think-aloud protocol follow-up is an important part of the research study. The questions I used during the retrospective interviews are listed in Appendix O. The procedure was similar to the semi-structured interviews.

In addition to asking questions based on the protocol, I gave each participant a copy of the tasks that they had completed and a written transcript of the texts to which they had listened. I then asked them to point out specific portions of the tasks and the texts with which they had particular listening problems and asked them to try and explain why they had difficulties with those specific portions. I also asked them what portions of the tasks and the text they understood and the reasons they had understood those portions and had not understood other portions. Finally, I asked them to give their reflections on their involvement in the protocol.

Obstacles Encountered during the Data Collection Process

During the data collection process I encountered some obstacles implementing the plan I had established for two of my data-collection methods: the listening diaries and the think-aloud protocols. Below I describe the obstacles I encountered and the way in which I overcame these obstacles and modified my plan for these data-collection methods based on the responses of the participants.

Listening diaries. Data collection from the listening diaries did not give me the data that I had expected. I had hoped that the participants would conscientiously write their diary entries during their listening comprehension classes, other classes, and outside class. Unfortunately, even though I discussed with the participants about the process of writing diary entries and I met them every two weeks while I was collecting data at the site, they still had a hard time writing entries in their diaries. Some of their difficulties were because their listening comprehension classes met only sporadically, due to teachers' absences. Sometimes they forgot to write entries. Another difficulty was that one participant only wrote about listening to oral texts outside of class; he wrote about songs he had listened to and English programs he had watched on television via satellite.

However, even though I had collected data from only four participants, I still received some important information about their experiences listening to oral texts in a classroom. I was also able to confirm some of my findings uncovered through my other data-collection methods. I divided the data from the diaries into two categories: strategies that learners used while listening to an oral text, and problems that learners encountered while listening to these texts.

Think-aloud protocols. Even though I carefully conducted the training with the participants and even though I demonstrated to them how to "think aloud," I found as I conducted the think-aloud protocols that the participants could not isolate their actual thought processes while they listened to oral texts. Based on the research that I had read, I was expecting the participants to say things like, "I really don't understand what the text is speaking about at this point," "There are too many words in this segment which makes it too difficult for me to capture these words and try to understand what they mean," or "I

understand some of the words but I can't make sense out of what I am hearing." Unfortunately, the participants did not verbalize these types of thoughts. This discouraged me, and I initially thought that I would not have any useful data from the think-aloud protocols. I initially thought that I would not have any useful data from the think-aloud protocols. However, as I analyzed the data, I realized that I did have data that could help my research. The participants had not reported their thoughts on their cognitive processes, as I had hoped, but they did report their thoughts about specific oral segments that they heard.

Through my analysis, I uncovered four types of data. The first type of data, which I called summarization data, was from participants who had repeated what they thought was the main idea or ideas of the segment; in other words, they summarized what they had heard. The second type of data, which I called association data, came from participants who associated words or ideas from the segment with background knowledge that they had. For example, a participant associated a text entitled, "Renting a Car" with her friends she knew who had tried to rent a car. The third type of data, which I called problem-identification data, came from participants who identified problems that they had while listening to a particular segment. The fourth type of data, which I called commenting data, came from participants who had commented on the segment. For example, during listening to one segment of a text entitled, "Earth Day and Environmental Problems," the participant said, "That's the most annoying topic for me. I've been listening to that since seventh grade."

These types of data were useful in helping me understand strategies used and some obstacles that the participants encountered while they listened to an oral text.

Summarization data was useful because it gave me a glimpse of how they used working memory during the comprehension process. This data was especially helpful in understanding the participants cognitive processing and giving me a better understanding of the process that the participants used to comprehend oral texts and the strategies that they used. In other words, it helped me understand how they constructed the textbase and how they combined their textbase with a situation model to attach meaning to a text and comprehend it.

For example, Ahlem listened to the following segment taken from the text, "Coming of Age."

> We don't really have a special ceremony where I'm from. I guess the senior prom is sort of like that. It's a big dance we have our last year of high school. We dress up; girls wear formal dresses, and guys wear suits or tuxedos. The couple takes a photo together, and everybody dances.

Ahlem's response to this segment was, "When the graduates in this country, the boys wear suits and the girls wear dresses and they dance together." This response indicates how Ahlem's mind has constructed a textbase through the identification of words like, "wear suits," "girls wear dresses," and "dance." In addition, even though Ahlem does not choose an appropriate situation model, her response reveals the way in which her mind created a situation model by linking information from long-term memory to the textbase she had created to make meaning of this segment.

Association data was useful because it helped me to understand the way in which associations and connections were made between working memory and long-term memory. These associations also gave me some insight into how the participants created

their situation model. This was very important because I did not collect this type of data from the individual interviews.

For example, Karima heard the following segment from the text "Earth Day and Environmental Problems."

> When deforestation occurs, thousands of species of plants and animals are killed. This destruction is particularly tragic when it occurs in rain forests, because humans rely on the rain forest for common products including coffee, bananas, chocolate, vegetables, and spices.

In response to this segment, Karima said, "This reminded me of a show on TV I have been watching on deforestation and it had a very bad effect on animals. That's what I was thinking about." This response indicated that she associated information from her long-term memory that was appropriate for the information she had stored in her working memory.

Problem-identification data also gave me some useful information. For example, when Basam heard a segment from the text, "Renting a Car," he responded, "It was really hard to complete this task because of many noises outside also the speed of native speaker is another obstacle for achieving it." In this statement, Basam provided two obstacles, outside noises and fast speech, which helped me triangulate obstacles from other data-collection methods. Therefore, through each of my data-collection methods, including the think-aloud protocols, I was able to triangulate my data and confirm the listening obstacles that participants had mentioned.

Finally, the commenting data was useful, because it helped me identify another important class of obstacles, affective obstacles. Through this data, I realized that the

participants were not able to understand the text because they were negatively influenced by the text which caused them to not focus on the information in the text. For example, Karima heard the following segment from "Earth Day and Environmental Problems:" "Air pollution is probably one of our oldest environmental problems. People in Ancient Rome complained about dirty air over two thousand years ago." In response she said, "That's the most annoying topic for me. I've been listening to that since seventh grade. Every day, every year, we talk about pollution and the causes, and its so boring." It is clear from this segment that the topic of the text has prevented her from attending to the text. This is an important class of obstacles that I will consider further in Chapter 4.

Method of Data Analysis

In my study, before analyzing the data, I first transcribed the audio recordings that I had made during the interviews and the think-aloud protocol and translated into English the parts of the audio recording that had been spoken in Tunisian Arabic or French. Then I reduced the amount of data, and analyzed it to draw conclusions, by using summary sheets and coding the important, salient information. I finally used qualitative analysis methods to obtain salient information which would help me answer my research questions and help me to better understand the validity of my theoretical model.

Transcription

According to Maxwell (2005), transcription is important, because it is usually simpler to analyze a transcript than to analyze an audio recording. It is also important to transcribe the data because in the process, analysis begins and the researcher becomes much more acquainted with the data that has been recorded. During this process, researchers writes notes or memos to help them later with the analysis. Listening to the

recordings multiple times and reading the transcripts multiple times helps to facilitate the analysis process (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96). I had two types of data to transcribe: interviews and think-aloud protocols. The process that I used for each is specified below.

Interview transcription. I chose to transcribe those parts of the recordings which related to the learners' strategy use and listening comprehension problems that they encountered in accordance with my research questions in Chapter 2. My notes from the interviews also aided me in deciding which parts of the interview recordings to transcribe.

Think-aloud protocol transcription. As with the interviews, I transcribed the think-aloud protocols before analyzing them. Likewise, I only transcribed those portions that related to learning strategy use or listening comprehension obstacles. I carefully labeled each protocol with a participant identification number and a protocol segment number so that I could later link the protocol with the retrospective interviews. I expected that the transcribed protocols would reveal a lot of cognitive strategies and some metacognitive strategies that were being used during each participant's listening comprehension process.

Data Reduction

After transcribing each of the interviews and protocols, the next step in the data analysis process was reducing the data. I purposely reduced the data by using summary sheets to record the important information based on the strategies and cognitive processes listed in Table 8.

Table 8

A List of Strategy Sets with Codes Used for Analysis

Strategy Group	**Strategy Set**	**Code**
Metacognitive	Planning	Meta-Plan
	Monitoring	Meta-Monitor
	Evaluation	Meta-Eval
Cognitive	Selective attention	Cog-Attend
	Rehearsal/Repetition	Cog-Rehearse
	Inferencing/Guessing	Cog-Guess
	Summarizing/ Note-taking	Cog-Sum
	Imagery	Cog-Image
	Associating/ Elaborating/Grouping	Cog-Assoc
	Practicing	Cog-Practice
	Analyzing and Reasoning	Cog-Reason
	Translating/ Transferring	Cog-Trans
Socio-Affective	Cooperation	SA-Coop
	Questioning/ Clarification	SA-Clarify
	Encouragement	SA-Encourage
	Monitoring Emotions/ Lowering Anxiety	SA-Monitor

Note: Based on work done by Wenden (1991), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), and Oxford (1990)

Table 8 lists strategy groups, strategy sets, and codes associated with the strategy sets used for my analysis. These strategy groups and sets were taken from Chapter 2.

Part of the data reduction process is to choose a way of analyzing the data. Maxwell lists three primary ways to do this: memos, categorizing strategies, and connecting strategies. I analyzed my written memos from the data collection process to help me focus my analysis on certain emerging issues during my research. Coding and thematic analysis are examples of categorizing strategies. These kinds of strategies dissect the data into small, manageable pieces (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96). According to Maxwell, there are three types of categories: organizational categories, substantive categories, and theoretical categories. For my study, I incorporated categorizing strategies, such as summary forms and coding to help me reduce the data and to facilitate the analysis process. I also considered substantive categories as my research progressed and I reduced and analyzed the data.

An alternate way that Maxwell proposes to analyze data is using connecting strategies. These types of analysis are quite different from categorizing strategies, like coding. With coding, the data is "fractured" by being divided into different parts. This dissection enabled me to identify similarities between individual pieces of data obtained from different methods. However, with connecting analysis the data is left intact and it, along with its context, is "connected" with other texts to see the way in which statements in one text are related to statements in other texts. (Maxwell, 2005, p.98). Both coding and connecting should be used to provide a complete account of the data (p. 99).

I used connection strategies by including salient stories from participants that I collected during the interviews. These stories related the participants' experiences listening to oral texts in a university setting. I included these stories in my analysis by connecting the important aspects of the story with learning strategies and listening

comprehension problems that I identified in my categorization process. These two ways of analyzing data made my study much richer than it would have been otherwise.

Data reduction and coding of the interviews. After I conducted each of the group interviews or individual interviews, I began the analysis process immediately by reducing the data that I had accumulated in each of the interviews. I did this by reading through my interview notes, my field notes, and the interview transcription and summarizing the information on an interview summary form (see Appendix P). This form is a combination of two contact summary forms that are described by Miles and Huberman (1994, pp. 53-54).

For each individual or group interview that I had, I wrote the contact information at the top of the form; I labeled the main issues and themes from the interview; I summarized the information that I received based on the questions asked and coded each important point by using the codes in Table 8. I noted other salient points gleaned from the interview with a code, if appropriate; and I wrote down other questions to use in the next interview. This form allowed me to reduce the data from the interview to one or two pages and made analysis of the data much easier. If there were new strategies not listed in Table 8, I took note of those strategies with an appropriate code.

Data reduction and coding of the observations. I coded the classroom observations using a procedure very similar to the procedure that I used for the interviews. I created an observation summary form (see Appendix Q), based on the contact summary form. I put the relevant information regarding the time and the place of the observation on this form. I also recorded the important points from my written observation notes, and coded each point using the same procedure as with the interviews.

Data reduction and coding of the diaries. As with the interviews and observations, I created a diary summary form for each diary that I collected from the participants (see Appendix R). I read through each diary several times before I began the process. As I read through each diary entry, I recorded the important points from that entry on to the diary summary form, including strategies used and listening problems recognized and recorded. I also included the diary page number for each important point. I then coded that entry using the same procedure used with the interviews and the observations. I was able to reduce the amount of information contained in each diary to a manageable size that I could analyze effectively using this procedure.

Data reduction and coding of the think-aloud protocols. I coded each protocol by reading the transcript and listening to the recording at the same time. For each protocol and each segment of the protocol, I focused on the verbalized thoughts of the participants, related to a predefined list of strategies. These strategies are listed in Table 8. Each time there was a remark in the protocol that related to a specific, pre-defined strategy set, I coded that particular segment of the protocol with an appropriate code. If there was a remark in the protocol that related to a strategy set that was not included in Table 8, I established a new strategy set for that strategy and an appropriate code.

Data reduction and coding of the retrospective interviews. I created a retrospective interview summary form based on the interview summary form that I had created (see Appendix S). The retrospective interview form also contained a column for linking participant comments about the protocol with the specific part of the protocol to which the student was referring.

For each participant, I wrote contact information at the top of the form. Second, I completed the main issues and themes from the interview. Third, I summarized the information received based on the questions I had asked. I coded each of these important points, referring to my initial list of codes in Table 8 and then adding to that list specific strategies that were related to a strategy set, or adding a new strategy set if the data warranted it. Fourth, I wrote down other salient points received from the interview with a code, if appropriate. Fifth, I wrote down other questions that I need to ask when conducting my next interview. This form allowed me to reduce the data from the interview and made analysis of the data much easier.

Data reduction and coding of the researcher's field journal and memos. As with the interviews, the observations, and the listening diaries, I created a researcher's journal summary form (see Appendix T). I read through my journal and memos several times before I began the reduction process. Then, as I read through each entry, I recorded the important points from each entry as well as emerging thoughts that the entries contained and new questions that I should ask the participants. I also wrote down on the summary form any preliminary conclusions I had drawn in the entry and included the applicable journal or memo page number for that point on the summary form. I then coded each entry using the same procedure used with the interviews and the observations. I was able to reduce the amount of information contained in the field journal and memos to a manageable size that I could analyze effectively using this procedure.

Data Analysis

After reducing the data, as I described above, I used typology to classify the data into different groups. I started with a list of strategies and obstacles which I used as the

beginning of my classification system and then I added to these categories as I analyzed the incoming data. The coding that I mentioned above was one of the most important methods of data analysis methods that I used during my research. Through coding, I identified strategies, obstacles, and other salient data that was important for the conclusions of my research. Through constant comparison of the different codes, I was able to find consistencies between them, which I used for my developing categories. When I found differences between them, I identified these for further analysis and categorization. In addition to typology and coding, I also used hermeneutical analysis. Through this type of analysis I used the words of the participants to better understand the strategies that they used and especially the obstacles that they faced. By allowing their words to speak, I was better able to understand how they felt about their situation and I had more well-grounded ideas regarding possible solutions for the difficulties they faced.

Validity

My highest priority as a qualitative researcher is to provide validity in my study. This is important so that other researchers consider my research to be methodologically well-grounded. It is also important so that my participants will have confidence to share their experiences with me and realize that I honor them and protect them from any negative effects of the research (Erlandson et al., 1993). As a qualitative researcher, my purpose in doing this study is to eventually enrich Tunisian EFL learners' understanding of oral English texts and to, hopefully, improve the way that listening comprehension is taught to Tunisian EFL learners.

Erlandson et. al. (1993) have listed four criteria which are important to establish validity: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In traditional,

quantitative research these terms are called, internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. I have incorporated these criteria in to my study so that other researchers will recognize the validity of this study (p. 133).

Credibility

Prolonged engagement is one technique that should be used to establish credibility. I have established prolonged engagement through living almost 20 years in the Tunisian culture and have taught English to Tunisian EFL learners for about 17 years.

Persistent observation is a second technique for increasing credibility. I have incorporating this technique into my study by asking my participants about other sources of information that I had not initially considered and being aware of emerging sources of data in the course of my investigation.

Triangulation is a third technique for increasing credibility. For my study, I triangulated my data sources and my methods. My data sources included a number of different participants and I collected the data at different times. I found through my data analysis that much of the information was similar among the participants. I also had triangulation among my data-collection methods: questionnaires, classroom observation, interviews (both group and individual), student diaries, and think-aloud protocols.

Using referential adequacy materials is another way of increasing the credibility of a study. I incorporated referential materials into my study by taking pictures of the site as well as including the audio material that I produced throughout my research. Member checking is another important aspect to increase credibility. I incorporated this technique by asking participants to check transcripts of interviews for accuracy. I also asked the participants to read my report to verify the accuracy of my conclusions. I also wrote an

entry in a reflective journal every day that I conducted research to guide me in my research and increase the credibility of the study.

Transferability

Using thick description is one technique that can be used to create transferability. (Erlandson et al., pp. 146-147). I used thick description in my observations and my reports of the think-aloud protocols. I also used thick description when writing my final report of findings, by providing the context for my data collection procedures. Another technique for establishing transferability is purposive sampling (p. 148). I conducted purposeful sampling throughout the data collection process, especially when I chose participants for individual interviews.

Dependability and Confirmability

A technique which can be used to increase both dependability and confirmability is the audit trail (Erlandson et al., p. 148, 149). I created a box that included all of the audio recordings of the interviews and the think-aloud protocol, the student diaries, my notes from the interviews and classroom observations, my field journal, my memos, the data reduction forms that I used, and my analysis. This box is stored in a secure place. In the future, if any researcher wants to verify the accuracy of my findings, they will be able to request the data and reconstruct my study.

Summary of the Chapter

The methodology that I used for my study has been chosen expressly because it is a qualitative research study. For my research I connected Anderson's (1983, 1993) ACT model, Baddeley's (2009) working memory model, Kintsch's (1998) Construction-Integration model, and listening strategies. I used my research questions to guide me and

I conducted my research. Since qualitative research assumes a particular context for a study, I provided a context that included my background and role in this research, a description of the research sites, and the educational system of Tunisia. This context will help others better understand my research and allow this research to be transferable to other situations that have similar characteristics.

In order to carry out this research, I had to gain access to participants and elicit their participation. I asked the students, who completed the questionnaire, to volunteer for further research. I also posted a general announcement asking for volunteers for my research study at both research sites to produce a large pool of volunteers. Once I had a pool of volunteers, I purposefully selected participants for further research. This means that I chose participants based on their knowledge of listening problems and their ability to help me answer my research questions. I chose a broad range of students from different educational levels and different backgrounds so that I could obtain a wide range of views, thus avoiding bias and errors during my research. During this process, I maintained the confidentiality of the information that participants provided.

I used a variety of methods to collect data for my research. During this study, I collected data quantitatively through questionnaires and qualitatively through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, student diaries, a think-aloud protocol, and retrospective interviews. These various methods were used with different groups of learners during fall 2008 and spring 2009. The diversity of methods, times, and participants provided a wealth of data that helped me to understand problems that Tunisian EFL learners have when listening to oral transactional texts and the types of

strategies that they use when they listen to these types of texts. In addition, this diversity provided triangulation, which increased the validity of my findings.

Finally, I analyzed the data that I collected. Before I analyzed the data, I needed to transcribe it into written form. After the transcription and translation process, I reduced the data using memos, summary forms, coding, and connection strategies. Memos allowed me to notice emerging categories from the data. Summary forms and coding enabled me to reduce the large amount of data that I had and to notice similarities and differences between pieces of information. Connection strategies helped me to see the relationship of various stories participants related to specific learning strategies and listening comprehension problems I uncovered during the analysis process. In addition to the coding and connection strategies I mentioned above, I also used typology to help me categorize the data that I had collected and hermeneutical analysis to allow the participants' words to tell their story and the issues that they were facing while they listened to oral texts in English. The data-collection methods and data analysis methods that I used in my research increased both the credibility and the validity of my study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

Many studies have been conducted that examine English Second Language (ESL) and English Foreign Language (EFL) learners' strategy use. However, as far as I am aware, no studies have examined the relationship between strategies, comprehension, and the human information processing system. Wenden (1991) describes the interaction between listening strategies and various cognitive processes when ESL learners listen to oral texts; however, she does not include comprehension in her discussion. In defining the human information processing system, Anderson (1983) describes this system as automatized with information flowing from one cognitive process to the next. Kintsch (1998) also describes the two stages in his comprehension model, the Construction-Integration (C-I) model as being automatized. The description of these cognitive processes as being automatic is unfortunate, because I believe that EFL learners are active in the listening comprehension process, not inactive as Anderson and Kintsch would have us believe.

Because I think that EFL learners are active in the listening comprehension process, I have added listening strategies into a cognitive model, which I have called the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model. This is the model that I have assumed throughout my research. However, even though I have described EFL learners as active listeners, I have observed, while teaching in Tunisia, that Tunisian EFL learners have difficulty understanding oral English transactional texts. Therefore, the purpose of this

study is two-fold. First, I want to discover the listening strategies that Tunisian EFL learners use and the obstacles which prevent them from adequately understanding oral English transactional texts. Second, I want to observe whether the Tunisian EFL learners use of strategies concurs with the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model that I have proposed. In Chapter 5, I will examine this second purpose in more detail. In this chapter, I will discuss this first purpose in more detail.

I proposed two research questions in order to accomplish the first purpose of my research. First, what are the metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies that Tunisian EFL learners use when they listen to oral English transactional text? Second, what are the obstacles that these learners encounter while they listen to these types of texts? I collected data using five different methods: a questionnaire, a listening diary, group interviews, individual interviews, and think-aloud protocols in attempting to answer these two research questions. Triangulation of the data-collection methods answered my research questions and produced a list of listening strategies that Tunisian EFL learners used when they listened to oral transactional texts in English and a list of obstacles that were encountered while they listened to these texts.

I have identified the listening strategies that Tunisian EFL learners use through my data-collection methods. These strategies include metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and one socio-affective strategy. The majority of my participants used two metacognitive strategies: a *planning* strategy, Reading the Task, and a *monitoring* strategy, Matching. In addition, I have found that my participants used six cognitive strategies: a *selective attention* strategy, Focusing, an *association* strategy, Association, a

practice strategy, Listening Many Times, an *inferencing* strategy, Guessing, a *note-taking* strategy, Note-taking, and a *repetition* strategy, Memorization. The results of my research have also indicated that Tunisian EFL learners use at least one socio-affective strategy, Getting Help from Classmates, which is a *questioning* or *clarification* strategy.

Not only has my research identified the listening strategies that Tunisian EFL learners use when they listen to oral transactional texts in English, the research has also identified some important obstacles that hindered or prevented the participants from understanding the oral texts. The obstacles mentioned by research participants relate to five features of listening comprehension: the text, the task, comprehension of the text, external factors, and negative disposition. The main obstacles the participants mentioned were: a fast text speed, a long text, an unfamiliar accent, a complex or confusing task, a long task, and audio or external noise. In addition they also encountered an inability to listen to the text and write answers at the same time.

Listening Strategies Identified among Tunisian EFL Learners

My first research question was answered by compiling the listening strategies that the participants identified through various data-collection methods included in my research: a questionnaire, listening diaries, group interviews, individual interviews, and think-aloud protocols.

Findings from the Questionnaire

A questionnaire was the first method I used to determine the participants' strategy use during their listening comprehension classes. The questionnaire was primarily a strategy inventory (Oxford, 1990). As mentioned in Chapter 3, the questionnaire

contained 75 statements about strategy use. The Tunisian EFL learners who volunteered to complete the questionnaire read each statement and assessed the validity of these statements based on their personal experience of listening to oral texts in English. Most of these statements were placed in the context of a classroom, although some of them were about listening to English oral texts outside of the classroom. Each statement in the questionnaire was related to one of 16 strategy sets. The questionnaire's purpose was to gauge the frequency of learning strategy use by the participants. I ordered the strategy sets by their mean score through descriptive statistics. The results of this ordering provided seven distinct groups of strategies, which I labeled “always used,” “usually used,” “frequently used,” “often used,” “sometimes used,” “occasionally used,” or “rarely used.” The results from the questionnaire are listed in Table 9.

Table 9

Frequency of Listening Strategy Use from the Questionnaire, Based on the Responses of Tunisian EFL Learners (n=28)

Frequency of Use	Strategy Group	Strategy
Always	Metacognitive	Planning
Usually	Cognitive	Association/Elaboration
		Selective Attention
Frequently	Metacognitive	Evaluation
	Cognitive	Practicing
	Socio-Affective	Questioning/Clarifying
Often	Metacognitive	Monitoring
	Cognitive	Imagery
		Rehearsal/Repetition
		Summarizing/Note-taking
	Socio-Affective	Encouragement
Sometimes	Cognitive	Analyzing/Reasoning
		Inferencing/Guessing
Occasionally	Socio-Affective	Cooperation
	Cognitve	Translating/Transferring
Rarely	Socio-Affective	Monitoring Emotions/Lowering Anxiety

As is displayed, the results of the questionnaire indicate that the respondents "always" used one metacognitive strategy, planning. Then, they "usually" used two cognitive strategies, association/elaboration and selective attention. Next, the results expressed that they frequently used one metacognitive strategy, evaluation; one cognitive strategy, practicing; and one socio-affective strategy, questioning/clarifying. The results also showed that they often used one metacognitive strategy, monitoring; three cognitive strategies, imagery, rehearsal/repetition, and summarizing/note-taking; and they often

used one socio-affective strategy, encouragement. Next, the results indicated that the respondents sometimes used two cognitive strategies, analyzing/reasoning and inferencing. After that, the results suggested that the respondents only occasionally used one socio-affective strategy, cooperation and one cognitive strategy, translating/transferring. Finally the results showed that the respondents rarely used one socio-affective strategy, monitoring emotions/lowering anxiety.

Therefore, according to 28 learners who completed the strategy inventory, the eleven strategies that they always, usually, or often used while they listen to oral texts in English were: planning, association/elaboration, selective attention, evaluation, practicing, questioning/clarifying, monitoring, imagery, rehearsal/repetition, summarizing/note-taking, and encouragement. It was surprising to me that two socio-affective strategies, encouragement and cooperation, and one cognitive strategy, translating/transferring were ranked so low by the respondents. The results of the two socio-affective strategies surprised me because I observed in my classes that Tunisian learners usually talk with each other when trying to decide on an answer. The result of the translation or transferring ranking also surprised me because I observed in my classes that learners often search for words in Arabic or French to understand the meaning of a word in English. As I will discuss later, it seems that the culture, in general, and teachers, in particular, discourage learners from talking to other learners while completing a task associated with an oral English text, as well as translating from English into either Arabic or French.

Findings from the Listening Diaries

In addition to the questionnaire, I used listening diaries during my research as a way of discovering listening strategies that the participants used in their listening comprehension classes. I also used this data to triangulate the results with other data-collection methods. Four participants wrote listening diaries during my research. However, only three of them wrote in their diaries about strategy use. Table 10 lists the strategies mentioned by them, the strategy set from which each strategy comes, and the number of participants that mentioned each strategy.

Table 10

Listening Strategies Identified in the Listening Diaries (n=3)

Listening Strategy Group	Listening Strategy Set	Listening Strategy	# of Students Reporting
Metacognitive	Planning	Reading Task	3
		Proximity to Source	2
Cognitive	Attention	Task Information Focus	1
	Elaboration	Matching	1
	Practice	Listening Multiple Times	2
	Translation	Translation	1
Socio-Affective	Cooperation	Completing the Task with Classmates	1
	Questioning/ Clarification	Talking to a Classmate	1

Four cognitive strategies, two metacognitive strategies, and two socio-affective strategies were mentioned by the participants. Four of the strategies, Reading the Task, Task Information Focus, Matching, and Listening Multiple Times, were also cited in the individual interviews. Two of these strategies, Reading the Task and Task Information

Focus along with two other strategies, Translation and Talking to a Classmate, were mentioned in the group interviews. The remaining two strategies, Proximity to Source, a *planning* strategy, and Completing the Task with Classmates, a *cooperation* strategy, were new strategies that were not mentioned in the other data-collection methods.

Samia said that she tried to get as close to the tape player as possible in talking about the *planning* strategy Proximity to Source, . She described her listening experience in one diary entry.

> As usual, before listening, I try to read the questions quickly in order to have an idea about the main topic, because our teachers don't give us enough time to read the questions. This is on one hand. On the other hand, I fear not to listen or understand some words. But things were well done because I was near or close to the tape recorder so my task was successful.

Therefore, her assumption seems to be that if she was close to the tape player, she would hear the text better and do better on the task.

Dhakra, also used the Proximity to Source strategy. She said that she tried to be as close to the front as possible so that she could hear the teacher better and watch the teacher's body movements. She describes this in her diary.

> I think the new teacher will face problems with us because she doesn't speak loudly and the amphitheater is always full and students don't get the point that they should be quiet and silent in order to listen. Instead, they complain and shout saying that they don't hear anything. Personally, I try my best to come as early as I can in order to have a seat in the first or second range because seeing the teacher

> while he or she is speaking allowed me to understand, especially words that I don't hear, from the articulation of her mouth.

From the comments of these two students, Dhakra and Samia, it seems they thought that being close to the teacher would help them better understand what the teacher was saying and better understand the oral text, resulting in doing better on the task.

It was surprising that only one of the participants, Samia, wrote in her listening diary about translation. Since I have observed a translation strategy being used in the listening comprehension classes I taught, I thought that translation would have been discussed more. Samia writes the following about translation in one of her diary entries.

> The most difficult [text] was the third, it was like the first but the words are not familiar to us at all. The text was typically economic and the words we are required to complete are not simple words but economic terms. So, the teacher was obliged to explain them to us and to complete them by herself but she asked us to look for their synonyms in Arabic.

This is an interesting entry because Samia is not discussing her use of translation. Instead it is the teacher that is asking them to find Arabic synonyms for the words the students have encountered in the oral English text. It seems that the teacher has resorted to using this strategy because the students are unable to understand the meaning of the text. The teacher gives the learners the meaning of many of the words in the text and then, it seems, the teacher asks them to use Arabic to make sure that the students have understood the terms she has given them.

Findings from the Group Interviews

Another data-collection method I employed during my research to determine Tunisian EFL learners listening strategies was group interviews. The strategies that they mentioned are listed in Table 11.

Table 11

Listening Strategies Identified during Group Interviews (n=4)

Listening Strategy Group	Listening Strategy Set	Listening Strategy	# of Groups Reporting Strategy	% of Groups Reporting Strategy
Metacognitive	Planning	Reading the Task	3	75%
Cognitive	Selective Attention	Focus	4	100%
	Summarizing/ Note-taking	Note-taking	4	100%
	Translation/Transferring	Translation	2	50%
	Inferencing/Guessing	Guessing	1	25%
	Rehearsal/Repetition	Memorization	1	25%
Socio-Affective	Questioning/Clarification	Getting Help from Classmates	2	50%
	Monitoring Emotions/Lowering Anxiety	Using Breathing Techniques	1	25%

Along with the listening strategies mentioned during the group interviews, Table 11 also indicates the strategy group and strategy set of each strategy as well as the number and percentage of groups that mentioned the strategy. The results of the group interviews were somewhat different from the results of the questionnaire; planning, selective

attention, and note-taking strategies were highly ranked. However, unlike the questionnaire, a *translation* strategy was also ranked fairly high. Another cognitive strategy, Guessing, which was ranked fairly high in the questionnaire, was cited by only 25% of the group interview participants. Finally, the socio-affective strategy, Using Breathing Techniques, was only mentioned by one participant. This final strategy is an affective strategy in which the participant breathed in and out to reduce his anxiety. Even though this strategy was only mentioned once by the participants, I listed it in the table because the participant who used it found it very useful in reducing his anxiety and helping him concentrate on the text. This strategy was not mentioned in any of the other data-collection methods.

Since the focus of my research is based on a cognitive model and on individual listening activity, it is not surprising that few socio-affective strategies were mentioned and more than half of the strategies that were mentioned were cognitive strategies. During the group interviews, two cognitive strategies, Focus and Note-taking, were mentioned by all of the participants. These participants described three types of focus they used while they listen to oral English texts, Key Word Focus, Task Information Focus, and Topic Focus. Regrading Key Word Focus, the group participants said that they focused on key words in the text in one of two ways; they either extracted key words from the text based on their understanding of the text's context, or they listened for clear words in the text and then wrote these down or tried to remember them. They also said that they used this type of focus on specific information, such as dates, names of places, and names of people. The second type of focus mentioned during the group interviews

was Task Information Focus. The participants who mentioned this type of focus said they used the task as a filter to determine the information on which to concentrate in the text. The third type of focus was Topic Focus. The participants who reported using this strategy focused on the topic of the text to help them determine the information in the text on which to concentrate.

The second strategy that was mentioned in all the group interviews was note-taking. Participants mentioned taking notes on key information and key words while one group mentioned taking notes on specific information such as names, dates, places, and long words. Two groups specifically mentioned the process of taking notes based on the task requirements and then to write down clear words from the text, including numbers and proper names.

Participants from three of the groups said that the metacognitive strategy Reading the Task was important when attempting to understand oral texts in English. Based on all my data, including the data from the group interviews, it seems clear that students read the task before they listened to the text to better understand it. Knowing beforehand what information is requested in the task helped them effectively listen so that they could successfully complete the task. Surprisingly, this was the only metacognitive strategy that was mentioned during the group interviews. Since respondents from the questionnaire indicated that they usually used three metacognitive strategies, planning, monitoring, and evaluation, I had expected other metacognitive strategies to be mentioned during the group interviews. It may have been that they were so focused on

talking about other strategies they thought were more important to discuss, that they forgot to mention metacognitive strategies.

Two other cognitive strategies, Guessing and Memorization, were only mentioned by participants in only one group. The participants who mentioned Guessing said it helped them to understand some unknown words in the text based on their background knowledge of the topic. Using this information, the participants said that they could guess answers to some of the questions in the task. Participants who cited the second strategy, Memorization, claimed that this strategy was important to help them remember key information. Once they had it in mind, they wrote down some of the information before they forgot it. Memorization is a *repetition* strategy that allows learners to keep important information in working memory until it has been comprehended.

Two other strategies that were discussed by the participants, Translation and Getting Help from Classmates were debated at length by the participants during the group interviews. Translation, the first controversial strategy, was discussed in half of the groups. Two participants defended the use of this strategy. The first one said, "When there are difficult words, I translate them into Arabic and then I understand the meaning in English." The second said, "Sometimes when there are difficult words, I translate them into Arabic in order to understand it." However, other participants were hesitant to use this strategy. One participant said, "From secondary school our English teachers encourage us to not translate English into Arabic but to try and understand it in English. Because of that now it is much easier to understand English in English without the need to translate it into Arabic." Therefore, it is not clear the extent to which the translation

strategy is used. During the group interviews, seven participants said that they did not translate from English into Arabic. However, three said that they sometimes translated English words into Arabic so that they could understand the English words. It is possible that they had been told in secondary school not to translate and they may have also been told by their listening comprehension teachers in the university not to translate from English into French or Arabic. Therefore, from this negative feedback, some students may see it as a negative strategy. On the other hand, it is possible that all the students translate subconsciously without always being aware of it.

The benefits of a second controversial strategy, Getting Help from Classmates, was also debated by the participants of the group interviews. There were a number of participants who did not want to use this strategy for various reasons. The first reason seems to be a desire to rely on oneself and ones own understanding of the text. For example, Mohammed, said, "I don't ask other students. I feel competent in myself. These exercises are like an exam so I must rely on myself." Wahida, also claimed that she needed to rely on herself. She said, "I don't do that. I want to concentrate on the text. I need to listen by myself with no help from other students." Another reason, other than self-reliance, seems to have been a politeness issue. For example, Mounir, said, "I don't do that because I don't want to bother anyone." A third explanation for not wanting to use this strategy was the belief that others had various understandings of the text, which confused rather than helped the learner. For example, Radhia said, "I try my best to understand the text without talking to anyone. It doesn't help me to talk with someone else because they all have different understandings of what the text is about, which

confuses me. So I just focus on the text and try to understand it by myself." However, other participants did not see that this strategy confused but rather it helped them better understand the texts. For example, Ridha said, "Sometimes I ask other students for help and that helps me in understanding the text." Bouthaina, said, "It is sometimes helpful [to talk to other students]. I take what they have understood along with what I have understood and that sometimes helps me to have a better understanding of the text." Therefore, based on the 11 participants who debated the use of a *questioning* or *clarification* strategy, seven said that they did not use this strategy and four said that they did sometimes use this strategy. It may be that those participants who did not use this strategy have tried it in the past and have not found it helpful. However, it may also be possible that they were told by the teacher to not talk to others and, instead, rely on their own understanding of the task and the text. From my teaching experience, I would have expected the group interview participants to report using more socio-affective strategies, since Tunisians are very social and very rarely perform a task without including others.

Findings from the Individual Interviews

During the individual interviews, I asked participants to listen to one difficult text and one easy text. Some of the easy texts had a written task and some had a visual task. The texts that I used are listed in Chapter 3. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I labeled texts "easy" when I expected these texts to be below the participants' comprehension ability. I designated texts as "difficult" when I expected these texts to be above the participants' comprehension ability.

Table 12 shows the listening strategies the participants used while they were listening to easy texts and difficult texts and completing an associated task.

Table 12

Listening Strategies Used for Easy and Difficult Texts During the Individual Interviews (n=18)

Strategy Group	**Strategy Set**	**Strategy Name**	**Participants Reporting Strategies During Individual Interviews**					
			Easy/ Visual		**Easy/ Written**		**Difficult**	
			#	%	#	%	#	%
Metacognitive	Planning	Reading Task			10	100	12	66.7
"	Monitoring	Matching			10	100	18	100.0
"	Evaluation	Checking Information					1	5.6
Cognitive	Association	Association	2	25			2	11.1
"	Selective Attention	Focus			10	100	18	100.0
"	Elaboration	Note-Taking					8	44.4
"	Imagery	Picture Matching	8	100				
"	Inferencing	Guessing					2	11.1
"	Practicing	Listening Many Times					13	72.2
"	Rehearsal	Memorization					2	11.1
"	Repetition	Note-taking					3	16.7

Table 12 lists the name of the strategy, the group and set to which the strategy belongs, the number and percentage of times it was used by the participants for visual tasks associated with easy texts, for written tasks associated with easy texts, and for difficult texts. As is shown, a total of 11 strategies were used, the participants used two strategies when they completed visual tasks, three strategies when they completed written tasks

associated with easy texts, and ten strategies when they completed written tasks associated with difficult texts. Each of these strategies belongs to a different strategy set.

Association, which the participants called "background knowledge," is an *association* strategy. Although no one explicitly mentioned this strategy, Abir, Houda, Nourzed, and Zohra implicitly suggested that they had used Association by mentioning that they had heard the text before, or they were familiar with the topic of the text. Abir and Nourzed used this strategy for the visual tasks associated with easy texts and Houda and Zohra used this strategy for the difficult texts. Houda said that knowing the topic helped her as she listened to the difficult text. She said, "Because I knew the topic, I knew what the topic was talking about, completing the task was easier. For example the reasons and things like that was kind of easy." Nourzed said that she found completing the visual task easy. She said, "I've heard the story before in Arabic. Knowing the story helped me to successfully complete the task."

Focus, which the participants called "concentration," is a second strategy that the participants mentioned. Focus means that the participant's attention is concentrated on a specific part of the text. Nourzed explained her use of Focus: "I read the task first then I listened to the text and I concentrated on what I needed to complete the task." This strategy was used by all of the participants who listened to the difficult texts and all of the participants who completed a written task associated with an easy text. It was not used at all when the participants completed visual tasks associated with easy texts.

Note-Taking was a third strategy that the participants mentioned. Eight of the participants used it as an *elaboration* strategy and three used it as a *repetition* strategy.

Samia said that elaborating the text through note-taking made it easier for her to understand the text: "I can shorten the whole text. With note-taking, I can omit some words and write down the important words." This process of omitting some words and writing down the important words was important for the participants. Note-taking was also used as a *repetition* strategy, in which case the words are written down exactly as in the text without any elaboration. Fatma describes this strategy in the following way: "I note down all the words that I hear in the conversation and then I can refer back to my notes to find the information which helps me to answer the questions in the task."

Picture Matching was a fourth strategy that was used by all of the participants when they completed a visual task. Other than the two participants who used an association strategy, this was the only strategy that the participants used when they completed a visual task. Since it was the primary strategy they used, it seems that this strategy processes a picture in the visuo-spatial sketchpad and then matches the picture with the corresponding text from the phonological loop. Salah described this strategy by saying, "I matched the description from the text with the picture in the task."

A fifth strategy used by 13 participants was Listening Many Times. It was mentioned by the participants as being the normal *practice* strategy that is used during their listening comprehension classes. However, even though it was mentioned as being a normal strategy, only about three-quarters of the participants used this strategy for the difficult text. The other participants did not want to listen to it a second time. These participants either said that the text was clear and easy enough and they did not need to listen to it again, or they said that the text was too difficult and listening to the text again

would not help them complete more of the task. I have categorized this strategy as a *practice* strategy, because it helped the participants activate inactive information in their long-term memory. Khadija says this about Listening Many Times: "The more times you listen to something the more you understand. . . .So when you listen to something a second time you may understand something that you didn't understand the first time."

A sixth strategy, Memorization, was only mentioned by 2 participants. Memorizing is a *repetition* strategy that helped the two participants repeat the information in working memory until it had been comprehended. Basam described how he used a memorization strategy: "First you have to concentrate on all the words. Then you have to memorize the main idea and some important words. Then you complete the task using the information that you remembered from the text."

A seventh strategy, Guessing, was only explicitly mentioned by one student and implicitly mentioned by another. This result was surprising to me as it was quite highly rated in the questionnaire. It is possible that more participants used it during the individual interviews, but did not report it. Sheima said this about Guessing: "I listened to everything. I didn't have a specific plan. I guessed on some of the answers." As is evident from her response, she used this strategy without any orchestration of any other strategies; therefore, her use of this strategy was not very effective.

In addition to the cognitive strategies mentioned above, three metacognitive strategies were mentioned: Reading the Task, Matching, and Checking Information. The first two strategies were used quite extensively by the participants but Checking Information was used by only one student.

Reading the Task is a *planning* strategy. It was used by all of the participants who completed a written task associated with an easy text and by 12 participants who listened to the difficult task. Learners used this strategy by looking at the task before they listened to the text and deciding on which part of the task they should focus or what information they needed to successfully complete the task. In addition, this strategy helped students while they listened to know the parts of the text to focus while they listened to the text. Abir said, "I read the task to know what information I needed to find."

Matching was a second metacognitive strategy that was used by all of the participants for both the written task that was associated with the easy text and for the difficult text. The participants used this *monitoring* strategy to make sure that the information on which they focused was appropriate and relevant to successfully completing the task. About this strategy, Nourzed said: "I read the task first then I listened to the text and I concentrated on what I needed to complete the task."

The final metacognitive strategy that was used was Checking Information. This strategy is an *evaluation* strategy. Even though only one participant used this strategy, she thought this strategy was very important. She said, "I can write down answers and then review them and write the correct answers down on the task."

Surprisingly, none of the participants mentioned a translation strategy during the individual interviews and none of the participants wanted to conduct the interview in Arabic or French, even though I told them they could speak in their first language. The lack of this strategy surprised me because I observed the use of this strategy while I taught listening comprehension. I often encountered this strategy in my classroom when

the learners would search for a word in Arabic and then define the English word based on the meaning of the Arabic word. As I mentioned when I discussed the findings from the group interviews, translation seems to be a controversial strategy. They may have used it unconsciously but did not want to mention it because they have been told by their teachers that they should not translate from Arabic into English.

Because of the participants' hesitancy to use Translation, there seems to be a conflict between the teachers' prescription not to use this strategy and the learners' natural desire to use this strategy. This conflict is evident from my conversation with the only participant who implied that she may have used Arabic during the individual interviews, Samia. The following is part of the conversation that I had with her when I asked her about the process she used to listen to the text.

S: I listen to the text and I try to say the words and the ideas in my own language.

R: In your own language? Hmm. So you try to say. . .

S: I try to say it in another way. So, if I don't take the right word. . .I just say it in my own words.

R: So you listen to the text in English and then you try to translate it into Arabic?

S: No. For example, the speaker said that you can improve memory by using mnemonics. So if I don't get the right word, I try to paraphrase it in my own way, with another word.

R: Oh. I see.

In this dialogue, she uses the phrase "in my own language." I thought that she meant she translated into Arabic. However, when I asked her about her translation strategy, she denied it and explained that she did not use another language but she used a different English word to mean the same thing.

This implied "taboo" of using Arabic when listening to English is also mentioned when I interviewed Fatma. After she listened to a difficult text, she said:

> "The text was difficult. Sometimes it was too fast. But it was clear. I had a hard time hearing everything because I'm not used to listening to English conversations. Maybe if I would have more practice listening to English conversations, I would have understood this conversation better."

The problem she mentions is that she is "not used to listening to English conversations." The solution is not translating into Arabic, but, instead, "practice listening to English conversations." Therefore, as I mentioned before when I discussed the findings from the group interviews, translation is a controversial strategy. During the group interviews some participants admitted using it but others denied using it completely. Its use was also not reported during the individual interviews, even though its use was implied occasionally, indicating that a translation strategy may be used subconsciously. However, because of the apparent restriction of using Arabic by teachers and others, it seems that none of the participants wanted to admit using it during the individual interviews.

Findings from the Think-Aloud Protocols

My final data-collection method for identifying listening strategies that Tunisian EFL learners used was think-aloud protocols. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, the

participants who participated in the think-aloud protocols responded by summarizing segments, associating segments with their background knowledge, providing listening problems related to the segment, or commenting on the segment. Out of those four categories, only those segments related to segment summarizing helped me identify listening strategies that the participants used while they listened to an oral text in English.

From my analysis of the think-aloud protocols, four listening strategies emerged. I have listed these strategies in Table 13.

Table 13

Listening Strategies Indicated during Think-Aloud Protocols (n=4)

Strategy	**Total Amt. Used**		**Participants Reporting Strategies During Think-aloud Protocols**							
			Ahlem		Hatem		Houda		Salah	
			#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Clear Word Focus	55	45.9%	17	54.80	14	58.30	12	54.50	12	27.90
Segment End Focus	18	15.0%	2	6.50	4	16.70	9	40.90	3	7.00
Guessing	45	37.5%	10	32.30	9	37.50	11	50.00	15	34.90
Adding Extra Information	16	13.3%	9	29.00	6	25.00	0	0.00	1	2.30

Along with the strategy names, I also listed the names of the participants participating in the think-aloud protocols, the percentage that each participant used a particular strategy, and the total percentage that each particular strategy was used during the think-aloud protocols. All of these strategies are related to the comprehension process, rather than the movement of information in the human information processing system. Currently, I will

confine myself to only describing these strategies. In Chapter 5, I will discuss in more detail the relationship between these strategies and the comprehension process.

During the think-aloud protocols I identified two language-specific strategies that Tunisian EFL students used, Clear Word Focus and Segment End Focus. I refer to these strategies as language-specific strategies, because I think that Tunisian EFL students have learned these strategies from their multilingual educational background of Arabic and French. Clear Word Focus and Segment End Focus may be beneficial to help the listener focus on important words in an oral text when they listen to a syllable-timed language, like French. However, when they listen to an oral text in English, which is a stress-timed language, these strategies are very unhelpful. Both of these strategies, along with Guessing and Adding Extra Information are related to the word-identification and construction of the text-base which I discuss further in Chapter 5.

Three of the participants used Clear Word Focus more than half of the time in order to recognize words from the text during the think-aloud protocols. Salah did not use it as much as the others. This could be because he had a more difficult time than the others in identifying words and information from the segments he heard. The four participants used this strategy by focusing on clear words, words that are held longer, are louder, or that have longer pauses after them. They seem to use this strategy to recognize what they consider to be important words in an oral text.

An example of the use of Clear Word Focus is below, showing an extract from a text entitled, “Airline Reservations” (Baker & Tanka, 2006, p. 225).

A: Sep**tem**ber the **12th/**(.62) **And/(.50) what time** did you want to **leave** JFK/ (.20)

C: **Mid**-after**noon**(.62)

A: **So/** (.37) like de**part**ing a**round** (.20) like **one** or **two** (.15)

C: **Right** (.25)

A: **OK**(.66) I **got** a (.40) **twelve noon** or (.40) **four-**fif**teen** de**par**ture (.25)

C: OK Um (.50) **four-**fif**teen** would be **bet**ter (.77)

A: OK

In this example, the bold-faced syllables are the stressed syllables and the length of the pauses in seconds is shown in parentheses. Normally a native English speaker would use Rhythm Focus to focus on the stressed syllables to recognize the words in the information units. During a think-aloud protocol, Salah responded to the segment in this way, "She's giving the dates of her travel, the 15th." Salah has obviously misunderstood the segment. Instead of understanding that the agent and the customer were talking about the time of departure, he thinks they are talking about her dates of travel. I see this as a concrete example of Salah's use of Clear Word Focus. The time "four-fifteen" is repeated twice and is the clearest word in the segment. So it seems that Salah has heard it and guesses that it is a departure date instead of a departure time.

Another example of Clear Word Focus is given below.

In the United States//(50) freedom of the press/(.20) is a very important idea//(1.0) It is illegal for the government/(.15) to either stop/(.30) or try to change what newspapers say//(1.15) If a newspaper prints a story that is negative or critical of

the government//(.60) the writers cannot be arrested or otherwise punished//

(Scholnick & Gabler, 2003b, p.121)

This example is a segment from a think-aloud protocol with Hichem. After listening to a segment from the text, Hichem responded, "U.S. freedom. Punished, arrested, writers. Freedom of press." None of these words has context and, therefore, what he wrote does not make sense. It seems that he listened for the clear words and reported what he heard, even though together these words have no meaning.

The second language-specific strategy that the participants used during the think-aloud protocols was Segment End Focus. As with Clear Word Focus, participants focused on the clear words. However, students using this strategy focused specifically on the end of the segment rather than on words in the segment that they thought were clear. Participants used Segment End Focus 15% of the time, with Houda using it more than 40% of the time.

The problem with using Segment End Focus is clearly demonstrated by the difficulties Houda had understanding the segment below.

But there are some health concerns. And this is a big "but" with this kind of diet. Nutritional experts worry about the effects of low-carb diets on the body. What kind of effects are we talking about? Some significant ones, like vitamin deficiencies...

(Baker & Tanka, 2006, p. 248-249)

This segment is taken from a text entitled, "Two Popular Diets." In this text, a lecturer talks about two popular diets, the low-fat diet and the low-carb diet. In this segment the

lecturer is talking about health concerns linked to both of these diets.

This segment has one main point, which is the health concerns of the nutritional experts. However, it also has two sub-points. The first sub-point is the concern about what type of effects these two diets have on the body. The second sub-point is specifying the negative effects that nutritional experts are concerned about.

After listening to the above extract, Houda, responded, "Vitamin deficiencies can be linked to carb diets." Thus, she focuses on the last two words in the segment, "vitamin deficiencies" and ignores all the other words in the segment, except for "carb diets." She then links "vitamin deficiencies" and "carb diets" without really understanding how they are linked. She doesn't mention the health concerns, or that nutritional experts are concerned about the effects of the diet on the body. Her statement mentions part of the last sub-point but doesn't focus on the main idea of the segment.

Another example of the use of Segment End Focus can be seen in Hatem's response to a segment from an oral text entitled, "Airline Reservations." This segment is shown below.

> A: uh, most of the time daily, and sometimes hourly. And this fare is a non-refundable fare. There is a 75 dollar fee for any changes once the tickets are issued, plus any increase in the fare.
>
> C: I understand. OK.
>
> (Baker & Tanka, 2006, p. 225)

Hatem responds to this segment, "She understands what he says and that's all." Thus, he misses all the important information in the segment that the travel agent gives to the

woman. All he hears is, "I understand. OK," which is the last piece of information in the segment, but it is not important in this segment. Therefore, like Houda, he has used a strategy that has failed to help him understand the important information in the segment.

Guessing is a third strategy that the participants used during the think-aloud protocols. Participants used this strategy when they were unable to understand the meaning of some words that they had recognized or they did not understand what the words meant in the context of the text that they had heard. The participants of the think-aloud protocols used this strategy much more than the participants of the individual interviews, which leads me to believe that this strategy was actually used much more during the individual interviews, but was unreported by the participants.

One of the participants in my research, Hatem, used Guessing while he listened to an oral text entitled "Newspapers." A segment from this text is shown below.

> This is what freedom of the press means, and Americans take this right very seriously. Newspapers are an important way to get information in this country, and when people read a newspaper, they want to be confident that the information in it is truthful and fair. Daily newspapers are cheap and easy to buy and are an important part of American life. (Scholnick & Gabler, 2003b, pp. 121-124)

After hearing this segment, Hatem responded, "Lack of freedom in writing in newspapers. Daily newspapers are an important part of American life. They are cheap. Anyone can buy it." Hatem's response to the segment may seem confusing. However, if we analyze it piece by piece, what he has done becomes more understandable. Figure 12 illustrates, in pictorial form, the way that Hatem has understood this segment.

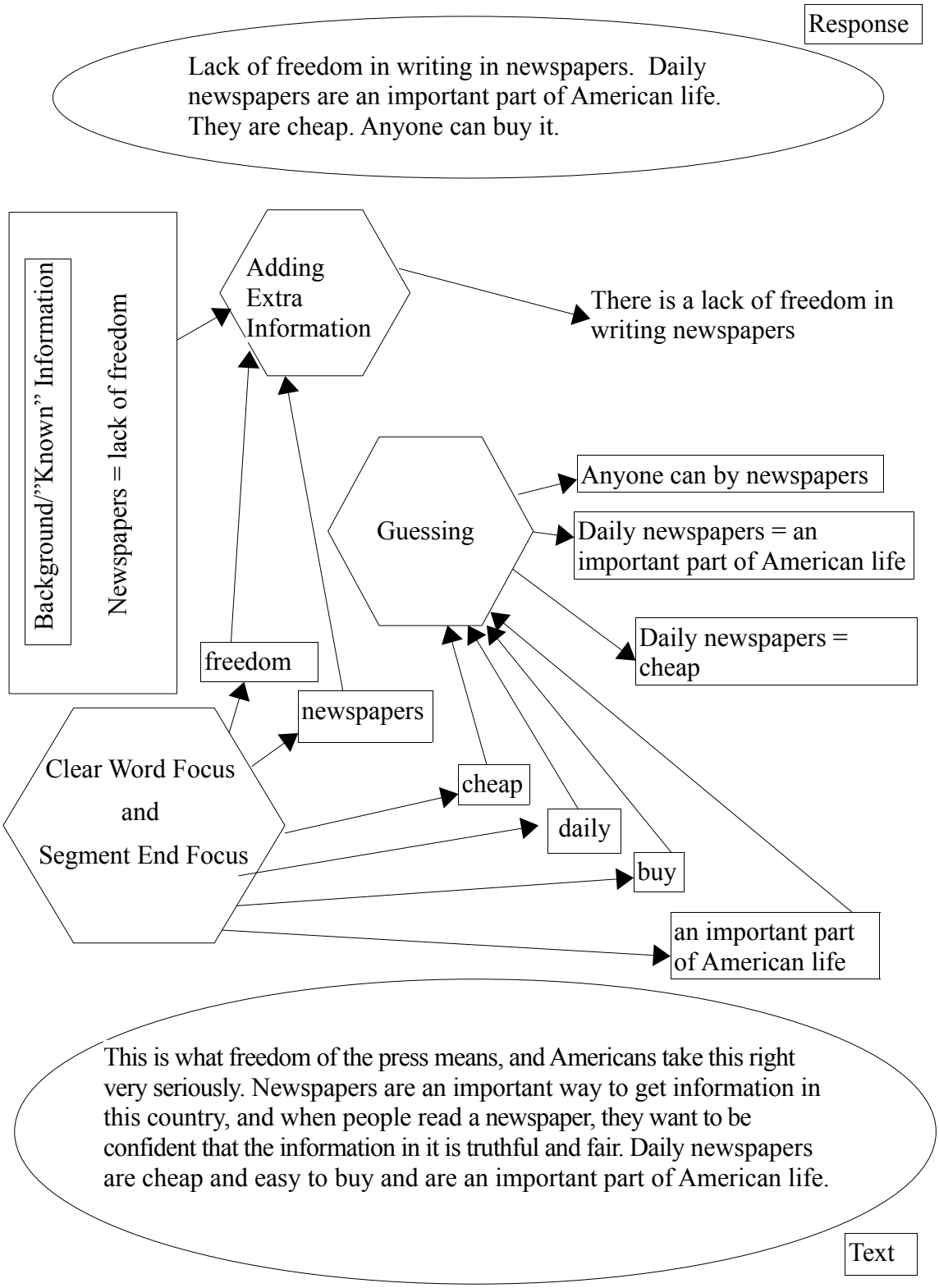

Figure 12: A model of comprehension strategy use by one Tunisian EFL learner

He used Clear Word Focus, Segment End Focus, Guessing, and Adding Extra Information to help him try to understand the meaning of the segment he heard. Hatem first used a Clear Word Focus strategy to recognize the words "freedom," "newspapers," "daily" "cheap," and "buy." It seems that he also used a Segment End Focus strategy to recognize the phrase, "an important part of American life." Once he recognized the pieces, he was not sure what they meant so he used a guessing strategy to infer what the words have in common and what they mean in the context of the segment. Through his guessing strategy, therefore, he inferred that "daily," "newspapers," and "cheap" are related and that "daily," "newspapers" and "an important part of American life" are related. In addition, it seems that he inferred that "buy" must mean that people buy the newspapers. Finally, even though he has heard the words "freedom" and "newspapers," he did not guess that there is freedom in writing newspapers. Instead he used an Adding Extra Information strategy to associate from his background knowledge that there is a lack of freedom in writing newspapers and so this is what he links together during the comprehension process. The result of using these four comprehension strategies is his response to the segment. Even though it is not what a native English speaker would understand from the segment, it is what Hatem has understood as a result of using his language-specific comprehension strategies and his background knowledge.

In this section, I have identified the listening strategies that Tunisian EFL learners use. These strategies include metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies. The strategies that the majority of the research participants reported using during their listening comprehension classes were: one metacognitive strategy,

Reading the Task and three cognitive strategies, Focus, Note-taking; and Listening Many Times. In addition, during my research the research participants reported using two metacognitive strategies, Reading the Task, a *planning* strategy, and Matching, a *monitoring* strategy. They also reported using six cognitive strategies during the research: Focus, an *attentional* strategy; Association, an *association* strategy; Listening Many Times, a *practice* strategy; Guessing, an *inferencing* strategy; Note-taking, a *note-taking* strategy; and Memorization, a *repetition* strategy. The results of my research has also indicated that Tunisian EFL learners use at least one socio-affective strategy, Getting Help from Classmates, which is a *questioning* or *clarification* strategy.

In addition to the above strategies that my research participants reported using, two other more controversial strategies were mentioned being used in their listening comprehension classes: one cognitive strategy, Translation, and one socio-affective strategy, Getting Help from Classmates. These two strategies were controversial because some of the participants said that they used them but others said that they should not be used. First, from the results of my research, it seems that my participants had been told that they should not use Translation and, instead they should only use English to understand the text and respond to the text. Second, it seems that the other controversial strategy in my research, Getting Help from Classmates, was also not used by the majority of they participants. They said that they did not understand it either because they thought they should rely on their own understanding, because their teachers' had told them not to use this strategy, or because they considered completing a listening task like taking an exam.

Listening Obstacles Identified among Tunisian EFL Learners

In this section, I identify the obstacles that participants of my research reported. I used the same data-collection methods to identify listening obstacles as I used above to identify listening strategies. Three of these data-collection methods, the questionnaire, the group interviews, and the listening diaries, I used to identify listening obstacles that the participants reported when they listened to oral English texts in their classroom. The other two data-collection methods, individual interviews and think-aloud protocols, I used to identify listening obstacles they encountered while listening to oral texts.

Findings from the Questionnaire and from the Group Interviews

In identifying listening obstacles encountered while listening to oral English texts, I expected the participants from all the data-collection methods to list features of the text, or features related to the text, that they considered to be hindrances to understanding the text. In addition to these "open" listening obstacles, I also asked respondents to the questionnaire and participants of the group interviews to rank a fixed list of obstacles which I assumed Tunisian EFL learners may have difficulty.

I gave them an open-ended question to answer at the end of the questionnaire in order to collect a list of listening obstacles that the questionnaire respondents thought were important. The question was, "Please write down specific problems that you have when you listen to English oral texts." 17 of the respondents responded to this open-ended question, providing a list of listening obstacles which I have included in Table 14.

Table 14

Listening Obstacles Reported in the Questionnaire (n=17)

Obstacles	**Respondents Reporting**	
	#	%
Fast Text/Speaker's Speed	8	47%
Unfamiliar Accent	6	35%
Unclear Speech	4	24%
Difficult/New Vocabulary	3	18%
Not Hearing Stressed/Key Words	3	18%
Tape not Clear	3	18%
Unfamiliar Grammar	3	18%

Table 14 lists the obstacles mentioned by the respondents and the percentage of respondents who mentioned this obstacle. I have excluded from this table those obstacles that were mentioned by only one respondent. The obstacles reported most by the respondents were: a fast text speed, a difficult to understand accent, and unclear speech. Other than the *tape not being clear* and *unfamiliar grammar*, the other obstacles mentioned by the questionnaire respondents dealt with the importance of words and were also highly ranked in the other data-collection methods I used.

In addition to the obstacles mentioned by the questionnaire respondents, the group interview participants also mentioned listening obstacles which they thought were important. A summary of these obstacles is given in Table 15.

Table 15

Listening Obstacles Reported in the Group Interviews (n=4)

Listening Obstacle Type	**Listening Obstacles Reported**	**% of Groups Reporting Strategy**
Text Obstacles	Fast Tex Speed	100%
	Unfamiliar Accent	75%
	Poor Audio Quality	75%
	Reductions	75%
	Background Noise	50%
	Unknown Topic	50%
	Numbers	25%
	Pauses Too Short	25%
	Vocabulary Not Known	25%
	Not Hearing Stressed/Key Words	25%
	Unknown Grammatical Structures	25%
Task Obstacles	Confusing	25%
Other Obstacles	Emotions	25%

In Table 15, I have grouped the obstacles the participants of the group interviews reported into three categories: those related to the text, those related to the task, and miscellaneous obstacles that were listed. Most of the obstacles mentioned were related to the text. 75% of the groups mentioned the *speaker's accent*, the *speed of the text*, and *reductions in the text*. Half of the groups mentioned *audio noise* as an obstacle. The remaining obstacles in the table were only mentioned by one group; they are: *short pauses*, *unknown vocabulary*, *a confusing task*, *negative emotional response to a text*, and *a difficult or complex topic*. The two highest ranked obstacles, *a fast text* and *an unfamiliar accent*, were mentioned by both the questionnaire respondents and the group interview

participants. All the other obstacles mentioned by the group interview participants were also mentioned by the questionnaire respondents. These obstacles are: *unclear speech*, *new vocabulary*, *not hearing stressed words*, *unclear audio*, and *unfamiliar grammar*.

Table 16 compares the "open" obstacles list with a fixed list of obstacles that were ranked by both respondents of the questionnaire and participants of the group interviews.

Table 16

A Comparison of the Ranking of a Fixed List of Obstacles between the Questionnaire Respondents (n=21) and the Group Interview Participants (n=13).

Questionnaire Respondents Ranking	**Group Interview Participants Ranking**
Text Speed	Text Speed
Unclear Speech	Speaker's Accent
Speaker's Accent	Vocabulary
Hearing Stressed Words/Syllables in a Text	Unfamiliar Grammatical Structures
Unfamiliar Grammatical Constructions	Unfamiliar Context/Background of Text
Lack of Visual Input	Number of Speakers in a Text
Vocabulary	
Background/Context of the text	
Number of Speakers in a Text	

As is shown, the rankings from both data-collection methods are similar. Both *text speed* and *speaker's accent* were ranked as the most troublesome obstacles, while the **c***ontext* or *background of the text* and *number of speakers* were ranked as the least troublesome obstacles to understanding an oral text. The only major difference was *unfamiliar grammatical structures* and *vocabulary*. The respondents in the questionnaire thought

that *unfamiliar grammatical structures* were more of a hindrance than *vocabulary*, while the participants of the group interviews thought that *vocabulary* was more of an obstacle than *unfamiliar grammatical structures*.

Therefore, based on the data that I have analyzed from the questionnaires and from the group interviews, the listening obstacles that seem to be the greatest hindrance are: *a fast text speed*, *an unclear accent*, and *unclear speech* even though other listening obstacles, such as *audio noise* and *unfamiliar vocabulary* were also mentioned.

Findings from the Listening Diaries

Three of the four students who wrote listening diaries, described encountering listening obstacles when they listen to oral English texts. These obstacles are listed in Table 17.

Table 17

Listening Obstacles Reported in the Listening Diaries (n=3)

Obstacles	**Participant**		
	Mounir	Saoussen	Samia
Audio Noise	X		
Difficult/Unclear Pronunciation		X	
Teacher Passivity	X		
Fast Text Speed		X	X
Negative Affect of Topic on Listener	X		
Unfamiliar Topic		X	
Unfamiliar Vocabulary	X	X	X

As shown in the Table17, all three students mentioned *vocabulary* as being an obstacle. In addition, two students listed the *fast speed of the text* as being an obstacle. All the other obstacles were only mentioned by one of the students: *audio noise*, *pronunciation*, *teacher passivity*, *topic affect on the listener*, and *unfamiliar topic*. All of these obstacles were also mentioned in the other data-collection methods, with the exception of *teacher passivity*.

Mounir writes an entry describing his encounters with listening obstacles: "The lesson was a bit boring. In fact the theme [smoking] was a bit unfashionable. The quality of tape was very bad which affected my understanding of the speech. The teacher was also a bit inactive which made me fed up. I think that a good listening session depends on the quality of the tape. The teacher motivation, and the authenticity of the theme." In these sentences, Mounir lists several obstacles: *lack of topic affection*, *audio noise*, and *teacher passivity*. Then he summed it up by saying that these three obstacles must be eliminated if an oral text is to be understood. In addition, Mounir stated that he became frustrated, "fed up," when the teacher was passive and this affected his ability to understand the oral text.

Saoussen also talks about obstacles that she has faced.

> "[In] the first task I managed the description part but I couldn't hear well and know the birthplace of them. Maybe because I didn't hear about them before. [In] the second task, from 16 words, I knew 12. The other words were somehow difficult because of the speed of the speaker for example the word 'moves' I heard it 'rules'."

First, Saoussen mentions that she could not "hear well" the words needed to answer the task because she was not familiar with them. This is, therefore, a problem with vocabulary. Second, she could not complete the second task for two reasons. First the speaker's speed was too fast and, second, she misheard the pronunciation of words, which caused her to misunderstand.

Samia mentions the obstacles with which she had difficulties in two separate entries. In the first entry she stated, "Today, we were asked to complete notes. . . . As usual, the main difficulty was hearing some words because the speaker was too fast, not all of them of course but some." In this entry she mentioned that, "as usual," the main difficulty was that the speakers spoke too fast. In other words, she encounters this obstacle a lot when she listens to oral texts and this is the primary obstacles that she is concerned with. In another entry she says,

> Personally, I haven't understood lots of things in the conversation because they spoke about places and theaters names which I don't know. I found also difficulties in hearing some movies titles and I was obliged to ask my colleague who sit next to me. But even with the help of my friend, I failed to finish the task. The words I missed actually, were not movies or theaters names, they were new vocabulary for us, used in the informal English language between friends.

Here she mentioned not being able to understand the meaning of certain words, which caused her to "fail" to finish the task. As with the group interviews, the *quickness of the*

speech and *unfamiliar words* were the two biggest obstacles mentioned in the listening diaries.

However, the extent to which students encountered each of these obstacles is not obvious from a table. For example, Samia mentioned the text being too fast. However, even though she talked about the quickness of the text, she spoke more often in her entries about the importance of understanding words. When she understands the words she is happy. However, when she encounters words that she does not know or cannot hear clearly, she becomes frustrated. For example, she says,

> I fear not to listen or understand some words. But things were well done because I was near the tape recorder so my task was successful. But in the second part, we were asked to fill in the gaps, I faced some problems with some words that their pronunciation looks a like so, how to spell them was a problem. Unfortunately, I have missed two words...

From her diary entries, it is clear that her main concern is understanding the words.

However, even though Saoussen and Samia wrote about the text sometimes being too fast, Mounir does not. Instead he indicates from his entries that the speed of the speakers is fine. The following are some examples of the way in which he approaches the text.

1. "The speech was clear to me, but I had some difficulties concerning some words that I do not know or heard. I had no problems while listening and I was motivated to understand his speech."
2. "The speech was good, and I did understand most of it."

3. “I did understand the speech but the new words affected my understanding of some parts.”
4. “I had no difficulties in understanding the speech, but the new words affected a bit of my understanding.”
5. “The speech was interesting. . .and clear. I think that a good understanding also lies in the attractiveness of the speech.”

Continually he states that the speech is clear and that there is some other obstacle, usually *not understanding the words*, which prevents him from understanding the text. This concentration on vocabulary and understanding specific words was a major focus of all three students. Again, as I have mentioned before, these entries indicate an emphasis on the importance of clear words.

Findings from the Individual Interviews

Obstacles that were encountered while the participants listened to oral texts were reported during two data-collection methods: the individual interviews and the think-aloud protocols. In Table 18, I have listed the obstacles that were mentioned by participants of the individual interviews, the total number and percentage of participants mentioning the listening obstacle, the number and percentage of participants mentioning a listening obstacle for the easy texts, and the number and percentage of participants mentioning a listening obstacle for the difficult texts.

Table 18

Listening Obstacles Reported during the Individual Interviews (n=18)

Listening Obstacle Name	**Total Obstacles**		**Amount for Easy Text**		**Amount for Difficult Text**	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Text Fast	13	35.1%	2	10.5%	11	61.1%
Inability to Listen and Write Simultaneously	10	27.0%	2	10.5%	8	44.4%
Text Long	9	24.3%	1	5.3%	8	44.4%
Task Confusing	8	21.6%	1	5.3%	7	38.9%
Accent Difficult	5	13.5%			5	27.8%
Vocabulary Not Known	3	8.1%	3	15.8%		
Pauses Too Short	2	5.4%	2	10.5%		
Subject/Topic Difficult/Complex	2	5.4%	2	10.5%		
Task Long	2	5.4%			2	11.1%
Background Noise (Music)	1	2.7%	1	5.3%		
Multiple Speakers	1	2.7%	1	5.3%		
Text/Pronunciation Not Clear	1	2.7%			1	5.6%

As Table 18 indicates, *fast speech* was the obstacle most often cited by the participants. After *fast speech*, the *inability to listen and write simultaneously*, *a long text*, *a confusing task*, and *a difficult accent* were the next four obstacles most often mentioned. All of these obstacles were reported more for the difficult text than they were for the easy text. However, it is interesting to note that five of the remaining seven obstacles were mentioned during the easy text but not during the difficult text. These five obstacles are: *unknown vocabulary*, *short pauses*, *difficult topic*, *background noise*, and *multiple speakers*. It seems that the participants expected these types of obstacles for the difficult texts, but not for the easy texts.

Two of the obstacles most often mentioned, *a fast text speed* and *a difficult accent*, were also the two obstacles most often reported in the other data-collection methods. However, most of the other obstacles mentioned in the individual interviews were either not reported, or rarely reported in the other data-collection methods. In addition, obstacles that were reported many times in the other data-collection methods were not mentioned, or rarely mentioned in the individual interviews.

There are many examples of obstacles that were reported frequently in most of the data-collection methods but were not mentioned at all during the individual interviews. One example of the obstacles often reported during the group interviews is *reductions***,** yet it was not mentioned at all during the individual interviews. Another example of this difference is the obstacle, *encountering unknown vocabulary***,** which was mentioned very often in the listening diaries, and also mentioned a few times in the questionnaire, but was not a significant obstacle for the participants during the individual interviews. It was mentioned only three times during the easy text interviews and not at all during the difficult text interviews. Other obstacles, such as *unfamiliar grammar*, *hearing stressed words, listening for reductions*, and *lack of audio clarity*, were also prominently reported in the other data-collection methods, but absent from the individual interviews. In addition, other obstacles such as *the inability to listen and write simultaneously*, *text length*, and *a confusing task*, which were either not mentioned at all in the other data-collection methods, or only rarely mentioned, figured prominently during the individual interviews.

I would like to propose three possible explanations for the participants reporting listening obstacles in the individual interview which were unrelated to those reported in the other data-collection methods. The first explanation is regarding the differences in types of tasks between the classroom and the individual interviews. The listening tasks were easier and shorter in their listening comprehension classes than they were during the individual interviews, which may be the reason that *long tasks* were not reported as an obstacle, and *confusing tasks* and the *inability to listen and write simultaneously* were only mentioned twice, once in the questionnaire and once in the group interview.

The data from my research gives evidence that the participants' listening tasks in the classroom are shorter and easier than were the tasks in my research. For example, I asked the participants to compare tasks and texts in the interviews with tasks and texts in the classroom. Out of seven participants who talked about the text, only one thought the text was more difficult. However, out of eleven participants who responded to my question as to whether the task was easier in the classroom than the interview, only two thought that the tasks related to the easy texts were more difficult; but five participants thought that the tasks related to the difficult text were more difficult. Evidence also exists in my observations. I noticed during the observations that the tasks the teachers used were easier than some of the tasks I used during my research. Therefore, it seems that some obstacles related to the task, such as difficulty listening and writing at the simultaneously and the difficulty the participants had with long or complex tasks during the individual interviews, were more noticeable to them during the individual interviews than they were during their listening comprehension classes.

Another explanation for the participants reporting listening obstacles, unrelated to the other data-collection methods, is linked to specific word focus. An emphasis on vocabulary, listening for individual words, and focusing on grammar seem to be much more a part of the listening comprehension classroom than it was during the individual interviews. During my observations, all three of the teachers I observed, Ms. Arbi, Ms. Hamdi, and Ms. Jerbi, concentrated on helping the students hear individual words in the text. Ms. Hamdi and Ms. Jerbi, wrote on the board the sentences from the text that answered a question from the task. Ms. Hamdi concentrated on getting the students to identify the exact words from the text, filling in missing words that the students had missed. Ms. Arbi encouraged the students and also summarized and consolidated what the students had said. All three teachers would correct any mistakes in words or pronunciation that the students had made. Therefore, my classroom observations seem to confirm that an emphasis on words and grammar are much more part of the classroom than it was during the individual interviews. Therefore, because emphasis on words and grammar was not a focus of the listening tasks during the individual interviews, it is understandable participants would not report these as being obstacles in the individual interviews, even though they had reported them in the other data-collection methods.

Finally, I think that obstacles related to textual clarity and audio noise were more often reported for data-collection methods related to the listening comprehension classroom, because sound quality was an issue in their classrooms, but was not an issue during the individual interviews. For example, I noticed the audio problems and classroom noise in my observations. Other evidence was found in three of the

participants' reports during the individual interviews. They said that the audio during the interview was much clearer than the audios that they heard in their classes. They also said that there was more noise in the class, making it difficult for them to focus on the text. Conversely, not one participant during the individual interviews said that the text was unclear, said that the audio was not clear, or complained about noise in the classroom. Therefore, I think the individual interviews had different types of tasks, more focus on meaning rather than words, and more audio clarity and less noise. These differences caused the participants to report different obstacles from the individual interviews than they reported about their listening comprehension classroom experiences.

Findings from the Think-Aloud Protocols

Only one participant, Basam, mentioned encountering listening comprehension obstacles during the think-aloud protocols. The obstacles he cited that deterred him from understanding the text were: *a fast text speed*, *outside noises*, and *too much information*. He also complained about losing his focus or having his focus "*delayed*."

Regarding *text speed*, Basam said, "I was thinking about the great speed of the native speaker. It is a major problem in such a task." He also mentioned the tempo of the text in response to another segment of text. At this point he also mentioned that outside noises had disturbed him, "It was really hard to complete this task because of many noises outside also the speed of native speaker is another obstacle for achieving it." Another obstacle that Basam mentioned was too much information. The following is what he said about this obstacle, "I really feel uncomfortable because all the circumstances are presented at the same time it was very hard to complete [the task]."

The final obstacle that Basam mentioned was *delayed focus*. This obstacle is a concept that the participants talked about during the individual interviews. They defined the concept in the following way. During their listening comprehension classes, they listened to an oral text at least three times. The first time they are told by the teacher to listen and to not focus on understanding the text. The second time they are told to focus on understanding the text. The third time they are told to listen, and presumably check their answers. Therefore, they have learned to "delay" their focus until the second or third time they listen to a text.

During the individual interviews, the participants may have had a problem with *delayed focus*, since they listened to the easy text only once and they listened to the difficult text twice. Even though they may have had it, none of them reported it directly. Some of them mentioned it indirectly when they talked about the difficulty in focusing and when they mentioned that they were used to listening to an oral text three times.

Unlike the other participants, Basam reported *delayed focus* as being an obstacle during the think-aloud protocol. He said the following about this obstacle, "I was thinking about my lost. I feel that I am not concentrating in the conversation because we [students] have a habit that we listen to a text three times the first time we don't actually concentrate and we delay that concentration to the second or the third time." After listening to another segment of the think-aloud protocol Basam said, "I was thinking about how I could make an answer and I was not completely concentrating on the conversation since we were familiar with three times listening." This is definitely an important obstacle which prevented Basam from implementing an important strategy.

Discussion of the Listening Obstacles

From my analysis of the five data-collection methods, I have divided the obstacles the participants mentioned into five main classes. These classes, along with the obstacles are listed in Table 19.

Table 19

A Classification of Obstacles from the Research

Obstacle Classification	**Obstacles Identified from Research**
1. Text Transfer Obstacles	a. Text speed
	b. Text length
2. Text Comprehension Obstacles	a. Unknown vocabulary
	b. Inability to hear specific words
	1. difficult or unusual accents
	2. reductions
	3. unclear speech
	4. unfamiliar pronunciation
	c. Unfamiliar grammatical constructions
3. Task Obstacles	a. Task complexity
	b. Task length
	c. Listen-write obstacles
4. External Obstacles	a. Audio noise
	b. Background noise in audio
	c. External (classroom) noise
5. Affective Obstacles	a. Negative feelings about the text
	b. Negative feelings about the topic
	c. Negative judgments about the speaker

The first class of obstacles relates to the manner of conveying the text. This class relates to obstacles interfering with the participants using strategies to transfer information

between the various cognitive processes in the human information-processing system. The two main obstacles in this class are *text speed* and *text length*. The second class of obstacles relates to comprehension of the text and to hearing specific words, and focusing on specific structures. This class relates to obstacles interfering with the participants' strategy use during the comprehension process. There are mainly three obstacles in this class: *unknown vocabulary*, *inability to hear specific words*, and *unfamiliar grammatical constructions*. Participants also mentioned obstacles that are subcategories of hearing specific words. These obstacles are understanding various *accents* and *reductions*, and contending with *unclear speech* and *unclear pronunciation*. A third class of obstacles relates to the task. This class is associated with obstacles that interfere with the participants' ability to understand the listening task and to complete it. The three main obstacles in this class are: *task complexity* and *task length*, and *the inability to listen and write simultaneously*. A fourth class of obstacles relates to external variables. This class relates to obstacles that interfere with the participants' ability to attend to the aural stream. The obstacles mentioned that correspond to this class are *audio noise*, *background noise in the audio*, and *external noise*. The last class of obstacles relate to the participants' lack of affection toward a text. In other words, if a participant finds the topic of the text or the text itself uninteresting, or if she is negatively disposed toward the topic of the text, she will have a more difficult time focusing on the text and will have a difficult time successfully completing the task associated with the text.

Text speed. The first class of obstacles relates to the way in which the oral text is conveyed. This class of obstacles pertains to both the speed of the text and the length of

the text. In my research, too fast of a text speed was the major obstacle for most of the participants in all of the data-collection methods. By this they meant the tempo of the speakers was very quick and their speech contained many words per minute. They also mentioned that the clarity of the text was important. They thought that it was vital for words to be spoken slowly and clearly so that they could effectively understand a text.

To try and overcome the fast text speed obstacle, the participants often used the practice strategy, listening many times. They often found that when they listened to the text more times they would understand more of it. However, this strategy did not always help them. For example, Abir said, "It also wouldn't help me to listen to it a third time because it was just too fast." Ahlem also did not find the "listening many times" strategy always helpful. In response to the question, "would it help to listen to the text again," she said, "Not really. I don't understand what the text is talking about. Usually it helps me [to listen another time to the text] but this time it didn't help me. The speech was too fast."

The relationship between text speed and pause length. Even though the majority of my participants cited a fast text speed as being a huge hindrance to their comprehension of the text, I discovered that the tempo of the speech and the amount of words per minute was not as important as the length of the pauses between each information group and the amount of information words in each information group.

During my research, I eliminated the normal pauses from seven different texts during my research to further test the relationship between pauses and text speed. Six participants were involved in listening to one of these texts. One participant listened to

two of the texts. After the participants listened to the text, I asked them to give their impressions of the text. Table 20 shows the results of this experiment.

Table 20

A Comparison of Participants' Text Comments with Normal Pauses Removed (n=6)

Participant Proficiency	**Text Name**	**Text Level**	**Participant's Comments**
Low	Laughter	Easy	Text too fast and too long
Medium	Strange and Unusual Things	"	Text too fast
"	Zoos	"	No problem
"	Memory	Difficult	Text too fast
"	Ethical Decisions	"	No problem
High	Strange Stories	Visual	No problem
"	Memory	Difficult	Text too fast

As is shown, four out of seven times students found the text too fast and three times they said that it was clear and not too fast. Once I lengthened the normal pauses of a difficult text and the participant found the text easier to understand. During this experiment with the six participants, I did not find a difference between medium- and high-proficiency participants. Both medium- and high-proficiency participants sometimes had difficulty understanding texts when the pauses were removed, and sometimes they had no difficulty understanding these texts.

Even though I cannot make any generalizations from this experiment, it seems that there is a relationship among the amount of words in an information group, the length of pauses, and how fast the speaker spoke. Therefore, from my research it seems

that when the pauses were longer, the text was perceived to be slower by the participants, On the other hand, when the pauses were shorter, they perceived that the text was faster.

One example of the relationship between pause length and text speed is taken from my individual interview with Ahlem. I gave her an easy text but I edited it by removing the pauses from the text. When I asked her if she found the text easy or difficult, she said that it was not very easy and it was very fast. The second time she listened to it, the text was unedited, in other words the text contained the normal pauses between the information units. When I asked her which version she preferred she said that she preferred the second version. When I asked her the reason that she preferred the second version, she said, "I understood more the second time. I was more comfortable. When I listened the second time it was clearer and easier. I don't know why it's easier or clearer." For the difficult text, I did the opposite from the easy text; I gave Ahlem the normal text the first time she listened to it and then the second time I gave her a modified version of the same text with the pauses removed. When I asked her about the difference between them, she thought that the speaker had talked faster the second time. Another participant, Mounir, had a similar reaction to Ahlem. When he listened to a text with pauses removed he said, "The speech was too fast. Also some information was a bit difficult to extract from the text because the speech was too fast." When he listened to the same text with the normal pauses he said, "The speech was not as fast the second time, it was slower."

Therefore, even though the text was not slower, if the text contained longer pauses then the participants thought that a text was slower. This demonstrates that more pauses

in a text can give a learner the perception that the text is slower and easier to understand, while fewer pauses can give a learner the perception that the text is faster and more difficult to understand.

Comprehension of the text: Clear word focus. The second class of obstacles is related to the perceived importance of specific words and grammatical structures. Because many of my participants perceived specific, individual words to be important, they used a listening strategy I named Clear Word Focus. I previously defined this strategy as a focus on words that are held longer, are louder, or that have longer pauses after them. This strategy had probably been learned as an effective way of understanding French, but since the English language is different from the French language, Clear Word Focus is not effective in hearing and understanding English texts.

Because of the apparent focus on clear words, language, and grammatical structures in Tunisian EFL learners' listening comprehension classes, they often found common features of spoken English, such as reduced speech, unstressed syllables, and unfamiliar pronunciation to be hindrances to their understanding of the text. However, this class of obstacles was not mentioned during my research.

Task obstacles. A third class of obstacles was obstacles related to the task. According to my findings, there were two main obstacles in this class mentioned by most of the participants in most of the data-collection methods: *the inability to listen to the text and write answers in the task simultaneously* and the *task* itself. I will discuss each of these obstacles separately.

First, according to the participants, they found it very difficult to listen and write simultaneously. This is understandable since average people speak about five times faster than they can write. For a Tunisian EFL student, writing is probably ten times slower than listening. Samir describes this obstacle in this way.

> I can reveal the truth that we in Tunisia are quite late in getting with the text when staying with one argument or idea. For example, when she talks about suggestions, there are obviously four suggestions. I can go with her suggestions for the first and the second. However, when she is talking about the second suggestion, I have still memorized the first suggestion. Then she is running through [the third and] the fourth and I am still thinking about the second one....She's not too fast. But my brain isn't going as fast as she is speaking....I can't write as fast as she can talk. So I miss information because when I am trying to write down one point, she is on to the next point, which I can't concentrate on.

Since the text is spoken much faster than the participant can write, either the text, the task, or both should be modified to assist the EFL learner in this area. I will discuss this more in my concluding chapter, Chapter 6.

Second, the task itself was also often identified by the participants as an obstacle to comprehension of the text. I believe there are four issues to consider in this area. The first issue, according to my experience, is that many listening tasks have been designed for reading comprehension instead of listening comprehension. Second, my research participants were not familiar with some tasks which was an obstacle to their comprehension and successful completion of the task. Third, the length or complexity of

some tasks caused participants difficulty. Finally, the participants had difficulty with tasks with questions that were not in the same order as the answers in the text. These are four important issues which, I believe, may have hindered my research participants from completing the tasks or understanding the text.

The first issue that may have caused difficulties for the participants is that many listening comprehension tasks are very similar to reading comprehension tasks. For example, true and false, multiple choice, matching, sentence completion, and short answer completion, are all reading comprehension tasks that are also used in listening comprehension. These tasks work well with reading comprehension texts where the reader can refer back to the text to complete the task. However, using this type of tasks as a way of assessing comprehension of an oral text is problematic since these tasks require either memorization of the information in the text or taking notes while listening to the text. This problem also causes another obstacle, *the inability to listen and write at the same time*. Because the participants' working memory became completely focused on the text, many of them found it difficult to complete the task at the same time as listening to the text.

A second issue that caused problems was the use of tasks with which the students were not familiar. I used a variety of tasks from different sources and I discovered that participants found familiar tasks easier to complete successfully than unfamiliar tasks. The participants found multiple choice, true and false, and matching the easiest tasks to complete. However, completing partially written notes was very difficult for some of them because they were not familiar with the linear method that native English speakers

use to take notes. In addition, two participants were given tasks in which they were asked to find errors in the task. They had never encountered this type of task before and both of them found it very difficult.

A third issue was that some tasks were too long, had too many questions, or had too many parts. When the participants encountered a long task, they tried to focus on part of the text and answer questions related to that part, but they were unable to focus on other questions in the task that referred to other parts of the text.

The final issue related to the task as an obstacle was the participants encountering a task that had questions in a different order from the answers in the text. For example, I gave to a participant a task which had the questions in a different order from the answers in the text. The participant was only able to answer the questions sequentially and she bypassed the other non-sequential questions.

External obstacles. The fourth class was external obstacles. The obstacles mentioned in this class were *unclear speech*, *unclear audio*, and *external noise*. The obstacles that were mentioned from this class were reported by the participants as occurring while they listened to texts in their listening comprehension classes. Four of the questionnaire respondents reported unclear speech in their listening comprehension classes, and three of them reported audio noise in the class was an obstacle. During the group interviews, three of the four groups reported poor audio quality from their listening comprehension classes, and two groups reported background noise on the tape as being an obstacle in these classes. Audio noise in the listening comprehension class was also reported by one of the participants who wrote a listening diary.

This class of obstacles is obviously a concern to the questionnaire respondents and the research participants. In addition, even though these obstacles were often reported as occurring during the participants' listening comprehension classes, these obstacles were rarely reported during the individual interviews and think-aloud protocols. In fact, only once did a participant mention this obstacle during the think-aloud protocols. Since, the participants rarely encountered this obstacle when they listened to texts during the individual interviews and think-aloud protocols, it seems that this class of obstacles can be eliminated, if proper preparations are made by the teacher before class. I will discuss this more in the implications section of Chapter 6.

Topic familiarity and lack of topic affection. My research shows that a negative disposition of some participants toward a topic could potentially deter them from focusing on the oral text. One text that I used more than once was entitled, "Earth Day and Environmental Problems" (Scholnick & Gabler, 2003b, pp. 165-167). One participant began to listen to the speaker talk about air pollution and then she said, "That's the most annoying topic for me. I've been listening to that since seventh grade. Every day every year we talk about pollution and the causes and it's so boring." This negative attitude toward the topic of the text prevented her from concentrating on the text. Since she was unable to concentrate, she could not understand the text. I sometimes encountered this obstacle with other participants as well, especially during the individual interviews. If a participant was very familiar with a topic and had a negative feeling about the subject, he or she was unable to concentrate on the text and, therefore, unable to understand the text.

During the think-aloud protocols, three participants were sometimes affected by this obstacle, which prevented them from focusing on the segments. During the four think-aloud protocols that I conducted, nine times participants experienced an affective obstacle toward the text which caused them to not understand. In fact, during the think-aloud protocols, one of the participants, Karima, was so negatively affected by the two texts to which she was listening that she could not understand anything that the speakers were saying.

During the think-aloud protocols, I encountered three types of negative dispositions. The first type was when the text caused the participants to provide negative comments about the text; such as when a participant said, "I feel it's a silly explanation. The girl seems so naive to me. All she needs to do is read the paper in the package that you get when you buy your camera. There's nothing new in anything he said. It's just useless." The second type is when the topic created a negative attitude, as when a participant said, "That's the most annoying topic for me. I've been listening to that since seventh grade. Every day every year we talk about pollution and the causes and its so boring." The third type caused the participants to judge what the speaker said, such as "I don't know if I should believe her because it seems like it's not true what she's talking about." In addition to participants mentioning how a negative disposition affects their ability to focus on a text in class, the three participants during the think-aloud protocol presented important information to help understand the importance of this obstacle and the value of finding ways to help educators, researchers, and EFL learners work together to overcome this obstacle.

Hatem's Story as an Example of a Tunisian EFL Student's Strategy Use

I believe this story captures the essence of Tunisian EFL students' use of strategies in their classes and the way that obstacles affect their ability to effectively use their listening strategies.

When I first interviewed Hatem, he seemed like any other Tunisian EFL student. Hatem's proficiency test indicated that he was a low, medium-proficiency EFL student. Therefore, I expected that he would be similar to other low, medium-proficiency students; he would do well on the easy text but would have trouble on the difficult text. However, this initial assessment proved to be wrong,

The first easy text I gave him was entitled "Strange and Unusual Things." I had used this same text two other times and the other two students who had heard it complained that it was too long and too difficult. They also complained that the task was too difficult. They said that they could not listen and write at the same time. One of the students had said that he needed longer pauses in the text to give him time to write down the answers.

On the other hand, Hatem did not complain about the text he had been given and did not seem to have trouble with it. He did admit that the second exercise in the task was more difficult and required more "concentration" than the first exercise. Nevertheless, he correctly completed both of the exercises. He also showed some flexibility in how he approached the two exercises. He said that in the first exercise all of the answers were written and it was only a matter of putting the right answer in the right box. In addition, he devised a short-hand notation system for this exercise. So, while he

listened to the text, he wrote the first letter of each city in the appropriate box. Then, when the text was finished he finished writing the name of the city, which began with the letter he had written in the box. When he encountered the second exercise, he changed his strategy by taking notes on the text, writing down in his notes important information, and then answering the questions in the exercise with the information from his notes.

I was intrigued by the nonchalant way in which Hatem had correctly completed the tasks associated with the easy text and I wondered how he would cope with the difficult text. The difficult text that I gave Hatem was called "Ethical Decisions." This is a text that I had given to two other students with mixed results; one student had done well on it and the other had done poorly. However, both of them had a higher proficiency than Hatem, therefore, I expected him to have trouble with the text. Much to my surprise, he didn't find it difficult at all. In fact, he was one of two students who needed to listen only once to the difficult text. He said that the task and the text were not difficult at all and that "I wouldn't have got anything new by listening to it again." He also mentioned only one listening obstacle, a long text, when he said, "The only difficult part of it was that the text was a little bit long and it's difficult to concentrate throughout the whole text." However, this obstacle did not prevent him from finishing the task. He said, "Everything [in the text] was clear. The speech was clear and it wasn't too fast." To finish the task and to overcome the long text obstacle, he used a note-taking strategy.

Hatem's performance on the two different texts intrigued me. He was supposed to be a lower proficiency student and he should have struggled with both of the texts. Yet, he not only correctly completed the tasks, he didn't even need to listen to the difficult text

a second time. I began to think that he may rely too much on his listening strategy, note-taking. Therefore, I decided to have another interview with Hatem where I could begin to observe how he performed if he was not allowed to take notes. The questions that I wanted to answer were, "Would Hatem be able to switch from a note-taking strategy to another strategy?"

I arranged a meeting with Hatem for a follow-up interview. For the interview I used another easy text, entitled "Zoos" and another difficult text, entitled, "Product Placement." For both of these texts I did not allow Hatem to take notes. For the regular individual interviews, the other three participants who had listened to "Zoos" had no difficulty in successfully completing the task. However, with Hatem, I eliminated the long pauses that the text contained. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, this gave the perception that the text was faster and not as clear.

Again, I was surprised by Hatem's response to the task. The lack of pauses did not seem to deter him from understanding the text and finishing the task. He did mention that he had some confusion about the two parts of the task. But, he did not think it was too fast. I was also interested by his strategy use. He said that normally he would have taken notes. But since he was not allowed to take notes, he only "concentrated and that was it." Therefore, initially he seemed to be able to modify his strategy use, at least for a short, easy text.

Similarly to the first text, for the second text, "Product Placement," I did not allow Hatem to take notes. The text was very similar to the other difficult text that Hatem had listened to, "Ethical Decisions." The only difference in the interview was that

Hatem was allowed to take notes during the first interview, whereas he was not allowed to take notes during the second interview.

Unlike the first difficult text, Hatem had trouble with the second difficult text. He said that one listening obstacle, a fast text, interfered with his strategy use. Because of the fast text, he could not use his normal focus strategy while he listened to the text, Instead, he said that he was only able to focus on the conclusion, using Segment End Focus, which, as I mentioned earlier in the chapter, is not effective when listening to oral English texts. He used this strategy by waiting for the conclusion, and then memorizing the words that the speaker used and writing down the words on the task. He said it would have been much easier to complete the task if he had been allowed to take notes.

From Hatem's response, it seems that he tried to switch to a different strategy when his preferred strategy, note-taking, could not be used. However, because he lacked a large repertoire of effective strategies, the strategies that he used did not help him understand the text and complete the task. With a short, easy text, such as "Zoos," he was able to use a less effective strategy such as memorization. However, with a longer text, he could not keep all of the information in working memory and he was only able to remember the very end of the text. Furthermore, his strategy use was not flexible enough to change in response to the apparent ineffectiveness of the memorization strategy.

I gave Hatem another opportunity to listen to the text. This second time, I allowed him to use his normal listening strategy, note-taking. He said this after encountering the text a second time, "It was much easier the second time because I was able to take notes. Because with notes I can write everything down that I hear. I can

write down all the key ideas. Through note-taking, I can also connect the text, and the main ideas of the text, with the task." Even though he was able to take notes, he was not able to correctly complete the task. He normally used the task to guide him as to what notes to take. However, this task, which was a note-taking completion task, did not contain enough clues on which information he should concentrate, therefore, he saw the task as being an obstacle to understanding the text. He said the following about the task and his experience completing the task.

> Usually I use the task to help me know what information I should listen for. In this case I wrote down examples. I also wrote down his descriptions. In this case I didn't understand what was the key information and so I tried to write down everything until I get tired and I can't write down anything more. . . .In this exercise, [my note-taking strategy] didn't work because the task was "open" which didn't clue me in on what important key ideas I should listen for. I could not connect the information in the text with the requirements of the task. I'm sure it was a bad task. I tried my best but I failed.

Thus, "the bad task" became an impeding obstacle that prevented him from understanding the text. In addition, it seems that Hatem's note-taking strategy worked well when the task was clear and gave him enough information so that he knew on what to concentrate in the text. Furthermore, he had some flexibility in his strategy use. But he had trouble when the text became too long, the text was too fast, or the task did not have enough "markers" to point him to the important information in the text.

Hatem's story is an example of a typical Tunisian EFL student listening to an oral text and completing a task. Most of the participants I interviewed had specific strategies that they used with familiar tasks. Even though some of them had trouble, most of them were able to use their strategic approach to understand a text and correctly complete a task. However, if the participants encountered a listening obstacle or an unfamiliar task, or if they were somehow prevented from using their "normal" listening strategies then many of them "failed" just like Hatem failed to understand the text and correctly complete the task.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the major findings of my research and I have also answered my two research questions. In the first section, I presented the listening strategies that the participants used when they listen to oral English texts. Because most of my research was conducted individually with the participants instead of in a classroom situation, most of the listening strategies I encountered were cognitive strategies. I expected to identify a number of metacognitive listening strategies, but I encountered only two that were used by most of the participants, Reading the task and Matching. One other metacognitive strategy, Checking Information, was reported by only one participant. Participants reported that they used some socio-affective strategies in their listening comprehension classes. However, there was no consensus about the effectiveness of these strategies. Some of them seemed to have a negative impression of socio-affective strategies and preferred not to use them. Others found them effective in helping to understand listening comprehension texts.

The major cognitive strategies that were used while listening to texts during the research were an *attention* strategy, two *elaboration* strategies, an *imagery* strategy, an *inferencing* strategy, a *practice* strategy, and two *rehearsal* strategies. In addition, I discovered two language-specific strategies, Specific Word Focus and Segment End Focus. These strategies were not effective in aiding the participants to understand the text to which they listened. It seems that they developed these strategies to help them in listening to oral texts in French. Further research needs to be done in this area to discover if there may be other language-specific strategies and the extent to which learning strategies in general and listening strategies in particular can be used universally.

I also discussed the absence of a cognitive *translation* strategy. Some of the group interview participants talked about this strategy. Some of them said they used it during their listening comprehension classes and other denied using it. Its use was not reported in any of the other data-collection methods, including the individual interviews. One of the participants during the individual interview hinted that she used a translation strategy. However, she denied it when I asked her about it and instead insisted that she used a paraphrasing strategy, not a translation strategy. During the individual interview, another participant indicated that the reason she did not understand the text was that she was "not used to English," not because she was not using a *translation* strategy.

In the second section, I presented obstacles that prevented the participants from understanding oral English texts. I have classified these obstacles into five categories: text-related obstacles, comprehension-related obstacles, task-related obstacles, external obstacles, and affective obstacles. The major text-related obstacles that the participants

encountered were *fast speech* and a *long text*. The major comprehension-related obstacles the participants encountered were *difficult accents* and *unknown vocabulary*. The major task-related obstacles the participants encountered were a *confusing* or *unfamiliar task* and a *long task* and the inability to listen and write simultaneously.

The fourth class of obstacles was external noises. Even though the participants reported some external obstacles such as *outside noise*, *students talking*, and *audio noise*, during their listening comprehension classes, only one participant reported an external obstacle, *outside noises*, during a think-aloud protocol. This low occurrence of this class of obstacles seems to be because I was able to control for these factors during my research. In addition to the above obstacles, some participants reported a negative disposition toward the text which affected their concentration on the text and their comprehension of the text. I called this class of obstacles, "affective obstacles." These obstacles were reported in the group interviews, the listening diaries, and the think-aloud protocols. During the think-aloud protocols three types of affective obstacles were recorded: negative comment about the text, negative attitude toward the topic, and a negative judgment on the context or the speaker of the text. Affective obstacles are important because a learner with a negative disposition toward the text, the topic of the text, the content of the text, or the speaker in a text seem to create a type of filter or screen that prevent them from concentrating on the text.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE COGNITIVE STRATEGIC COMPREHENSION MODEL

Introduction

As a teacher of listening comprehension to Tunisian EFL learners, I often witnessed these learners struggling to understand oral transactional texts in English. As a researcher, I was curious to know the reasons for the difficulties that they encountered. This curiosity lead me to begin this present research. I saw that in listening comprehension classes the learners were passively receiving information because, out of frustration, teachers were giving them the answers to complete the tasks that they had been given. The learners became frustrated because they did not understand the oral texts and the teachers became frustrated because they did not know how to teach the learners to find the important information in the oral texts to understand the texts.

Through this observation and analyzing process, I was perplexed. I believed that EFL listeners were active in the listening process, but the teacher was treating them as passive vessels that needed to be filled with the important information from the oral text. I knew that the most important reason that the learners were not understanding the oral texts was because the teachers were using ineffective teacher-centered, methodologies. I knew that a change in focus was needed, focusing on the students' needs instead of the teachers' methods. As the needs of the students were highlighted, a new, student-centered way of teaching could be found that would empower the students to understand oral English texts by maximizing effective listening strategies and by minimizing obstacles that could interfere with their strategy use. The first step in moving to this student-

centered approach was by identifying the listening strategies that they used and the obstacles that they encountered while listening to oral texts. These observations encouraged me to embark on this descriptive research expedition.

At the beginning of this expedition, I asked two questions to aid me in understanding the current situation of Tunisian EFL learners: What listening strategies do Tunisian EFL learners use when they listen to oral English transactional texts?, and What are the major obstacles that Tunisian EFL learners encounter when listening to oral English transactional texts? These two questions gave my research direction. In addition to these questions, I proposed a theoretical model which was derived from my observations of Tunisian EFL learners listening to oral texts in a listening comprehension classroom. These observations of watching these learners trying to understand the oral texts with little or no help from other learners, propelled me to use a cognitive model for my research that included Anderson's human information processing system (1983, 1993), Baddeley's (2009) working memory model, and Kintsch's Construction-Integration model (1998). In addition, I included listening strategies in my theoretical model, assuming that Tunisian EFL learners were active listeners. This is a theoretical approach which was suggested by Macaro (2006), but, as far as I am aware, has not been formally proposed in research. I have called this theoretical model the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model. In Chapter 4, I presented the answers to the two research questions. In this chapter I will consider the extent to which the listening strategies Tunisian EFL learners use and the obstacles they encounter correspond to the

Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model, the way in which they function in this model, and how Tunisian EFL learners use their strategies in this model.

Listening Strategies and the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model

Figure 13 displays in diagram form the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model, which I discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

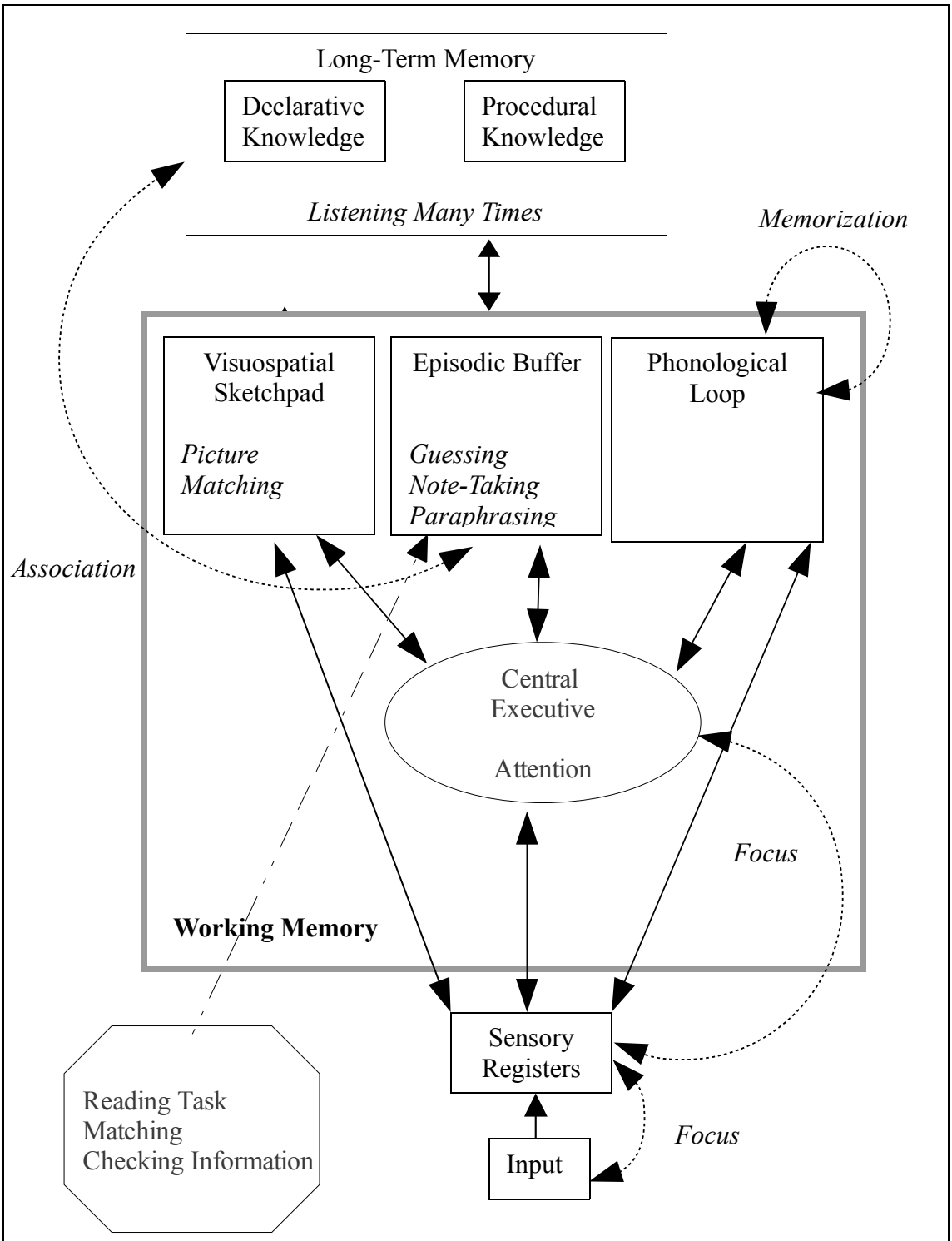

Figure 13. A diagram of the cognitive strategic comprehension model, including strategy findings.

This model has an architecture similar to Anderson's (1983, 1993) ACT model. An understanding of working memory's architecture is paramount because this is the area of comprehension. Because Anderson's description of working memory is insufficient, I added the ACT model Baddeley's (2009) working memory model. I have also added Kintsch's (1998) comprehension model, which provides a description of the comprehension process, to the above two models, focusing on movement of information not comprehension of the information.

Even though the above models are very useful in understanding information flow and comprehension throughout the human information processing system, I believe that they are insufficient to completely explain comprehension because these models treat comprehension as an automatic process and learners as passive in the process. Therefore, I added cognitive and metacognitive strategies to the above models, indicating the active role that learners play in the comprehension process. This modified model includes listening strategies at both the architectural level and the comprehension level. I named strategies at the architectural level transfer strategies and I named strategies at the comprehension level, comprehension strategies. Transfer strategies help the listener move the information between the various components of the system and comprehension strategies help the listener construct the textbase and the situation model.

Throughout my research, I have used the diagram displayed in Figure 13 to represent my understanding of the human information processing system. As I previously mentioned, this figure represents the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model that I have assumed throughout my research. In Chapter 2, Figure 10 includes

strategies mentioned by Wenden (1991). However, Figure 13 includes only those strategies that my research participants actually used. The strategies that are included in this model are an aggregation of data that I compiled during my research. As is shown, the learners used attentional strategies, rehearsal strategies, elaboration strategies, and retrieval strategies. A fuller description of these strategies is provided in Chapter 4.

Even though the diagram in Figure 13 describes the flow of information and the way in which listening strategies interact with that flow of information, it does not describe the comprehension process that is part of the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model. The comprehension process, which I have taken from Kintsch's work (1998), happens in working memory at the same time that information is flowing throughout the human information processing system. As I conducted my research, I confirmed my supposition: that Tunisian EFL learners use transfer strategies to move information throughout the human information processing system. However, I also discovered that they use comprehension strategies during the comprehension process. Therefore, in the same way that Figure 13 diagrams the way in which transfer strategies aid the flow of information throughout the human information processing system, Figure 14 diagrams the way in which comprehension strategies aid the comprehension process.

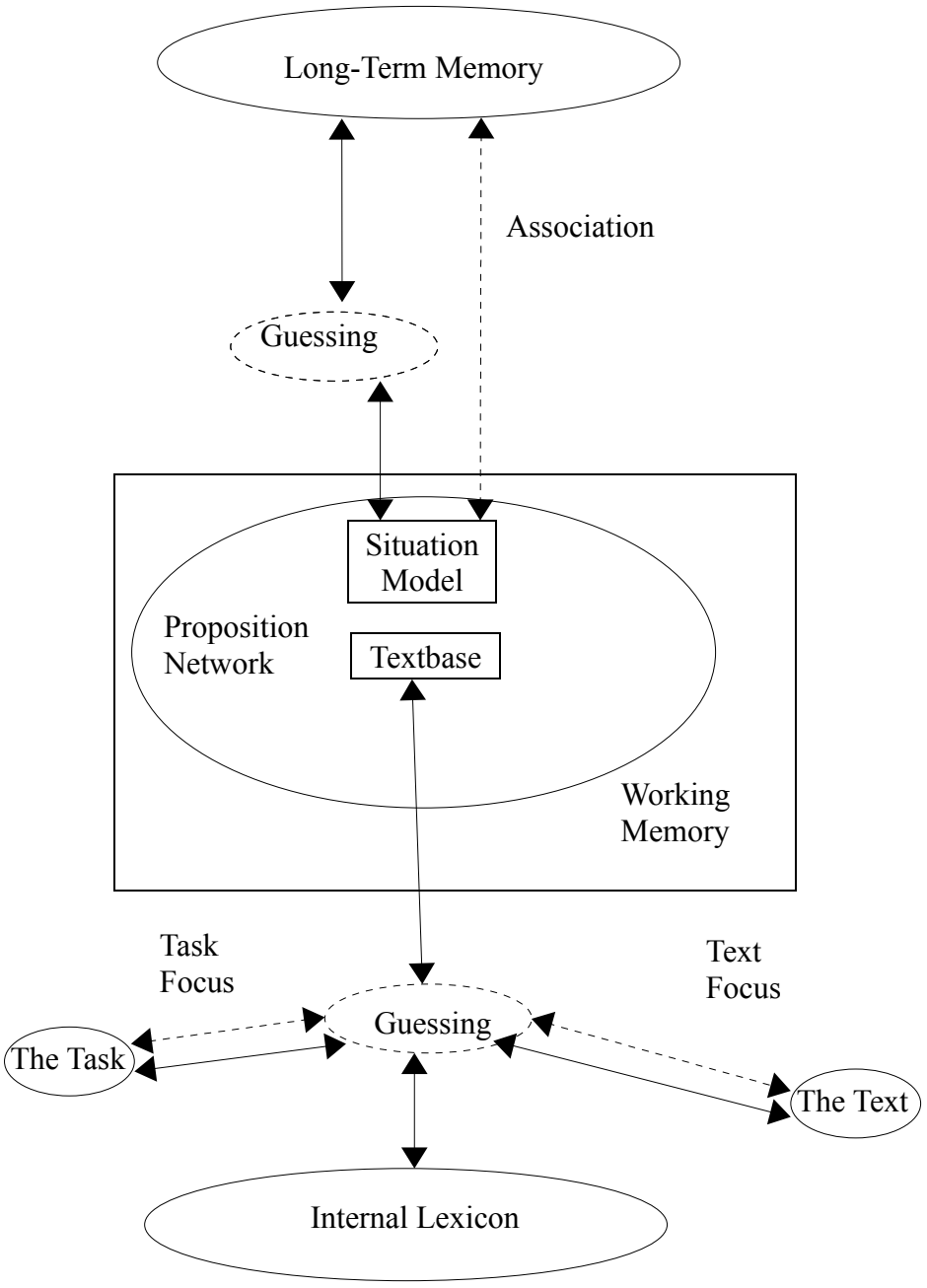

Figure 14. A modified diagram of the construction phase of the C-I model, including actual strategy use from findings.

As is shown in Figure 14, comprehension occurs when aural information from the sensory registers has been moved into working memory, identified based on the internal lexicon, and combined with a situation model that has been activated in long-term memory. These two entities, the textbase and the situation model, are constructed into a proposition network, discussed in Chapter 2. Figure 14 depicts the construction phase of Kintsch's (1998) Construction-Integration model and the way in which learners' comprehension strategies interact with the construction of the proposition network; however, the integration phase, at which time a spreading activation process occurs to stabilize the network, is not depicted. This figure includes four main comprehension strategies that I have identified in my research: Focus, Guessing, Association, and Adding Extra Information.

My research has shown Tunisian EFL learners actively use transfer strategies while processing the aural information and also use comprehension strategies during the comprehension process. Although these two processes occur simultaneously in the mind, I will discuss these two processes separately, discussing the functions that these listening strategies perform and the way in which the participants of my research use these strategies while listening to oral transactional texts in English.

The Function of Strategies in the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model

Listening Strategies play an important role in the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model. This role facilitates the flow of information throughout the human information system, depicted in Figure 13, and also facilitates the construction of a proposition network during the construction process, shown in Figure 14.

The Function of Listening Strategies in the Information-Processing System

In Chapter 2, I discussed the four processes that occur while information flows throughout the human information processing system (Wenden, 1991): Reception, Recycling, Retrieval, and Storage. Table 3, shown in Chapter 2, listed these four processes, the cognitive function where these processes occur, and the strategy sets that are used during each cognitive process. In Table 21, I have reproduced Table 3 along with the display in the last column of the aggregate data that summarize my findings.

Table 21

Identified Strategies Grouped according to Cognitive Processes

Cognitive Processes	Cognitive Functions	Strategy Sets	Strategies Identified from Research
"Getting"/ Reception	Sensory Registers	Selective Attention	Focusing/Concentration
	Central Executive	Selective Attention	Focusing/Concentration
"Holding"/ Recycling	Phonological Buffer	Rehearsal/Repetition Note-taking	Memorization Note-taking
	Visuospatial Sketchpad	Imagery	Picture Matching
"Using"/ Retrieval	Episodic Buffer	Practicing	Listening Many Times
		Associating/Elaborating/ Grouping	Associating Paraphrasing
		Summarizing/ Note-taking	Note-taking
		Inferencing/Guessing	Guessing
		Imagery	Picture Matching
		Translating/Transferring	
"Saving"/ Storing	Long-term Memory	Associating/Elaborating/ Grouping	Associating Paraphrasing Note-taking
		Inferencing/Guessing	Guessing
		Analyzing/Reasoning	
		Translating/Transferring	

Note: Adapted from Wenden, 1991, p. 22 and Oxford, 1990, p. 19

According to Oxford (1990) and Wenden (1991), each strategy set should contain a number of strategies. However, many of the participants in my research had only one or two strategies for each strategy set and some strategies were completely missing.

Notably I did not encounter any strategies related to the analyzing/reasoning strategy set or strategies related to the translating/transferring strategy set. These two strategy sets utilize the listener's native language to process information. Although I am not certain about the reasons that the participants did not use strategies corresponding to these two strategy sets, I assume that they have been taught that they should understand an oral text in English without employing their native language, Arabic. As I discussed in Chapter 4, I collected data during my research which seems to corroborate this assumption.

Even though many of the participants in my research used only one or two strategies for each strategy set, the results indicated that Tunisian EFL learners use listening strategies to facilitate the cognitive processes that Wenden has mentioned (1991, pp. 20-22) and, therefore, suggesting that listening strategies are an integral part of the human information-processing system.

As I mentioned, even though there normally should be a number of strategies for each strategy set (Chapter 2, Table 3), my research showed that my participants used far less than what other researchers have indicated is normal. I use the term strategic unboundedness when listeners use a large amount of strategies for each strategy set. Therefore, if these listeners are unable to use one particular strategy when they are listening, they normally have other strategies that they can use. However, many of my participants did not demonstrate strategic unboundedness during my research, but the opposite strategic boundedness.

An analogy to strategic unboundedness is a carpenter who has different types of screwdrivers, hammers, saws, planes, etc. Because this carpenter has a range of different

tools, he is able to use the right tool for the right job, for example using a small screwdriver for a small screw and a large screwdriver for a large screw. This carpenter has built up his tools over a number of years and is able to successfully take on any situation with the right tool. An analogy to strategic boundedness is a novice carpenter who only has a few tools with which to work on his project. He might not have a Phillips screwdriver and he will try to screw a Phillips screw into the wood with a flat screwdriver. Or, he may not have a screwdriver so he tries a hammer. Because of the novice carpenter's lack of tools, he limits himself to very simple projects that he is familiar with and he knows he can complete successfully. If he attempts a more difficult project, he will have a difficult time, because of his lack of expertise and his lack of the correct tools.

I found that the participants during my research demonstrated strategic boundedness. Therefore, like the novice carpenter using only a very limited number of tools, the participants in my research only used one or two strategies for each of the cognitive functions. I would assume that they did not use other strategies because they were not familiar with them, or did not have enough practice using them. Because of their use of a very limited number of strategies, they were not able to switch to a different, more effective strategy when their primary strategy was not effective.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, listening strategies, both metacognitive and cognitive, have an important role in human information-processing. The role of metacognitive strategies is to plan which strategies the listener should use, monitor the way the listener uses strategies, and to verify that strategies have helped the listener to obtain correct

information. Three metacognitive strategies were used by the participants of my research: Reading the Task, Matching, and Checking Information.

One metacognitive strategy used during my research, Reading the Task, is a planning strategy that helped the participants to decide on which information to focus. Abir, gives a description of this strategy: "I read the task to know what information I needed to find and then I tried to concentrate on that information in the text." Another metacognitive strategy, Matching, is a monitoring strategy, helping the participants to connect the information they focused on with the information required for the task. This strategy was mentioned either explicitly or implicitly by most of the participants during the individual interviews. Ahlem, a research participant, said, "I listened for words that answered the questions in the task." Basam, also mentioned his use of a matching strategy: "For the [difficult] task I needed to take. . . information from my notes that corresponds to the missing information from the task and fill that information in the task." Finally, another research participant, Moufida, used a metacognitive evaluation strategy, Checking Information, to be certain that she had successfully completed the task. She said, "When I have a blank piece of paper, I can write down answers and then review them and write the correct answers down on the task."

In addition to metacognitive strategies that manage the moving of information throughout the human information processing system, cognitive strategies were also used to help transfer information throughout this system during the four cognitive processes (Wenden, 1991). These cognitive processes are: reception, recycling, retrieval, and storage.

The cognitive strategy that the participants used to aid the reception process was focus. This strategy was used during the reception process to bring to the awareness of the cognitive attentional system the sounds detected by the auditory sensory registers. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, human information processing must give attention to an auditory stream so that information can be moved into working memory. Without this attentional system, the aural stream is only noise. All the participants used a focus strategy.

Even though all the participants used focus as a reception strategy, each one used it differently. Some tried to focus on every word. Others tried to focus on important information. There were also some who tried to use the task as a filter for the text. Based on the questions of the task, these participants would focus on specific parts of the text and ignore other parts of the text. The participants used focus for both the easy and the difficult texts.

Below are two descriptions of the way in which Mounir used focus for both easy texts and difficult texts. After listening to an easy text he said:

> It requires a little bit of concentration. It is interesting because it has numbers and these numbers require some concentration. The first activity was a bit easy. The focus was mainly on dates. The second activity was easy but it required more concentration. The first was easy because it only required circling information. The second was more difficult. . . .But with a little concentration, the second is OK.

Thus he thought that the more difficult parts of the text and the task required more focus

than the easier parts.

Not only did Mounir consider focus important for easy texts, he also found it important for difficult texts. He said, “In order to complete the task I had to concentrate on what I heard. For example, when she says, 'I'm going to give you an example,' I open my mind and I try to concentrate more. . . .I need to concentrate on the examples that she gives and get the main ideas from these examples.” Like Mounir, the participants in the individual interviews focused on various aspects of the text and they used Focus to concentrate on information they thought would help them understand the text and complete the task. Mounir extracted the main idea from the examples in the text and others distilled the main idea from specific words or ideas.

After the auditory signal has been attended to, the information focused on is stored temporarily in working memory during the recycling process while awaiting further processing. As I have previously mentioned, only a very limited amount of information can be held in working memory and information stored there begins to deteriorate very quickly. One cognitive strategy, Memorization, was used by some of the participants to repeat or rehearse the information in the Phonological Loop until it had been comprehended. During an individual interview, Samir indicated his use of a memorization strategy when he said, “ I have memorized [the speaker's] idea and the context. I want to copy her speech word for word and I want to write the right answer.”

In addition to the use of Memorization to help recycle information in working memory, another strategy, Note-taking, was also used by some participants to help overcome cognitive load. Instead of using it as an elaboration strategy, they used it as a

rehearsal strategy and wrote down every word that they could hear on a piece of paper, without changing the words in any way. After they wrote everything down, they would read the task and try to match the information they needed with the information that they had written down. Basam describes his use of this strategy: "Taking notes is very helpful because it allows you to record information so you don't have to keep all of it in your head. [For this task] I needed to take notes on the whole text and then take information from my notes that corresponds to the missing information from the task and fill that information in the task."

Three cognitive strategies, Association, Guessing, Note-taking, and Paraphrasing were used in the retrieval and storage processes. For example, Abir said during an individual interview: " I looked at the pictures which gave me the topic and then I matched the text with the picture." Thus, she used an association strategy during the retrieval process. In her case the picture she saw triggered an associated topic in her long-term memory. She used this topic to help her complete the task. Houda also used an association strategy during a think-aloud protocol to store in long-term memory what she had heard. The topic of the text she listened to was about the origin of some English words. At the end of the text the speaker said, "I hope I've stimulated your curiosity to find out more about the origins of your favorite English words." In response Houda says, "He did stimulate me to know the origin of some of my favorite English words." Thus she had associated her favorite English words with the speaker said about their origins and then she had stored this combined information in her long-term memory.

In addition to an association strategy, many participants used another cognitive strategy, Guessing, even though no one reported using this strategy. Salah's use of this strategy demonstrates how it can be used during the retrieval process. During a think-aloud protocol, Salah heard the following segment from an oral text, "We live on the water planet. Our world is made up of 75 percent water, and without water, there would be no life on earth. The atmosphere is not the only part of our environment that is in danger." To this Salah responded, "Now a man is speaking about the water as the most important thing of life." Even though the segment does not say that water is the most important thing in life, Salah used a guessing strategy to make the correct assumption that this is a main idea of the segment. During his use of a guessing strategy, he first retrieved relevant information about the importance of water to sustain life from his long-term memory. Then he combined it with the information in working memory about the segment to reach the inference that the speaker is talking about the importance of water.

Salah was not the only research participant to use a guessing strategy. Basam provided another example of a guessing strategy. However, unlike Salah who used a guessing strategy to retrieve information from long-term memory, Basam used this guessing strategy to help him store information to long-term memory while he was listening to a segment from a think-aloud protocol. For brevity I have included only the end of the segment, the part that relates to Basam's response. The speaker said, "Many people work hard for the simple reason that they enjoy it! For many Americans, their work gives them an identity, meaning they say, . . . 'I'm a something.'" Basam responded to this segment by saying, "I was thinking about jobs in general and how men should get

jobs whatever its nature (hard or easy)." Basam used a guessing strategy to assume that the speaker is talking about jobs. He then stored this information in his long-term memory and pondered the importance of people having a job. Even though, Basam's assumption of the meaning of the segment is wrong, his guessing strategy has still helped him to store information he has understood from the segment.

Only one participant, Samia, used the cognitive strategy Paraphrasing. During an individual interview she said this about the strategy, "I try to paraphrase it in my own way. . . . I try to get another word that means the same thing." This strategy helped her during the retrieval process to redefine words in the text that she did not understand with words that she had stored in her long-term memory. It then seems that she was able to associate the new word with a similar word she had previously stored in long-term memory and store the two words together.

Another cognitive strategy, Listening Many Times, was also used during the retrieval process by many of my research participants. It was used during the individual interviews as a practice strategy to help them acquire information they had previously stored in long-term memory. They used this strategy as a way of repeating the information may times until they were able to activate relevant information in long-term memory and retrieve that information from long-term memory for use in the comprehension process. Mounir is an example of a participant who used the Listening Many Times strategy. He said, "When I listen the second time the ideas become clearer because I am familiar with the ideas and I can concentrate on the unfamiliar words more." Salah also described this strategy: "The first time you don't understand what is

going on in the text. The more times you listen to a text, the more information you get out of the text, and the more of the task you will be able to complete."

Both association strategies and practice strategies activate inactive information or retain activated information. However, practice strategies activate inactive information through repetition, whereas association strategies activate background information from long-term memory linked with information in working memory. During an individual interview, Dhakra explained the difference between the two in this way, "If I had the background knowledge for this subject, I wouldn't have needed to listen to it more than once. However, without the background knowledge, I need to listen to it more than once so that I can better understand the text and successfully complete the task." Therefore, when listeners are unable to link background knowledge with information from the text, a practice strategy can be used to activate information in long-term memory..

Note-taking was another strategy that was used during the individual interviews by most of the participants. This strategy was used during the retrieval process to summarize or elaborate what they had understood from the text. Summarization or elaboration was the way that most of my participants used the note-taking strategy. Using it in this way was different from the few who used it during the recycling process which I mentioned above. Samia, a research participant, used note-taking to summarize the text and identify important information in the text. She said, "I can summarize the text and write down the important words." However, once it was used by Fatma as a grouping strategy to put like items together. She said, "I divided my blank paper into two

columns and I put what Mark said on one side and what Doris said on the other side. . . . I divided it into two to help me better answer the questions."

Another cognitive strategy, which was used by participants, completing a visual task during the individual interviews, is an imagery strategy I called Picture Matching. Ahmed described his use of this strategy during the retrieval process: "I listened to the words that they said and I matched up the words with the pictures in the task." Zohra was another research participant who used Picture Matching during the comprehension process. Describing her use of this strategy, she said, "I used the pictures to help me understand what [the speakers] are talking about. So I matched the description with the picture." Six of the eight participants who had a visual task reported using only a matching strategy, matching the picture with the lexical information from the oral text. In addition to a matching strategy, the other two used an association strategy, which they said helped them understand the text. None of the participants mentioned using any other strategies, including Focus, while completing a visual task. For example, Houda said: "I didn't have to focus too much on the text because all I needed to do was match the description with the pictures. I was comfortable and relaxed with this task."

The findings from my research indicate that during the individual interviews visual tasks affected the participants understanding of a text differently than written tasks. These findings suggest that Baddeley's (2009) working memory model accurately depicts the process that the participants used. When the participants completed a visual task, they used a matching strategy to match the picture with information from the auditory stream. This strategy is used to transfer pictures to the Visuospatial Sketchpad where the

pictures are associated with relevant information in long-term memory. This information is then combined with the lexical information in the Episodic Buffer to comprehend the text. During my research, this strategy was used during both the recycling process and the retrieval process.

When the participants completed a written task, they first focused on information in the auditory stream; second, some of them used a repetition strategy to maintain the information in the Phonological Loop; third, they all used other strategies like note-taking and guessing to elaborate on the information, which they had stored; and finally some of them used association strategies to combine information from working memory with other related information from long-term memory.

In this section, I have discussed the way in which the participants used cognitive strategies to help move information throughout the human information processing system. Some metacognitive strategies were also used to plan, monitor, and check the way in which this information moved throughout the system. In order for the above cognitive and metacognitive strategies to effectively aid a learner, a combination of strategies is needed at both the architectural level and the comprehension level. Therefore, attentional strategies, repetition strategies, elaboration strategies, practicing strategies, and association strategies all need to be orchestrated together to move information throughout system. In addition, attentional strategies, inferencing strategies, and association strategies need to be present at the comprehension level.

The Function of Listening Strategies in the Comprehension Process

Up to this point, I have discussed the use of listening strategies in the human information processing system, based on Anderson's (1983, 1993) ACT model and Baddeley's (2009) working memory model. This system discusses information moving throughout memory; however, this system does not treat the comprehension process. In order for comprehension to take place, information is transformed into recognizable words and meaning attached to the words. This is the comprehension aspect of the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model, based on Kintsch's (1998) Construction-Integration model. In the same way that transfer strategies aided my participants in the movement of information, comprehension strategies also helped them in the comprehension process.

The participants used three primary comprehension strategies during the construction stage of the comprehension process: Focus, Association, and Guessing. I subdivided the focus strategies into Task Focus and Text Focus. The participants used Task Focus to concentrate on the task and used Text Focus to concentrate on various parts of the text. Often Task Focus and Text Focus strategies were used together. During the individual interviews, Nourzed and Zohra explained their use of these two strategies. Nourzed said, "I read the task first then I listened to the text and I concentrated on what I needed to complete the task." Zohra agreed, First, I read the questions so I know what information I am looking for. Then I listen for information which answers the questions in the task." The participants used these focus strategies to help construct a textbase. In addition to the general text strategies that Nourzed and Zohra talked about above, some

of the participants used two specific types of text focus strategies during the comprehension process: Specific Word Focus and Segment End Focus. While these participants used these two specific types of strategies, they also referenced their internal lexicon to try to understand specific words from the text. The participants used a guessing strategy to infer the meaning of various parts of the text, which were not clear. The participants used information from the task, the text, and the internal lexicon to help them as they used the guessing strategy.

Not only did the participants use strategies to help create a textbase, they also used them to create a situation model. The participants used an association strategy to help them link activated information from long-term memory to the situation model. They also used a guessing strategy to help them infer associations that were not activated in their long-term memory as well as to add extra information which they deduced was relevant to the situation model.

I will begin discussing the participants' use of comprehension strategies by giving an example of Specific Word Focus, taken from the text "Airline Reservations." One segment of this text is shown below.

A: **This** is on U**ni**ted Airlinesss(.41)/(.75) **Round** trip/(1.60) **fare** isss(.45)/(.70) ooh you're **not/**(.25) uh let's **seeee**(.75) what's the/(.80) that's the **8th** of Sep**tem**berrr/(.30)and you're **not** staying a Saturday **night**/(.25)

C: I **could** if it saves **mon**ey/(.80)

A: Well, **I'm** going to give you **pri**ces on **both**/(.90) if you **stay** over and if you **don't**

(Baker & Tanka, 2006, p. 225)

As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a particular rhythm to the speech of English. Pauses in English usually mark the end of an information unit and each information unit will have at least one strongly stressed syllable. This prominent syllable marks important information. English listeners focus on these prominent syllables and map them to the corresponding words in their internal lexicon (Rost, 1990a, 2002).

In the segment above, the boldfaced syllables indicate the strong-stressed, prominent syllables in the speech. The slash (/) indicates a pause in the speech. This also indicates the end of an information unit. After the slash is the amount of time (in seconds) that the pause lasted. In the text from which this segment is taken, a woman is calling a travel agency to make airline reservations. In this specific segment, the travel agent is lengthening the ends of some words, making an even longer pause. I added multiple letters to indicate this. After the lengthened sound is the amount of time (in seconds) that the lengthened sound lasted.

Because English is a stress-timed language, if native English listeners heard the segment above, they would use a type of text focus, which I call Rhythm Focus, to focus on the prominent syllables. These syllables, indicated in bold-type, would indicate the important words. From these words, the native English speaker would be able to understand that the airline flight is on United Airlines. From the long pauses, the repetition of information, and the hesitancy of the travel agent, the native English listener would also understand that there is a problem. From the phrase "ooh you're not...," from what the customer says, "I could if it saves money," and also from the response of the travel agent, the native English listener would understand an inference: the price was very

expensive for the dates for which she asked, but she is willing to change the dates if it will save her money. The native English listener would also understand that the travel agent will give the customer both prices, the expensive price and the cheap price, and let her decide. All this information is understood by the pauses, the intonation, and the 17 words that are stressed.

However, instead of the participants in my research using a Rhythm Focus strategy as I have described above, they used two different text focus strategies: Clear Word Focus and Segment End Focus. When the participants used a Clear Word Focus strategy, they focused on words that were clear to them and tried to understand the segment based on those words. For example, after listening to the segment above, Salah used Clear Word Focus when he said, "The man is giving her more information, giving her the price and asking her about the date." He understood three pieces of information. First, the man is giving her more information. Second, a piece of information that he is giving her is the price [of the ticket]. Third, he is asking her about the date [of the flight]. The words "United Airlines," "fare," and "8th of September" are the clearest words in the segment. In addition there are long pauses after "fare," and "prices on both" which would help him to focus on those words. The other words in the segment are not as clear. From Salah's use of Clear Word Focus, he understood that the man and the woman were talking about prices and dates, thus misunderstanding the man and woman's discussion.

I think that the participants used Clear Word Focus, instead of Rhythm Focus, because they were using a language-specific strategy that they had learned from using French, a syllable-timed strategy with its clear-word pronunciation (Walker, 1975).

Therefore, Clear Word Focus would be appropriate for a syllable-timed language, such as French. However, it is an inappropriate comprehension strategy with English, a stress-timed language. This inappropriateness of Clear Word Focus is evident because the participants were never able to completely understand a segment by using this strategy, even though it was used 55 times by four participants during the think-aloud protocols. Therefore, when the participants in my research used a Clear Word Focus strategy, they were unable to completely understand a text and they often misunderstood the text.

In addition to using Clear Word Focus, they also used another language-specific strategy, Segment End Focus. Even though this strategy was used only 18 times, it did not result in the participants being able to understand oral English texts. Ahlem is one of the four participants who used this strategy. An example on one segment from the oral text, "Why Americans Work Hard" is included below.

> And a **third** reason which is related to the **pre**vious one the one I just **men**tioned is that a **lot** of people work hard to keep a **job** that gives them **be**nefits//(1.0) **By** **be**nefits I mean things like **med**ical insurance unem**ploy**ment insurance and a re**tire**ment plan//(1.0) Now in most Euro**pean** countries/(0.50) **these** things are **paid** for by the **gov**ernment so people are pro**tect**ed even if they **lose** their jobs// (1.0) (Baker & Tanka, 2006, p. 243-244).

The above segment has three information units. Each of these has a one second pause after it. The third group also has a 0.50 second pause in the middle of it. The first information group has six strongly stressed words, the second has five, and the third has six. Thus, for a native English speaker, this information can be stored in memory with no

trouble. However, for a Tunisian EFL learner using Clear Word Focus, the working memory becomes overloaded. For example, Ahlem, replied to this segment, "In Europe they have protection even if they lose their jobs. But in America they work hard because their salary is paid by their company not by the government." She uses Clear Word Focus to concentrate on the clear word "protected" and possibly she hears "benefits." However, because of the length of the segment, she cannot focus on any other clear words. Instead, she uses Segment End Focus to identify the phrase "lose their jobs" from the end of the segment. Even though Clear Word Focus does not help her to understand the segment, her use of Segment End Focus helps her mostly understand the last information group in the segment.

In addition to Clear Word Focus and Segment End Focus, Ahlem also uses Guessing to infer the meaning of the segment based on words that she has heard. For example, she seems to have heard the clear word "benefits" from earlier in the segment. However, she does not understand the word "benefits" and she did not focus on the meaning given in the segment. Instead, it seems she used her internal lexicon to link the word "benefit" with a word in her lexicon, "salary." She produces the second sentence by incorrectly recognizing the meaning of the word "benefits," which is not correct. In addition, it seems she understands from the segment that salaries in Europe are paid for by the government, but in the United States, they are paid for by companies; unfortunately, this is a complete misunderstanding of the segment's meaning.

Ahlem's response gives us a glimpse of the cognitive processes she used to understand the segment. All the elements of comprehension are present: recognizing

words, mapping recognized words to her internal lexicon, guessing the meaning of unknown words, and combining recognized words with other knowledge in long-term memory to produce a meaning for the words. The result of this process is the textbase with which the situation model is later combined. Unfortunately, the textbase that Ahlem has created is not an accurate representation of the meaning of the segment.

Ahlem was not alone in misunderstanding the meaning of words in the text; Salah, also incorrectly guessed the meaning of at least one word in a segment taken from the oral text "Night Market."

I: So, what **else** can you buy at the **night** market?/(.85)

S: **Well**, let's **see**/(.60) I bought this great **belt there/**(.80)

I: That's a **nice** one/(.40) Is it **leather**?/(.45)

S: **Yes**, it **is**/(.45) They **sell** lots of **nice** leather **shoes**, **too**/(.50)

I: **Great/**(.75)

(Brown & Smith, 2007d, pp. 152-153)

In this segment, a woman is asking a man about the night market in Malaysia. It is talking about buying leather goods, including belts and shoes, at the night market. However, Salah did not mention this at all. Instead, he said, "He said that he bought some nice bargains, I think." The man in the segment does not mention bargains at all. Therefore, it seems the participant misheard the word, belt, in the segment and drew a wrong conclusion about the meaning of the segment based on the misheard word. Therefore, instead of understanding that someone can buy good quality leather goods at the night market, he assumes the man said that he bought some good bargains at the night

market, which the man did not say. This shows that the strategy that Salah used for identifying the meaning of the word led to his misunderstanding the segment. This misunderstanding of a word could be because Salah was unfamiliar with the word, or with how the word was pronounced and, therefore, the correct word did not exist in his internal lexicon. It also could be that the context was unfamiliar and that his guessing strategy expected a different word than the word he encountered.

The construction stage of the Construction-Integration model is not complete until the textbase has been combined with a situation model. In the same way that strategies are used to form the textbase, strategies are also used to help form a situation model. This is a crucial aspect of the comprehension process because it helps learners fill in missing information from the textbase. If an appropriate situation model is chosen, much of the information in the textbase is already known, making it easier for learners to concentrate on new information. If there is no situation model for a textbase, they must focus more on the text. If an inappropriate situation model is chosen, it is very likely that they will misunderstand the oral text.

Based on the findings, and on the research (Cook, 2001; Hagtvet, 2003; Tyler, 2001) it seems that the participants do not have the same ability as native English listeners to focus on all the important information in an oral text. Therefore, it is even more important for them to choose an appropriate situation model to make the listening comprehension process much more fruitful. However, the participants involved in my research had an appropriate or semi-appropriate situation model only 13% of the time and 25% of the time they had no situation model. Even worse, they used an

inappropriate or incomplete situation model 62% of the time. Consequently, when the participants did not choose an appropriate situation model, they often either did not understand the oral English text or misunderstood it.

The participants of my research used two strategies to help them incorporate a situation model into the developing propositional network: Guessing and Association. Below I show the way in which a participant in my research, Salah, used these two strategies to help him link a situation model with the textbase, first unsuccessfully and second successfully. The segment that Salah heard is below.

> W: So, is **every**thing cheap at the **night** market?/(.60)
>
> M: Well, that's up to **you**!/(.50)
>
> W: What do you **mean**?/(.65)
>
> M: At the **night** market you **bargain** for **prices/**(.35) the **seller** tells you **one** price/(.30) then you offer a **lower** price/(.40) he lowers his price a **bit**/(.35) then you **raise** your price/(.45) if you can agree on a **good price**/(.20) you **buy** the item
>
> (Brown & Smith, 2007d, pp. 152-153)

His response to this segment clearly indicates that he has misunderstood the segment. He replies to the example as follows:

> The woman asked if all the prices in the night market were cheap. He said that the first time you buy something for a high price but the second time they will give you sort of a promotion to the client to buy something else with a cheap price.

It seems that Salah's misunderstanding stems from linking an inappropriate situation model to the textbase that he has created. He correctly understood the woman's question, but he completely misunderstood the man's response. The pause between the woman's question is long enough for the participant to be able to understand the woman's question, but the man's response is too long for the participant and contains only short pauses. These pauses are enough for a native English listener to focus on the important words, but not enough for this Tunisian EFL learner, who is using Clear Word Focus. Salah probably hears some isolated words such as "raise," "lower," "good price," and "buy", but he is unable to use his guessing strategy to make any meaning from these words.

Salah should be able to link a correct situation model with the textbase since the topic, bargaining, is commonly practiced in Tunisia. However, it appears that he has not heard the word "bargain" but instead heard about high and low prices. He has used a guessing strategy to assume that the topic is about buyers and sellers instead of about bargaining. After guessing the topic, he uses an association strategy to link his background information about buyers and sellers to the text. Based on the results of these two strategies, he links a "Seller/Client" situation model to the textbase, instead of a "Seller/Bargainer" situation model.

The "Seller/Client" situation model, another common practice in Tunisia, corresponds to what Salah says in his reply to the text. In this situation, when a person goes to a shop for the first time, he may get a higher price because the shop owner does not know him. However, after he buys something once, he becomes a client and the next time he buys something from that same shop, he is known by the owner and will get a

lower price. Thus, the situation model guided Salah into comprehending the text when the textbase that he had created was too vague. Unfortunately, the situation model he used was not appropriate for the segment and so he misunderstood the segment.

On the other hand, while listening to a segment from another text, shown below, Salah is able to successfully link a situation model to the textbase.

> what can we **do** about this **pro**blem//(.60) **well**/(.35) there are **sev**eral things that can **help** to re**duce wat**er pollution//(.95) **laws** must be created to **limit** the **dump**ing of **dan**gerous **mat**erials into our **wat**ers//(.50) and **fac**tories must be **forced** to pay **very high fines** for **break**ing these **laws**//(1.0) in a**ddi**tion/(.40) **gov**ernments must spend **more mon**ey/(.20) to help to **clean** up **wat**ers that are al**rea**dy pol**lut**ed
>
> (Scholnick & Gabler, 2003b, pp. 165-167)

The segment above is taken from the oral text, "Earth Day and Environmental Problems." In this text, a woman is giving a lecture about various environmental problems. After listening to the extract, Salah replied with the following statement, "He gives us the steps to take in order to face this problem. Government decision." Like other segments we have seen, this segment contains many words (64 of them). But less than half of them (27) are important for the native English listener.

Salah was only able to focus on a few of the words in the above segment. It is clear he was able to correctly focus on the words "problem" and "government," and correctly link them with a meaning from his internal lexicon; he may have understood a few other words as well. His reply clearly indicates he did not understand all the words of the segment, and he incorrectly uses the word "decision" instead of "action."

Nevertheless, from the words that he understood, he correctly guesses the topic and associates appropriate information from his long-term memory, linking an appropriate situation model, “Steps to Take to Solve the Problem (of Water Pollution)” with the textbase. Thus, the situation model he used helped him supplement his inability to identify all the important words from the segment and helped him partially understand the segment.

I used the various examples above to demonstrate that comprehension strategies are important in order to comprehend an oral text, showing that the participants' use of comprehension strategies, such as Focus, Guessing, and Association, helped them in the comprehension process. Before discussing these comprehension strategies, I also pointed out that Tunisian EFL learners use transfer strategies to help move information throughout the human information-processing system; therefore, they are a vital part of the system. The participants' use of listening strategies gives evidence to suggest that listening strategies are an essential aspect of comprehension, and provides additional validity to the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model.

Tunisian EFL Learners' Orchestration of Strategies Listening to Oral Texts

According to the model presented in the previous section, the participants orchestrated a cluster of strategies from each of the strategy sets so that comprehension occurs. In this section I further consider my participants orchestration of strategies by examining the strategies of those participants who completed tasks associated with easy texts and the strategies of those participants who completed tasks associated with difficult texts. As I examine the strategy orchestration of these participants, I examine both their

successful completion of these tasks and their unsuccessful completion of these tasks, and I consider the listening obstacles that they encountered while they listened to the texts.

Strategy Use and the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model

The results of my research showed that the participants used different strategies depending on the type of text to which they listened, indicating that these learners are active in the listening comprehension process. In addition, they have a limited repertoire of strategies they can successfully orchestrate together to understand easy texts and successfully complete tasks associated with those texts. Because they use a limited number of strategies, they often have a difficult time orchestrating their strategies together when they listen to difficult texts and are often unsuccessful in understanding difficult texts and completing tasks associated with those texts.

An examination of strategy use for easy oral texts. In order to better understand the way in which the participants used listening strategies while they listened to easy texts, I examined the successful and unsuccessful completion of tasks by participants in my research who listened to these types of texts. I chose to use easy texts in my research because I assumed that listening obstacles, like the ones that I discussed in Chapter 4, are not present. Thus, the vocabulary is known, the speech is slower, there are longer pauses between information units, and the text is shorter. In addition, I expected these texts to be below the participants' comprehension ability. Some of the tasks were visual and some were written. Because I assumed that the participants would not encounter obstacles while they listened to the easy text, I also assumed that they would use a larger range of strategies and would be better able to orchestrate their strategy use

than when they listened to the difficult texts. Therefore, I was interested to examine whether the participants used the same collection of strategies when they listened to easy texts as they did when they listened to difficult texts.

I discovered that the participants used very few listening strategies when they listened to easy texts. The majority, 60%, were also able to successfully complete the task. However, more of them successfully completed the visual task than successfully completed the written task, 86% versus 47%. Therefore, my initial assumption that they would use more strategies was wrong. However, my assumption that they would encounter very few obstacles, was correct. In addition, I assumed, incorrectly, from the outset that almost all of the participants would successfully complete both the written task and the visual tasks.

I discovered that the students' proficiency had no bearing on whether they successfully completed the task; both low and high proficiency students successfully completed tasks, and both low and high proficiency students unsuccessfully completed tasks. Discussed below are the participants' successful and unsuccessful use of strategies and how the participants' success and lack of success compares with the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model I discussed in the beginning of this chapter.

Written tasks associated with easy texts were successfully completed by 47% of the participants in my research. Except for one high proficiency participant, all of the participants had a medium proficiency. Of the participants who were successful, all of them except one used three strategies together: Reading the Task, Focus, and Matching. Two of these strategies that the participants used, Reading the Task and Matching, were

metacognitive strategies and only one, Focus, was a cognitive strategy. Only one participant used a focus strategy with no metacognitive strategies; he seemed to successfully complete the task, focusing only on the important words in the text. No one used an elaboration strategy, an inferencing strategy, or an association strategy. Apparently, combining the information with information from long-term memory through elaboration was not necessary because these texts were easy, the topics of the texts were well known, the vocabulary was familiar, and the task was simple. In addition, no one encountered any listening obstacles while they listened to the text or completed the task.

Except for one, all of the participants, who were assigned visual tasks, completed them successfully, by using only a picture matching strategy. In addition, two participants associated information in their long-term memory with the visual task, giving them additional support in successfully completing the tasks. The participants used a focus strategy with the written tasks, but not with the visual tasks. This agrees with Baddeley's (2009) working memory model that focus, an attentional strategy related to the sensory registers and the central executive, is not needed with visual information.

From the results of the participants who completed written tasks associated with easy texts, I concluded the following. If a text was below the participants' comprehension ability and when they did not encounter any obstacles, they used only a cognitive focus strategy, a metacognitive planning strategy, and a metacognitive monitoring strategy. These strategies help move lexical information into the Phonological Loop where it is stored until it is comprehended. In addition, when participants encountered an easy text that has a visual task associated with it, they used a

much different strategy, Picture Matching which moves visuals information into the Visuospatial Sketchpad where it is stored until it is comprehended.

Having discussed the participants' use of strategies to successfully complete an easy task, I now consider those participants who were unable to complete an easy task successfully. 40% of the participants were unable to successfully complete a task associated with an easy text. Of these, the overwhelming majority, were unable to successfully complete a written task associated with an easy text. Table 22 displays the listening strategies that were used by the research participants and the listening obstacles that they encountered completing written tasks associated with easy oral texts.

Table 22

Unsuccessful Participants' Listening Strategy Use for Written Tasks Associated with Easy Texts Ordered by Proficiency

Participant	**Proficiency**	**Strategies**	**Obstacles**
(n=3)	High	Reading Task, Focus, Matching	[No Background, Vocabulary, Listen/Write, Long Task, Accent, Speed, No Pauses, Background Noises]
(n=3)	Medium	Reading Task, Focus, Matching	Speed, [No Pauses], [Listen/Write], Long Task
(n=1)	Low	Reading Task, Focus, Matching	Speed, [No Pauses]

The obstacles listed in brackets were mentioned by only one participant.

As is evident from the table, all of the participants who unsuccessfully completed the written tasks associated with the easy texts used the same strategies as those who

successfully completed them. Therefore, the difference was the listening obstacles that the participants encountered, not in their strategy use. Those participants who were unable to successfully complete a written task associated with an easy text encountered three main obstacles: a fast text and a long task, as well as an inability to listen and write at the same time. These obstacles seemed to prevent these participants from effectively orchestrating their strategies together, thereby preventing comprehension from occurring. In addition, there is an indication that these participants are strategically bound because they did not change their strategy use, using exactly the same strategies when they did not encounter any obstacles and when they did encounter obstacles.

An examination of strategy use for difficult oral texts. I now examine the strategies that participants used to complete tasks associated with difficult texts. I used difficult texts for this research project because I expected these texts to be above the participants' comprehension ability and I was interested to know the extent to which their strategy use would be affected with obstacles they would encounter, such as unknown vocabulary, fast speech, long information units, and short pauses between information units. I was also interested to know the difference between their strategy use for easy texts and difficult texts.

Contrary to my initial assumption, I discovered that the participants used a larger variety of listening strategies when they listened to difficult texts than when they listened to easy texts. Their strategy use with more difficult texts also corresponded to the cognitive functions that Wenden (1991) mentioned. In addition, they were able to orchestrate their strategies to a certain extent to help them understand difficult texts when

they encountered only a few listening obstacles, or if the obstacles they encountered did not impede their strategy use. However, when they encountered an impeding obstacle or many different obstacles, they are unable to use their normal listening strategies, affecting their ability to understand the text. The findings indicate that the strategies most vulnerable to being blocked by obstacles were Note-taking, an elaboration strategy, and Listening Many Times, a practice strategy.

In exploring the participants' use of listening strategies while listening to difficult oral texts, I begin with those participants who were able to successfully complete task associated with difficult oral texts. Table 23 displays those participants who successfully completed tasks associated with difficult texts.

Table 23

Successful Participants' Strategy Use for Difficult Texts Ordered by Proficiency

Participant	**Proficiency**	**Strategies**	**Obstacles**
(n=5)	Medium	Reading Task, Focus, Notes, [Guessing], [Association],Listening Many Times, Matching	Speed, Long Text, Long/ Difficult Task, [Listen/Write], [Accent]
(n=1)	Low	Reading Task, Focus, Notes, Listening Many Times, Matching, Checking	

Note: The information in brackets was reported by only one participant.

As is shown in the above table, all of the participants, except one, had moderate proficiency. The strategy cluster used by the majority of the participants was: Reading the Task, Focus, Note-Taking, Listening Many Times, and Matching. All the participants

used an attentional strategy, Focus, an elaboration strategy, Note-Taking, and a practice strategy, Listening Many Times. It seems that they were also able to use their focus strategy to retain the information until it had been comprehended. Therefore, with these cognitive strategies they were able to obtain information from the aural stream, retrieve relevant information from long-term memory, retain the information in working memory until it had been comprehended, and store new information back into long-term memory with note-taking. By using these various strategies, they used strategies for all of the cognitive processes except for recycling, which occurs in the Phonological Loop.

In addition to the cognitive strategies mentioned above, they all used two metacognitive strategies: Reading the Task and Matching. These two strategies helped them develop a plan for listening. It also helped them ensure that they listened to the correct information so that they could complete the task. In addition to the other two metacognitive strategies, the low proficiency participant also used Checking Information, which helped her verify that she had answered the task correctly. Interestingly, the participants were able to use the above strategies successfully even though they encountered various obstacles while they listened to the texts. The participants reported the following listening obstacles: fast text speed, a long text, and a long or difficult task. Two individuals also reported two other obstacles: the inability to listen and write simultaneously, and the inability to understand certain accents.

By comparing the participants use of listening strategies with the easy texts and with the difficult texts, it seems that they used a greater range of strategies with the difficult texts than they did with the easy texts. Therefore, it seems that when the text is

easy and there are no listening obstacles, the participants did not need to use a large number of listening strategies to aid the information processing system. However, when the text was more difficult and there were more listening obstacles, they needed to use more listening strategies to help the system.

Even though the results of my research show that the participants could use more listening strategies to help them understand difficult texts, it is surprising that only 33% of the participants were able to successfully complete tasks associated with difficult texts and no high proficiency participants were able to successfully complete tasks associated with difficult texts. Therefore, I now examine the strategy use of those participants who were not successful in completing tasks associated with difficult texts to discover how their strategy use, and the obstacles they encountered, were different from those participants who were successful.

Table 24 displays the unsuccessful use of strategies by the participants of my research when they listened to difficult texts.

Table 24

Unsuccessful Participants' Strategy Use for Difficult Texts Ordered by Proficiency

Participant	Proficiency	Strategies	Obstacles
(n=5)	High	Reading Task, Focus, Notes, Listening Many Times, [Memorization], [Paraphrasing], [Association], Matching	Speed, [Long Text], Long/Confusing Task, Listen/Write, Unknown/Difficult Topic
(n=5)	Medium	Reading Task, Focus, [Notes], Listening Many Times, Matching	Speed, [Vocabulary], Long Task, Long Text, [Text/Task Linking], Accent
(n=2)	Low	Reading Task, Focus, Listening Many Times, Guessing, Matching	Speed, Accent, Long Text, Long Task, External Factors

The information in brackets was mentioned by only one participant. Even though I divided my participants by proficiency to observe any advantage of proficiency, I discovered that the high-proficiency participants did not perform any better on the task than the medium- or low-proficiency participants. This is evident from Table 24. As I previously discussed, this table shows that even though the high-proficiency participants used the same strategies and encountered similar obstacles as the medium-proficiency participants, five medium-proficiency participants were able to successfully complete the task but none of the high-proficiency participants were able to complete the task.

Part of the reason for the high-proficiency participants lack of success may have been because many of them were given partially completed notes to complete. They were totally unfamiliar with this type of task and this type of western note-taking is different from the way that Tunisians take notes. However, this is only a partial answer

because three medium-proficiency participants also had this type of task and two of these three participants were able to complete the task successfully. I think that the rest of the explanation to their poor performance is that they were so overwhelmed by the fast speed of the text that they were unable to effectively focus on the text or take notes based on the text, even though they reported that they had used a focus strategy and a note-taking strategy.

I now present some comments from the high-proficiency participants, which seem to corroborate my belief that the fast text completely incapacitated their strategy use. First, Samir says this about the difficult text to which he listened: "My brain isn't going as fast as she is speaking. I can't write as fast as she can talk. So I miss information because when I am trying to right down one point, she is on to the next point, which I can't concentrate on." Another participant, Dhakra, also agrees with Samir. She said, "I tried to concentrate on specific words in the text to complete the task. It worked for the [easy] task because the words were spoken slowly in the text and I could understand them. However, in this [difficult] text the words were spoken too fast and there were too many unknown words which kept me from successfully completing the task." Finally, I have included a short comment from Houda who says, "I can't catch all the information at the same time. I can't hear and focus and write all at the same time." These three comments from these three high-proficiency participants give an indication that even though they reported that they used a focus strategy and a note-taking strategy, they actually had difficulty focusing on the important information; additionally, they were unable to take notes on the important information because of the speed of the text and

their lack of focus.

I now discuss the medium-proficiency participants lack of success. These five participants encountered similar listening obstacles as the successful medium-proficiency participants. However, only one of the four used a note-taking strategy. It seems that they decided not to take notes because they had a hard time listening and writing at the same time with the difficult texts; therefore, they stressed a focus strategy instead of a note-taking strategy. This is interesting because they normally used a note-taking strategy when they listened to a text. This strategy is an elaboration strategy, because they did not have this key strategy they were not able to identify patterns in the data, to make associations, and to combine what they had heard with information from long-term memory to aid comprehension. Listening Many Times was another strategy they reported using, but which did not seem to help them. Fore example, when I asked Ahlem if the Listening Many Times strategy helped her she said, " Not really. I don't understand what the text is talking about. Usually it helps me but this time it didn't help me. The speech was too fast." Finally, even though they said they used a focus strategy, it seemed that the text was too fast and so, like the high-proficiency participants, they were unable to focus on the important information in the text. For example, when I asked Saoussen if she was able to focus on the text, she said, "No. The speaker had a British accent and I had a hard time understanding that accent. The text was too fast."

I finally discuss the reasons that the low-proficiency participants were unable to complete the difficult text successfully. The successful low-proficiency participants did not report encountering any listening obstacles. However, the unsuccessful low-

proficiency participants reported many listening obstacles. It seems that these obstacles affected their strategy use, especially Note-Taking, which was not reported by them at all. The obstacles that these two low-proficiency participants reported was a fast text, an unclear text, and a long text. About the text, Nourzed said, " I wasn't able to concentrate. I found it difficult. The vocabulary was simple. But the text was too long." Sheima agrees with Nourzed when she says, "I couldn't concentrate because it was too long." In addition, Sheima cited a long task with too many questions and the difficulty of writing down answers while listening to the text. Therefore, it seems that the major obstacles of a fast text and a long task, as well as difficulty in writing and listening simultaneously, prevented these two participants from using their focus strategy which may have helped them successfully complete the difficult texts. They also had no elaboration strategy, an important factor in not being able to successfully complete the task. In contrast, the one low-proficiency participants who successfully completed the task associated with the difficult text reported using a large amount of different strategies that helped each cognitive process. This successful, low-proficiency participant also used a metacognitive checking strategy which helped her ensure that she had correctly answered the questions in the task.

By examining the strategy use of the participants in my research, I have shown that the participants did have a range of strategies that allowed information to flow throughout the human information-processing system. However, the findings also show that these learners are not always able to successfully understand oral English transactional texts, even with a range of strategies, because they encounter obstacles

while they are listening to these texts. The major obstacles that I have discussed above are: a fast text, a long text, and a long task. In addition, they were not able to listen and write simultaneously. Furthermore, it seems that the listening obstacles they encountered hindered or prevented them from using their listening strategies effectively. The strategies that were most affected by the obstacles were Focus and Note-taking.

One strategy noticeably lacking from most of the participants' strategy clusters was a metacognitive evaluation strategy. The one participant who used this strategy benefited from it enormously. Some of the participants thought that they had successfully completed a task and they were very surprised when they discovered that they had not completed it successfully. From the disconnect between the participants' perception of their performance on the tasks and their actual performance on the task, I believe that an evaluation strategy, like Checking Information would have helped all of the participants to do much better on the tasks.

As mentioned above, it seems that the participants' proficiency had no bearing on how successful they were in completing tasks associated with oral texts; high-proficiency participants had more lack of success than medium-proficiency participants and a low-proficiency participant was as likely to successfully complete a task as a high proficiency participant. Therefore, according to the findings, successful participants, regardless of proficiency were able to overcome the listening obstacles they faced and to orchestrate a cluster of strategies well in the midst of the listening obstacles they encountered.

Besides the important implications I have mentioned above, I consider strategic boundedness to be another important issue with regard to Tunisian EFL learners. All the

participants reported very similar strategy use regardless of what type of texts or obstacles they encountered. The amount of strategies was less with easy texts and more with difficult texts, but there were not a wide variety of different strategies that I would have expected and that other researchers, such as Oxford (1990), Wenden (1991), O'Malley, and Chamot (1990), have cited. Therefore, they did not have other strategies to use when they were prevented from using their usual strategy. This is an indication that the participants had strategic boundedness. For example, Hatem and Mounir, performed very well when listening to oral texts. Both of them used a note-taking strategy. They were able to understand both easy texts and difficult texts. However, when I did not allow them to take notes, they did not have any other elaboration strategy to replace it and, therefore, they failed to understand the oral texts given to them. Furthermore, rather than realizing that they lacked a listening strategy to replace the note-taking strategy, they complained about the text or the task. Hatem complained that the task was "bad" and Mounir said that he was unable to concentrate on the text and the text's topic was confusing.

This chapter ends with the story of one participant, Basam. His story appropriately summarizes the way in which other participants also approached texts and tasks.

"Basam" as an Example of a Tunisian EFL Learner

Like Hatam, Basam's way of listening intrigued me. However, Basam was different from Hatem in proficiency: Hatem had a lower proficiency and Basam had a higher proficiency. Like other research participants, I gave Basam both an easy text and

a difficult text. No matter what type of text I gave him, he decided that the texts were easy. However, sometimes he was successful in completing the task and sometimes he was not.

For example, I gave Basam an easy text entitled, "Strange and Unusual Things." Two other participants also had this same text and had done poorly on the first part of the task and had done better on the second part of the task. Although he did not think he did very well on the task, he did better than the other two participants on this task, receiving 75% correct on the first part and 71% correct on the second part. When I asked him about the text and the task, he said that they were easy: "But you have to concentrate because of some speed [of the text]." However, when I asked him if he had completed the task, he said he had not completed it.: "While you're concentrating on one sentence [of the text], the next passes very quickly. So you can't concentrate on one piece of information at a time." So from the beginning of my interview with him, he mentioned that a fast text as well as his inability to listen and write at the same time were two important obstacles that hindered him from completing the task. Even though he encountered two obstacles while listening to the easy text, it seems that through his strategy use, Reading the Task and Focus, he was able to overcome these obstacles, successfully completing a majority of the task.

As with the easy text, Basam thought that the difficult text was easy. When I asked Basam the reason it was easy he said, "There was only one person speaking." He said the only difficult part of the text was that he did not have background knowledge of the topic. When I asked him about his strategy for listening to the text and completing

the task he only mentioned note-taking: “I took notes on the important information from the text and then I rewrote it in the task. Taking notes is very helpful because it allows you to record information so you don't have to keep all of it in your head.” He used note-taking as an elaboration strategy. He described his use of note-taking by saying, “I write down definitions and key words from the text. What I think is important I write down and what I don't think is important I don't write down.”

However, even though he was confident that he had done well on the task, the correction of the task indicated that he had not understood the text, getting only 10% of the task correct. Like half of the other research participants, there was a difference between his perception and the indication from the correction of the task. However, it seems that in Basam's case, maybe he did understand, but he did not know how to reconcile the task requirements of an unfamiliar task with the notes he had taken while listening to the text. The task itself, therefore, became an obstacle; Basam thinking he had understood the text, but the assessment indicating that he had not understood the text.

Even though Basam had some difficulty with the tasks, he showed flexibility in his strategy use between the easy text and the difficult text. He explained to me the way his strategy use changed from the easy text to the difficult text: “For the first task you listen for specific information and then write down that information directly in the task. However, for the second task I needed to take notes on the whole text and then take information from my notes that corresponds to the missing information from the task and fill that information in the task.”

I was intrigued by Basam's performance on the two tasks I had given him and the apparent disconnect between his perception and the indication from the corrected tasks. Therefore, I decided to re-interview him, giving him other texts and observing how he managed with different types of texts and different types of tasks.

During the re-interview, the first text I gave him was a lecture entitled, "Ethical Decisions." This had a note-completion task very similar to the first difficult text to which he previously listened. Although he did better than the first note-completion task, he only got 46% correct on the second note-completion task.

In order to see if he was able to change his strategy use, as he did when I first interviewed him, I did not allow him to take notes while he listened to the first text. I also removed the normal pauses to make the text appear more difficult, trying to observe if Basam would admit that the text was difficult. However, he did not change his opinion. Similar to the first interview he said, "It's easy because there's only one person speaking in this text and she uses clear words and her language is very clear; the words are simple and plain." But, it was obvious that he was confused by the task and initially he did not write down anything on the task. I asked him if the problems he had writing information on the task indicated that the task was difficult. However, he denied it, saying that the task was easy. "[The task is] easy because the text is easy. You just have to memorize some information from the text and then you fill in the blanks that are in the task."

This comment from Basam seems to identify the thinking of the research participants; if the text is easy, the task is easy and if the text is difficult, the task is

difficult. This attitude often caused the research participants to believe that they had understood a text if they believed the text was easy, even if the corrected task indicated that they had not understood the text. Conversely, if these participants believed that the text was difficult, they thought that they had not understood the text and had done poorly on the task, even if the corrected task had indicated they had understood the text.

Like the first interview, Basam changed his normal strategy use, since I did not allow him to take notes. Instead of using a note-taking strategy, he used a memorization strategy: "First, you have to listen to each word that is said in the text - don't miss any words. From all that information, your brain will remember the main ideas and the important words in the text that you may use in the task. Complete the task using the information that you remembered from the text." Thus, his description includes a focus strategy, a rehearsal strategy, an elaboration strategy, and a matching strategy. However, it did not seem that his strategy use was very effective. As I previously mentioned, he got less than half of the task correct. When I asked him the reason for not doing well on the task he said, "When I listened to it the first time, I thought it was easy -- and it was very easy. Because the way of speaking is clear everything is clear. But when you asked me to answer the task I got a little bit confused. Then when I listened to the text the second time I got [more] confused because I realized that I had put the information from the second type in the third type and I couldn't find a way of correcting it." For this first listening text, it seemed the task was the only obstacle that he encountered.

The second text I gave Basam during the re-interview was a discussion from the radio entitled, "Obesity." The task associated with this text was a table that was to be

completed with details from the text. Like the three other participants who listened to this text and completed the associated task, Basam did not do well on the task. In Basam's case he got only 33% of the task correct. Basam thought the task was confusing. He said the following about the task, "I was confused by the task. Therefore, I didn't know if I should take notes or not. I didn't know if I should complete the task or take notes. I don't have time to take notes and complete the task at the same time. I think it's more important to complete the task than to take notes."

In addition, instead of Basam saying that the text was easy, as he had with the previous text, he said it was difficult and mentioned the obstacles he encountered that had made the text difficult: "The speaker spoke much faster than the previous speaker [from the first text]. Also there were multiple speakers who intervened in the middle of the news reporter's summary. These interventions by multiple speakers made it more difficult and more confusing." Thus he indicated that the text's speed and multiple speakers were the two obstacles that prevented him from understanding the text. In addition, even though I allowed him to listen to it three times, this did not help him to understand it any better; thus, the obstacles prevented him from using his strategies to understand the text.

Another interesting aspect was the confusing task and the difficult text causing him to change his normal strategy use and implement a memorization strategy instead of a note-taking strategy. I asked him why he did not use his normal note-taking strategy. He replied, "But you don't have time....If you do not have a task to complete, you can take notes on the text. However if there is a task to complete, there is no time to take

notes and also to complete the task. Furthermore, the task is more important so the task must be completed directly without taking notes." However, memorization, which he used to replace his normal note-taking strategy, did not help him to understand the text or complete the task successfully. Even though he said that a memorization strategy could help a listener to complete the task very easily after listening the first time, he admitted, "I'm trying to concentrate on the missing words but I'm finding it a little bit difficult because the missing words are [spoken too fast]." Even after listening to it three times he said his strategies did not help him at all to understand the text.

The third text I gave Basam during the re-interview was a text entitled, "On the Job." This text was a conversation between a new employee and an employee who had worked at the company for many years. Even though the text contained multiple speakers, Basam found the text easy. The only obstacles he mentioned were a long text and a long task. The task had two parts. The first part contained completion questions focusing on the main ideas of the text. The second part was a table that was to be completed with details from the text. Basam did well on the table, completing 83% of the table correctly. However, he did poorly on the completion exercise, getting only 41% correct.

The first time Basam listened to this text, he tried to answer the questions on the task while listening to the text. However, because of the speed of the text, and listen-write difficulties, he was unable to do this. The second time he listened to the text, he changed his strategy and used a note-taking strategy instead of the memorization strategy he used the first time. He found that the note-taking strategy worked better for him and

he was able to complete the task better the second time than he was able to complete it the first time. He listened to the text a third time and completed parts of the task that he was unable to complete the first two times.

During both of the times that I interviewed Basam, he claimed that, in general, the texts were easy. Out of five texts to which he listened, he only found one of them difficult. In addition, he generally found the tasks easy, he only found difficulty with the task associated with the second text during the re-interview. However, even though he generally found both the texts and the task easy, he did poorly on almost all of the tasks. Out of seven tasks, he only successfully completed two of them, a 29% successful completion rate. The normal strategy cluster he successfully used was Reading the Task, Focus, Listening Many Times, Note-taking, and Matching. The obstacles he encountered during the listening process were a fast text, long text, a long task, and a confusing task. In addition, he also encountered another obstacle, an inability to listen and write at the same time.

Even though Basam mentioned encountering obstacles each time he listened to a text, it seemed that the obstacles only affected his ability to understand the text once. However, the big obstacle Basam encountered was not the text and task obstacles mentioned above but his inability to translate what he had understood into appropriate task responses. The majority of the time he thought the text and the task were easy; but the corrections of the task indicated that he had not understood the text. It seemed that his goal was to complete the task, whether or not he completed it correctly. During the re-interview I asked him about this, but he did not seem to have an appropriate answer.

The answer he gave had to do with his concentration, not his completion of the task: "I see that my concentration is gradual. It starts up really high and then falls down to nothing by the end." However, I think there was a different problem; he did not check his answers that he had written down to make sure they were correct. It seems that the Checking Information, a metacognitive evaluation strategy, would have helped him to better synchronize his understanding of the text with the requirements of the task.

During the two interviews I had with Basam, I noticed that sometimes he thought he had understood the text but the indication from the task was that he had not understood the text. Other times he was able to successfully complete the task even though he told me that he had not understood the text. Although sometimes he encountered obstacles that prevented him from understanding the text, it was usually the task that gave him the most difficulty. Twice he was unfamiliar with the task, twice the task confused him, and at least once he could not relate what he had understood from the text to the requirements of the task. In addition to the difficulties he had with understanding the task requirement, I think the most significant issue was that each time he did not use a metacognitive evaluation strategy, which would have helped him verify that his completion of the task corresponded with his understanding of the text.

I include Basam's experience of listening to oral English transactional texts because many of my research participants had similar experiences listening to a text. Just as Basam was only able to switch between a note-taking strategy and a memorization strategy, many of my research participants also identified their strategic boundedness by using favorite strategies continuously, whether they were appropriate for the text and task

or not; much like a novice carpenter who uses the same favorite hammer for everything he encounters in the wood, whether it be a screw or a nail. Many of my research participants also encountered similar obstacles to Basam when they listened to an oral English text. Sometimes these obstacles prevented them from using strategies that would have helped them understand the text, as Basam was prevented from understanding the second text in the re-interview. Finally, many of the research participants encountered difficulty relating what they had understood in the text with the requirements of the task. Also, just like Basam, all of the participants, except for Fatma, did not use the evaluation strategy, Checking Information, which would have ensured that what they had written in the task agreed with what they had understood from the text.

Summary of the Chapter

From the outset of my research, I have tried to determine reasons that Tunisian EFL learners have trouble understanding oral texts. I assumed a cognitive model as my theoretical approach because this approach seemed to best fit the situation in which the learners listened to oral texts. This cognitive model is a combination of Anderson's (1983, 1993) human information-processing system, Baddeley's (2009) working memory model, Kintsch's (1998) Construction-Integration model, and listening strategy use.

The findings indicated that the participants used listening strategies at both the architectural level and at the comprehension level. At the architectural level, the participants used transfer strategies to help move information throughout the system. This movement of information goes through four distinct cognitive processes as described by Wenden (1991). Therefore, they used a focus strategy to help move

information from the sensory registers to working memory, this is the reception process. Focus strategies also help them keep information in working memory. Along with focus, a few participants used a memorization strategy which helped the Phonological Loop to repeat information. These two strategies are used during the holding or recycling process and help hold and repeat information in working memory until it has been comprehended. Three strategies, Guessing, Note-Taking, and Paraphrasing, help the Episodic Buffer during the retrieval process to combine relevant information from working memory and long-term memory during the comprehension process. Another strategy, Picture Matching, also helped the participants to use pictorial information to help comprehend information during this process. Finally, two strategies, Listening Many Times, and Association helped activate relevant information from long-term memory to be used during the storing process to move new, important information into long-term memory. I also found from my research that three metacognitive strategies, Reading the Task, Matching, and Checking Information, oversee the movement of information throughout the system and help ensure that the right information is used in the comprehension process.

Not only did the findings show that the participants used listening strategies at the architectural level, they also used strategies at the comprehension level. These strategies help in the construction of the textbase and the inclusion of a situation model with the textbase during the construction phase of the Construction-Integration model. As part of comprehension, Text Focus and Task Focus help the learner to isolate the correct information from both the text and the task. These two strategies, along with Guessing,

help to match information from the text with known information in the learners' internal lexicon. A guessing strategy is also used, along with an association strategy, to help in choosing a correct situation model to include with the textbase.

Even though findings demonstrated that the participants used text focus during the comprehension process, the type of text focus that the participants in my research used was not an English-based Rhythm Stress focus strategy, like native English listeners use. Instead they used two French-influenced text focus strategies, Clear Word Focus and Segment End Focus. These two strategies often helped them pick incorrect, unimportant information instead of the important information that a rhythm stress strategy would have chosen.

Consequently, according to my findings, the strategies that the participants used at the comprehension level were not as effective as those strategies that they used at the architectural level. I attribute this to them using universal strategies at the architectural level, which are strategies that can be used effectively with any language. However, the strategies they used at the comprehension level, especially at the word identification level, were language specific strategies, based on learning a French-based syllable-timed focus, which were not effective when they listened to oral English texts.

In the final part of this chapter, I explored the way in which my participants used listening strategies while they listened to two oral texts, an easy text and a difficult text and completed two tasks associated with those texts. I discovered the proficiency of the participants had no relationship to how successful they were able in completing listening tasks. I also discovered that when they listened to the easy texts they used a limited

amount of listening strategies, which seems to be because the text was below their comprehension level and the vocabulary was well-known, the text was slow, and the information units were short. However, when they listened to difficult texts, the participants used a wider range of strategies that corresponded with the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model. Furthermore, the difficult texts presented obstacles, such as a fast text, a long text, and a long task, as well as the inability to listen and write at the same time. These obstacles prevented the participants from using their normal strategies and prevented other strategies from being effective. I also elaborated in the final part of this chapter on another finding from my research, strategic boundedness. This term refers to Tunisian listeners as normally only using one strategy from each of the cognitive processes. Therefore, when obstacles prevented a participant from using one strategy, they had no other strategy to use in its place.

From the findings of my research, it seems that the theoretical model I have adopted accurately depicts the process that Tunisian EFL learners use to understand oral transactional text in English. In addition, this theory has helped identify where misunderstanding or non-understanding can happen.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Introduction

I began this research to better understand the reasons that Tunisian EFL learners have difficulty understanding oral English transactional texts. I decided from the outset that these learners are active listeners and that they use a cognitive process to understand oral transactional texts in English. Based on these two premises, I used a theoretical model which combines a cognitive architectural model (Anderson, 1983, 1993) a working memory model (Baddeley, 2009), a comprehension model (Kintsch, 1998), and listening strategies (Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; & Vandergrift, 2003b). I combined these three aspects into a theoretical model which I call the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model. The two research questions I have attempted to answer through this research are:

1. What listening strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective) do Tunisian EFL learners use when listening to oral English transactional texts? How wide and varied are these strategies?, and
2. What are the major obstacles that Tunisian EFL learners encounter when listening to oral English transactional texts?

I have discovered through my research that Tunisian EFL learners are active listeners, they are aware that they use strategies while they listen to oral transactional texts in English, and the strategies they use are an integral part of the theory that I have identified. Even though they may not be aware of all of the strategies that they use, they

are aware of many strategies that facilitate the flow of information throughout the cognitive architectural system and that facilitate the comprehension process.

Discussion of Tunisian EFL Learners' Strategy Use and Obstacles Encountered

There were a number of listening strategies the participants used as well as a number of listening obstacles they encountered. I will first summarize the listening strategies these participants used and then I will summarize the obstacles they encountered.

A Summary of Listening Strategy Use

The main cognitive listening strategies the participants identified were an *attentional* strategy, Focus; two *rehearsal* strategies, Memorization and Note-taking; an *imagery* strategy, Picture Matching; an *association* strategy, Association; two *elaboration* strategies, Note-taking and Paraphrasing; a *practice* strategy, Listening Many Times; and an *inferencing* strategy, Guessing.

In addition to the transfer strategies I have mentioned above, which help move information between cognitive areas in the human information processing system, the participants also used three main comprehension strategies: Focus, Guessing, and Association; and they used two types of focus: Clear Word Focus and Segment End Focus. In contrast to the transfer strategies I mentioned above, which are universal strategies, Clear Word Focus and Segment End Focus, are language-specific strategies. Because the participants used these two language-specific strategies to focus on clear words in the text and the end of information units in a text, these participants most likely developed these strategies while learning a syllable-timed language, like French, rather a

stress-timed language, like English. Since these two strategies are based on a syllable-timed language, these strategies were counter-productive when the participants used the strategies to help them in understanding oral English speech. The use of these two comprehension strategies often resulted in the participants' misunderstanding a text, because these strategies caused them to focus on the wrong information in the text.

Although I expected the participants to use most of the above strategies, I was surprised that they did not use the cognitive strategy, Translation, because I observed learners using this strategy quite frequently while I taught students in Tunisia, especially when the students were defining new vocabulary words. In fact, when I thought that one participant had used it to help her understand a text, she denied it and claimed that she had used a *paraphrasing* strategy, not a *translation* strategy. In addition, during my research, I found the use of Translation in their listening comprehension classes to be very controversial, with some of the participants saying they had used Translation in their classes and others denying using this type of strategy. There was an attitude among some of them that it was wrong to use this strategy. Therefore, even though they probably use a *translation* strategy in their listening comprehension classes and they may have used this strategy subconsciously while listening to oral texts in my research, they did not report using it and I did not observe them using it.

In addition to the cognitive strategies that I mentioned above, I also identified two metacognitive strategies that the participants used: Reading the Task and Matching. Reading the Task is a *planning* strategy and Matching is a *monitoring* strategy. Most of the participants used these two strategies to help them decide on which information to

concentrate in the text and to oversee the flow of information throughout the cognitive system. Even though only one student used a metacognitive *evaluation* strategy, Checking Information, she found it important to ensure that she had completed the listening task correctly. Many of the participants had a difficult time connecting what they had understood from the text with the requirements of the task, which lead me to conclude that if more of the participants had used an *evaluation* strategy, they may have more accurately connected the information from the text with the task requirements.

Because my research was based on a cognitive model and my research was primarily conducted with individual Tunisian EFL learners, I did not expect to discover many socio-affective strategies. However, the participants during the group interviews did identify one socio-affective strategy, Getting Help from Students. Similar to Translation, the use of this strategy caused disagreement among the participants. Some participants admitted using this strategy to help them in their listening comprehension classes to better understand the oral text and complete associated tasks. However, the majority of the participants thought it was wrong to use this strategy. There were four reasons given for not wanting help from other students. 1) They wanted to rely on themselves. 2) They didn't want to bother other students. 3) They saw the task as a type of exam and getting help from other students a form of cheating. 4) They thought that the other students' help confused rather than clarified.

I observed that many of the participants in my research were able to orchestrate the above strategies together, resulting in better comprehension of the oral English transactional texts. However, even though the participants used listening strategies to aid

the movement of information between each cognitive process, they used only one or two strategies at each information transfer point. Therefore, if they were prevented from using a particular strategy, information flow was often impeded. In addition, some participants had some flexibility in their use of strategies enabling them to switch to a different strategy if a favorite strategy could not be used. However, other participants did not have this flexibility to switch strategies and floundered with no strategic plan when they were unable to use their preferred strategies.

A Summary of Listening Obstacles Encountered

In addition to the listening strategies I have identified above, I also found that certain text and task obstacles blocked the participants from effectively using their strategies and understanding the oral text. They reported encountering some of these obstacles in their listening comprehension classes and reported encountering some of these obstacles while they were listening to texts and completing associated tasks during my research. I classified the obstacles that the participants mentioned by into five categories: text transfer obstacles, text comprehension obstacles, task obstacles, external obstacles, and affective obstacles. The main text transfer obstacles they encountered were a fast text speed and a long text. They also encountered text comprehension obstacles. Two of these were unfamiliar vocabulary and unfamiliar grammatical constructions. A third text comprehension obstacle was not hearing specific words. Next, they cited some task obstacles; task complexity and task length were mentioned as well as the inability to listen and write important information simultaneously. They also reported some obstacles pertaining to factors outside the text and task: audio noise,

background sounds in the audio, and classroom noise. Finally, the affective obstacles they encountered during the research were negative feelings about the text, negative feelings about the topic, and negative judgments about the speaker.

The participants reported that some of the above obstacles occurred during their listening comprehension classes, some of them occurred while they listened to a text during the research, and some of them occurred in both situations. A "fast text" and an unfamiliar accent were the obstacles cited occurring in both their listening comprehension classes and during the research. The main obstacles that the participants reported during their listening comprehension classes were: unclear speech, unknown vocabulary, audio noise or an unclear audio, and external noise. Finally, a long text and an unknown topic were the main text obstacles that the participants only encountered during my research. Overall, in addition to an inability to relate their understanding of the text to the task and an inability to listen and write simultaneously, there were three other main task obstacles that the participants encountered during the research: a confusing task, a long task, an unfamiliar task,

All participants mentioned a "fast text" as the biggest obstacle to understanding oral texts. They encountered this obstacle both in their listening comprehension classes and during my research. However, I discovered in my research that long information units or short pauses between the information units were sometimes interpreted by the participants as being fast, while short information units or longer pauses between the information units were sometimes interpreted as being slower and clearer.

I also noticed that the task itself sometimes became an obstacle to their comprehension of the text. Task unfamiliarity was the major task obstacle the participants encountered. Because they were unfamiliar with a task, they did not know how to translate their understanding of a text into acceptable requirements for the task. This led to the participants sometimes not being able to successfully complete the task, even though they thought that they had understood the text. This is an important issue because researchers and teachers use listening tasks to determine whether an EFL learner has understood an oral text.

Discussion of the Function of Tunisian EFL Learners' Listening Strategies

I found that the listening strategies that the participants used while they listened to oral English texts integrated into the Cognitive Strategic Comprehension Model I have proposed in this research. According to Wenden (1991), there are four cognitive processes that are used to manipulate information throughout the human information-processing system. These four processes are: reception, retention, retrieval, and storage. My research shows that Tunisian EFL learners used specific transfer strategies during each of these processes to help manipulate and move information throughout the human information-processing system. Not all of the participants used all of these transfer strategies. However, most of them were able to use the majority of them as long as they did not encounter impeding obstacles while they listened. I have summarized my findings below for each of these processes.

The first cognitive process is reception. During this process, all of my participants used Focus, an *attention* strategy, which helped them attend to information in

the auditory stream and transfer this information to working memory. Different types of focus were used by participants. Some focused on important information in the auditory stream. Others attempted to focus on every word they could hear. Still others used the task to guide them as they listened to the oral text.

The second cognitive process is retention. During this process, the information that has been transferred to working memory is recycled until it can be comprehended. One strategy, Memorization, was used by a few participants to help maintain information in working memory. A couple of other participants also used a note-taking strategy to aid the working memory in maintaining information. These participants wrote down every word that they heard without interpreting it or transforming it in any way.

The third cognitive process is retrieval. During this process, relevant information from long-term memory is combined in working memory. Information from long-term memory and important information from the text, stored temporarily in working memory, is used during the comprehension process to give meaning to the text. Five listening strategies were used by the participants to transfer information from long-term memory to working memory: Association, Guessing, Paraphrasing, Note-taking, and Listening Many Times. An *association* strategy was used by a few participants to link known information in long-term memory with information in working memory. A *guessing* strategy was also used by a few participants to link information that they assumed should be linked with information in working memory. They made these assumptions based on their knowledge of the text's context and sometimes only on conjecture. A *paraphrasing* strategy was used by one or two participants. Through paraphrasing, the learners were

able to link words or possible meanings from long-term memory to working memory. Even though this strategy is similar to an *association* strategy, this strategy allowed them to link information that would not normally be linked with an association strategy. Note-taking was used my most of the participants. Like paraphrasing, this strategy allowed them to link information from long-term memory to working memory by elaborating and expanding on the information on which they had focused. The final strategy that most participants used was Listening Many Times. This strategy is a *practice* strategy. As the text is repeated multiple times, related, inactive information in long-term memory is gradually activated and combined with the information in working memory. Similar to Paraphrasing and Note-taking, Listening Many Times links information from long-term memory that normally would not be linked with an association strategy.

The fourth cognitive process is storage. During this process new important information comprehended from the text is stored in long-term memory. Three strategies were used during the retrieval process, Association, Guessing, Note-taking, and Paraphrasing, were also used during the storage process to retain new important information in long-term memory. Association stores information by linking new information with old information. Guessing stores information in long-term memory through linking assumed related information between the new information in the text and long-term memory. Note-taking and Paraphrasing store new information in long-term memory through elaborating and transforming the information in the text.

During the four cognitive processes, reception, retention, retrieval, and storage, a comprehension process is also occurring. The data in my research showed that not only

did participants use transfer strategies to move information throughout the human information-processing system, they also used specific comprehension strategies to attempt to understand the text. The strategies that they used during this process were: Focus, Association, and Guessing. Most of the participants used two types of focus, Clear Word Focus, and Segment End Focus to attempt to identify and comprehend specific words in the text. This word identification process, I described more thoroughly in Chapter 2. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, these two strategies were not effective in helping the learners to correctly identify important words and information because these strategies are based on a syllable-timed language, like French, and not a stress-timed language, like English. Most of the participants also used an association strategy. Some of the participants also used a guessing strategy. Unlike the focus strategies, these two strategies helped the participants link information from long-term memory to information in the text and create a textbase during the construction stage of the comprehension process.

Discussion of the Orchestration of Tunisian EFL Learners' Listening Strategies

I found that the participants' strategy use varied depending on whether they were listening to easy texts or difficult texts. They were more likely to use less strategies with the easy texts and more strategies with the difficult texts. This was an important finding because I expected the participants to use more strategies with the easy texts and less strategies with the difficult texts.

According to the data, when participants listened to easy texts with a written task they used only three strategies: two metacognitive strategies, Reading the Task and

Matching, and one cognitive strategy, Focus. It seems that because they considered the texts very easy, they decided they were able to understand the text and complete the task without using any other strategies. When they listened to an easy text with a visual task, they used only one strategy, Picture Matching. Thus it is evident that a focus strategy, which was used with written tasks to transfer information to the Phonological Loop, was not needed with visual tasks because the visual information was transferred to the Visuo-Spatial Sketchpad instead of the Phonological Loop.

Another important finding was that listening obstacles could easily interfere with the participants' ability to understand the texts and successfully complete the tasks because the participants used very few strategies. In addition to their inability to listen and write at the same time, the other two main obstacles that impeded their ability to successfully understand the easy texts and complete an associated task were a "fast text," and a long task.

In contrast to the participants' strategy use while they listened to easy texts, they used more strategies when they listened to difficult oral texts and were able to orchestrate these strategies together. In addition to using a number of different strategies, the strategies they used with the difficult texts corresponded to the four cognitive processes, whereas there was no relationship between their strategy use and the cognitive processes when these learners listened to easy texts. Thus the majority of the learners used a metacognitive *planning* strategy, a metacognitive *monitoring* strategy, a cognitive attention strategy, a *note-taking* strategy, and a cognitive *practicing* strategy.

Even though they used a variety of transfer strategies and orchestrated their strategies to some degree, only one-third of the participants were able to understand the difficult texts and successfully complete an associated task. I concluded from my analysis of the data that the difference between those who were successful and those who were unsuccessful was in their ability to overcome listening obstacles they encountered, not in their strategy use. Those participants who overcame the listening obstacles were usually able to successfully complete the listening tasks; those who were unable to overcome the listening obstacles were usually unsuccessful in completing the tasks. In addition to their inability to listen and write simultaneously, the obstacles that caused the greatest amount of difficulty were: a "fast text," a long text, a long task, and unfamiliar accents.

Implications for Teaching Listening Comprehension to EFL Learners

First, I believe that the current audio-lingual method of teaching listening is ineffective in teaching Tunisian EFL learners how to understand oral transactional texts in English. The audio-lingual method treats EFL learners as passive participants and expects them to just "hear" and "understand" the words of the text and the meaning of the text. This method becomes frustrating for the student because they are unable to hear or understand the oral texts. This method also becomes frustrating for the teacher because they do not understand why the learners do not understand the text and do not know how to teach them to understand the text.

Instead, I believe a paradigm shift is needed that empowers the EFL learners and helps them to become competent users of English and fully able to understand oral

transactional texts in English. The first aspect in this paradigm shift is to treat EFL learners as active participants in the listening comprehension process. They may be "novice listeners" with few strategic tools to help them understand complex texts. However, Tunisian EFL learners can become "expert listeners" with a large repertoire of strategic tools, giving them more flexibility in which strategies they use to listen to oral texts. In this process, they will realize that strategies are tools. In the same way that carpenters choose appropriate tools for the objects they are constructing, listeners should choose the most appropriate strategies that will best enable them to successfully understand the oral text. Through this process the EFL learners will move from strategic boundedness to strategic unboundedness.

The second step is to train teachers in teaching listening comprehension. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, most listening comprehension teachers have their training in reading comprehension, grammar, or composition, instead of listening. This type of training is appropriate for written language, but not for oral language. I think that teachers should be well-versed in the ways that oral English is different from written language and the unique aspects of oral English. In addition, they should use a learner-centered approach to become aware of the learners' strategies and difficulties in understanding oral English texts. In this way, listening comprehension teachers will be prepared to help EFL learners become "expert" users of oral English.

The third step in this paradigm shift is to move the teaching focus away from learning vocabulary, learning grammatical structures, and identifying specific words. Instead, the focus should be on identifying main ideas and important details. In addition,

inferencing skills should be taught to the students. It is also important for the teacher to allow the students to work out the answers by themselves, in their own words. As the focus moves from identifying individual words to identifying main ideas and important details, an English language- specific strategy, Rhythm Focus, should be taught and encouraged rather than the EFL learners' default strategy, Clear Word Focus.

The third step is eliminating or minimizing listening obstacles as much as possible. During my research, I encountered four classes of obstacles: text-related, task-related, topic-related, and external. The class of obstacles that was the simplest to overcome was the external obstacles. Because I controlled for these obstacles during the individual interviews and the think-aloud protocols, these external obstacles were not mentioned at all during the individual interviews and mentioned only once during the think-aloud protocol. My ability to effectively eliminate external obstacles during the individual interviews and think-aloud protocols lead me to the conclusion that classrooms and methods can be modified to minimize and even eliminate external obstacles. For example, comprehension classrooms can be fitted with speakers in all areas of the classroom and teachers can attach an audio player into those speakers so that the audio is heard throughout the room. In addition, teachers can use CDs instead of cassettes to improve the audio quality of the recording.

In addition to external obstacles, as teachers use rhythm-stress comprehension strategies, instead of word-stress strategies, some of the text-based obstacles related to a focus on specific words and structures would gradually disappear. As learners are exposed to different types of texts and accents from different areas of the world, some

text-bases obstacles, such as pronunciation, accent and reduced speech, could be eliminated.

Another major text-related obstacle I identified in my research was a fast text. To eliminate this obstacle, a systematic, step-by-step approach should be implemented. In the same way that learners are taught to read step by step, learners should be taught to listen step by step. Part of this systematic approach is selecting and grading appropriate oral texts based on the proficiency of the learner, in the same way that reading comprehension texts are graded based on a reader's proficiency. For lower proficiency learners, texts of no more than one minute should be used that have short information units and long pauses between these units of approximately one second. As the learners become more proficient, longer texts can be used. For moderate proficiency students, texts should be no longer than three minutes. If longer texts are used for moderate proficiency learners they should be broken down into two- to three- minute segments with a discussion of each segment before moving on to the next segment. As the proficiency of a students increases, longer information units and shorter pauses can be gradually introduced into the instruction. If these guidelines are followed, when learners reach a high proficiency, they should be able to understand any oral English transactional texts with little or no difficulty. If the teacher cannot find audios that meet the suggested specifications above, the teacher can edit audio texts with audio-editing software such as *Audacity* to break the audio into smaller segments and to increase the pauses between information units.

The choice of appropriate topics is another area that listening comprehension teachers should consider. Pre-listening activities are the typical way that new topics are introduced to EFL listeners in a classroom. However, topic obstacles were mentioned by Tunisian EFL learners both in their listening comprehension classes and during the research. Therefore, pre-listening activities may not be sufficient, especially for lower proficiency students. Familiar topics should be used as much as possible, regardless of the students' proficiency. Since the topic affects how a EFL listener approaches a text, interesting topics should be chosen and a variety of different topics should be identified to continually pique the listeners' interest. The teacher may want to use oral texts with topics that relate to the learners' context and worldview rather than employing texts that have a western context, which require learners to have a western worldview.

The final area that teachers should consider is the tasks used with oral English transactional texts. In my experience, very little thought has been given into the ease or difficulty of a particular task. Tasks are mostly retrospective, which are difficult for Tunisian EFL learners to complete while they are listening to an oral text. This, I believe, is a major reason that many of my participants encountered listen-write obstacles. Instead, I would recommend that short, familiar tasks are given to EFL listeners with the instructor giving a thorough explanation of the requirements of the task. Tasks should be devised that require a minimum amount of writing to avoid obstacles arising from having to listen and write simultaneously. As much as possible, on-line tasks, tasks that the learner completes while she is listening a text, should be introduced and used instead of retrospective tasks. As I have previously mentioned, the focus of a task should be on the

main ideas of a text and important details in it, instead of a focus on specific words. Since 50% is considered a passing mark in Tunisia, True and False and Multiple Choice tasks should be avoided, unless they are specifically designed so that good guessers, who do not understand the text, will not be able to receive a passing mark. New, innovative tasks should be designed which take into consideration the listeners' cultural background. All tasks should be avoided that depend on a western cultural perspective. These new types of tasks should preclude reliance on memorization of chunks of text and should take into consideration the learners' working memory limitations, bearing in mind that the learners are unable to refer back to a text when they answer questions in a task.

Some specific types of tasks can be used if they are appropriate for the goals of the instructor. For example, carefully, systematically-designed Cloze tasks can be used to draw attention to important information in the text and to help listeners focus on the stressed words; however, these tasks are counter-productive if the Cloze task is designed haphazardly. Completion tasks requiring a lot of writing should be avoided. Short-answer tasks can be used effectively if the answers focus on important details from the text. Tasks that have tables to be completed can also be used as long as the listeners are familiar with the task. Finally, to help listeners focus on main ideas, I would suggest including summarizing tasks. These tasks will allow the listeners to write in their own words what they have understood from the text.

I believe that when the above suggestions are implemented, Tunisian EFL learners will be able to relate their understanding of the text with the requirements of the task. However, it is essential that these learners not only complete the task, but also

complete it correctly, to the best of their ability. Therefore, it is essential that instructors stress to the students the importance of a metacognitive evaluation strategy, like Checking Information. By using this strategy, the listeners will confirm that they have accurately written in the task their understanding of the text.

Finally, I would like to mention one strategy, Listening Many Times, that the participants relied on and which they said is an essential strategy in the listening comprehension classroom. This strategy can be useful as a practice strategy, but it must be used appropriately. The participants reported that they were accustomed to listening to oral texts three times. Some of the participants even stated that there was a process in always listening a text three time. These participants said that the first time they listen to the text they get comfortable with the text, the second time they try to understand the missing information and the main ideas, and the third time is for checking information and for fun. Other participants added that the more times they listen to a text, the more information they get out of the text, which aids them in completing more of the task. This may seem like a good method for the learners. Unfortunately, the teachers who use this method are actually handicapping the learners; the learners will never hear these types of texts three times outside of the classroom, because, normally, they will only hear once the oral English transactional texts that they listen to outside the listening classroom, whether it be television, radio, or classroom lectures. Instead of this inappropriate method of teaching listening comprehension, I would suggest that teachers systematically moves the learner from a novice level to an expert level through initially allowing the learner to listen twice and then gradually allowing them to listen only once.

The suggestions I mentioned above necessitate using appropriate texts based on listeners' proficiency, using appropriate tasks related to the texts that are used, and using appropriate planning, monitoring, and evaluating of metacognitive strategies while listening to a text. If EFL learners are instructed how to listen to a text to locate important information in the text, eventually these learners should be able to successfully complete an appropriate task after only listening to the text once.

Implications for Listening Comprehension Research

Not only does my research indicate important implications for teaching listening comprehension, the results of my research are also significant for listening comprehension research. The findings from my research that have an impact on listening comprehension research are proficiency, segmentation strategies, and listening problems.

The first significant area is the relationship between proficiency and strategy use and proficiency and listening comprehension ability. According to the consensus of L2 research in the area of a learner's proficiency and strategy use, which I reviewed in Chapter 2, there is more evidence for the linguistic threshold hypothesis than the linguistic interdependence hypothesis and, therefore, proficiency is important especially with the use of learning strategies. In other words, more proficient learners are better able to use strategies to understand oral texts than less proficient learners.

However, I discovered from my research that proficiency had no bearing on a learner's strategy use or their ability to comprehend oral texts. Even though the participants strategies were not entirely effective, it seems that they tried to use strategies from their L1 when they listened to oral English texts. In addition, even though

researchers such as Liu (2002) and Jeon (2007) concluded that less proficient learners were less likely to understand an oral text and more proficient learners were more likely to understand oral texts, I did not identify this link in my research. Instead, I found that task complexity, task familiarity, and the interference of listening obstacles on the learners' ability to use their listening strategies were better predictors of their ability to comprehend oral texts than proficiency.

Since I had only 20 participants in my study, I cannot make any generalizations based on my research. However, I found that the proficiency of the participants in my research did not either positively or negatively affect their ability to understand oral English texts. The moderate-proficiency participants understood the texts better than some of the high-proficiency students and the low-proficiency students understood the texts better than some moderate-proficiency participants. In addition, it seems that the participants were able to use their L1 strategies regardless of their proficiency.

The second important implication from my research deals with word segmentation during the comprehension process. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Cutler (2000) and Sanders, Neville, and Woldorff (2002) concluded from their research that each language has a specific way of dividing aural speech into individual words, also known as a segmentation strategy. Cutler indicated that an L2 learner will tend to divide aural speech in an oral English text according to the segmentation strategy of his or her mother language. Cutler maintains that this tendency will cause problems when the segmentation strategy of the first language is different from the segmentation strategy of the second or third language. She does not think that an L2 learner's default

segmentation strategy can be changed. However, she thinks that it may be possible to train L2 learners to consciously prevent misapplication of their first language segmentation when they listen to oral English texts. Field (2003) also believes that it is possible to train L2 learners to recognize and use the rhythm and stress segmentation strategy of English rather than their L1 segmentation strategy.

I found that Cutler's (2000) and Field's (2003) review were important for my study since French, a syllable-timed language, has a different segmentation strategy than English, a stress-timed language (Goyet, de Schonen, & Nazzi, 2010, p. 85). I found from my research that the participants seemed to use a syllable-time segmentation strategy rather than a stress-timed segmentation strategy. I also agree with Cutler that by teaching learners how to use a correct stress-timed listening strategy, they can learn not to misapply an incorrect syllable-timed listening strategy.

A third important implication in my research involved the identification of listening problems that EFL learners encounter while they listened to oral texts. Little research has been done in this area and I only found a few researchers who explored this area. One of these researchers, Goh (2000), uncovered problems that her ESL participants identified in their self-reports. However, all of these problems dealt with the comprehension of oral texts and related mostly to the cognitive processes of perception and parsing of the auditory signal. Another of these researchers, Hasan (2000), discovered four main areas in which Arabic speaking learners encountered listening problems: text difficulties, task difficulties, speaker difficulties, and affective difficulties (i.e. disinterest). My investigation of obstacles Tunisian EFL learners encountered while

they listen to oral texts corroborated Hasan's research to a large extent. Similar to Hasan, I uncovered text obstacles and task obstacles. However, I also identified external obstacles, such as audio and external noise. In addition, related to my findings, Hasan identified text speed to be important, although he categorized it as a speaker difficulty and I categorized it as a text transfer obstacle.

Suggestions for Further Research

Even though I believe that my research has provided some new insights into EFL listening comprehension, it also has some limitations. First, the purpose of the research was to examine listening strategy use of Tunisian EFL learners and obstacles that they encountered while listening to oral English transactional texts. Further research needs to be conducted to determine if the findings of this research can be applied to EFL listeners in other similar contexts. Second, I conducted my research at only one site in Tunisia. Further research should be conducted at other sites in Tunisia to determine the extent to which the findings of my research can be applied to other Tunisian EFL learners.

Third, my purpose in conducting this research was not only to answer my research questions, but also to begin a process whereby listening comprehension teaching of EFL learners in Tunisia can be improved. My research has provided the first step in this process: to identify learners' strategies, to specify the listening obstacles they encounter, and to determine the reasons that some learners are successful in the listening process and the reasons that other learners are not successful in this process. This research has been exclusively student-centered. Additional teacher-centered research still needs to be done. More research also should be conducted in identifying new

pedagogical approaches that can help learners improve in their ability to understand oral texts in English.

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APPENDIX A
Request Letter to the Director of the Gabes Campus

The Director
The Higher Institute of Languages, Gabes
Rue Ali Jemal
Gabes

Dear Sir,

I, James M. Ishler, am an English instructor at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Humanities in Sfax. I am also a PhD student at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA. I am in the process of writing a doctoral thesis entitled, "The Listening Strategies of Tunisian University EFL Learners: A Strategy-Based Approach to Listening to Oral English Texts." In order to complete my doctoral thesis, I would like to conduct research with students at a Tunisian university campus. There are two aspects of the research that I would like to investigate. The first aspect is problems that students have when they listen to oral texts in a listening comprehension class in a university setting. The second aspect is strategies that students use when they listen to oral texts in a listening comprehension class in a university setting. The ultimate purpose of the research for this thesis is to help students improve in their ability to understand oral English texts in a university setting.

I would like to conduct this research at your campus from September to December 2008. This research consists of five different types of data collection methods: questionnaires, classroom observations, interviews with students, student diary writing, and a simple experiment known as a think-aloud protocol. Most of the research would be carried out among English students. If you agree to this research, I would ask teachers in select classes to allow me to distribute a questionnaire to students that deals with Tunisian students' learning strategies. I would also post an announcement, with the approval of the head of the English department, asking for volunteers for further research. I would then choose participants from among those students who volunteered for the research and conduct my research with those volunteers. There are no risks or benefits, if students participate in my study.

If this research is acceptable to you, please complete and sign the bottom of this form. If you have further questions, please call me at 24-657-222. Thank you for your consideration of this important research.

Sincerely Yours,

James M. Ishler
PhD Candidate

I, Abdelmajid Ayadi, hereby approve of James M. Ishler's doctoral research at my institution.

Signature Date

APPENDIX B
Student Participant Informed Consent Form

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH:

You are being asked to participate in a study that will investigate two aspects of listening comprehension. The first aspect is problems that students have when they listen to oral texts in a listening comprehension class in a university setting. The second aspect is strategies that students use when they listen to oral texts in a listening comprehension class in a university setting. Data collected from this anonymous survey will be used as part of research for a doctoral thesis entitled, "The Listening Strategies of Tunisian University EFL Learners: A Strategy Based Approach to Listening to Oral English Texts." The ultimate purpose of the research for this thesis is to help students improve in their ability to understand oral English texts in a university setting.

The primary investigator, Mr. Jim Ishler, would like to conduct three types of research with student volunteers: oral interviews, diary writing, and a listening procedure. During the interviews, Mr. Ishler will ask participants further questions about listening comprehension problems and strategies used during listening to English oral texts. For the diary writing, students will be asked to write in a diary about the ways they listen to English oral texts for a period of two months. For the listening procedure, students will listen to specific English oral texts and report on what strategies they use while they are listening. There are no risks or benefits to you by participating in the oral interviews, the diary writing, or the listening procedure. If you would like to volunteer please fill in the following information and return to the English department secretary, or contact Mr. Jim Ishler by e-mail at ishler_research@pobox.com or by phone at 21-933-508.

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature Date

Phone number: E-mail address:

Best days and times to reach you:

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date Investigator's Signature

APPENDIX C
Sample of Posted Announcement for Student Volunteers

REQUEST FOR STUDENT VOLUNTEERS
FOR A DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT

Mr. Jim Ishler, an English instructor at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Humanities in Sfax is seeking students studying in the English department to volunteer for a doctoral research project. Mr. Ishler would like to conduct three types of research with student volunteers: oral interviews, diary writing, and a listening procedure. Data collected from this research will be used as part of research for a doctoral thesis entitled, "The Listening Strategies of Tunisian University EFL Learners: A Strategy Based Approach to Listening to Oral English Texts." The ultimate purpose of the research for this thesis is to help students improve in their ability to understand oral English texts in a university setting.

During the interviews, Mr. Ishler will ask participants further questions about listening comprehension problems and strategies used during listening to English oral texts. For the diary writing, students will be asked to write in a diary about the ways they listen to English oral texts for a period of one month. For the listening procedure, students will listen to specific English oral texts and report on what strategies they use while they are listening.

There are no risks or benefits to you by participating in the oral interviews, the diary writing, or the listening procedure. If you would like to volunteer please contact the English department secretary for a form or contact Mr. Jim Ishler by ishler_research@pobox.com or by phone at 21-933-508.

Student Volunteer Request Form

Dear Mr. Ishler,

I would like to volunteer for your doctoral research project. I understand that there is no benefit or harm to my participation and I understand that I can withdraw my participation at any time. Furthermore, I understand that all information that is recorded, either in writing or via audio tape, is confidential and will only be used by you, Mr. Ishler, for your doctoral research project.

Name (PLEASE PRINT) _____

Year in School 1st 2nd 3rd 4th

I
Phone number: _____

E-mail address: _____

Best days and times to reach you:

Signature Date

_____ _____

APPENDIX D
Observation Rubric

1. What are the students doing while they are listening to the oral text? Are they concentrating on the text or are they showing inattention by talking to their friends, doodling, or daydreaming?
2. What is the teacher doing while the students are listening to an oral text?
3. How does the teacher present the oral text? Does the teacher play the whole oral text without interruption or does the teacher divide the oral text into sections? How many times do the students listen to the oral text?
4. What kinds of exercises do the students have to assess their comprehension of the oral text? Are the exercises content questions? Are they questions about the main ideas? Are they close exercises? Are they tables to be completed? What other types of assessments are used?
5. Do students seek information or answers from other students to help them complete the assessment exercises?
6. Do students ask questions to clarify information in the text or in the assessment exercises?
7. Does the teacher elicit responses to the assessment exercises individually? Do students work in groups to answer the assessment exercises together?
8. What does the teacher do if the students cannot provide correct answers for the assessment exercises? Does the teacher play the oral text again? Does the teacher give them the answer? Does the teacher give them part of the answer and encourage the students to finish the answer?

APPENDIX E
Tunisian EFL Learner Questionnaire

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM FOR ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE:

You are being asked to participate in a study that will investigate strategies that students use when listening to oral texts in first and second year listening classes at three sites in Tunisia. Data collected from this anonymous questionnaire will be used as part of research for a PhD thesis entitled, "The Listening Strategies of Tunisian University EFL Learners: A Strategy Based Approach to Listening to Oral English Texts." The ultimate purpose of the research for this thesis is to help students improve in their ability to understand oral English texts in a university setting. There are no risks or benefits to you by participating in this research. If you do not wish to participate, you may simply return the blank survey or stop at anytime, with no penalty to yourself. If you choose to participate, completion and return of the questionnaire indicates your consent to participate in this study.

Please do not put your name on the questionnaire. The questionnaire should take approximately fifteen minutes to complete. Any questions or concerns should be directed to the investigator, Mr. Jim Ishler by e-mail at ishler_research@pobox.com or by phone at 21-933-508.

Furthermore, the investigator, Mr. Jim Ishler, would like to conduct oral interviews, diary writing, a simple listening procedure with volunteer students in order to investigate, in more depth, some aspects of the listening strategies that international students at the ALI have. As with this questionnaire, there are no risks or benefits to you by participating. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Mr. Jim Ishler.

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature Date

Phone number: E-mail address:

Best days and times to reach you:

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date Investigator's Signature

Learning/Listening Strategy Questionnaire

Part 1: Demographics

Please circle the appropriate response below in pen. Please only circle one number.

1. In what year are you at the university?

   1st 2nd 3rd 4th

2. How many hours per week do you spend listening to English outside of a university context?

   Less than 2 hours 2-6 hours 6-12 hours 12-20 hours + 20 hours

3. When you listen to English outside of a university context, to what types of sources do you listen? (circle all that apply)

   Audio cassettes/CDs Video cassettes/DVDs Radio Satellite Television

Part 2: Difficulties in Specific Oral Text Features

Rank the following from 1 to 9 (1 = The biggest hindrance to understanding an English oral text, 9 = the least hindrance to understanding an English oral text) – speed, unclear speech, the speaker's accent, vocabulary, background/context, unfamiliar grammar constructions, or the number of speaker's in a text.

Feature of an English Oral Text		**Rating (1 to 9)**
Speed of the speakers		
Unclear speech		
The Speaker's accent		
Vocabulary		
Background/Context of the text		
Unfamiliar Grammar constructions		
The number of speaker's in a text		
The lack of visual input (body language & gestures)		
Hearing Stressed Words/Syllables in a Text		

Part 3: Using Listening Strategies

All of these statements refer to the learning strategies that you use when you are listening to an English oral texts in a university context, or when you are involved in learning in your classes. For the following statements, please put a mark ("X") in the appropriate box below, according to the following key. Please mark only one box.

a. Always (4): This statement is always true for me or almost always true for me.
b. Usually (3): This statement is usually true for me.
c. Sometimes (2): This statement is sometimes true for me.
d. Occasionally (1): This statement is rarely true for me.
e. Never (0): This statement is never true for me or almost never true for me.
f. Not Applicable (X): This statement is not applicable for me/I've never encountered this situation.

How often do you use the following strategies to help you understand a listening text in your class?

(Note: the word "text" below refers to an oral text).

	Always=4, Usually=3, Sometimes=2, Occasionally=1, Never=0, Not Applicable=X		4	3	2	1	0	X
1	I can remember information in an text better if I periodically repeat it to myself using my own words.							
2	When I encounter new words, I combine them according to their meaning.							
3	I use information in the text to guess the meanings of unfamiliar language, or to fill in missing information.							
4	If I don't understand the goals of a task, I ask the teacher or a fellow student to explain them again.							
5	I think about how I should successfully complete a task.							
6	It helps me when another student or my teacher encourage me to finish a listening task that I think is too different.							
7	I watch English language television shows or go to English language movies.							

	Always=4, Usually=3, Sometimes=2, Occasionally=1, Never=0, Not Applicable=X		4	3	2	1	0	X
8	When I am listening to English, I think of the meaning of the words in my language before I think of the meaning of the English words.							
9	I use the speaker's tone of voice to guess the meaning of unknown words in a text.							
10	If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.							
11	Before I listen to a text, I decide what information that I will need to successfully complete a task.							
12	When I work together with other students, it helps me to successfully complete a task.							
13	I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.							
14	I like to find an underlying structure from the text that I can apply to other situations.							
15	When I hear or read new English words, I look for an equivalent word in my language.							
16	When I listen to an text, I focus on each word that I hear.							
17	Before I listen to a text, I think ahead and consider the information that I will need in order to successfully accomplish a task.							
18	When I listen to an text, I focus on the words as well as the intonation and stress that the speaker uses.							
19	While I am listening to a text, I consciously keep in mind that information that I need to listen for.							
20	I quickly can build grammatical structures from texts that I hear in English.							

	Always=4, Usually=3, Sometimes=2, Occasionally=1, Never=0, Not Applicable=X		4	3	2	1	0	X
21	When I make a mental image of words or ideas from a text, I can remember the words or ideas better.							
22	When a new English word is explained to me in English, I am not satisfied that I understand the word until I know what the word is in my language.							
23	I keep in mind the answers I am looking for while I am listening to a text.							
24	I ask for help from other students when I don't understand something in English.							
25	When I want to remember a word in English, I repeat it to myself many times.							
26	When I hear new ideas in an texts, it helps me to understand the text if group them with other ideas that have a similar meaning.							
27	I am actively thinking about the important information while I am listening to a text.							
28	I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.							
29	When I listen to an text, I focus on the words that I hear most clearly.							
30	I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.							
31	When I can keep in my mind the goals for a task, I find it easier to extract information from a text.							
32	I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.							
33	I ask questions when I don't understand an text.							

	Always=4, Usually=3, Sometimes=2, Occasionally=1, Never=0, Not Applicable=X		4	3	2	1	0	X
34	When I want to remember an idea from a text, I repeat it to myself many times.							
35	When I hear new ideas, I combine them with other similar ideas that I am familiar with.							
36	To help me remember an text, I mentally construct a summary.							
37	I find learning English easier when I compare it with my own language.							
38	I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.							
39	I think about the important information that I need to find in a text while I am listening to the text.							
40	I try to find patterns in English.							
41	I plan ahead so I can successfully complete a listening task in class.							
42	I give myself a reward or treat when I have accomplished my goals for understanding or using English.							
43	I review information that I heard in my classes in order to remember it.							
44	I use the context of an text to help me guess the meaning of words I do not know.							
45	I put information that I have read or heard in my own words to help me remember it.							
46	I check to see if I have been able to successfully complete a task after I have finished listening to a text.							
47	I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.							
48	I practice the sounds of English.							
49	For learning English, I normally translate words from English into my language or from my language into English.							

	Always=4, Usually=3, Sometimes=2, Occasionally=1, Never=0, Not Applicable=X		4	3	2	1	0	X
50	I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.							
51	I repeat information many times silently or audibly in order to memorize it.							
52	I use the words in a text that I know to help me guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.							
53	I summarize information that I have read or heard to help me remember it.							
54	After I have listened to a text, I check that I have successfully remembered the important information							
55	I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.							
56	When I find similarities and differences between my first language and English, I find it easier to understand texts.							
57	I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.							
58	I use my background knowledge to help me understand unfamiliar ideas in a text.							
59	I use words from my language when I do not know an English word.							
60	I usually check the information that I have understood from a text to verify that I have been able to successfully complete a task that my teacher has given me.							
61	I usually make mental pictures of situations that I hear in a text.							
62	I make guesses to help me understand unfamiliar English words.							

	Always=4, Usually=3, Sometimes=2, Occasionally=1, Never=0, Not Applicable=X		4	3	2	1	0	X
63	I have clear goals before I listen to a text.							
64	I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.							
65	When I have finished listening to a text, I compare the information I have understood with what the teacher asked me to find.							
66	I can remember a concept from a text better when I construct a picture or image of that concept in my mind.							
67	It helps me to remember information when I repeat it silently to myself many times.							
68	I try to think about the new information that I hear in a text.							
69	It's easier for me to remember information when I take notes.							
70	After I have finished listening to a text, I know that I have been able to extract the important information so I can successfully answer the questions that I have been given.							
71	I concentrate on each clear word that I hear in an text.							
72	It helps me when I write down information I hear from an oral text.							
73	I use linguistic concepts from my language to help me to understand linguistic concepts in English.							
74	I say or write new English words several times so I can remember them.							
75	I am more confident of my ability to understand a text when I check what I have understood with other students.							

Part 4: Listening Habits Outside of Class

Please put a mark ("X") in the appropriate box below. Please mark only one box

	Always=4, Usually=3, Sometimes=2, Occasionally=1, Never=0, Not Applicable=X		4	3	2	1	0	X
76	Outside of class, I speak in English to help me improve my speaking/listening ability.							
77	Outside of class, I listen to English via a multimedia source (TV, radio, internet, etc.) to help my listening ability.							
78	I have enrolled in outside oral English courses (i.e. in language schools) to help me improve my listening ability.							
79	I regularly go to places that are frequented by native English speakers (such as hotels, bars, and discotheques) to improve my listening ability.							
80	I regularly use oral English sources (such as tapes, videos, CD, and DVDs) at places such as language schools and cultural centers							

Part 4: Open-Ended Questions

A: Please write down specific problems that you have when you listen to English oral texts:

1.

2.

3.

4.

I greatly appreciate the time you have taken to complete this questionnaire. Thank you for your participation.

Mr. Jim Ishler

PhD Candidate

APPENDIX F

Oxford Strategy Inventory for Language Learners

Version for Speakers of Other Languages Learning English

R. Oxford, 1989. Version 7.0 (ESL/EFL)

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

- *Never true of me*: also includes 'almost never true of me'- means that the statement is very rarely true of you.
- *Usually not true of me*: means that the statement is very true of you less than half the time.
- *Somewhat true of me*: means that the statement is very true of you less about half the time.
- *Usually true of me*: means that the statement is very true of you more than half the time.
- *Always true of me*: also includes 'almost always true of me'- means that the statement is very true of you almost always.

Part: A

1. I think of the relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.
3. I connect the sound of an English word and an image or picture of the world to help me remember the word.
4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.
6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.
7. I physically act out new English words.
8. I review English lessons often.
9. I remember the new words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.

Part: B

10. I say or write new English words several times.
11. I try to talk like native English speakers.
12. I practice the sounds of English.
13. I use the English word I know in different ways.
14. I start conversations in English.
15. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.
16. I read for pleasure in English.

17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.
18. I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.
20. I try to find patterns in English.
21. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.
22. I try not to translate word-for-word.
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.

Part: C

24. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.
25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.
27. I read English without looking up every new word.
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.
29. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

Part: D

30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.
31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.
34. I plan my schedule so I have enough time to study English.
35. I look for people I can talk to in English.
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.
37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.
38. I think about my progress in learning English.

Part: E

39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.
40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying English.
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.

Part: F

45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
46. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.
47. I practice my English with other students.
48. I ask for help from English speakers.
49. I ask questions in English.
50. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.

Strategy Inventory Statements and Modifications for Research
(Comparing Oxford's SILL (1989) with my Strategy Inventories)

Part 1: EFL Student Inventory

SILL Question Number and Statement	Inventory Question Number and Statement
15. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.	7. I watch English language television shows or go to English language movies.
45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	10. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	13. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.
1. I think of the relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.	28. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.	30. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.	32. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.
49. I ask questions in English.	33. I ask questions when I don't understand an text.
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.	38. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.
20. I try to find patterns in English.	40. I try to find patterns in English.
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.	42. I give myself a reward or treat when I have accomplished my goals for understanding or using English.
3. I practice the sounds of English.	47. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.
12. I practice the sounds of English.	48. I practice the sounds of English.
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying English.	50. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.

SILL Question Number and Statement	Inventory Question Number and Statement
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.	53. I summarize information that I have read or heard to help me remember it.
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.	57. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.
24. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.	62. I make guesses to help me understand unfamiliar English words.
37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	63. I have clear goals before I listen to a text.
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	64. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.	74. I say or write new English words several times so I can remember them.

APPENDIX G
Coded Inventory

Key for Codes:

CAE = Cognitive Association/Elaboration
CAR = Cognitive Analyzing/Reasoning
CI = Cognitive Imagery
CIG = Cognitive Inferencing/Guessing
CP = Cognitive Practicing
CR = Cognitive Rehearsal/Repetition
CSA = Cognitive Selective Attention
CSN = Cognitive Summarizing/Note-taking
CTX = Cognitive Translating/Transferring
ME = Metacognitive Evaluation
MM = Metacognitive Monitoring
MP = Metacognitive Planning
SC = Socio-Affective Cooperation
SE = Socio-Affective Encouragement
SML = Socio-Affective Monitoring Emotions/Lowering Anxiety
SQL = Socio-Affective Questioning/Clarification

	Statement	Code
2	When I encounter new words, I combine them according to their meaning.	CAE
26	When I hear new ideas in an texts, it helps me to understand the text if group them with other ideas that have a similar meaning.	CAE
28	I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.	CAE
35	When I hear new ideas, I combine them with other similar ideas that I am familiar with.	CAE
58	I use my background knowledge to help me understand unfamiliar ideas in a text.	CAE
14	I like to find an underlying structure from the text that I can apply to other situations.	CAR
20	I quickly can build grammatical structures from texts that I hear in English.	CAR
30	I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.	CAR
37	I find learning English easier when I compare it with my own language.	CAR
40	I try to find patterns in English.	CAR

	Statement	Code
56	When I find similarities and differences between my first language and English, I find it easier to understand texts.	CAR
21	When I make a mental image of words or ideas from a text, I can remember the words or ideas better.	CI
47	I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.	CI
55	I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	CI
61	I usually make mental pictures of situations that I hear in a text.	CI
66	I can remember a concept from a text better when I construct a picture or image of that concept in my mind.	CI
3	I use information in the text to guess the meanings of unfamiliar language, or to fill in missing information.	CIG
9	I use the speaker's tone of voice to guess the meaning of unknown words in a text.	CIG
44	I use the context of an text to help me guess the meaning of words I do not know.	CIG
52	I use the words in a text that I know to help me guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.	CIG
62	I make guesses to help me understand unfamiliar English words.	CIG
7	I watch English language television shows or go to English language movies.	CP
13	I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	CP
38	I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.	CP
48	I practice the sounds of English.	CP
74	I say or write new English words several times so I can remember them.	CP
25	When I want to remember a word in English, I repeat it to myself many times.	CR
34	When I want to remember an idea from a text, I repeat it to myself many times.	CR
43	I review information that I heard in my classes in order to remember it.	CR
51	I repeat information many times silently or audibly in order to memorize it.	CR
67	It helps me to remember information when I repeat it silently to myself many times.	CR
16	When I listen to an text, I focus on each word that I hear.	CSA
18	When I listen to an text, I focus on the words as well as the intonation and stress that the speaker uses.	CSA
29	When I listen to an text, I focus on the words that I hear most clearly.	CSA

	Statement	Code
68	I try to focus mostly on the new information that I hear in a text.	CSA
71	I concentrate on each clear word that I hear in an text.	CSA
1	I can remember information in an text better if I periodically repeat it to myself using my own words.	CSN
36	To help me remember an text, I mentally construct a summary.	CSN
45	I put information that I have read or heard in my own words to help me remember it.	CSN
53	I summarize information that I have read or heard to help me remember it.	CSN
69	It's easier for me to remember information when I take notes.	CSN
72	It helps me when I write down information I hear from an oral text.	CSN
8	When I am listening to English, I think of the meaning of the words in my language before I think of the meaning of the English words.	CTX
15	When I hear or read new English words, I look for an equivalent word in my language.	CTX
22	When a new English word is explained to me in English, I am not satisfied that I understand the word until I know what the word is in my language.	CTX
49	For learning English, I normally translate words from English into my language or from my language into English.	CTX
59	I use words from my language when I do not know an English word.	CTX
73	I use linguistic concepts from my language to help me to understand linguistic concepts in English.	CTX
46	I check to see if I have been able to successfully complete a task after I have finished listening to a text.	ME
54	After I have listened to a text, I check that I have successfully remembered the important information	ME
60	When I have completed listening to a text, I usually verify that I have been able to successfully complete a task that my teacher has given me.	ME
65	When I have finished listening to a text, I compare the information I have understood with what the teacher asked me to find.	ME
70	After I have finished listening to a text, I know that I have been able to extract the important information so I can successfully answer the questions that I have been given.	ME
19	While I am listening to a text, I consciously keep in mind that information that I need to listen for.	MM
23	I keep in mind the answers I am looking for while I am listening to a text.	MM
27	I am actively thinking about the important information while I am listening to a text.	MM

	Statement	Code
31	When I can keep in my mind the goals for a task, I find it easier to extract information from a text.	MM
39	I think about the important information that I need to find in a text while I am listening to the text.	MM
5	I think about how I should successfully complete a task.	MP
11	Before I listen to a text, I decide what information that I will need to successfully complete a task.	MP
17	Before I listen to a text, I think ahead and consider the information that I will need in order to successfully accomplish a task.	MP
41	I plan ahead so I can successfully complete a listening task in class.	MP
63	I have clear goals before I listen to a text.	MP
12	When I work together with other students, it helps me to successfully complete a task.	SC
24	I ask for help from other students when I don't understand something in English.	SC
75	I am more confident of my ability to understand a text when I check what I have understood with other students.	SC
6	It helps me when another student or my teacher encourage me to finish a listening task that I think is too different.	SE
32	I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.	SE
42	I give myself a reward or treat when I have accomplished my goals for understanding or using English.	SE
50	I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.	SML
57	I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.	SML
64	I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	SML
4	If I don't understand the goals of a task, I ask the teacher or a fellow student to explain them again.	SQL
10	If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	SQL
33	I ask questions when I don't understand an text.	SQL

APPENDIX H

Questions for Group Interviews

1. What is your year at the university? How many years have you been formally studying English?
2. On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being the easiest and 7 being extremly difficult, how difficult is it for you to understand an oral text? Why?
3. What is the easiest thing you experience when you listen to an oral text and try to understand what is being said?
4. Do you have any problems understanding an oral text? Explain.
5. Do you feel frustrated when you listen to an oral text? Why or why not?
6. What is the most frustrating thing you experience when you listen to an oral text and try to understand what is being said?
7. Do you get anxious or afraid when you listen to an oral text in class or are asked to give answer a teacher's question? Do you do anything to lessen any anxiety you feel?
8. Rate the following in order from biggest hindrance to understanding an English oral text to least hindrance to understanding an English oral text – speed, unclear speech, the speaker's accent, vocabulary, background/context, unfamiliar grammar constructions, or the number of speaker's in a text.
9. Do you have a specific plan that you follow when you listen to an oral text in class? What is it? If not, what do you do as you listen to an oral text to try to understand it?
10. When you don't understand an English oral text, do you talk to other students or friends to help you to understand the texts?
11. Do you ask your teacher or other students questions about an English oral text when you have trouble understanding a text?
12. Do you find the oral texts that you listen to in class interesting? If so, what makes them interesting? If not, why not?
13. Do you find yourself doodling, talking to your friends, or daydreaming while the class is listening to an oral text? Why do you do this? Could anything in the class be done in a different way to increase your interest in the text and help you concentrate more?
14. Do you find the oral texts that you listen to in class appropriate for your level (not too easy or difficult)? If they are too easy, what makes them easy and what kind of texts would you suggest to make your listening class more challenging? If they are too difficult, what make them difficult and what kind of texts would you suggest to make your listening class more rewarding?
15. Do you try to understand the English oral text in English or do you translate it into Arabic or French to help you to understand it?
16. What is the difference for you between listening to an oral text in Arabic and English? Between French and English? What makes listening to Arabic easier than listening to English? What makes listening to French easier than listening to English?
17. What kind of English listening activities do you participate in outside of class? What kind of activities do you participate in? Are these activities helpful for your listening classes?
18. Outside of class, do you spend time talking with anyone in English? If so, how much time a week do you spend talking in English?
19. Does your teacher give you encouragement when you've answered a question or exercise correctly? How does he or she do this?

APPENDIX I
Tasks for Individual Interviews

Part 1: Low Proficiency Visual Task

A. "The Farmer and His Sons"
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Part 2: Low Proficiency Tasks for "Easy" Texts

A. "Laughter" (Text w/o Pauses is Classified as Difficult)

Listening Comprehension 1

Listen to a talk about what makes people laugh. Then complete the sentences.

1. People laugh when there is a ___ ___ ___. They expect __ ____ ___ thing, but something else _____.
2. People laugh at other people's _____.
3. People laugh when they feel _____ from stress.

Listening Comprehension 2

Listen to a talk about laughter. Check (✓) the ideas you hear.

_____ 1. Almost everyone says it's good to smile.
_____ 2. Scientists say laughter is good for your health.
_____ 3. Laughter makes you feel smart.
_____ 4. Laughter and exercise lower blood pressure.
_____ 5. Laughter and exercise make your legs move faster.
_____ 6. To put more laughter in your life, decide what makes you laugh.
_____ 7. To put more laughter in your life, meet with people who make you sing.

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Part 3: Low Proficiency Tasks for “Difficult” Texts

A: “David's Neighbors”

Listen to the text and then complete the following tasks.

1. Answer the following questions:
a. Why is David so interested in his neighbors?

b. Why was David awake until 2:30am?

c. Why doesn't David call the landlord to complain?

2. David has different problems with each of his neighbors. In the blanks, write the problem that David has with each neighbor.

Mrs. Anderson: _____

_____

Michael and Betty: _____

_____

Rob and Steve: _____

_____

Art: _____

_____

B: “Preparing a Turkey”

Listening for the Main Ideas

Listen to the interview. Answer the following question. Discuss your answer with a partner.

According to Chef Larry, what are the three most important things to consider when buying a turkey? (Check three answers.)

___ **a.** serving a fresh vs. a frozen turkey

___ **b.** getting a deal on a turkey

___ **c.** thawing under refrigeration

___ **d.** roasting the turkey the right amount of time

___ **e.** precooking the turkey

Listening for Details

Listen to the interview again. Match the tips with the correct information. Compare your answers with those of another student.

___	**1.** amount of turkey per person	**a.** 375 degrees
___	**2.** bone weight in bone-in turkey	**b.** 2 1/2 –3 hours
___	**3.** preorder fresh turkey	**c.** 1–2 days before
___	**4.** days to defrost turkey in refrigerator	**d.** 1 pound
___	**5.** cooking time for a 10 to 12 pound turkey	**e.** 4 1/2 hours
___	**6.** temperature for cooking a turkey	**f.** 70%
___	**7.** cooking time for a 16 to 18 pound turkey	**g.** 3 1/2 – 4 1/4 hours
___	**8.** cooking time for a turkey over 20 pounds	**h.** 5–7 days

Listening for Inference

Listen to the excerpt from the interview. Mark the statements T (true) or F (false). Discuss your answers with a partner.

___ **1.** Each person eats a pound of turkey.

___ **2.** There's a lot of meat on a turkey.

___ **3.** It is important to have extra turkey meat after the meal.

C: “Women at War”

Listening for the Main Ideas

Listen to the oral history. Answer the following questions. Discuss your answers with a partner.

1. What did Jeanne Markle do in Vietnam?
   a. She was a nurse.
   b. She was a soldier.
   c. She was a cook.

2. How did people in her community react to her when she came home?
   a. They wanted to know more about her.
   b. They gave her a homecoming party.
   c. They didn't appreciate her.

Listening for Details

Read the following questions. Listen to the oral history again. Circle the best answer for each question. Compare your answers with those of another student.

1. How many days a week did Jeanne normally work?
   a. 5
   b. 6
   c. 7

2. Why was Jeanne flying home and leaving her husband, Brian, behind?
   a. She was divorcing her husband.
   b. She was going to have a baby.
   c. She was caring for the injured soldiers on the plane.

3. Why did Jeanne feel depressed in the airplane?
   a. She was going home.
   b. She had to keep caring for injured soldiers.
   c. She thought about her work as a nurse in the war.

4. What was wrong with the blond-headed young man?
   a. He couldn't see.
   b. He couldn't walk.
   c. He couldn't eat.

5. How did the Air Force nurse help him?
   a. She sat with him.
   b. She fed him with a spoon.
   c. She cried with him.

6. What did Jeanne wear going home?
   a. a nurse's uniform
   b. civilian clothes
   c. farming clothes

7. How did Jeanne react when she knew she wasn't appreciated at home?
   a. She started to demonstrate against the war.
   b. She left her farming community.
   c. She kept her emotions bottled up.

Part 4: Moderate Proficiency Visual Tasks

A: “How Was Your Vacation”

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B: “Malaysia”

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Part 5: Medium Proficiency Tasks for “Easy” Texts

A: “Participating in a Discussion”

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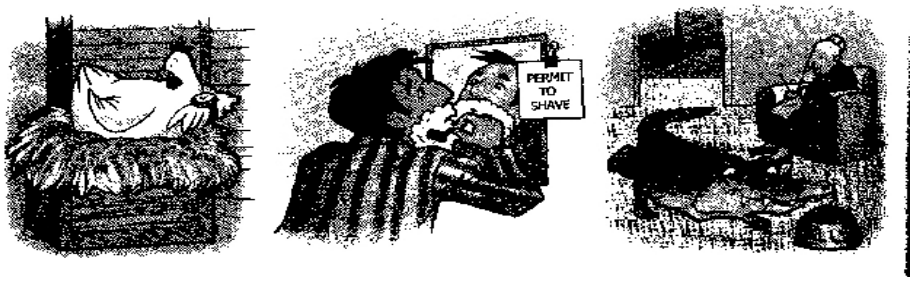
B: “Strange and Unusual Things”
Task 1: Main Idea

Some U.S. cities and states have very unusual laws. These laws are old, and no one really follows them. Read the chart. Then listen to the laws and complete the chart.

Missouri **Corpus Christie, Texas** **Cleveland, Ohio** **Massachusetts**
North Carolina **Virginia** **Tennessee**

Place	Law
	A man can't shave without a permit.
	You can't raise alligators in your home.
	You can't leave chewing gum in public places.
	Chickens must lay their eggs between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
	Rabbits can't race down the street.
	You can't put tomatoes in clam chowder.
	You can't drive while sleeping.



Task 2: Comprehension Questions

Listen to the information from the *Guinness Book of World Records*. Then answer the questions.

1. What's beautiful in Myanmar?
2. What do women wear around their necks in Myanmar?
3. What happened to Hoo Sateow after he got a haircut?
4. How long is Hoo Sateow's hair?

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C: "Zoos"
Task 1: Main Idea

Listen to a talk about zoos.

1. Circle the countries you hear about in this talk.

India **Egypt** **China** **Germany** **Mexico** **Singapore** **Greece** **Austria**

2. Circle the times you hear about in this talk.

- 5,400 years ago
- 4,500 years ago
- 3,000 years ago
- 1,500 years ago
- 8th century
- 18th century
- From the 400s to the 700s
- From the 1400s to the 1700s
- Today

Task 2: Listening for Specific Information

Listen to a talk about zoos. Then complete the chart.

Number of zoos today	
Largest zoo	
Second largest zoo	
Oldest public zoo	
First children's zoo	

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Part 6: Medium Proficiency Tasks for “Difficult” Texts

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B: Ethical Decisions

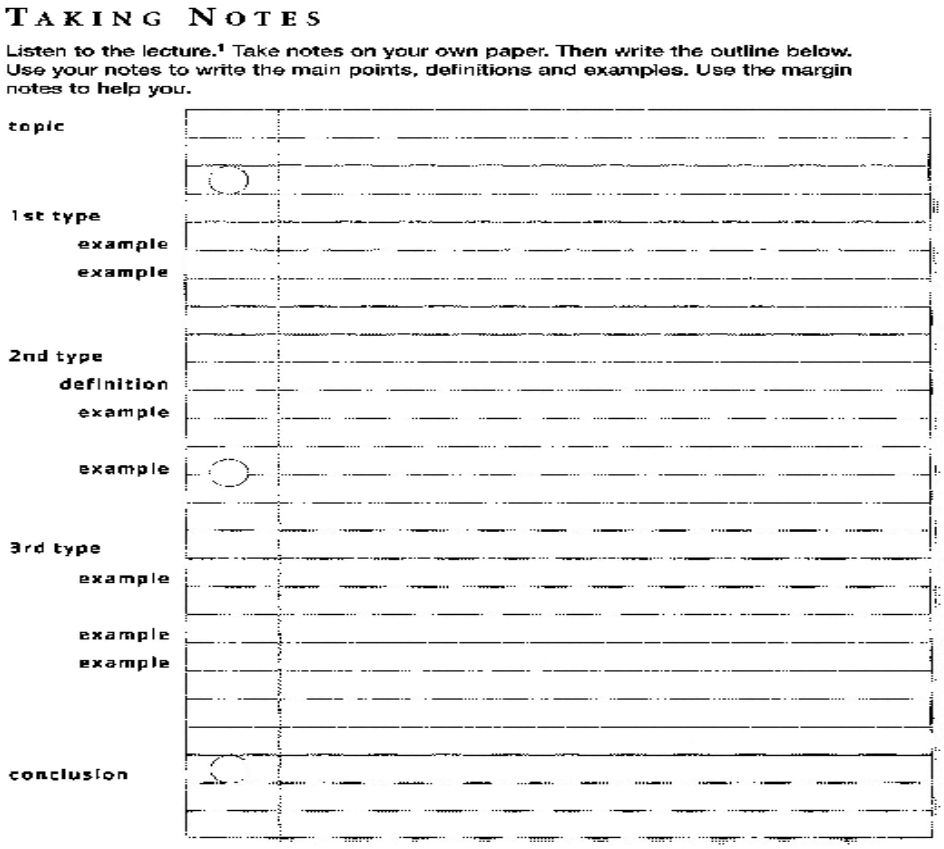
Task 1: Main Idea

Listen to the lecture. Answer the following question.

What is the main idea of this text?

Task 2: Note-taking Practice

Listen to the lecture. Take notes on the lecture. Then complete the following outline based on your notes.



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C. "Obesity"
Task 1: Main Idea

B. Listening

Main Ideas

Listen to a news report about obesity. Then answer the questions.

1. Which of the following would be the best title for this report?
   a. Visitors to the United States Find Americans Fat
   b. World Health Organization Fights Obesity
   c. Obesity No Longer Just a U.S. Problem
2. Which of the following are included in the report? Circle the letters of correct items.
   a. statistics about obesity in the United States
   b. statistics about obesity around the world
   c. advice about losing weight
   d. definition of obesity
   e. causes of the obesity epidemic
   f. food trends around the world
   g. health problems related to obesity

Details and Inferences

Listen to the report again. Take notes on important statistics on the increase of obesity as well as on its causes.

Listen to the report again. Fill in the missing details.

	United States	World
Statistics	• _____ overweight • _____ obese • _____ severely obese	• Obese adults: _____ → 300 million from 1995 to 2000
Causes	• Huge variety of _____ _____ _____ • High fat / energy dense foods in _____ _____	• Diet becomes Americanized → _____ • _____ children overweight

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D: “On the Job”

Listen to an extract from a company meeting. Then complete the following tasks.

A. Comprehension Questions

a. How long has Mark worked at his job?

b. What does Gloria tell Mark about?

c. How long does Mark plan to work at his job?

d. How does Gloria feel about her job? Why?

e. Mark doesn't want to join the union. Why not?

f. Why does Gloria think the union is important?

g. What does the factory make?

h. Why is Mark working at the factory?

i. Who is the third person who joins Gloria and Mark at the end of the dialogue? What is the connection between him and Mark?

j. Why does Gloria make a strange sound at the end of the dialogue?

B. Complete the Following Table

Starting Time:		
Ending Time:		
Vacation:		
Break Time:		
Overtime:		
Lunch Time:		
Dental Plan:	Yes	No
Retirement Plan:	Yes	No
Medical Insurance:		

E: “Product Placement”

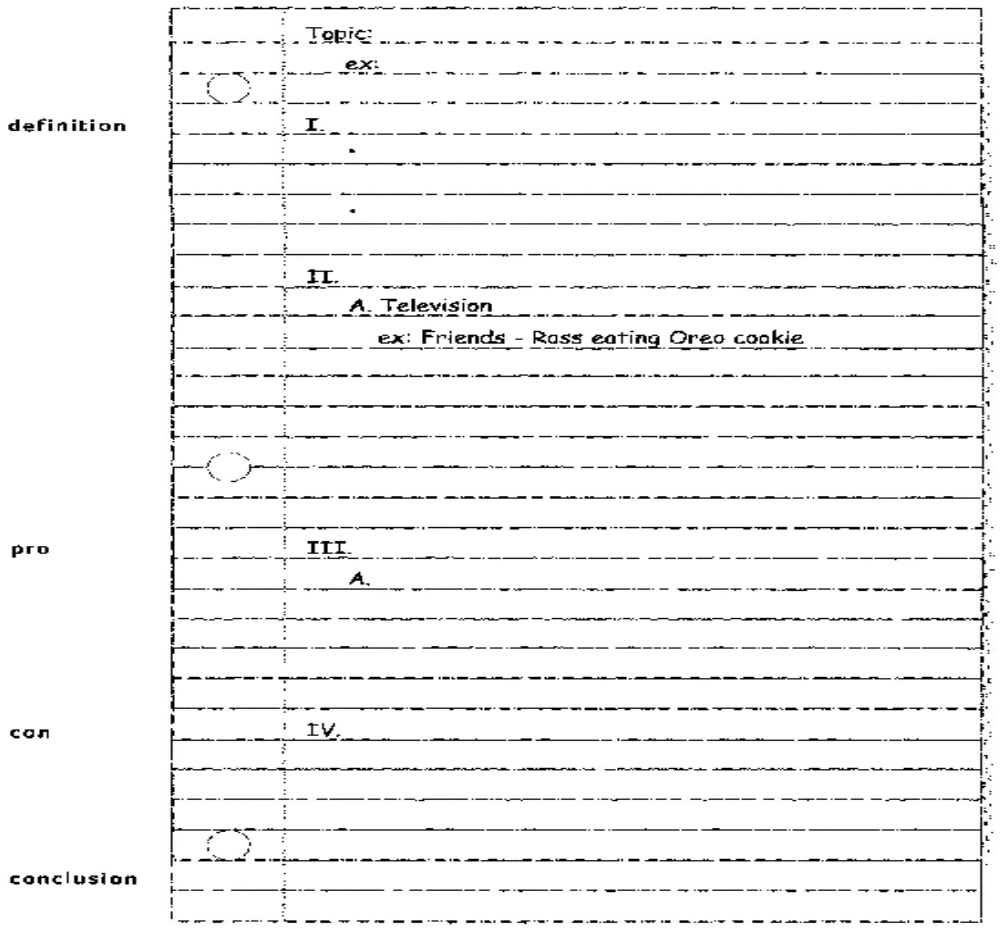
Task 1: Main Idea

Listen to the lecture. Answer the following question.

What is the main idea of this text?

Task 2: Note-taking Practice

Listen to the lecture. Take notes on the lecture. Then complete the following outline based on your notes.



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F: "Staying Single"

B. Listening

Main Ideas

Listen to the radio interview. Complete the notes on the main reasons why the three people prefer to stay single.

	Age	Reasons for Choosing to Stay Single
Neil L.	fifty-two	He likes his: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
Jennifer S.		She isn't sure whether _____
Terri W.	early fifties	1. She doesn't feel pressure to marry because _____ _____ 2. _____

Details and Inferences

Listen again. Mark the statements *T* (true) or *F* (false).

____ 1. Neil has been married for ten years.

____ 2. Neil is against marriage in general.

____ 3. Jennifer might get married someday.

____ 4. Most of Jennifer's friends want to stay single.

____ 5. Terri never gets lonely.

____ 6. Terri feels she has a great life.

Part 7: High Proficiency Visual Tasks

A: “Great Sites!”

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B: “Strange Stories”

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Part 8: High Proficiency Tasks for "Easy" Texts

A: "Discover Joy in Serving Others"

B Listening for the Main Ideas

Listen to the PSA. Answer the following question and discuss with a partner.

What does Amber's organization do?

C Listening for Details

Read the following statements. Listen to the PSA again. Mark the statements T (true) or F (false). Compare your answers with those of another student.

____ **1.** Amber was eight years old when she realized what she had to do.

____ **2.** She started a profit group to feed the homeless.

____ **3.** Amber's organization is called Happy Helpers for the Homeless.

____ **4.** Homeless people come to her home for food and clothing.

____ **5.** Amber helps other young people discover the joy in serving others.

____ **6.** Amber thinks people know there's something they need to do in their communities.

____ **7.** People often think, "I'm sure I can do something to help."

____ **8.** Amber thinks we can make a difference if we put our minds to it.

D Listening for Inference

Listen to the excerpt from Amber's PSA. What does Amber mean by this? Check (✓) the possible interpretations. Discuss your answers with a partner.

____ **1.** We feel lazy.

____ **2.** We feel scared.

____ **3.** We feel uninterested.

____ **4.** We feel helpless.

____ **5.** We feel separated from the problem.

____ **6.** We feel lonely.

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B: “Stating Opinions”

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Part 9: High Proficiency Tasks for “Difficult” Texts

A: “Choosing a Holiday”

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B: Credit Card Debt”

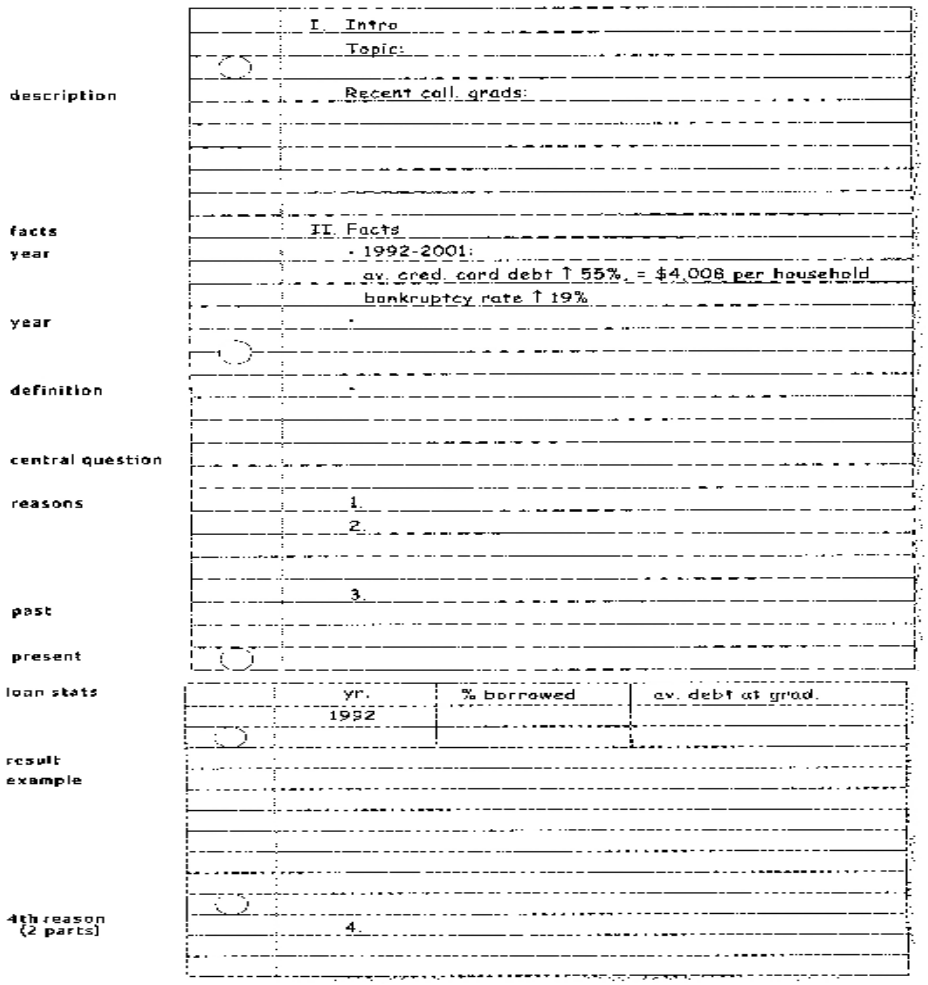
Task 1: Main Idea

Listen to the lecture. Answer the following question.

1. What is the main idea of this text?

Task 2: Note-taking Practice

Listen to the lecture. Take notes on the lecture. Then complete the following outline based on your notes.



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C. “Culture Shock”

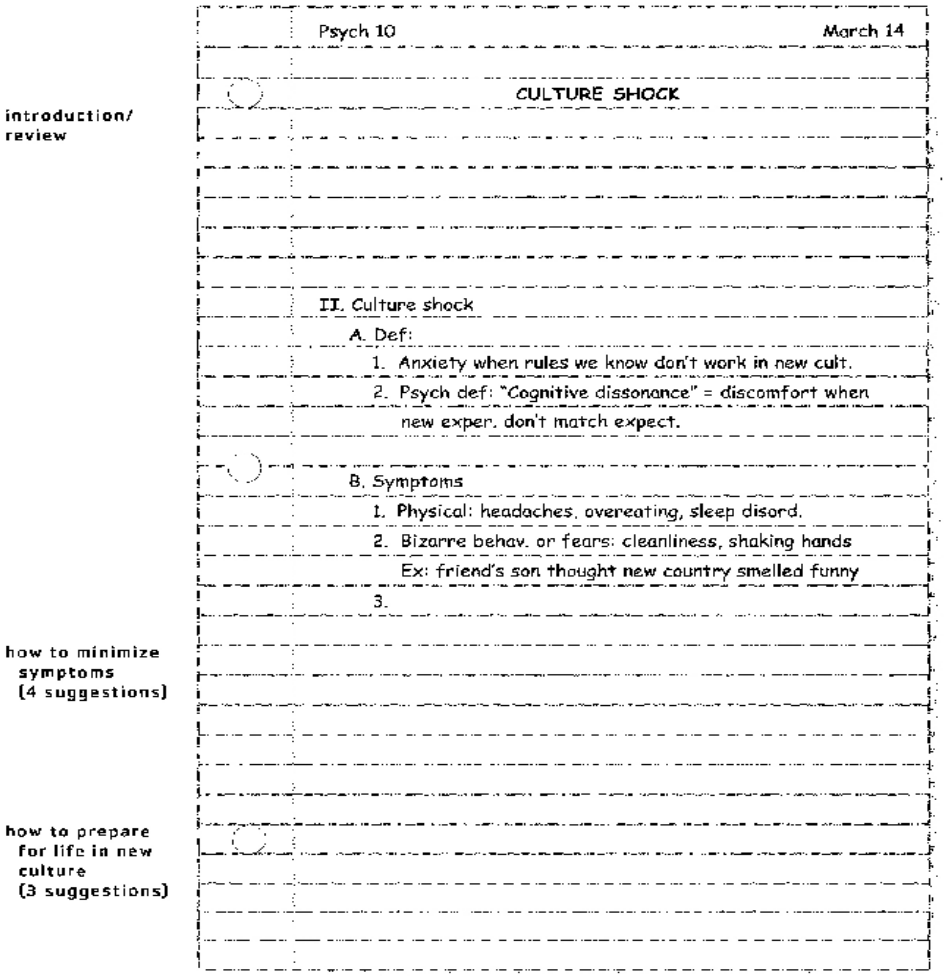
Task 1: Main Idea

Listen to the lecture. Answer the following question.

2. What is the main idea of this text?

Task 2: Note-taking Practice

Listen to the lecture. Take notes on the lecture. Then complete the following outline based on your notes.



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D. Memory

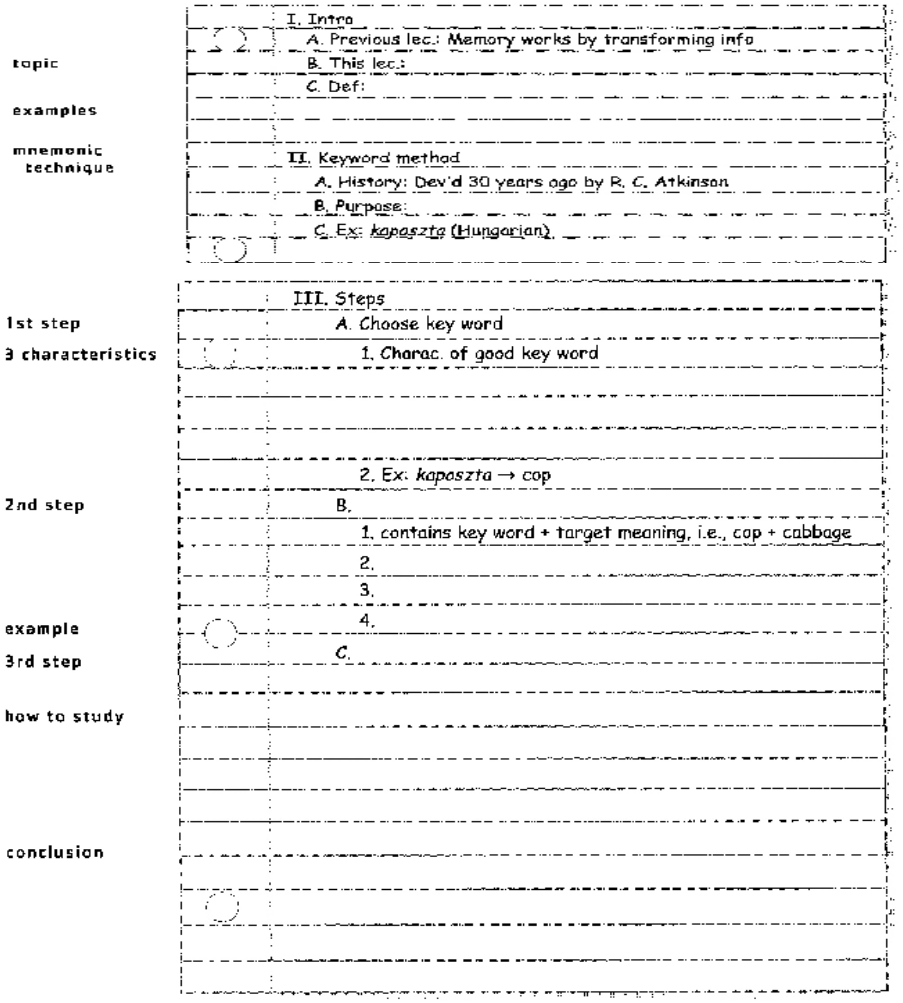
Task 1: Main Idea

Listen to the lecture. Answer the following question.

3. What is the main idea of this text?

Task 2: Note-taking Practice

Listen to the lecture. Take notes on the lecture. Then complete the following outline based on your notes.



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APPENDIX J
Text Transcripts for Interviews

Part 1: Low Proficiency Visual Text

Text 1. “The Farmer and His Sons”

Listen. You will hear a traditional folktale. Number the pictures (1-6).
WOMAN: Once upon a time, a farmer and his three sons lived on a farm. The farmer worked very hard in his fields. But his sons did not like to work. They were very lazy and only wanted to have a good time. [pause]
One day, the farmer called his sons to him. He said,
FATHER: Sons, I am old. I will soon die. I'm leaving you a treasure in the fields. There's a treasure in the fields.
FIRST SON: A treasure? Is it money?
SECOND SON: Gold?
THIRD SON: Diamonds?
FATHER: A treasure. You will find a treasure in the fields. [pause]
WOMAN: The old farmer died. His sons ran to the fields. They began digging and digging. Soon, they dug up the whole field. But they found no treasure. [pause]
The field was already dug for planting, so they decided to plant some wheat. The wheat grew and grew. They sold the wheat, and they made a lot of money. [pause]
But the sons still wanted to find the treasure, so they dug up the field again. Once again, they found no treasure, so once again they planted wheat. They did this year after year. [pause]
After many years, the sons began to enjoy working hard on their farm. They had good lives. And they finally understood: The land was their father's treasure. The land itself brought them a good life. [pause]

(Taken from Helgesen & Brown, 1995, p. T28)

Part 2: Low Proficiency Easy Text

Text 2. “Laughter”

Listening Comprehension 1

Why do we laugh? Experts say there are three explanations. First of all, we laugh when there is a surprise. We expect one thing to happen, but something else happens. For example, a teenager is on the telephone for thirty minutes. Her father says, "That was short. You usually talk for two hours." The girl replies, "It was a wrong number."

Second, we laugh at someone's mistake. We laugh because we feel we are better or smarter. That is why people laugh when someone slips on a banana peel or when someone says something stupid.

Third, we laugh when we feel relief from stress. We see this a lot in movies. The tension in a movie increases. We are very nervous. Suddenly someone says or does something funny. We feel relief and laugh.

Listening Comprehension 2

Almost everyone says it's good to laugh. Scientists say it's good for your health, and it makes you feel good. They say laughter is like exercise. Both laughter and exercise lower blood pressure. They make your blood move faster and they use different muscles in the body.

Here are two ways you can put more laughter in your life:
First of all, decide what makes you laugh. Then, meet with people who make you laugh.

(Taken from Schoenberg, 2005, p. 113)

Part 3: Low Proficiency Difficult Texts

Text 3. “David's Neighbors”

Ruth: Good morning, David. Wow, what happened to you?
David: Hey, Ruth. Boy, do I need coffee. I was up till 2:30 last night for the second night in a row
Ruth: More trouble with the lovebirds?
David: Yeah, good `ole Michael and Betty were at it again all night.
Ruth: Were they breaking dishes again?
David: No, I don't think they have any dishes left after the last fight. They were yelling about his old girlfriend.
Ruth: Haven't you spoken to them? I mean, don't they know they're keeping you up all night?
David: I think when they're fighting, they don't care about anything else. I banged on the ceiling with a broom for about five minutes and they kept yelling.
Ruth: They sound like very selfish people.
David: You've got that right, Ruth.
Ruth: Why don't you just call the landlord?
David: He doesn't care if I'm unhappy. He wants me to move! I've lived in the building the longest, and with rent control, I pay half as much as they do. If I move, he can jack up the price.
Ruth: What about the other neighbors? Can't you all get together and complain?
David: Are you kidding? I have had problems with everybody in that building! Rob and Steve, the people who live next door to Michael and Betty, crank-up the volume of their stereo at all hours of the night.
Ruth: That's terrible!
David: Yeah, those two guys are so busy throwing parties that they probably never even hear the fighting.
Ruth: Well, there has to be someone in your building who you like.
David: There is Mrs. Anderson, the woman who lives below me. She's 87 years old, as sweet as can be with a heart of gold. Unfortunately, she's a little deaf and I'm sure she never hears any of the noise in the building. Actually, as much as I like her, she's also a problem.
Ruth: How so?
David: Her niece phones from out of state every Sunday morning at 6:30 to check on her. The trouble is because she's deaf, she screams into the phone, and it wakes me up.
Ruth: Every Sunday?
David: Yes, and the sound of her voice goes right up through the floor. "Hello? Yes, dear. It's so good to hear your voice." She's more reliable than an alarm clock!
Ruth: Wow, that sounds like a real nightmare!
David: It's not her fault, poor old thing. She's just very old and her health isn't good.
Ruth: I'm pretty lucky. The biggest problem I have is the garbage collectors waking me up at 5:30 in the morning three times a week when they empty the cans. But, I can

usually fall asleep again after they leave.

David: At least your neighbors put their garbage into the cans! Art, the guy who lives next door to Mrs. Anderson, is sometimes such a pig. He never seems to throw away his garbage. Whenever I walk by his door I have to hold my nose.

Ruth: Maybe you just need to start looking for a new place to live.

David: And give up my book?

Ruth: Book? What book?

David: I told you about my book didn't I? I'm writing a book about a guy who lives in an apartment building with a bunch of crazy people. I hope it'll be a big Hollywood movie someday.

Ruth: That sounds fantastic, but can't you write the book in a nice quiet apartment in another building?

David: No way! Every week I get a new idea for a chapter from somebody in the building. If I move now, I'll never be able to finish the book!

(Taken from Gabler & Scholnick, 2003b, p. 37-38)

Text 4. "Preparing a Turkey"

Chef Larry: When selecting a turkey, now this is debatable, but I like to give this information out . . . because you can kind of determine where you want to go with this. When selecting the size of a turkey . . .

Eric: Uh-huh.

Chef: . . . you have to figure at least a pound per person. Sounds like a lot, but you're talking about a bone-in turkey, where the turkey itself represents about 30 percent of the weight of the turkey. So, always consider at least a pound per person, comfortably feeding everyone but also making enough for leftovers.

Eric: Exactly . . . turkey sandwiches.

Chef: Also too consider the convenience of fresh versus frozen. You know, if you're going to be able to run around a couple of days before, like Eric said, pre-order it, make all those arrangements, you have to plan it a little bit when you cook. Um, or frozen, if you're able to get it on a deal. A lot of times now if you buy so many groceries or a certain amount of groceries, they'll give you a free turkey, and it might be frozen. So, you might just want to cook that one up. Make sure that you, you know, you thaw it under refrigeration, which leads me to my other tips about thawing. Always thaw under refrigeration. So, you've got to consider that the turkey itself is going to have to sit under refrigeration for five to seven days to defrost. Very, very important. So, if you have a frozen turkey, make sure you thaw it under refrigeration. When you do have your turkey ready to go, when you're ready to season it and put it in the oven or into the deep fryer, you have to rinse it thoroughly and pat it dry. So, cold water, lots of cold water, pat it dry with paper towels. Now here's some roasting times. These are some great hints because sometimes you ask yourself, you know, how long to roast, you know, how long to let the juices settle, and so on and so forth. So, for a 10 to 12 pound turkey, you

want to go to about 2 1/2 to 3 hours. This is 10 to 12 pound turkey. A 12 to 14 pound turkey, you increase that to 2 3/4 hours to 3 1/2 hours.

Eric: At what temperature?

Chef: At about 375, Eric. Yeah, for this. 4 to 16 pounds, excuse me, 14 to 16 pounds, 3 ¾ hours. Sixteen to 18 pounds, 3 1/2 to 4 1/4 hours, 18 to 20 pounds really gets you into that time that you need to prepare a lot ahead of time, 3 3/4 hours to 4 1/2 hours. If you have a turkey that is over 20 hours, excuse me, 20 pounds, you almost have to cook it 20 hours, you have to cook it 4 1/2 hours.

Jamie: God!

Chef: Anyway, we'll post this information and get all this information again at our website here.

Eric: It's really a long cooking day...it's one of those days, you know, when you go and...

Chef: It is! You gotta start early.

Eric: Yeah.

Jamie: Or even a day before, a couple of days before.

Eric: But the thing is . . . you could even pre-cook it, but of course if you pre-cook it, you need nearly the same time to reheat it.

Chef: Right. Absolutely right.

Eric: It's just one of those things that . . . then it gets dry.

(Taken from Numrich, 2006, p. 161-162)

Text 5. “Women & War”

They were 12-hour shifts a day and six days a week. And sometimes you even worked on your day off if the census was very high. And the helicopters after we opened came in all the time everyday. It was a busy hospital. We got a lot of injured.

That was a very emotional time for me. I had just left Brian in Vietnam, and he wasn't going to be coming home for the birth of our baby. And there I am in this belly of this airplane with more than 100 injured soldiers, and that's what I did over there. I took care of those boys, and I couldn't get away from it. It was there all the way home. And so I was pretty depressed on the trip home.

Right across from me there was a blond-headed young man—couldn't have been more than 20—and he had lost both arms, and he was also blind. And he just laid there quietly the whole trip, but at mealtime, of course, the Air Force nurse came with the tray and knelt down beside him and fed him, and it was very emotional for me to watch him. I kept thinking, "Oh this poor, poor boy. How is he going to get through life like this?" I thought, "Gee, if he wasn't blind he'd see the spoon coming, or maybe if he is blind and had his hand, he could feed himself, but this boy was blind with no hands, and he didn't know where the spoon was coming from. And I watched her try to touch his cheek with the spoon so he could turn that way like a new baby to learn to eat again. It was very, very sad.

Coming home wasn't a happy experience at all. Not only did I have my own difficulties to face, I had a nation to face that didn't want to even know about me. And they told me not to wear my uniform home just to pack it up in my suitcase and wear civilian clothes home. I faced people all along the way of my homecoming that didn't want to even know where I came from or what I'd been doing. And I could tell that right away. And we had lived through news bulletins

and all the demonstrations. We knew that we weren't appreciated at all. And so it was a very different homecoming than some of your Second World War veterans had gotten. I didn't talk about it. And I even came home to Indiana to a small farming community of 400 people in northern Indiana, and they were glad to say "hi" to me, but they didn't ask me anything, and so it all bottled up inside of me for many, many years.

(Taken from Numrich, 2006, p. 164)

Part 4: Moderate Proficiency Visual Texts

Text 6. “How Was Your Vacation?”

Listen. What did these people do on vacation? Write W (Wei), J (Julia), K (Katie), or R (Ryan) in the correct pictures. There is one extra picture for each pair.

1. Wei and Julia

Julia: Wei! Good to see you. So, how was your vacation?
Wei: Oh, it was wonderful.
Julia: What did you do?
Wei: Well, let's see. I walked around this beautiful garden.
Julia: Really? I didn't know you liked gardening.
Wei: Oh, I don't like doing gardening. It's too much work. But I love to look at beautiful flowers.
Julia: Mmm-hmm. So what else did you do, Wei?
Wei: Well, I went to some great restaurants. I ate seafood every night.
Julia: Really?
Wei: Yeah. Crab, lobster. Great food. Not too expensive either. It was just a terrific trip. So, how was your vacation, Julia?
Julia: Well, I didn't go anywhere special.
Wei: You just rested?
Julia: Yeah. It was nice to be home and have a lot of time for things like reading. I did a lot of that. I probably read, I don't know, four or five books. And I visited a couple of museums. So it was relaxing, but also very interesting.
Wei: Sounds nice.

2. Katie and Ryan.

Ryan: Did you have a good vacation, Katie?
Katie: Yeah! It was exciting — probably my most exciting vacation ever!
Ryan: Wow! What did you do?
Katie: I took a nature adventure tour. For the first part, we went hiking. It was so much fun! We hiked all the way up to these beautiful waterfalls. I took lots of pictures.
Ryan: Sounds great. So, what else did you do on the tour?
Katie: Well, the best part was at the end of the trip. We went skydiving! Can you believe it? I jumped out of an airplane.
Ryan: Wow!
Katie: Yeah, it was just a fantastic vacation. But anyway, that's enough about my vacation. How did you spend your break, Ryan?
Ryan: Oh, I drove to visit my relatives.

Katie: Uh-huh. Did you have good time?
Ryan: Well, it was pretty boring, actually. It rained every day so we had to stay inside. We just stayed home and watched TV a lot.
Katie: Oh, that's too bad.
Ryan: No, that's OK. It really was very relaxing, even though it was a little boring.

(Taken from Brown & Smith, 2007b, p. 150)

Text 7. “Malaysia”

Listen. People are talking about Malaysia. Which places are they talking about? Number the pictures from 1 to 4. There is one extra picture.

1. Woman: Malaysia is a country in Southeast Asia. Part of Malaysia is on the Asian mainland, and there are also two states on the island of Borneo. This city is Malaysia's capital. It is clean and modern, and famous for its shopping centers and markets. The Petronas Towers are located here. Built in nineteen ninety-eight, the towers are eighty-eight stories high and have thirty-two thousand windows. Underneath the towers is a large shopping mall, with shops, places to eat, an art gallery, and a concert hall.

2. Man: Just north of Kuala Lumpur is this famous site. These were found in a mountainside in eighteen ninety-two. To get there, take a bus from Kuala Lumpur. You will have to climb two hundred and seventy-two steps to reach the entrance from the bus stop! Don't forget to buy some bananas and peanuts from the stalls near the stairs so you can feed the many monkeys you will see on the way in.

3. Woman: This is a small island off the west coast, just south of Thailand. The warm weather and tropical waters mean that you can swim all year. Even though many tourists come here to enjoy the beaches, you can still find beaches on the northwest side with very few people. However, if you enjoy crowds, you'll love the nightlife here. The island is also famous for its nightclubs, restaurants, and shops. It's a wonderful place for a relaxing vacation.

4. Man: When you want a break from Malaysia's hot weather, head for this cool spot, in the center of the island. This area's high elevation helps it stay cool all year. Visitors enjoy taking tours of the nearby tea plantations, where tea is grown and then shipped all over the world. If you take a walk in the nearby jungles, you'll probably see some of Malaysia's famous butterflies.

(Taken from Brown & Smith, 2007b, p. 151-152)

Part 5: Moderate Proficiency Easy Texts

Text 8. “Participating in a Discussion”

Catherine: OK, so lets get started, shall we? The first item on the agenda is what are we going to do about the decline in sales? We have to do something. I'd like to start by asking Mark
Mark: Well, we might consider spending more money on marketing.
Catherine: Hmm. Julie, do you have any thoughts?
Julie: I think that's a good idea. More marketing means more sales.
Peter: Sorry, can I come in here?
Catherine: Yes, Peter. Of course.
Peter: I couldn't disagree more with Julie and Mark. Marketing is expensive, and we have no guarantee that the costs will be worth it. Perhaps you can give us your opinion, Catherine?
Catherine: Yes, well, I can see where Mark and Julie are coming from, but I have a problem with increasing our marketing budget for the same reason that Peter has just given. We can't be sure of the results. I propose we hire a new sales manager. How do you feel about that, Mark?
Mark: That sounds reasonable to me. I think some new blood would be a good thing.
Julie: I have no problem with that, either.
Catherine: So, Mark and Julie both think it's a way forward. Peter?
Peter: Well, I'm afraid that's not how I see it, Catherine. Again, it means trying to spend our way out of this crisis and I'm not very keen on that idea at all.

(Taken from Craven, 2008a, p. 97)

Text 9. “Strange & Unusual Things”

Task 1: Main Idea

In Tennessee, it is against the law to drive a car while sleeping.
In Virginia, chickens cannot lay eggs before 8:00 a.m. and must be done before 4:00 p.m.
In Cleveland, Ohio, it is unlawful to leave chewing gum in public places.
In Missouri, a man must have a permit to shave.
In Massachusetts, it is against the law to put tomatoes in clam chowder. In North Carolina, it is against the law for a rabbit to race down the street.
In Corpus Christie, Texas, it is illegal to raise alligators in your home.

Task 2: Comprehension Questions

Long necks are a sign of beauty in Myanmar. Women put large copper rings around their necks. This makes their necks longer. The longest neck on record is 40 cm (15.75 in.). Hoo Sateow lives in India. When he was 18, he got a haircut. Soon after, he got sick. He never cut his hair again. His hair is now 5.15 meters long (16 ft. 11 in.).

(Taken from Schoenberg, 2005, p.116)

Text 10. “Zoos”

Task 1: Main Idea

Zoos are very old. The first zoo was built in Egypt more than 4,500 years ago. But zoos then were different from zoos today. Early zoos were for kings and queens. Then later, zoos opened for all rich people. These zoos were built for the fun of the rich.
In China around 3,000 years ago an emperor created a very big zoo. It was more than 1,500 acres. He gave the zoo an interesting name. He called it the Garden of Intelligence. Ancient Greeks built zoos, too. They built them in order to study animal and plant life. Students in Greece had to visit the zoos as part of their education. From the 1400s to the 1700s new animals were brought to Europe from different parts of the world. The first public zoo opened in Austria in the 18th century. Soon, other countries followed. All the animals were kept in cages. Today zoos are different. Animals aren't kept in cages. They can move around, just like in nature. There is an open feeling for the animals and the visitors. But some people still think zoos are not good for animals. These people believe animals should be free. What do you think?

Task 2: Listening for Specific Information

There are over 1,500 zoos in the world. The largest zoo is in Berlin, Germany. The Berlin Zoo has 13,000 animals. The Bronx Zoo in New York City is the second largest zoo. It has 6,000 animals. The oldest public zoo is the Vienna Zoo, in Austria. It opened in 1752. The second oldest zoo is the London Zoo, which opened in 1828. At first it was used for scientific study. In 1847 it opened to the public. This was the first zoo to have a special children's zoo.

(Taken from Schoenberg, 2005, p.118)

Part 6: Moderate Proficiency Difficult Texts

Text 11. “Choosing a Holiday”

Travel agent: Hello. Take a seat. How can I help?
Simon: We're thinking of going to Canada, Vancouver and then to Calgary.
Jenny: Yes, flying to Vancover on June the 12th. Travel agent: OK. How many nights?
Jenny: Just eight. Coming back on the 20th, from Calgary.
TA: OK ... just a moment ... Yes, with Air Canada, that'll be £780 per person, including all taxes.
Jenny: Oh, that's better than we thought!
Simon: Hmm! We were thinking three nights in Vancouver first. Somewhere rather nice?
TA: We have a special on at the moment with the Metropolitan. It's a lovely hotel, four stars ... You can see it here. That's, urn ... €140 a night.
Jenny: Per person?
TA: No, that's for the room. All these are per room per night, without breakfast.
Simon: Oh, yes. It certainly looks very nice.
TA: It is! I stayed there last year. And you should definitely hire a car — it's only £30 per day for a small car — and drive to Lake Louise.
Jenny: Oh, yes. We want to go there.
TA: I recommend you stay at the Emerald Lake Lodge. It's a perfect place to explore from.
Simon: That sounds good.
TA: Let me see ... that'll be £150 per night. It's worth spending two nights there.
Simon: Two nights?
TA: Yes, it's a nine-hour drive from Vancouver, so two nights is best. And then you can drive to Jasper — that's four hours. Two nights at the Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge will be £250 per night. It's expensive, but it's well worth going there. A beautiful place.
Simon: Look, a log cabin!
TA: Yes. You get your own cabin.
Jenny: And there's plenty to do in Jasper National Park, is there?
TA: Sure. You can play golf, go hiking ... and boating if you fancy that. Then you've got a five-hour drive to Calgary. A final night somewhere like the Westin will save money — just £74. There's enough for a day — shopping, museums and Calgary Tower, of course. You can drop your car off at the airport and fly back at ten in the evening.
Simon: Well, that's the kind of thing we were thinking of, isn't it, dear?
Jenny: Yes, it is. Can you print out those details and we'll take a brochure?

(Taken from Craven, 2008a, p. 92)

Text 12. “Ethical Decisions”

OK, earlier we talked about the definition of an ethical dilemma... We said that it's a situation where you're forced to make a choice that involves your beliefs about right and wrong behavior. Now I think most people know the difference between right and wrong, and I think most people, when they find themselves in a situation where there is a clear difference between what's right and wrong, they will choose to do the right thing. But what happens when the choice isn't between a right action and a wrong action but between two actions that are both right? This is something that we all face in our lives from time to time, isn't it? So today I want to look at three types of these right versus right dilemmas, um we'll look at some examples, and later I'll ask you to think about what you might do if you were in these situations. OK?

OK, so the first type of dilemma I want to describe is something I'm sure you've encountered in your own life. It's called a truth versus loyalty dilemma. Let's suppose that you have a good friend who is using drugs. OK, and you know about it but your friend has asked you not to tell anyone. This immediately creates a dilemma for you, doesn't it? On the one hand your friend asked you not to tell anybody. So you can be a loyal friend and agree to keep his secret.

But the problem is, drugs are dangerous. Drugs are illegal. Your friend could die, right? So do you keep quiet and keep your friend's secret or do you tell somebody, such as his parents, and get him the help that he needs? You see both actions are good and correct by themselves, but you can't do both. You have to choose. So what do you do?

Or here's another example, um a simpler one. Suppose your good friend is dressing in a way that's unattractive or unprofessional. Um, it's the wrong color, uh, it doesn't fit, or whatever. Do you tell your friend the truth, that the outfit looks bad because you want to be helpful, or do you keep quiet because you don't want to hurt your friend's feelings? Again, it's a situation where both choices are ethically correct, but you can only choose to do one. OK? So those are two examples of the truth versus loyalty dilemma.

Another type of dilemma is called the self versus community dilemma. And here there is a conflict between the needs or desires of one person and the needs or desires of a larger group such as your family, or your class, or your town, or even your country. Let's say that your parents want you to become a doctor. They think it's the best thing for you and of course it would make them happy. But you don't want to be a doctor. You want to be an artist. So you have a dilemma. On the one hand, you want to please your parents. But on the other hand, you want to please yourself, and you can't do both. Does this sound familiar?

Or here's another example, um, the kind of thing that you read about in the newspaper every day. Suppose you work for a company that makes plastic toys. And you discover that your company is spilling dangerous chemicals into a river nearby. Should you report the company to the government in order to protect the people who live near the factory, or should you keep quiet in order to protect yourself and keep your job? You can't do both! Uh, by the way, this is exactly what happens in the movie Erin Brockovich, um, if anyone has seen it. Erin Brockovich, uh, who's played by Julia Roberts, is a secretary who discovers that the gas company is poisoning the people of the town where

she lives and of course they're trying to hide it, and she has to decide whether to make this public or keep quiet in order to protect her reputation and her job. And I'm sure you can guess what happens at the end of the movie. Anyway, so those are some examples, then, of the self versus community dilemma.

All right, the third type of dilemma I want to describe is also something I'm sure you have had to face in your own life. What we have here is a conflict between short-term and long-term needs or goals. So if you're seven years old, the dilemma might be should you eat all your candy now or save some for later? At age sixteen it might be should you spend your money on a car now or should you save it to pay for college later? And at the national level, the dilemma might be, um should a government keep taxes low in order to be popular in the short term with voters, or should it raise taxes in order to pay for new universities that will be needed five years from now? This is the kind of dilemma, incidentally, that the United States government faces all of the time because of the nature of the political system that we have here. So in all of these examples, what you see is a conflict between the needs or desires of the present as opposed to the needs or desires of the future. Both choices have certain advantages, but it's only possible to choose one of them.

So by now I think you can begin to understand that ethical dilemmas are not easy to resolve. Yet life is full of hard choices, isn't it, so wouldn't it be useful if there were some strategies or guidelines we could use to think through our ethical dilemmas and make the right choices? Well, that is exactly the topic we're going to examine next.

(Taken from Baker & Tanka, 2006a, p.259-260)

Text 13. “Obesity”

U.S. health officials say there is a new epidemic; it's called obesity. The World Health Organization says the problem is global. Obesity is linked to a number of serious health problems, such as cancer, heart disease, hypertension and diabetes. As diets higher in fat and sugar become more widely available around the globe, fighting fat is not just a U.S. problem.

The 2000 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, prepared by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, found that nearly two-thirds of Americans over the age of twenty are overweight, and more than thirty percent are obese.

The American Obesity Association says these percentages translate into approximately 127 million American adults who are overweight, 60 million who are obese, and 9 million who are severely obese.

Why are so many Americans overweight? Barbara Rolls, from Pennsylvania State University, says part of the problem is the American diet. "We have a huge variety of foods that are inexpensive. They're readily available. They're high in fat, high in energy density, and they're in huge portions?'

Dietitian Jackie Newgent says too much of a good thing is bad for health. She says American fastfood giants are making inroads into other countries around the world. "It's unfortunate that, for instance, the Asian diet and the European diet, they may have

started as healthier diets, and they are becoming more Americanized, which actually means they are going to get a little bit more saturated fat, and likely more trans-fat. I don't know what the stats are on that, but that is definitely a trend."

The World Health Organization calls obesity an escalating global epidemic that it has dubbed "globesity." WHO statistics say the number of obese adults worldwide jumped from 200 million to 300 million, between 1995 and 2000. The health organization also points to the rise in childhood obesity, estimating that more than 17.5 million children under the age of five are overweight around the world.

(Taken from Baker & Tanka, 2006a, p.247-248)

Text 14. “On the Job”

Gloria: Are you Mark?
Mark: Yes.
Gloria: I'm Gloria. I'm going to be showing you around. So, which department are you going to be with?
Mark: Shipping. I'll be loading the delivery trucks.
Gloria: You have to be strong to do that.
Mark: Well, I joined a gym last semester, so I'm in pretty good shape.
Gloria: Oh, you're still in college? Why are you working in a factory?
Mark: I'm a business student. I wanted to learn about the dog food business from the bottom up.
Gloria: Shipping isn't really the bottom. Assembly line jobs are the worst! Those people do the same thing over and over and over again all day long. That would drive me bananas!
Mark: Yeah, I see what you mean. You been working here a long time?
Gloria: Uh-huh; about fifteen years.
Mark: Fifteen years?!? You must have started when you were five years old.
Gloria: Well, thank you, but I was a little older than that. Anyway, this is the time clock where you punch in and out every day. Oh, and make sure you get here by 7:45.
Mark: Quarter to eight—that early?
Gloria: Yes, that's when we start. And don't even think about leaving before 4:45. Ooh, that Mr. Carson—
Mark: The owner?
Gloria: Yeah. Have you met him yet?
Mark: Why yes; he's—
Gloria: Well, then you know what I'm talking about. Oh, look over there. That's the coffee machine and the rest area. We're allowed one fifteen-minute break in the morning and another one in the afternoon.
Mark: Okay.
Gloria: Now, lunch time is from 11:45 to 12:30.
Mark: Okay
Gloria: And you will probably have to stay late one day a week to work overtime.

Mark: Oh, good. I could use the money.
Gloria: The overtime is good. We get double pay for overtime, thanks to the union. You are going to join the union, aren't you?
Mark: Well, I'm only here for the summer. Besides, unions don't really—
Gloria: Listen, college boy, after you've worked here a couple of weeks you'll be singing a different tune. Without the union, Old Man Carson would work us to death.
Mark: Oh, come on! He can't be that bad.
Gloria: Are you kidding? He's so mean, I wouldn't be surprised if he fed his own kids Carson's Canine Cuisine!
Mark: Dog food?!?
Gloria: Well, you know what I mean. He just doesn't care about his employees.
Mark: That can't be true.
Gloria: If he cared, we'd get better pay and benefits. Do you know that you have to work here a year before you get medical insurance?
Mark: A whole year?
Gloria: Yeah, and there's no dental or retirement plan at all!
Mark: Well, surely you get vacation time.
Gloria: We only get one week of vacation a year, and Carson makes us take it in the winter!
Mark: I can't believe that.
Gloria: Well, you should. He is the cheapest, meanest man—oh, there he is . . . How are you today, Mr. Carson?
Mr. Carson: Hello.
Gloria: Isn't that a beautiful tie you're wearing.
Mr. Carson: Yes, yes, thank you. Now, are you giving young Mark all the information he needs?
Gloria: Yes, sir. And I'm sure he's going to be a fine worker.
Mr. Carson: Well, he should be. He's just like his father.
Gloria: His father, sir?
Mr. Carson: Why of course. Mark, Jr., has been around dog food all his life. All of this will be his one day. That's why we've got him working here this summer.
Gloria: Mark, Jr., Eeeuw . . .

(Taken from Gabler & Scholnick, 2003b, p. 108-109)

Text 15. “Product Placement”

Today we're going to talk about a form of advertising known as product placement, and I think the best way to explain this method of advertising is by looking at an example. Now before we started I asked you to look at a photo ... and in this photo we see a man and a woman sitting at a table, talking, and there's this computer in front of them. Yeah? So how many of you thought this photo was a scene from a television program? OK. And how many thought it was an advertisement? Good. And how many of you thought it was both?

Wow. Yeah, if you said both, you were right. Yes. This is a scene from a popular American TV show called 24. And this program is shown without any commercials, which is not

very typical, but yeah, no commercials for this show. But did you notice what kind of computer the man is typing on? An Apple, yes. Yes. And do you think it's a coincidence that he's using an Apple and not some other computer brand? Of course not. Right. It's probably ... the Apple computer company paid the producers of the show to "plant" their computer in this scene. This is what we mean by product placement. It is the practice of mentioning, using, or showing a brand-name product in a movie, film, or any other medium, so that the product actually becomes part of the story or the action. Now, it isn't a commercial, but it is advertising.

Now you can find examples of product placement in almost any medium. I've already mentioned television, and ... How many of you here remember Friends? Yes, huge hit. Lots and lots of examples of product placement in this series. I'll just give you one example. There is a well-known scene where the character named Ross is sitting at the kitchen table with a package of Oreo cookies clearly visible. Um hmm.

Now in movies there are countless examples of product placement. And one of the absolute most famous examples of this is the BMW Z8 driven by James Bond in the movie The World Is Not Enough. All right. You can probably think of other examples of product placement involving cars; almost every movie includes some kind of example of this. It's like a soft drink, or ... and if it's a soft drink, it's either Coke or Pepsi. Yeah? You get the picture. Good.

Product placement is most common in television and movies, but it's also easy to find in video games, pop songs, and even in books. Yes, books. I was shocked to find the name of this popular candy in the title of a book that teaches children how to count. But as product placement has become more and more common, it's also become more controversial. OK. Now, there are strong arguments both for and against it.

On the one hand, obviously, advertisers are in favor of product placement. Now why? Why? Well, because it works! Right? It sells products! It works. Now here's a famous example. There's a classic children's movie called E. T., right? You've all seen it, about this cute space alien that makes friends with a young boy. And do you remember the alien's favorite food? It's a kind of candy called Reese's Pieces. Well, as soon as that movie came out, sales of Reese's Pieces went up by 65 percent. Now, eh, similarly, when you see Tom Cruise or any of those superstar guys wearing Ray Ban sunglasses or driving a certain kind of car, you can be sure that sales of those products are going to increase dramatically.

For consumers—that's you and me, the people who watch the shows or read the books—there's another argument in support of product placement, and that is that it makes these stories more realistic. In real life people do drink Coke, right? You don't see them holding a can that just says "soda" or "soft drink," right? In some cases it would just look really strange or completely unbelievable not to use a name-brand product.

OK. Now, on the other hand there are some serious arguments against product placement. And the main argument, according to people who oppose it, is that it exposes us to advertising against our will. It's not like a television commercial where we have the choice of walking away or changing channels. With product placement the product's part of the story, so we're forced to see it. And what's even worse, opponents say, is that sometimes the product placement is so clever, so subtle, we don't even realize that we're seeing an advertisement. Children, in particular, they may have a very difficult time understanding the difference between advertising and entertainment. And this was proven in a recent study at Lancaster University in England.

As a result of this research, some consumer groups are pushing for laws to restrict or even ban product placement in media designed for children. This may happen in the future, but for now, product placement is legal in both the U.S. and Great Britain and, in fact, it is expanding all the time.

(Taken from Baker & Tanka, 2006a, p.254-255)

Text 16. “Staying Single”

Susan Stamberg: "Deeply single" is how one writer put it in To Do List magazine, and there are plenty of people who are deeply single. Unmarried by choice, living alone by choice, or living together but just not wanting to get married. In Portland, Oregon, Neil Lubow, age fifty-two, has been in a committed relationship for ten years with, as he puts it, "a woman I love, honor, and indulge:' And they live separately.

Neil: I'm not against marriage, but I think that marriage is not the only answer. I think it's just one answer. I like my freedom, I like my independence, I like my privacy and my solitude . . ."

SS: Neil Lubow likes living single. In Washington, D.C., Jennifer Schneider, age thirty-one, says most of her thirty-something friends are desperately seeking a someone, but she wonders about marriage all the time.

Jennifer: I'm not sure whether I want to get married or not, or have kids or not.

SS: Hmm. What are your questions?

Jennifer: I'm not sure of the benefits of getting married.

SS: Jennifer Schneider says, "Most people around me, especially the older generation, assume that what is good for me is to have a family." But Jennifer says, "I'm not ready to give in to that assumption." In La Canada, California, Terri Wild decided when she was fairly young that she didn't want to have children, so she felt the pressure to marry wasn't there. In her early fifties now, Terri Wild has dated over the years, been engaged, made a full circle of friends, and never felt she had to be in a committed relationship to feel fulfilled.

Terri: As I was pursuing my career, as the pool of eligible men dwindled, you know, I found myself sort of making the decision that I wanted to have a full life, and if that didn't necessarily include a husband or a long-term relationship, that was OK. I could still pursue all the things that I wanted to do, and still have a great life. And I feel as though I've pretty much been able to do that.

SS: Do you think there is an assumption in this society that your life is not complete unless you're in some kind of a relationship?

Terri: Yes. I do. I've had a lot of people say, well, you know, "Don't you get lonely, don't you worry about when you're old and alone and there's no one there to take care of you? Don't you get uncomfortable if you wanna go out to dinner and you know, you go out by yourself?" And I suppose there are many people who do worry about those things, and who do feel that way, and you know certainly they're free to make their own choices, but...

SS: But you, but that's not you?

Terri: I mean, it doesn't... first of all, I get lonely just like any other person does; I don't, I can't think of anything more lonely than being in a marriage or relationship that's not the right one. I think that would be awful.

(Taken from Baker & Tanka, 2006a, p.231-232)

Part 7: High Proficiency Visual Texts

Text 17. “Great Site!”

1.
Man: Here's that music Web site I was telling you about.
Woman: Wow! There's a lot of stuff here. Oh, click on that link. I just bought a new CD and I want to read what the critic thinks of it.
Man: OK. . . . It says, "Don't rush out and buy this one. This CD is not the band's best." Huh. He says he doesn't recommend it.

2.
Man: Oh, you know what I want to do? There's this old song I've been looking for. Let's see if they have it here.
Woman: Why don't you just go to a music store and buy the CD?
Man: No, this way's a lot better. I can just choose the songs I want and put them right onto my MP3 player. I don't have to buy the whole CD.
Woman: Hmm. Well, I think I'd rather have the CD to add to my collection.

3.
Man: Hey look! Isn't this the lead singer of your favorite band?
Woman: Oh, yeah! Oh, that's a great picture of him, too.
Man: Oh, and how exciting. It says here he's going to be online live tonight. Oooh! You can get online and talk to your dream man.
Woman: Wow! That's amazing. I can really
communicate with famous musicians.
Man: Come on. There's no way it's the real guy. These sites just pay some part-time worker to sit there and chat with the fans. It's a waste of time.

4.
Woman: Oh, look. Click on that.
Man: What's that?
Woman: It's like an online diary. A lot of bands have them on this site.
Man: A diary?
Woman: Yeah. The musicians write about themselves — what's happening every day — all sorts of information about the band. Fans can read the musicians' personal Web logs.
Man: Huh. I don't see the point of that. I think I'd rather just listen to the music.
Woman: Well, I really enjoy reading about their everyday lives. Look. This one even has photos of last week's concert in the park.

5.
Woman: Speaking of concerts . . . uh, didn't we have a reason for getting onto this Web site? I guess we kind of got sidetracked. Got your credit card ready?
Man: My credit card? No way. Uh-uh. I don't like using my credit card online. I don't

think it's safe. Maybe this link isn't such a good idea.
Woman: Oh, all right. I'll use my card. I always use this site. It's so convenient. First let's just check what seats they still have available. I want to sit as close to the stage as possible. Uh-oh.
Man: What's the matter? No seats up front?
Woman: It's sold out!
Man: Oh no! I guess we shouldn't have waited so long.

(Taken from Brown & Smith, 2007d, pp. 144-145)

Text 18. “Strange Stories”

1. Woman: I'll never forget it. We were returning to London. We'd been on vacation in northern Scotland. We were driving along the lake when I looked out the window and saw it. I noticed something moving in the water. It was some sort of shape — a large animal with a long neck and a huge body. Its body was huge and dark gray, like an elephant. I guess it was about twenty-five meters long. It was carrying something in its mouth. I couldn't tell what it was. Then it disappeared under the water.

2. Man: This happened to my wife and me several years ago. We were driving home after a party when suddenly we saw a strange object in the sky. We stopped the car to get a better look. It was high up in the air and had a strange, green light. We could see these creatures — definitely not humans —looking at us from the window. We were so scared. We tried to drive away, but our car wouldn't move. There was a bright light coming from the sky, and it started to get really hot. Then suddenly we couldn't see anything. That's the last thing I remember. We woke up still sitting in the car. We were back home in our own driveway. We had been gone for two days!

3. Man: About ten years ago, we bought a new house. Our first guest there was my friend Bill. He came to visit for a few days, and he stayed in the small guest room upstairs. That night, we all went to bed around ten o'clock. Everything seemed normal, but then my wife and I heard something in the night. It was Bill. He woke us up around midnight. He said he had heard a strange sound coming from the closet. So, he got up to see what it was. He opened the door, and at first he thought he was dreaming. But Bill swears he saw a woman standing there — just standing in the closet. A moment later, she disappeared.

4. Woman: I usually don't have trouble sleeping. But one night a few years ago, I just couldn't get to sleep. Finally, around three A.M., I fell asleep, but not for long. About five A.M., I woke up. I was sitting up in bed and screaming, "Mom, Mom, Mom!" I don't recall having a bad dream or anything. For some reason, I just was in great need of my mother. I finally calmed down and went back to sleep. I woke up at seven o'clock to the sound of the telephone ringing. It was my mother on the phone. She said she'd been awake since five o'clock worrying about me. She didn't know why, but she just wanted to make sure I was all right.

(Taken from Brown & Smith, 2007d, p. 167)

Part 8: High Proficiency Easy Texts

Text 19. “Discover the Joy in Serving Others”

I was eight years old when I realized what it was that I had to do. I was walking down the street and I saw so many homeless men and women. I knew I had to find a way to help. Two years later, I started a nonprofit group to feed the homeless.

Hi, my name is Amber Coffman and today I'm 20 years old. For the past 10 years, the organization I created, Happy Helpers for the Homeless, has delivered love, food, and clothing directly to men and women living on the streets. We've also helped other young people discover the joy in serving others.

You know there's something you need to do in your community. But maybe you thought, "What can I do? I'm just one person?" You'll be amazed at what a difference you can make, if you just put your mind to it. Decide today to make that difference.
Get out and live—volunteer! (Taken from Numrich, 2006, p. 158)

Text 20. “Stating Opinions”

David: So, I'd like to know what everyone thinks about the Board's proposal to pull out of France and Germany? How do you feel about it, Inessa?
Inessa: Well, David, I think it's a bold move and it's probably the way we need to go, se yes, I'm in favour of it.
David: Hmm. Javier, what are your thoughts?
Javier: I agree to some extent, but there are considerable costs involved. For example ..
Ian: Sorry, can I come in here?
David: Could you let Javier finish, please Ian: Javier, you were saying?
Javier: Yes, thanks. The costs are huge. It will cost over five million just to close our branches there and we can't guarantee the move will succeed. It's risk. I'm not completely opposed to it but, er, you know .
David: Ian, you wanted to say something?
Ian: Yes, Javier I see your point, but, well, basically I'm not very keen on the idea at all. As well as the costs, we need to consider our long term future. We need to expand our European operations, not close them down!
Inessa: Perhaps we should consider just closing down the least profitable of our branches in France and Germany.
Javier: I have no problem with that What do you think, David?
David: Well, I can see pros and cons each way. It's quite a mixed picture.
Ian: I can't agree to that, I'm afraid. Like I say, I think we need to stay in France and Germany. That's where our future lies.
David: Right Does anyone have anything else to add? OK, then. I think I need to pass all your thoughts on to the Board for further review. Clearly, we can't come to a unanimous decision here. Now, shall we move on?

(Taken from Craven, 2008b, p. 94)

Part 9: High Proficiency Difficult Texts

Text 21. “Credit Card Debt”

OK, so for the next few minutes I want to talk about the problem of credit card debt among one particular segment of the U.S. population. That's the group of college graduates in the 25-to 34-year-old range. Now this is the group of young adults who are just starting out.... They're on their first or second job, maybe they're newly married or they're just starting to have children. And for a variety of reasons, which I'll clarify in a minute, according to statistics this generation has more debt than any other generation in U.S. history.

So here are some facts. Between 1992 and 2001, the average credit card debt of this group increased by 55 percent to an average of 4,008 dollars per household. During the same period of time, this group's bankruptcy rate grew by 19 percent. OK, so... seven out of ten, that's 70 percent of these young Americans had credit cards in 2001, and of those 71 percent had revolving balances. Revolving balances means that they don't pay the full amount of their bill off each month but rather they only make partial payments. Meanwhile, the interest charges keep accumulating from month to month, and it leads to this pit of debt that's just almost impossible to climb out of.

So now the central question I want to address is, why is this generation going into debt and in many cases going broke? What's really causing it?

Well, first and... first and most obvious is the high cost of housing, transportation, childcare, healthcare, all of these have risen dramatically in the last 10 to 15 years. In the second place you have a weak labor market for this segment of the population. What I mean by that is, a large percentage of college graduates have jobs that are either temporary or part-time or both. In the year 2003, for example, this group-had an unemployment rate of about ten percent.

The third factor, which may be unique to the United States, is a rising student loan debt... Let me explain, uh, give you some background on that. Traditionally, it used to be that one way of paying for college in the U.S. was through... was throughgovernment scholarships or grants, which don't need to be paid back. But the amount of available grant money has been shrinking, so this generation I've been talking about is the first generation that is paying for college mainly through loans instead of through grants. And to give you an idea of the impact that this has had, in 1992, 42 percent of students borrowed money for college, and they graduated with an average debt of 9,000 dollars. In contrast to that, in 2002, ten years later, 66 percent of students were borrowing money and the average student loan debt had doubled, to 18,900 dollars.

So now if we combine all the factors that I've listed so far, what they add up to is a pretty difficult financial situation, as you can see by looking at the handout of the sample budget that I've provided for you of a typical graduate, college graduate... let's call her Caroline, OK. All right, so Caroline actually has a pretty good job, she's making 36,000 dollars a year. But, as you can see, her monthly pay after taxes is only 2,058 dollars. And every month, besides her ordinary living expenses, look at the amount of debt Caroline is carrying: 182 dollars per month on her student loans and 125 dollars on her credit cards.

You can notice that she really doesn't spend any money on luxuries, yet she has almost nothing left at the end of the month. So what happens to Caroline if she loses her job or has an accident or some other unexpected expense comes up? Well really, what choice does she have but to pull out the plastic and once again add to the credit card debt that she's already carrying.

Now as you know, the credit card companies make this a very easy thing to do. It's remarkably easy to get a credit card in this country. Already in high school young people start getting credit card applications in the mail. But, the problem is that typically young adults don't have much experience with money management, and with the illusion of "free" money that comes with owning credit cards they can quickly accumulate a debt that may take years to pay off. So I would say that the easy availability of credit cards together with poor money management skills is the fourth reason for the financial difficulties of young college graduates today.

(Baker & Tanka, 2007b, p. 250)

Text 22. “Culture Shock”

All right, are we ready to go here? OK. We've been talking about the process of cultural adjustment, and we've seen that when people first come into contact with a new culture, there is this euphoric period of a month or so where everything is new and exciting and interesting.

But if someone stays in the new culture for longer than just a short visit, sooner or later the realities of living in the new culture start to sink in, and quite unexpectedly people may find themselves feeling angry or upset, or they might overreact to situations that they really didn't have any trouble handling when they were "back home' So this shift in attitude and behavior is a pretty clear signal that a person is in a new stage of the cultural adjustment process, that's the stage we call culture shock. And that's what I'm going to talk about right now.

So to start off, what is culture shock? It's that feeling of anxiety that overtakes you when you realize that the rules that you thought you knew about how to get things done don't seem to work in the new culture. In psychological terms this is known as cognitive dissonance; cognitive dissonance, which is defined as the sense of discomfort that we feel when our new experiences don't match what we already know or expect.

So... this dissonance or discomfort can be expressed in all kinds of strange and unexpected symptoms. Some people develop physical symptoms such as headaches, or over- uh huh, overeating, sleep disorders. Other people develop kind of bizarre behaviors or fears, like maybe they worry a lot about cleanliness, or they're afraid of shaking hands with people in the new culture. I have a friend who took his family to live overseas for a year and his son kept complaining that the air smelled funny. That's a little weird.
So... OK, then there are the emotional symptoms of culture shock... personality changes... irritation, anger, homesickness, loss of confidence, loneliness,depression... you know, you wake up in the morning and feel like another person is suddenly living inside your body. This is culture shock.

But as terrible as all of that sounds, there are things that people can do to avoid... well not, not avoid but you can minimize the symptoms. So, uh, first of all it's important to recognize that culture shock is normal; OK, everyone can relax, and nearly everyone living in a new culture goes through culture shock to a greater or a lesser degree. And, uh, it's also helpful to know that it's temporary. Culture shock typically lasts three to six months and then most people start to adjust and feel better.

Now a third thing that can help is for people to understand that... psychological factors that make some people suffer from culture shock more than others. For example, research has demonstrated that people who are open-minded, flexible, curious about new things, uh, people who have a good sense of humor, are less affected by culture shock than people who are more kind of rigid and judgmental. Uh, research also shows that people who are more self-aware, who understand themselves in situations, they understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and they're obviously going to be able to anticipate the effects of culture shock and prepare for them better.

But even if you're not the most flexible person in the world, there are a few things that you can do to prepare yourself for the experience of living in a new culture. First of all, try to learn as much as you can about the new culture before you get on the plane. Read, talk to people, watch movies, and of course try to learn a little bit of the language before you go so you're not totally helpless when you arrive. And experts also suggest trying to develop a support system ahead of time... so, in other words getting the names of people and organizations that you can turn to if you need help and then contact them to introduce yourself as soon as you arrive in the new culture.

So to, to sum things up, as I said before, everyone experiences culture shock, some people worse than others, but there are some steps you can take to minimize the cognitive dissonance when you arrive in the new culture and reduce the shock of culture shock.

(Baker & Tanka, 2007b, pp. 238-239)

Text 23. “Memory”

OK, we've been talking about how memory works, right, and what we can do to improve our memory. So we've seen, for example, we can enhance our ability to recall new information if we transform or extend it in some way. So, for instance, we're more likely to remember verbal information like directions to someone's house for example uh, if we transform it into something visual like a diagram or a map or something.

So now, another way of facilitating recall is through the use of memory techniques called mnemonics... I'll spell that for you: m-n-e-m-on-i-c-s... OK, uh, as I said before, mnemonics are techniques for improving memory. A little more formally, uh, they're systematic strategies that we can use to help us remember information, especially information that is hard to recall like you know numbers, lists, names, things like that. So about 30 years ago, there's a psychologist named R.C. Atkinson, and he developed this mnemonic technique to help students learn vocabulary in a foreign language. And he called it the keyword method, and what I'd like to do now is demonstrate this method for

you using an example from a language that none of you know. All right, so then you can use this technique in your own language studies. Uh, anybody know Hungarian? You speak Hungarian? No? OK, good.

Uh, so let's say you're learning Hungarian, right, and you're learning the names of foods, and one of your target words is the Hungarian word for cabbage, which is called kaposzta. And how can you remember that?

Well, the first step in the keyword method is to choose your key word. And a good key word has three characteristics: One, it's a word you know very well. You're real familiar with it. Two, it's a word that sounds like the target word—you know, the word you're trying to remember—or at least the first part of the target word. And number three, the last characteristic, the third characteristic of a good key word, is that it should be something that's easy to visualize, easy to picture, so a concrete noun or action verbs, those make you know the best keywords.

All right let's apply those three criteria to our example, kaposzta. OK, so what's a familiar word that sounds like kaposzta and is easy to visualize?

What comes to mind? Well, how about "cop," you know, a police officer. So that's a good keyword because it sounds like our target word kaposzta, it's familiar, it's easy to visualize, easy to picture.

So OK now we've got a keyword, and what's the next step? What we're going to do is, we're going to create a mental image, a picture, that contains both the keyword, in this case cop, and the target meaning, which is cabbage. In other words, in your mind's eye I want you to imagine the cop and the cabbage interacting—you know, doing something. Um, it's best if the image is moving, if it's colorful, exaggerated, silly, it's even better. So the more absurd or ridiculous, the better. Uh, let's imagine a cop wearing a uniform. OK, you got that? And his head is a big, green cabbage, all right? So let's give it eyes, put a nose on it, and a mouth, cop's hat, put a cop's hat on it. OK, what else? Maybe a mustache? A mustache?

So take that silly image and just focus on it for a minute. Hold it in your mind's eye... OK... Really concentrate so it's fixed in your memory.

OK. Now let's suppose it's a week later, all right, and you've got to review because tomorrow you're going to have a test on your new Hungarian vocabulary. Let's see how you can use this keyword method to painlessly study for your test. Make it easy, right? First you take out your list of words and, you know, there's the word kaposzta. Immediately you think of your keyword, cop, which automatically triggers the image you created of the cop, you know with the cabbage head, and voila! There it is! Your definition. See how it works? So, you see the sequence? Kaposzta leads to cop; cop leads to cabbage. Now "cop" is the bridge that connects the new word, kaposzta, with the definition, cabbage. The association is so powerful you couldn't even forget it if you tried. So research does prove this. It proves that students who use the keyword technique remember vocabulary better than students who don't. But let me give you a word of caution, in conclusion. I don't want you to think that this mnemonic or any other, you know, techniques are magical. All right, for mnemonics to work you still have to practice and rehearse. You have to study for the test. (Baker & Tanka, 2007b, pp. 253-255)

APPENDIX K
Questions for Individual Interviews

Note 1: The questions that I used with the informants varied depending on what happened during the interviews and their responses to questions I asked.
Note 2: Text 1/Task 1 was the Easy/Visual Text/Task and Text 2/Task 2 was the Difficult Text/Task.

- What was your general impression of the exercise?
- Did you find the text appropriate for your level? Was it too easy? Was it too difficult?
- Did you find the task appropriate for your level? Was it too easy? Was it too difficult?
- What strategies did you use to understand Text 1 and complete Task 1?
- What strategies did you use to understand Text 2 and complete Task 2?
- (If the informant used different strategies for the different texts/tasks) Why were the strategies that you used for Text 1/Task 1 different than the strategies you used in Text 2/Task2?
- Were you able to successfully complete Task 1? Why or why not?
- Were you able to successfully complete Task 2? Why or why not?
- Was Task 1 easier or more difficu1t than Task 2? Why?
- Was Text 1 easier or more difficu1t than Text 2? Why?
- Did having a blank piece of paper to take notes help you or not? Why or why not?
- (For Text 2/Task 2) Did listening to the text a second time help you to complete the task? How?
- Are the texts/tasks that you encountered in this interview similar or different from texts/tasks that you encounter in your listening comprehension class? How?
- How are the strategies that you used in this interview similar to/different from the strategies you use in your listening comprehension classroom?

APPENDIX L
Student Listening Diary Writing Guidelines

For All Students Who Volunteered to Participate in My Diary Writing Research

This paper has guidelines to assist you in knowing what should be included and what should not be included in your listening comprehension diary. If you have any questions while you are involved in the research, please contact me at: ishler_research@pobox.com or call me at 24-657-222.

- Thank you very much for being willing to participate in this research. Your diary entries will be of great help to me and my research.
- Please remember that all the information that you write in the diary is confidential and will not be shared with your teachers or anyone else. Only I will read the entries. If I use any information from these diaries for my doctoral thesis, I will not use your name and I will change the information enough so that you will not be identifiable by anyone who reads my reports.
- Please also remember that any information you write in your diary will not affect your marks in your classes (either positively or negatively)
- These diary entries are to be a record of your experiences listening to an oral text that you listen to either in your classes or outside your classes (for example if you watch an English film on television).
- The overall purpose of this diary is for you to record:
  1. What problems or difficulties you encountered as you listened to an oral text, and
  2. What listening strategies (plans, actions, or tactics) you used to accomplish the task in class and/or to understand the oral text you were listening to.

Definition of Terms:

1. Oral Texts – Anything that you listen to in English. It may be a lecture in class, an audio or video tape in class, or an audio or video that you listen to or watch outside of class.
2. Listening Strategies – Plans, actions, or tactics you use to accomplish a task or understand a text. For example, if your listening comprehension teacher asks you to get the main idea from an oral text in class, how are you going to complete that task? If you have a lecture in class, what are you going to do to try and understand the lecture and remember the main ideas? If you watch an English program on television, how are you going to understand and remember the main ideas so you can share the information with your friend?

   These strategies include (but not limited to):
   - asking a friend or classmate to help you
   - planning in advance what parts of the text to listen to
   - relating information in the text to information you already know
   - focusing on certain parts of the text that are clearer or emphasized more

3. Tasks – a goal that you have or work that is assigned to you.

Specific Guidelines:

1. Write entries in the diary from now until the end of November.
2. Write an entry every time you listen to an English oral text. This is especially important for oral texts in your listening comprehension classes. However, it is also helpful for my research for you to write an entry when you listen to an English oral text in another class or outside of the university.
3. Try to write an entry as close to the event as possible. For example, if you have a listening task in your listening comprehension class, write an entry in your diary as soon as you finish the task or right after the class if you cannot do it earlier. The farther the entry is from the event, the less details you will be able to remember. Details are important for the research.
4. Write your entries in English. Your grammar and spelling is not important. However, writing it in English is helpful to for the research and it will also help you to improve your written comprehension skills. If you make a mistake in writing, just neatly cross out the mistake and continue writing. You can also use white-out (blanco) if you want. Don't rip out the page and start over again.
5. As you write about a task or a text, try to remember what steps you went through to accomplish the task or understand the text. The more details you can write down, the better it is for the research.
6. Please give me a way of contacting you. I will meet you once a week at the university to discuss your progress and answer questions you may have.
7. I will collect entries from you every two weeks and read them to make sure that your entries are satisfactory. After reading them and making comments on them, I will give them back to you the following week.

APPENDIX M
Tasks for Think-aloud Protocols

Part 1: Moderate Proficiency Visual Tasks

A. “Coming of Age”

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B. “How was Your Vacation?”

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C. “Night Market”

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Part 2: Moderate Proficiency Tasks for "Easy" Texts

A. "Airline Reservations"

Task 1: Main Idea

Listen to the conversation. Mark the statements T (true) or *F* (false). Then work with a partner and compare answers.

_____ 1. The woman wants to fly to Los Angeles.

_____ 2. The woman wants to buy a round-trip ticket.

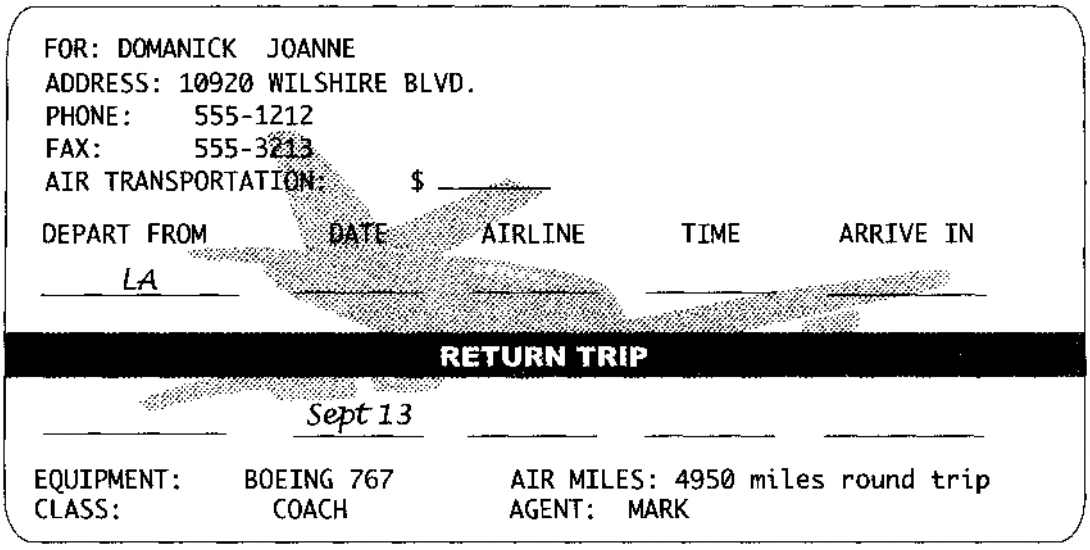
_____ 3. The ticket is cheaper if she stays over Saturday night.

_____ 4. The woman has to buy her ticket within forty-eight hours.

_____ 5. The agent reserved a ticket for the woman.

Task 2: Details and Inferences

Fill in the missing information on the ticket below. Then work with a partner and compare answers.



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B. “Renting a Car”

Listen again. Fill in the chart with details about the car rental choices you heard. Remain in separate groups. Note: If a piece of information is not given, leave the box blank.

	Call 1	Call 2
	Best Deals Car Rental	Discount Cars
Daily rate		
Weekly rate		
Mileage		
Insurance		
Tax		
Foreign license		
How many drivers allowed		
Age limit / surcharge		
Special package		

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Part 3: Moderate Proficiency Task for "Difficult" Texts

A. "The Daily Newspaper"

The Daily Newspaper

I. Introduction
  A. Background information
    1. _____
    2. Papers around for long time
  B. Freedom of the Press
    1. _____
      a) negative and critical stories protected
  C. Important way to get information
    a) _____
    b) papers cheap/easy

II. Overview of American Newspapers
  A. Background information
    1. _____
    2. _____
  B. _____
    1. _____
      a) Available everywhere
      b) _____
        i) Wall St. Journal
        ii) _____
    2. Local newspapers
      a) For cities/areas
      b) Examples
        i) _____
        ii) _____

III. Newspaper Business
  A. Advertising
    1. Papers get money from ads
    2. _____
    3. Newspapers are cheap because of ads

IV. Front Page
  A. Purpose: _____
  B. Kinds of stories
    1. _____
    2. _____
    3. _____
  C. Headline stories continue:
    1. _____
    2. publishers want people to buy papers

V. Good news articles
  A. Lead paragraph
    1. WH-questions: _____
    2. saves time for busy readers
    3. rest of article: _____

VI. Straight and Opinion/Editorial News
  A. Straight news
    1. _____
    2.
    3. readers decide for themselves
  B.
    1. opinions/feelings
      a) current news story
      b) political candidate
    2. letters to the editor

VII. Newspaper Sections
  A. World, national, and local news
  B. Other parts
    1.
    2. _____
    3.
    4. _____
    5. _____
  C. Finding a section

VIII. Conclusion:
  _____

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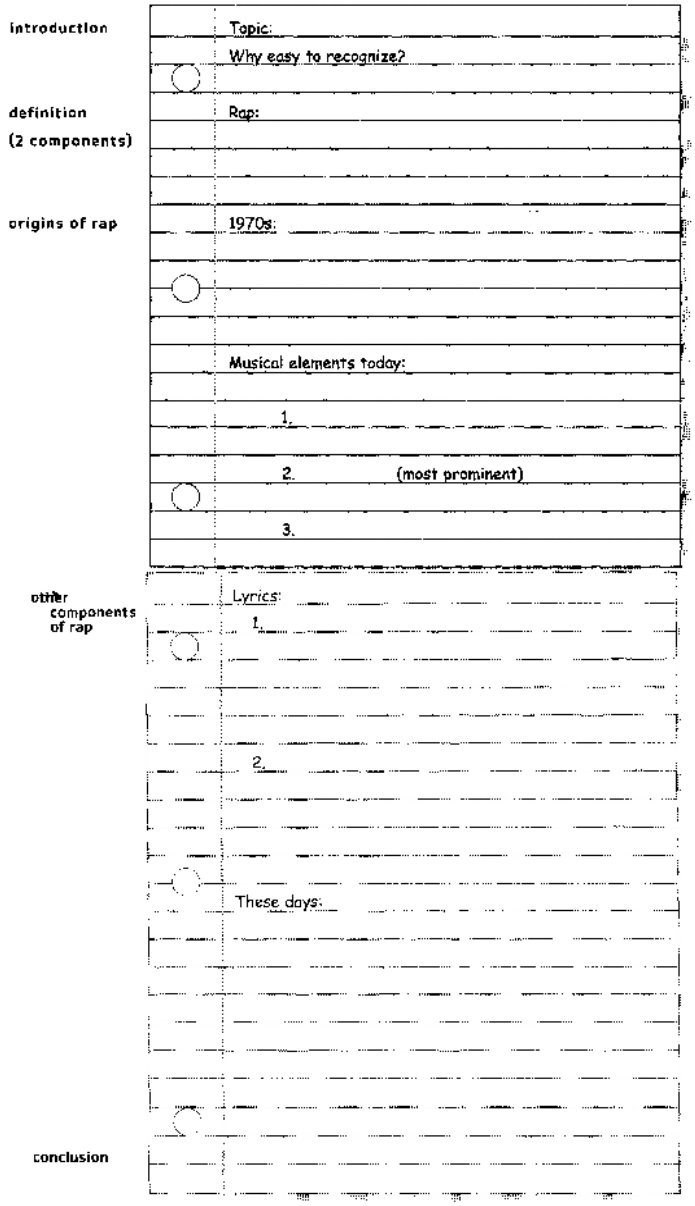
B. “Rap Music”

Listen to the lecture. Take notes on the lecture. Then complete the following outline based on your notes.



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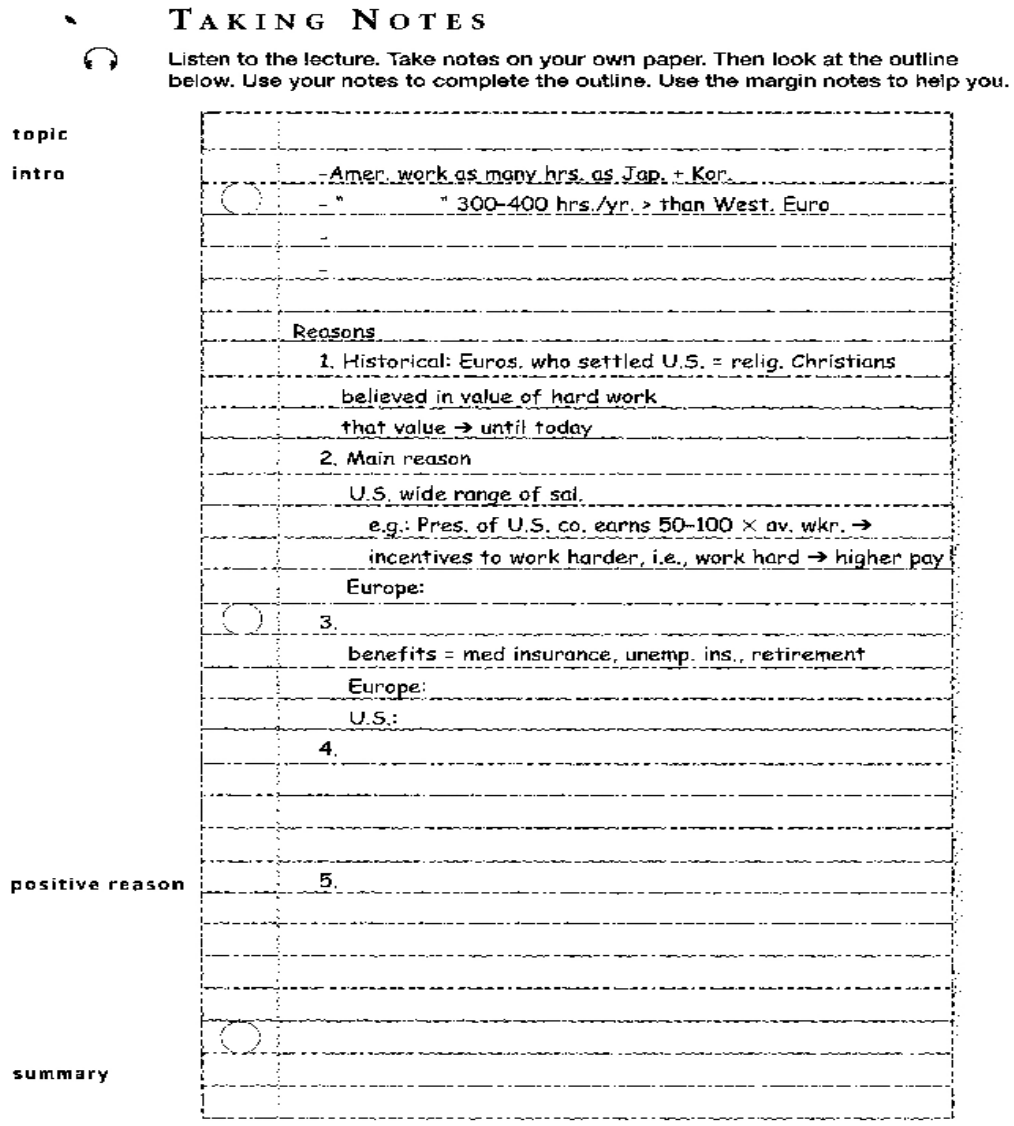
C: “Why Americans Work Hard”



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Part 4: High Proficiency Visual Tasks

A. “Electronic Devices”

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B. “Reflexology”

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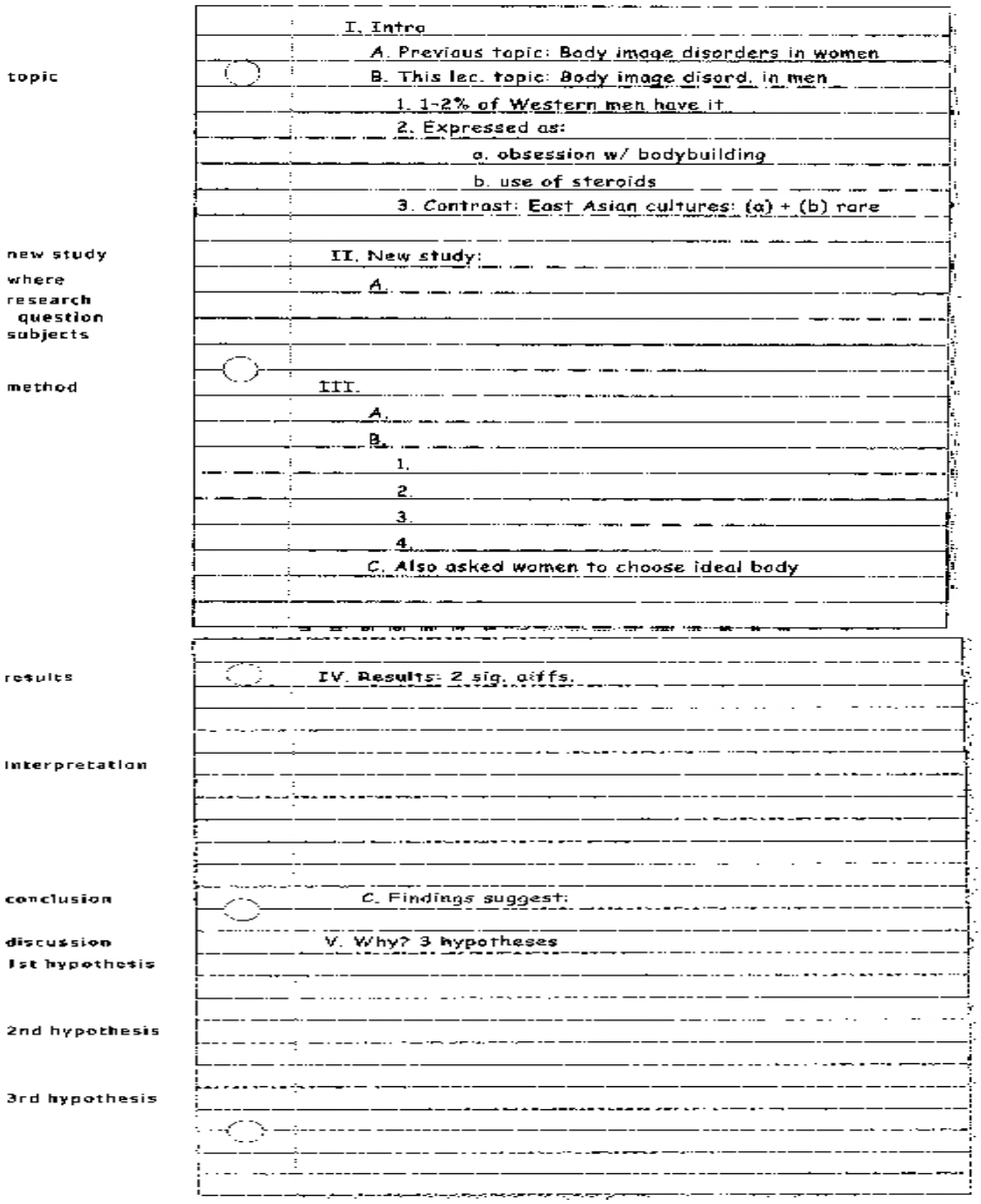
Part 3: High Proficiency Tasks for "Difficult" Texts

A. "Body Image Disorders in Men"

Listen to the lecture. Take notes on the lecture. Then complete the following outline based on your notes.



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B. “Earth Day and Environmental Problems”

	Environmental Problem	Causes	Effects
Speaker 1			
Speaker 2			
Speaker 3			

Listen to the lecture. Take notes. Use your notes to fill in the following chart.

C. “How English Acquires new Words.”

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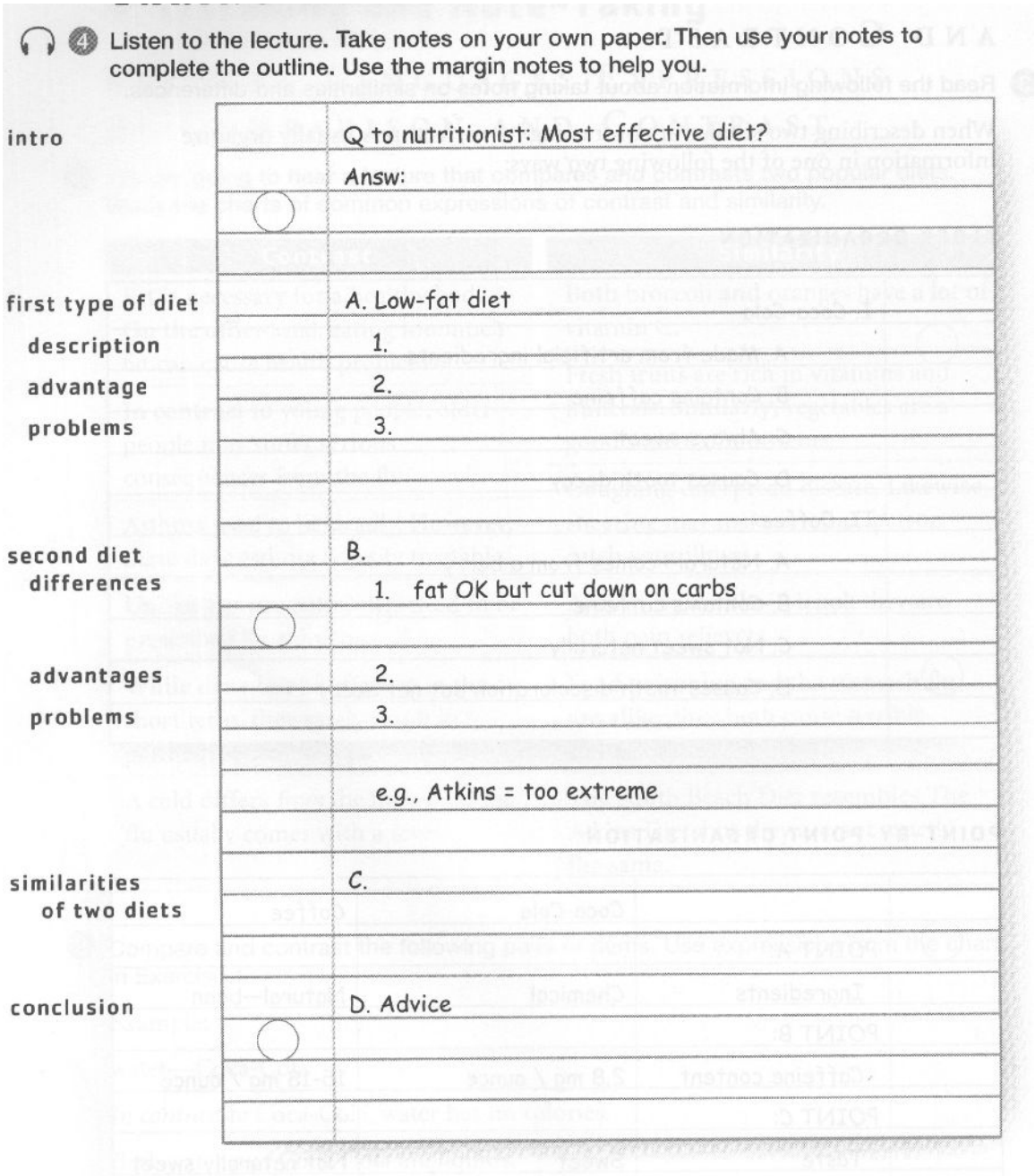
D. "Two Types of Diets"



4 Listen to the lecture. Take notes on your own paper. Then use your notes to complete the outline. Use the margin notes to help you.

intro	Q to nutritionist: Most effective diet?
	Answ:
first type of diet	A. Low-fat diet
description	1.
advantage	2.
problems	3.
second diet differences	B.
	1. fat OK but cut down on carbs
advantages	2.
problems	3.
	e.g., Atkins = too extreme
similarities of two diets	C.
conclusion	D. Advice

Taken from *Real Talk 1: Authentic English in Context* by L. Baker & J. Tanka, p. 150. Copyright [2006] by Pearson Education, Inc. Reprinted by Permission of Pearson Education, Inc.

APPENDIX N
Transcription of Texts for Think-aloud Protocols

Part 1: Moderate Proficiency Visual Texts

A. "Coming of Age"

Listen. People are talking about coming-of-age ceremonies. What countries are they talking about? Number the pictures from 1 to 5. There is one extra picture.

1.
Man: In my country, we have Coming of Age Day. It's on the second Monday in January. The year we turn twenty years old, we celebrate this day. We dress up. Women wear long, colorful dresses called kimono, and men wear suits. There's a big ceremony at City Hall, and somebody usually makes a speech. But the fun part is having a party with our friends. We're twenty. We are finally adults!

2.
Woman: For me, becoming an adult was my *Quinceañera* party. *Quince* means "fifteen." Where I come from, this is very important for fifteen-year-old girls. We wear pretty white dresses, and we usually wear something pretty in our hair, too — a hairpiece. First we go to church; then we have a big party and dance. We always dance the first dance with our fathers. *Quinceañera* means we are no longer little girls. We are becoming women.

3.
Woman: In my country, Krobo girls who are becoming women have a ceremony called Dipo. We go away for three weeks with our mothers and other older women to learn about being wives and mothers. When we come back, we wear special necklaces made of glass beads, and we walk through the village. After Dipo, we can get married.

4.
Woman: When we graduate from high school in May, students celebrate for two weeks. Students from the same school all wear the same clothes, usually blue or red, depending on the school. We go out with our friends and have lots celebrations — parades, fireworks, parties. Sometimes, we get pretty crazy!

5.
Man: We don't really have a special ceremony where I'm from. I guess the senior prom is sort of like that. It's a big dance we have our last year of high school. We dress up; girls wear formal dresses, and guys wear suits or tuxedos. The couple takes a photo together, and everybody dances.

(Taken from Brown & Smith, 2007b, p. 165)

B. “How was Your Vacation?”

1. Wei and Julia
Julia: Wei! Good to see you. So, how was your vacation?
Wei: Oh, it was wonderful.
Julia: What did you do?
Wei: Well, let's see. I walked around this beautiful garden.
Julia: Really? I didn't know you liked gardening.
Wei: Oh, I don't like doing gardening. It's too much work. But I love to look at beautiful flowers.
Julia: Mmm-hmm. So what else did you do, Wei?
Wei: Well, I went to some great restaurants. I ate seafood every night.
Julia: Really?
Wei: Yeah. Crab, lobster. Great food. Not too expensive either. It was just a terrific trip. So, how was your vacation, Julia?
Julia: Well, I didn't go anywhere special.
Wei: You just rested?
Julia: Yeah. It was nice to be home and have a lot of time for things like reading. I did a lot of that. I probably read, I don't know, four or five books. And I visited a couple of museums. So it was relaxing, but also very interesting.
Wei: Sounds nice.

2. Katie and Ryan.
Ryan: Did you have a good vacation, Katie? Katie: Yeah! It was exciting — probably my most exciting vacation ever!
Ryan: Wow! What did you do?
Katie: I took a nature adventure tour. For the first part, we went hiking. It was so much fun! We hiked all the way up to these beautiful waterfalls. I took lots of pictures.
Ryan: Sounds great. So, what else did you do on the tour?
Katie: Well, the best part was at the end of the trip. We went skydiving! Can you believe it? I jumped out of an airplane.
Ryan: Wow!
Katie: Yeah, it was just a fantastic vacation. But anyway, that's enough about my vacation. How did you spend your break, Ryan?
Ryan: Oh, I drove to visit my relatives.
Katie: Uh-huh. Did you have good time?
Ryan: Well, it was pretty boring, actually. It rained every day so we had to stay inside. We just stayed home and watched TV a lot.
Katie: Oh, that's too bad.
Ryan: No, that's OK. It really was very relaxing, even though it was a little boring.

(Taken from Brown & Smith, 2007b, p. 150)

C. “Night Market”

Listen. A man is talking about the Kuala Lumpur night market. What items did he buy? Check the items. There are two extra items.

1.
Interviewer: So, Seng Yeow, where is your favorite place to shop in Kuala Lumpur?
Seng Yeow: My favorite place is the night market. Interviewer: What's that like?
Seng Yeow: It's a big outdoor area with a lot of tables and stalls all selling different things. It's only open at night, but there are lots of lights, so you can see everything. The market is very popular, so it gets pretty crowded.
Interviewer: What can you buy there?
Seng Yeow: Oh, almost everything! I usually go there to buy T-shirts. They've got all kinds of T-shirts.

2.
Interviewer: So, what else can you buy at the night market?
Seng Yeow: Well, let's see. I bought this great belt there.
Interviewer: That's a nice one. Is it leather?
Seng Yeow: Yes, it is. They sell lots of nice leather shoes, too.
Interviewer: Great.

3.
Interviewer: I like your watch. Did that come from the night market, too?
Seng Yeow: Yes, actually it did. Lots of markets sell watches. Many look similar to very expensive brands, but they are very, very cheap. All watches are cheap at the night market.
Interviewer: I see. A good price, but still fashionable!
Seng Yeow: Yes, exactly.

4.
Interviewer: So, is everything cheap at the
night market?
Seng Yeow: Well, that's up to you!
Interviewer: What do you mean?
Seng Yeow: At the night market, you bargain for prices. The seller tells you one price, then you offer a lower price. He lowers his price a bit, then you raise your price. If you can agree on a good price, you buy the item.
Interviewer: It sounds difficult!
Seng Yeow: But it's worth it. For some of the more expensive things, like jewelry, you can get a great price. I spent fifteen minutes once bargaining for a silver ring for my mother. I got it for a very good price, and she was very happy.

5.
Interviewer: Fifteen minutes to buy one ring! I think that's hard work.
Seng Yeow: Well, if you get tired, you can get something to eat.
Interviewer: Oh? They sell food there, too?
Seng Yeow: Yes, all kinds. Malaysian food is a mix of Chinese food, Indian food, and of course, there are Malay specialties.
Interviewer: Is there anything special you recommend
Seng Yeow: Oh, yes. I got some fresh fruit there yesterday. Pineapples and mangoes are delicious this time of year. Oh, and I also recommend the Chinese fried noodles. Mmm, they're my favorite.
Interviewer: Stop! You're making me hungry!

6.
Seng Yeow: Well, I'd better get home. My family's celebrating tonight.
Interviewer: Oh, really? What's the occasion?
Seng Yeow: It's my wife's birthday. Actually, I bought her gift at the night market.
Interviewer: Oh, what did you get her?
Seng Yeow: She really likes jewelry, so I got her this.
Interviewer: Wow! That's a beautiful necklace.
Seng Yeow: Yes, and its twenty-four carat gold. My son helped me pick it out.
Interviewer: Well, I'm sure your wife will love it.

(Taken from Brown & Smith, 2007b, pp. 152-153)

Part 2: Moderate Proficiency “Easy” Texts

A. “Airline Reservations”

Agent: ABC Travel Center. Mark speaking.
Customer: Uh, yes, uh, I'm calling about your rates from L.A. to New York, uh.. I'd like to
A: On what day?
C: On September 8th.
A: OK. Los Angeles to New York. Are you flying to JFK, La Guardia, or Newark?
C: JFK.
A: How many in your party?
C: Sorry?
A: How many ... are ... traveling?
C: Just one. Myself.
A: OK. What time do you want to leave Los Angeles?
C: I'd like to leave in the morning. Not too early, though.
A: OK. I have 7:00, 8:00, 11:25.
C: 11:25 would be fine.
A: And your return date?
C: The return date would be the 12th.
A: September the 12th. And what time did you want to leave JFK?
C: Mid-afternoon.
A: So like departing around like 1:00 or 2:00?
C: Right.
A: OK. I got a 12:00 noon or 4:15 departure.
C: OK. 4:15 would be better.
A: OK. This is on United Airlines. Round trip fare is ... ooh, you're not ... uh, let's see, what's the ... that's the 8th of September ... and you're not staying a Saturday night.
C: I could if it saves money.
A: Well, I'm going to give you prices on both, if you stay over and if you don't. If you don't stay over Saturday night, you're looking at 1,623 dollars and 68 cents. Yeah, well, now if you do stay over Saturday night, coming back on the 13th of September, the rate will be, let's see, ... can you hang on a second?
C: Uh-hm.
A: Um, Thanks for holding. Uh, just let me check here. Brings it down to 379 dollars and 37 cents.
C: Oh, my goodness!
A: So you can see the difference...
C: Yeah. That's a big difference.
A: Yeah. These fares are based on today's rate. And the reason I say that's cause the rates change sometimes, uh, most of the time daily, and sometimes hourly. And this fare is a non-refundable fare. There is a 75 dollar fee for any changes once the tickets are issued, plus any increase in the fare.
C: I understand. OK, and um, when do I have to purchase this ticket?

A: OK. Now, if you made the reservation today, ticketing deadline would be within twenty-four hours. So you would have until tomorrow. That doesn't guarantee the fare.
C: Hmm.
A: We can only guarantee the fare today. But, usually it holds for twenty-four hours.
C: OK, so I'd have to purchase it in twenty-four hours. OK. Urn, fine. I'd like you to book me then. And then I'll make the decision within twenty-four hours.

(Taken from Baker & Tanka, 2006a, p. 225)

B. “Renting a Car”

Phone Call Number One

Rental Agent: Best Deals Car Rentals. How can I help you?
Customer: Hi. I'm calling to get some information about your rates.
RA: I can help you with that. When, uh, when did you need the car?
C: Well, I have some relatives... uh, relatives visiting next month from Italy.
RA: OK.
C: Uh, so I just wanted to know if you have daily rates, or weekly rates or...
RA: We have both and monthly.
C: Uh, can you tell me what they are?
RA: Yeah. Do you know what size car?
C: Well, it's four people, so what, uh, what are the different options?
RA: Well, a mid-size car for us is like a Ford Focus or a Toyota Corolla.
C: Uh-huh.
RA: And that's 39 dollars a day.
C: OK.
RA: 190 a week and 650 a month.
C: I see.
RA: Would you like me to reserve one for you?
C: Uh, well, not—not yet, I mean I'm —I'm trying to see which company is best for them.
RA: Well, we're very competitive on our pricing.
C: OK.
RA: Yeah, that's number one. Second, is our service. We provide free pick-up and/or delivery, anywhere, wherever you need it. And the rates I just quoted you do include unlimited mileage.
C: Oh, they do?
RA: Yup.
C: Because I did see cheaper rates um somewhere, but maybe those didn't include unlimited mileage.
RA: Yeah, and they probably have older vehicles. So pretty much the 190 a week for new vehicles is the best I could do. But if they rent over the weekend, we do have weekend specials as well.

C: Um, weekend specials. What are they?
RA: Those run from Friday to Monday, and the mid-size car with the unlimited mileage would be 30 bucks a day.
C: I see. Well, that sounds good.
RA: Yeah, those are kind of our options as far as...
C: Well, I'm sorry ... but do those rates include insurance?
RA: No, they don't.
C: Oh, they don't? How much extra...?
RA: It's 11.99 a day.
C: Uh-huh. And is tax included, or is that extra, too?
RA: Tax is not included. Tax is extra: 8.25 percent.
C: And is that OK if they don't have a local driver's license?
RA: Uh, yeah, it's fine. As long as they have a valid driver's license from somewhere.
C: Uh-hmm. And can everyone in the family drive the car? 'Cause they have two children
RA: You can have up to three drivers max. And everyone who drives has to show a driver's license and a credit card.
C: And what about an age limit? I think they have an eighteen-year-old and a twenty-two-year-old.
RA: We rent to twenty-one and up. The eighteen-year-old would not be able to drive.
C: I see. Well, uh, you've been very helpful. Thanks very much.
RA: You're welcome. Just give me a call when you're ready to reserve. My name's Erik.
C: Thanks Erik. I will give you a call.
RA: OK. Bye.
C: Bye.

Phone Call Number Two
Rental Agent 2: Discount Cars. May I help you?
Customer: Hi. Can you tell me about your rates, please?
RA 2: Sure, I'd be glad to. What kind of car are you interested in?
C: Actually, it's not for me. I'm expecting some visitors from Italy, so I'm just shopping around for them.
RA 2: OK. How many people?
C: Four. It's a family of four.
RA 2: I see. So are we looking at a midsize car, a mini-van, or an SUV? C: A mid-size would be fine.
RA 2: Mid-size is 249 per week. That includes everything: tax, insurance, and unlimited mileage.
C: Okay. What about per day?
RA 2: We rent for a one-week minimum. Then after one week, the additional days are 45 dollars per day.
C: Is that your lowest rate?
RA 2: Let's see. We've got a promotional package, the Las Vegas Special. It's 119 for three days, with 600 free miles.

C: Oh, that might be good for them. Um, and does that include insurance as well or is that extra?
RA 2: Yes. All the insurance is included.
C: Oh, OK. Urn, and about the drivers, what's your policy about drivers under twenty-one?
RA 2: Well, we don't rent to anyone under twenty. Do they have teenagers?
C: Uh, I think their kids are eighteen and twenty-two.
RA 2: Okay, well, twenty is the minimum and there's a surcharge of 5 dollars for under twenty-five.
C: 5 dollars extra per day?
RA 2: Yes, that's right.
C: So anyone in the family can drive the car as long as they are over twenty.
RA 2: Yes.
C: All right. Well, I think that's all I need to know for now. Thanks very much for your help.
RA 2: You're welcome. Thanks for calling Discount Cars.
C: Bye.

(Taken from Baker & Tanka, 2006b, p.251-252)

Part 3: Moderate Proficiency "Difficult" Texts

A. "The Daily Newspaper"

In the United States today, there are many ways to get news and information. Some people listen to the radio; others watch TV, read books or magazines, see films, or even surf the Internet. One of the oldest ways to get information is to read a daily newspaper. Newspapers have been a valuable part of American life since the country was founded, and the public's right to know what is happening by reading a newspaper without the government controlling or changing the information is one of the main principles of American society. In the United States, freedom of the press is a very important idea. It is illegal for the government to either stop or try to change what newspapers say. If a newspaper prints a story that is negative or critical of the government, the writers cannot be arrested or otherwise punished. This is what freedom of the press means, and Americans take this right very seriously. Newspapers are an important way to get information in this country, and when people read a newspaper, they want to be confident that the information in it is truthful and fair. Daily newspapers are cheap and easy to buy and are an important part of American life.

The first newspaper printed in the United States was published in the year 1690. Since then many newspapers have come and gone, and today there are more than 1,400 different daily papers available for Americans to read. A few newspapers are *national,* and can be easily purchased everywhere in the country. Examples of national newspapers include USA *Today* and The Wall *Street* Journal. But most newspapers are called *local* papers because they are published in one city or area and usually have the name of the city in their title. Examples of local newspapers include The *Philadelphia* Inquirer and The Miami *Herald.*

All major daily newspapers, whether they are national or local, include ads for many kinds of goods and services. The companies and stores that advertise in a newspaper pay to have their ads included. Some people complain that newspapers have too many advertisements and not enough news, but, if the stores and companies did not pay for the ads, the cost of the newspaper would be much higher for the public. Daily newspapers are cheap to buy because the ads pay for most of the cost of publishing them.

The front page of the paper contains the headline news. These are the stories that the newspaper publisher feels are the most important of the day and will be printed with large headlines or titles and perhaps even include color photographs. The headline is supposed to get your attention. If you see an interesting headline with large print, perhaps you'll be curious and want to buy the newspaper to read the story. World news—stories about events taking place in other countries—might be on the front page. National news—stories from around the United States—might also be found on the front page. Even local news—stories about the town or city where the newspaper is published—could be on the front page. The headline news is the information that the publishers feel the public is most interested in and they try to present it in a way that will increase newspaper sales. Most of the headline stories start on the front page and are continued somewhere inside the front section of the newspaper. When you see a newspaper at a news stand or in a paper box, you can easily see what the headline stories are, but you can only read part of them. In order to read the entire story, you

need to buy the paper and open it up to the inside page where the story is continued. Remember, newspaper publishers want you to buy the paper, so they aren't going to show you the entire story on the front page!

Since people buying and reading newspapers want information fast, a good news article will answer the major WH-questions—Who, What, When, Where, and Why, and How—in the first or *lead* paragraph of the article. Readers who don't have a lot of time can get all the basic information from the article by reading the lead paragraph. The rest of the article will include detail information that is not as important as the facts contained in the lead paragraph. Every paragraph after the lead paragraph contains less important information. The last paragraph or two of a newspaper article usually contains information that is not really important. So, for example, the first or lead paragraph of a story with the headline ESL *Student* Wins Ten Million Dollar *Lottery* will tell you who won the lottery, *where* the person won the lottery, when the person won the lottery, and *how* the person won the lottery. All of the paragraphs after the lead paragraph will provide details about the lottery story.

The articles on the front page and first section of a newspaper are called straight or objective news because the stories talk only about the facts of what happened. Newspaper reporters writing straight news articles are not allowed to give their opinions about the events they are reporting on. Instead, the story will give only the facts. So, for example, in the article about the ESL student winning the lottery, the reporter can only talk about the *who, what, when, where, why,* and *how* of the story. The reporter is not allowed to say that she or he thinks it's good or bad that the student won the lottery, or any other opinion. Even if the reporter has very strong feelings about a story, her or his opinion cannot be included. It is important for the readers to decide, after reading only the facts, what they think about the information, so the reporter's viewpoint is never included. While most of the stories in a newspaper are straight articles, there is a special place where opinions are allowed. This section is called the *opinion* or *editorial* page. The editorial pages are where writers are allowed to talk about their opinions, feelings, and reactions. The newspaper editors, or bosses, might write about how they feel about a current news story in the editorial section. Other reporters might say why they support a political candidate or disagree with a new law. Even newspaper readers can discuss their reactions to news stories by writing letters to the newspaper that are published in the editorial section.

Most daily newspapers are organized by topic and include sections on world news, national news, and local news. Additionally, you will often find parts of the newspaper focusing on business news, classified ads, sports, cooking, and entertainment. Each section of the newspaper is usually labeled so it's easy to find out what stories each part contains. No matter what information you need—for example, finding out the score of a baseball game, reading about what jobs are available, or even looking to see what the weather will be like—you can find it in a newspaper. Just look for the section that has the information you want, or use the newspaper index on the front page to assist you.

Daily newspapers are an important information source in the United States. Because they are protected by law, newspapers are free to print the kind of information that people want. Most major cities have at least one newspaper, and reading the paper is a popular daily activity for many Americans.

(Adapted from Scholnick & Gabler, 2003b, pp. 121-124)

B. “Rap Music”

OK, um, we've been surveying different styles of modern music and today's topic is rap. Why is it that when we hear a rap song, whether it's in English or Farsi or Korean or French, we immediately know that it's rap? In other words, what are the elements or characteristics that make this style of music so distinctive, uh, so easy to recognize? That's the question I want to answer today.

First of all, what is rap? Well, rap can be defined as a genre of music consisting of rhyming lyrics that are spoken or chanted over a musical background. That is to say, the two essential components of rap are (1) rhyming lyrics and (2) musical accompaniment. Now, I'll be addressing both of these topics but I want to start by looking at the musical aspect.

OK. As you may already know, rap music was started in the 1970s by poor, young, African Americans in New York City. They would go around to parties and dances and rap lyrics over music coming from vinyl records played on an old-fashioned turntable. Now a unique element introduced around 1978 or so was a technique called scratching. And a scratch sound is produced by moving a record back and forth with your hand while it's playing on a turntable. It sounds kind of like *whack-a whack-a whack-a.* And so this unusual sound is something that almost everybody associates with rap music.
Now as time passed, rap music became more sophisticated, and several elements were introduced that we hear until this day. Now, those elements are the background melody, the backbeat, and sampling.

Now the background melody, I mean the tune, is the part that you can sing. And it can be created using any instrument or combination of instruments. Typically, though, in a rap song the melody is not the most prominent or memorable element.
The most prominent element is the backbeat, or the rhythm. Now the backbeat is the repetitive BOOM BOOM BOOM; it's that drum sound that you hear when you're, uh, when you're stopped at a car next to you at a red light. It's one of the most identifiable characteristics of rap music and it is also the thing that makes a lot of people, such as parents, hate it.

All right, so, we have the melody and the backbeat. And then we have a wide range of additional sounds that are mixed in using an electronic device called a sampler, and that's why the technique is called sampling. So, in music sampling refers to taking a portion or a piece of one recording and reusing it in a new recording. So, to give just one interesting example, if you listen to a song called "C U when you get there" by a rap artist named Coolio, you'll hear that the introduction to the song is taken from a 17th century classical composition, the Pachelbel Canon. I'm sure you've heard it, it goes *da da, da . . .* and I will spare you singing the rest of it, OK? But I'm sure that sounds familiar.

All right. That takes care of the musical aspect of rap, so let's now talk a little bit about the lyrics. Now, in general rap lyrics can be divided into two broad categories,

gangsta rap and soft-core.

So first, gangsta rap emerged in the early 1980s as a form of protest by young black men wanting to express their frustration at the difficult conditions in America's inner cities. So groups like Public Enemy rapped about their realities and their lives which included drugs, gangs, guns, and violence. Now these rappers used shocking language and spoke about women in very negative terms, so for these reasons gangsta rap was heavily criticized.

Now contrast, by the mid-1990s, as rap music became more and more popular, a second type of lyrics could be heard, and these might be called soft-core. So soft-core rap is much less violent although many songs still emphasize some of the things you'd hear in gangsta rap such as money, cars, jewelry, and other status symbols.

However these days, quite a few rap artists are using their art to promote positive, and encouraging messages. An example is the song "I Can," by
Nas, which has the lyric:

I know I can
Be what I wanna be
If I work hard at it
I'll be where I wanna be

Since the mid-1990s rap has entered the mainstream. It is everywhere. Rappers like Ice Cube and Queen Latifah are acting in movies. TV ads for giant companies like McDonald's and Macintosh computers use rap music to sell their products. But perhaps most interesting is the fact that rap has become a worldwide phenomenon. France, for example, has officially declared rap an art form, and it's now the second-largest market for rap music in the world. These days rap's fans come from all social classes, races, and countries. Which is why I would argue, in conclusion, that no other style of music except for possibly rock has brought people together as powerfully as rap has been able to do.

(Adapted from Baker & Tanka, 2006a, p. 238-239)

C. “Why Americans Work Hard”

Good morning, everybody. Uh, the question I want to address today is why Americans work as hard as they do. Now, we've already seen that Americans work almost as many hours per year as the Japanese and Koreans. And compared to Europeans, well, Americans work three to four hundred hours a year more than people in Western Europe. They take fewer vacations and they retire at a later age. Why is this? How do you explain that? That's what I want to talk about for the next few minutes.

Now there are many reasons why Americans work as hard as they do. One reason has to do with American history. The Europeans who first settled this country were religious Christians who believed in the value of hard work, and that value has stayed with us to this day.

But the main reason why Americans work as hard ... why Americans work hard is that the U.S. economic structure rewards them for it, and Americans see this as a good thing. Let me explain to you what I mean. In the U.S. there is a very wide range of salaries, wages, within companies, much wider than in other.. . in most other countries. For example the president of a big U.S. company can earn anywhere from 50 to 100 times more than an average worker. Now, my point isn't to say that this is unfair, though I think it is and many people think it is. The advantage of a system like this is that it creates incentives for employees to work harder. In other words, people work harder because they know that in most cases the hard work will lead to higher pay. In Europe, on the other hand, the wage gap, I mean the difference in salary between the highest and the lowest salaries in the company, is generally much smaller than in the U.S., so people in Europe have less of an incentive to work hard.

So obviously most people work hard in order to make as much money as possible. And a third reason, which is related to the previous one, the one I just mentioned, is that a lot of people work hard to keep a job that gives them benefits. By benefits I mean things like medical insurance, unemployment insurance, and a retirement plan. Now in most European countries, these things are paid for by the government, so people are protected even if they lose their jobs. But in contrast, in the U.S., benefits are normally paid by a person's employer. What that means is that in the United States, if you lose your job, you also lose your benefits. So people are willing to work as hard as necessary in order to hold on to jobs that offer benefits.

Another reason why Americans work hard is technology. You might be surprised to hear that because technology's supposed to make it possible for people to work less, to give them more free time, right? But here's the paradox: Technology actually causes people to work more than they did twenty or thirty years ago. Now how is that so? That's because with e-mail and voicemail and videoconferencing and telecommuting and all the other high-tech methods of communication we have these days, it's so easy to stay in touch with the office that there's almost an expectation that people will check in even if they're on vacation. And because good jobs are hard to find these days, people might feel that they have to do it, that they feel pressured to stay in touch even if they don't want to. So you see how technology sometimes forces people to work harder and longer, whether they want to or not.

Now it might seem that Americans work hard for a lot of negative reasons, but there's one more reason I want to mention that I think is positive. And that is that many people work hard for the simple reason that they enjoy it! For many Americans, their work gives them an identity, meaning they say "I'm a teacher," "I'm a bus driver," "I'm a something." Work gives these people a sense of purpose or accomplishment, or maybe they enjoy the feeling of being part of a team. By the way, a common question that gets asked in job interviews in this country is "Are you a team player?" So this is something that Americans clearly value. Anyway, my point is that millions of Americans work hard because work gives them personal rewards that go beyond just money.

So to sum up, you can see that there are a variety of reasons why Americans work hard—historical, economic, and personal. For many people work is a rewarding experience that gives them great satisfaction. Other people work out of necessity, because they have to. Where work becomes a problem is when it starts affecting people's health and family life, and that's what we're gonna talk about next.

(Adapted from Baker & Tanka, 2006a, p. 243-244)

Part 4: High Proficiency Texts for Visual Tasks

A. “Electronic Devices”

Listen. People are talking about electronic devices. What are the different parts? Label the pictures with the correct parts from the box.

1. digital camera
Man: Hey. Check this out. I just got it yesterday.
Woman: Ooh, a digital camera. Wow! That looks like a complicated one.
Man: Well, actually, it's a lot more convenient than a traditional film camera. With a digital camera, you can look at your pictures and decide if you want to save them before you print them or e-mail them. You view them right here on the LCD screen. LCD stands for "liquid crystal display." See? That's a picture of my dog.
Woman: Nice! So, how does it work? I mean, how does the camera take pictures and store them?
Man: Well, first, the image sensor creates the pictures. The image sensor is a little square chip inside the camera. It turns light into electricity and creates an image. Then the flash memory stores the pictures. This is the flash memory right here on the side. See the red button next to it? You push the button, remove the flash memory, and then you can save, print, or e-mail your pictures.
Woman: Amazing. So, how much did it cost?
Man: Um, let's not talk about that.

2. MP3 player
Man: Tanya!
Tanya: Yeah?
Man: Can I borrow your MP3 player? I'm thinking of buying one, but I want to try yours first.
Tanya: Sure. It's right here. Just let me explain a few things first. OK. It's on. Look at the screen. See? That's the playlist. It displays the categories of all my songs. It's all my favorite music I've downloaded from my computer.
Man: Cool.
Tanya: When you want to listen to music, you use the keypad to choose the songs you want to hear. See the keypad buttons here? These are the main controls. Press the "Play" arrow.
Man: OK. That's easy enough. What do I do next?
Tanya: Here. Put these headphones on. When you press "Play," the digital signal goes to the digital signal processor. That's a large rectangular computer chip inside the MP3 player. The digital signal processor turns the signal into music. Well, I think that's all you need to know. Any questions? I said, any questions?
Man: What? Oh, sorry, I couldn't hear you. Great playlist! Um, what did you say?

3. PDA
Woman: Well, I'm all ready for my new job. I'll be on time for all my meetings

with my new PDA.
Man: PDA? What's that?
Woman: A personal digital assistant. You've never heard of them? They're the coolest things. I can store addresses, schedules, take notes. They're great.
Man: Hey, that's pretty neat. Show me how it works.
Woman: OK. First, you use the stylus to select the function from the menu. The stylus is like a little pencil. It's this thing on the side here. You use that to input the information. You just touch it directly on the screen, like this. See? This is a special kind of screen. It's called a touch screen. Here. Let's choose "Address book." After you select the function, the information goes to the microprocessor. It's a little, square chip inside the PDA. It's like the computer's brain. The microprocessor retrieves and stores information. See? There they are, all my phone numbers and addresses! Oh, here. I'll put in your phone number. What is it?
Man: Seven-oh-four, five-five-five, nine-one-oh-two.
Woman: Got it. Isn't this so convenient? I've got all my phone numbers in here.
Man: Great! Maybe now you'll return my phone messages!

4. GPS
Man: So, what do you think of my new car?
Woman: It's pretty high tech. What's this thing on the dashboard?
Man: That's my car's GPS. It's the navigation system. I love it! I always know exactly where I am and where I'm going. I never get lost.
Woman: GPS?
Man: *GPS* stands for "Global Positioning System." See, there are satellites way up in the sky. The satellites are always up there moving around the earth. This part here, the part you put inside the car, is called the GPS receiver. Here's how it works. First, satellites send radio waves to the GPS receiver. The GPS receiver reads the information signals from several satellites in different locations. Then the receiver uses a formula to calculate its distance and position, so you can find out the car's exact location - anytime, anywhere.
Woman: Well, I guess it is a pretty neat device. But, it doesn't seem to work very well.
Man: What do you mean?
Woman: Uh, you were supposed to turn left back there.

(Taken from Brown & Smith, 2007d, pp. 157-158)

B. “Reflexology”

Listen. People are talking about the health benefits of reflexology. Number the areas of the feet from 1 to 5. There are two extra areas.

1. Woman: Did I tell you about the reflexology class I'm taking at the Asia Center?
Man: The what class?
Woman: Reflexology. It's foot massage, from Chinese medicine.
Man: Foot massage - medicine?

Woman: Yeah. It's wonderful. Here, let me show you what I've learned. Take off your shoes and socks.
Man: Are you serious?
Woman: Just try it.
Man: OK.
Woman: You see, followers of Chinese medicine believe that when you massage parts of the soles of your feet, it can affect your body in a completely different area. Do you ever have headaches?
Man: Headaches? Sometimes.
Woman: Well, in reflexology, the area on the bottom of the big toe is connected to your head. When you get a headache, just rub the area on the bottom of your big toe. It helps relieve headaches.

2. Woman: Now let me show you another spot. This place really works for backaches. Look at the inside of your foot. Put your fingers near the top, just under the big toe. Now rub from the top all the way to your heel - to the end of your foot. If you ever have backaches, rub this long, narrow area several times a day.
Man: The whole inside edge helps relieve backaches?
Woman: That's right.

3. Man: What else?
Woman: Well, do you ever get stiff shoulders?
Man: Always! In fact, I have stiff shoulders right now.
Woman: OK. That spot's on the outside of your foot. Find the widest part of your foot. On the outside, below your smallest toe, there's an area related to your shoulders. Massage it firmly but not so hard that it hurts. This will help relax your stiff shoulders.

4. Man: Actually, my eyes get tired from using the computer at work. Is there a place on my feet for that?
Woman: Yes. Massaging your other toes can help tired eyes, especially the area under your two smallest toes. Right here.
Man: Here? This area under these two toes?
Woman: Yeah, right there. That's the best spot for sore, tired eyes.

5. Woman: Do you ever have trouble with your stomach, I mean, stomachaches?
Man: Sometimes, if I eat too much spicy food.
Woman: Find the area right in the center of your foot. It's shaped like a small egg. Press on it firmly. It can help you digest your food better and get rid of stomachaches.
Man: Here, in the middle of my foot?
Woman: Right.
Man: You know, this is pretty neat. I feel better already. But actually, you know what hurts the most? My feet! My feet are always really sore at the end of the day.
Woman: Hmm. Maybe you need to buy bigger shoes.

(Taken from Brown & Smith, 2007d, p. 149)

Part 5: High Proficiency “Difficult” Texts

A. “Body Image Disorders in Men.”

Now we've talked quite a lot in this course about the subject of body image disorders in women and the rising incidence of conditions like anorexia and bulimia. And I think we're so accustomed to thinking of these disorders as women's problems, that you might be surprised to learn that an estimated one to two percent of Western men also suffer from body image problems. These are often expressed in the form of a pathological concern with body building, the abuse of muscle-building drugs like steroids, or both.

Now in contrast, in East Asian cultures, such as China, male body image disorders and steroid abuse are extremely rare. Researchers at McLean Hospital in Boston were interested in finding out why this cultural difference exists, why body building and steroid use were so much more prevalent in the West than in the East, and this led them to conduct a very interesting study, which I'd like to summarize for the next few minutes.

All right. Um, the subjects in this study were male college students from three Western cultures, the U.S., France, and Austria. Now what the researchers did is that they showed these male students pictures of men with varying levels of muscularity and body fat, ranging from very slim at one extreme to really bulked up at the other, and they asked them to choose four images: one, the image that most closely resembled their own bodies. Two, the body of an average man of their age in their culture. Three, the body they would ideally like to have, and four, the body they thought women would prefer the most. In addition, for purposes of comparison, the researchers also asked a group of women to look at the pictures and choose the body they liked best.

Then, in the next phase of the study, the researchers showed the same series of pictures to a group of male university students in Taiwan, and asked the same questions. Afterwards they analyzed the two sets of data looking for similarities and differences. And what they found were two significant differences between the Western and the Eastern group.

First, with respect to the question of what the men considered to be the ideal body image, the Western subjects picked an ideal body that was about 28 pounds, or 13 kilos, more muscular than they perceived themselves to be. But the Taiwanese men picked an ideal body that was only two kilos bigger than their own.

In other words, the researchers interpreted this to mean that the Western men saw themselves as skinny and underdeveloped whereas the Taiwanese men were basically satisfied with the way they looked.

Second, regarding the question of which body type the men thought women preferred, the Western men predictably guessed that women preferred a male body that was about 30 pounds, or 14 kilos, more muscular than theirs. Yet when the researchers asked actual Western women to choose the male body they liked, they didn't choose a bulked up Arnold Schwarzenegger body; they chose an average body, without the extra muscle. Conversely, the Taiwanese men guessed that women would prefer an average body, similar to their own. And in fact, that is what the women chose.

So in short, the findings suggest that Western men may have an unrealistic or even distorted idea of what they should look like and what women want, but that Taiwanese

men don't seem to have this problem; and that brings me to the next part of my talk, which is: Why? What accounts for the difference? The researchers proposed three hypotheses.

Now, the first possible explanation may lie in the different ways that Western and Eastern cultures have traditionally defined masculinity. You know Western cultures going all the way back to ancient Greece and Rome have measured it in terms of muscles and physical power. You can go to any art museum and look at the male statues for proof of what I'm talking about. But as the researchers explain, in traditional Chinese culture, masculinity has much more to do with things like intelligence, strength of character, and courage, rather than muscles.

Another explanation could be the influence of the media. Studies show, for instance, that images of undressed, muscular men are far more common in the West, especially in the United States, than in Taiwan. And the greater exposure to these images could be affecting Western notions of what the ideal male body ought to look like. And finally, the third explanation, might be that the traditional role of Western men has changed over the last generation, with more and more women working and supporting themselves, you know, leading some men to focus on their bodies as a way of maintaining their masculine self esteem. But in Taiwanese culture, there has been much less of a change in the traditional family structure, at least so far. So the satisfaction that Taiwanese men appear to feel with their bodies may be related to the security they derive from their traditional role as breadwinner and head of the family.

Now let's examine each of these hypotheses more closely, keeping in mind that further research is needed on all three...

(Taken from Baker & Tanka, 2006b, pp. 258-260)

B. “Earth Day and Environmental Problems”

1.

Air pollution is probably one of our oldest environmental problems. People in Ancient Rome complained about dirty air over two thousand years ago! Today, air pollution is not just found outside; polluting substances can also be trapped inside of buildings. We sometimes hear people talk about sick buildings where air quality is a serious concern.

Some causes of air pollution are natural, such as forest fires and volcanoes. There's not much we can do about these sort of events. But, humans *are* responsible for the two greatest sources of air pollution today: heavy industry and automobile use. Factories and cars fill the air with poisonous gasses which are damaging to plant and wildlife and make people sick. Did you know that, on average, approximately 50,000 people in the United States alone die every year from diseases related to air pollution? If we really care about the quality of the air we breathe, we need to drive less and use public transportation more. We must make our homes more energy efficient and practice recycling and other conservation methods on a daily basis.

2.

We live on the water planet. Our world is made up of 75 percent water, and without water, there would be no life on earth. The atmosphere is not the only part of our environment that is in danger. Water pollution is another real threat to the survival of the planet.

Water becomes polluted when poisonous chemicals, garbage, waste sewage, and other toxins are dumped into our lakes, rivers, and other water supplies. Factories pollute the water with chemical runoff, and people dirty the water with human waste in places where modern sewer systems are not available.

Oil spills from huge transport ships are another source of water pollution. When these accidents occur, the oil spills kill the birds, fish, and other animals living in the water and disrupt the delicate food chain in our oceans, lakes, and rivers. Small life forms that fish feed on are killed, so the fish eventually die. Without those fish to eat, other animals cannot survive, and the terrible effects continue up to larger plants and animals until it directly affects humans. Moreover, when freshwater bodies are polluted, less water is available to us for drinking and for other essential life functions.

What can we do about this problem? Well, there are several things that can help to reduce water pollution. Laws must be created to limit the dumping of dangerous materials into our waters, and factories must be forced to pay very high fines for breaking these laws. In addition, governments must spend more money to help to clean up waters that are already polluted. Another step would be for manufacturers, such as those in the plastics industry, to develop products that are biodegradable—that is, products that break down and can be recycled back into nature. Finally, people must demand that their governments do more to protect the source of all life: water.

3.

Today, there are more than six billion people living on the planet. Earth has become a very crowded place, and the rise in the world population has had a negative impact on the environment. When people move in, the land, water, and air quality suffer. A perfect example of this problem is deforestation. Deforestation occurs when large areas of trees are cleared away in forests and woodlands. The deforestation of tropical rain forests in places like Brazil and Central America is of particular concern as these locations contain some of the largest and richest forest areas in the world.

Why is deforestation happening? To meet the needs of the growing population, forests have been destroyed to provide lumber and wood products. Additionally, deforestation has cleared land to be used for growing food and raising livestock such as cattle. The effect of this clearing has been deadly.

When deforestation occurs, thousands of species of plants and animals are killed. This destruction is particularly tragic when it occurs in rain forests, because humans rely on the rain forest for common products including coffee, bananas, chocolate, vegetables, and spices.

Deforestation also contributes to air pollution. When trees are cut and the land cleared through burning, millions of tons of the poison carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere. This increase in carbon dioxide levels has caused the average temperature on earth to rise by several degrees, a situation that is contributing to another very serious

environmental problem called global warming.

In order to prevent the continued deforestation of our land, people need to demand that governments do more to protect the earth's natural resources. We must reduce our need for wood products through our personal choices. As consumers, we must actively participate in recycling programs and other wood-conservation activities.

(Adapted from Scholnick & Gabler, 2003b, pp. 165-167)

C. “How English Acquires new Words.”

OK, so, uh, we've been talking about the origins of English words, where our vocabulary comes from. And we've talked about the way that languages borrow words from each other. In English, for example, 75 percent of our words are imported from other languages, mostly French and Latin.

Urn, so a language can acquire new words by borrowing them, but all languages also have ways of coining or creating new words. And so what I want to do today in this talk is to introduce you to some of the linguistic gimmicks, the techniques, that English uses to coin new words.

Now in English the main mechanism we have for creating new words is a process called derivation, which means we create—or we derive —new words from existing ones by adding prefixes or suffixes to them. Uh, so for example, we can take the word, the root "use," u-s-e, and by adding prefixes and suffixes we get *useful, useless, misuse, unusable, abuse,* and so on. So that's an example of derivation.

But derivation isn't the only mechanism for creating new words in English, of course. I mean how do we explain words like *blog* or *Y2K* or *SARS* or *website* or *carjacking,* uh *personal trainer* or like *metrosexual?* These words are all pretty common now but they didn't even exist 10 or 15 years ago. So to explain these terms we have to look at some other processes that English has for coining words.

One of these is compounding. OK, so compounds are two words, like two nouns or an adjective and a noun, that we put together to form a new word, such as *website, brainstorm,* or *role play.* Now you notice how each part of the compound retains its original pronunciation, but when we put the words together they form a new meaning. And the word on the right is the one that gives the compound its core meaning, so for example a *race car* is a kind of car, right, but a *car race* is a kind of race. OK? And another feature of compounds which you probably noticed already is that the first word is stressed: *brainstorm, website, carjacking,* and so on.

OK, so another way that new words are formed in English is by blending. Blending is a little similar to compounding because a blend consists of two words that are combined to form a new meaning, just like a compound. But what's different about a blend is that one or both words undergo a sound change. So let me give you a couple of examples so you'll see what I mean. So *smog* is a blend of the words *smoke* and *fog.* You'll notice how the /k/ in *smoke* and the /f/ in *fog* drop out and the remaining sounds are combined into one word. Another example is *motel. Motel* is a combination of *motor* and *hotel.* And here's a really

cute one. When my daughter was little she used to say "stummy," which was obviously a blend of *stomach* and *tummy.* And it's a great example of, of, of a blend because it shows how blends often occur organically, by accident, and then some of them become actual real new words while others don't become words.

OK, another process for forming new words is called clipping. This is when we take a long word and clip or cut out the front or the back, so for instance *telephone* becomes *phone,* and *refrigerator* becomes *fridge,* uh, or how about the word *'zine,* which is a really popular word nowadays—it's a clipping of *magazine.* And some words come about as a result of both compounding and clipping. A great example of that is *blog,* which started out as a compound of *web* plus *log* and then got shortened or clipped to just *blog.* A lot of the slang you hear is created by compounding and clipping just because these processes are so easy from a linguistic standpoint.

All right. So finally, two other sources of new words that I want to mention are abbreviations and acronyms. An abbreviation is a word that is formed from the names of the letters in a phrase, like *UFO, unidentified flying object.* Another example is *Y2K,* which as you probably know stands for *year 2000.* But now an acronym is a little different. In an acronym we form a word by combining the letters of a phrase into a word which we read phonetically. We don't say the names of the letters, in other words, so for example *SARS* is an acronym, it stands for *sudden acquired respiratory syndrome,* which is just too much of a mouthful to say, so we use the acronym instead. Another good example is the word *yuppie,* a *young urban professional.*

OK, so to recap, I've listed seven processes by which English acquires new words: borrowing, deriving, compounding, blending, um clipping, abbreviating, and acronyms. And of course there's more to say about each of these, this is just a quick survey, but what I hope I've done is to enable you to see how inventive and flexible the English language is, and I hope I've stimulated your curiosity to find out more about the origins of your favorite English words.

OK, we've been talking about how memory works, right, and what we can do to improve our memory. So we've seen, for example, we can enhance our ability to recall new information if we transform or extend it in some way. So, for instance, we're more likely to remember verbal information like directions to someone's house for example uh, if we transform it into something visual like a diagram or a map or something.

So now, another way of facilitating recall is through the use of memory techniques called mnemonics... I'll spell that for you: m-n-e-m-on-i-c-s... OK, uh, as I said before, mnemonics are techniques for improving memory. A little more formally, uh, they're systematic strategies that we can use to help us remember information, especially information that is hard to recall like you know numbers, lists, names, things like that.

So about 30 years ago, there's a psychologist named R.C. Atkinson, and he developed this mnemonic technique to help students learn vocabulary in a foreign language. And he called it the keyword method, and what I'd like to do now is demonstrate this method for you using an example from a language that none of you know. All right, so then you can use this technique in your own language studies. Uh, anybody know Hungarian? You speak Hungarian? No? OK, good.

Uh, so let's say you're learning Hungarian, right, and you're learning the names of

foods, and one of your target words is the Hungarian word for cabbage, which is called *kaposzta.* And how can you remember that?

Well, the first step in the keyword method is to choose your key word. And a good key word has three characteristics: One, it's a word you know very well. You're real familiar with it. Two, it's a word that sounds like the target word—you know, the word you're trying to remember—or at least the first part of the target word. And number three, the last characteristic, the third characteristic of a good key word, is that it should be something that's easy to visualize, easy to picture, so a concrete noun or action verbs, those make you know the best keywords.

All right let's apply those three criteria to our example, *kaposzta.* OK, so what's a familiar word that sounds like *kaposzta* and is easy to visualize?

What comes to mind? Well, how about "cop," you know, a police officer. So that's a good keyword because it sounds like our target word *kaposzta,* it's familiar, it's easy to visualize, easy to picture.

So OK now we've got a keyword, and what's the next step? What we're going to do is, we're going to create a mental image, a picture, that contains both the keyword, in this case cop, and the target meaning, which is cabbage. In other words, in your mind's eye I want you to imagine the cop and the cabbage interacting—you know, doing something. Um, it's best if the image is moving, if it's colorful, exaggerated, silly, it's even better. So the more absurd or ridiculous, the better. Uh, let's imagine a cop wearing a uniform. OK, you got that? And his head is a big, green cabbage, all right? So let's give it eyes, put a nose on it, and a mouth, cop's hat, put a cop's hat on it. OK, what else? Maybe a mustache? A mustache?

So take that silly image and just focus on it for a minute. Hold it in your mind's eye... OK... Really concentrate so it's fixed in your memory.

OK. Now let's suppose it's a week later, all right, and you've got to review because tomorrow you're going to have a test on your new Hungarian vocabulary. Let's see how you can use this keyword method to painlessly study for your test. Make it easy, right?

First you take out your list of words and, you know, there's the word *kaposzta.* Immediately you think of your keyword, cop, which automatically triggers the image you created of the cop, you know with the cabbage head, and voila! There it is! Your definition. See how it works? So, you see the sequence? *Kaposzta* leads to cop; cop leads to cabbage. Now "cop" is the bridge that connects the new word, *kaposzta,* with the definition, cabbage. The association is so powerful you couldn't even forget it if you tried.

So research does prove this. It proves that students who use the keyword technique remember vocabulary better than students who don't. But let me give you a word of caution, in conclusion. I don't want you to think that this mnemonic or any other, you know, techniques are magical. All right, for mnemonics to work you still have to practice and rehearse. You have to study for the test.

Mnemonics don't eliminate the need to study, but you know they can definitely make it easier for you to remember some kinds of information.

(Taken from Baker & Tanka, 2006b, p. 244-245)

D. “Two Popular Diets”

Um, as a nutritionist, the most frequently asked question I hear in my practice is, "What is the most effective diet?" And as we all know, one of the big reasons I'm asked this is that obesity has become a major problem in this country recently. In fact, in twenty years of practice, I have, unfortunately, seen an increasing number of overweight people. And most sadly, more and more children these days are overweight. Now, we all know that there is no shortage of advice on how to lose weight. Um, if you open any magazine, if you go on the Internet, or whatever, you are just bombarded with ads for an amazing variety, for all kinds of diets. You have the grapefruit diet, you have the cabbage soup diet, you have the famous Atkins diet, and you have the raw food diet and it just goes on and on. Um, let me tell you first that most of these are just fads. And that there is simply not enough scientific data to back up these diets.

However, two diets that have been around a long time and that seem to work are the low-fat diet and the lowcarb diet, or low-carbohydrate diet. So these are the two I want to discuss today. Um, let's think about how they're different, or let me talk about how they're different and how they really work.

First of all, let's look at the low-fat diet. This requires that you cut back on foods that are high in fats and oils. How are you going to do this? You are going to cut back on meats, especially red meats, cheeses, butter, and fried foods of all kinds. Now that may sound very healthy. And you are probably thinking, "If I cut down on fats, I won't get fat!" Plus it will lower my cholesterol and that will prevent heart disease." That's fine. But in terms of weight loss, is it effective in the long term?

Here are some of the problems with this kind of diet. First, you have to restrict your choice of food. And what happens is, people get bored eating the same thing over and over. Then they get frustrated. And they stop eating what they're supposed to eat on the diet. Then they get hungry and they overeat on certain other foods, like high-calorie foods and foods high in sugar. So they end up gaining back most of the weight that they've lost. And that is the main drawback.

Now, the other diet I mentioned was the low-carb diet. This is very popular in recent years, and in some ways is just the opposite of the low-fat diet. In contrast to the low-fat diet, with the low-carb diet you restrict your intake of carbohydrates, not fats. You know what carbohydrates are, right? This is the substance, or component, of food that gives your body heat and energy. So what foods are high in carbohydrates? Well, sugary foods and starches, things like sweets, breads, pastas, potatoes, rice and corn. You're supposed to stay away from all of these. That's because there are so many carbohydrates in these foods that the body can only use some of them for energy, and the rest it will store as, you guessed it, fat.

Some low-carbohydrate diets, like the famous Atkins diet, are a little extreme. Um, the Atkins diet wants you to eliminate fruits, fruit juices, and even some vegetables. Why? Because these foods are high in carbohydrates. So if you stop eating these foods, you're going to lose weight really fast. And that's a big advantage of this diet. But there're some health concerns. And this is a big "but" with this kind of diet. Nutritional experts worry about the effects of low-carb diets on the body. What kind of effects are we talking about? Some significant ones, like vitamin deficiencies, dehydration, kidney problems, and some

others.

So these two diets, the low-carb diet and the low-fat diet, sound very different; however, they are also similar in some important ways. First, both limit your food choices. Second, both of these diets are difficult to stay on for a long period of time. And finally, according to several studies, people either begin cheating on the diet, or they go off the diet completely. And they gain the weight back, sooner or later.

So, to go back to my question at the beginning of the lecture, what do I tell my patients who want to know what the best diet is? Well, my best weight-loss advice is: first, eat sensibly. And second, get off the couch. What I mean by that is, you should reduce the calories that you eat, but you also need to eat a well-balanced diet. That includes proteins, carbohydrates and fats. In other words, eat from every food group, but control the size of your portions. However, I really want to emphasize that you also need to use more calories than you eat. You need to be active and you need to exercise several times a week. Now I know this is not glamorous, or new or particularly exciting, but if you are really interested in improving your health, if you really want long-term weight management, if these are your goals, then this is the best approach for you.

(Taken from Baker & Tanka, 2006a, pp. 248-250)

APPENDIX O

Questions for Retrospective Interviews after Think-aloud Protocols

- What was your general impression of the exercise?
- Look at each of the texts that you listened to in the protocol. For each text, which parts were easy? Which parts were difficult? Why?
- How did "thinking out loud" affect your comprehension ability? Why?
- What was you impression of "thinking out loud?" Was this easy or difficult to do? Why?
- Was the training for the protocol effective? If you hadn't been trained, how would that have affected your performance in the protocol?
- Did you think out loud in Arabic (or French) or English? Why?
- During the exercise, did you discover any plans, tactics, or approaches,which you used to understand the oral text, that you did not realize that you used before?
- What else did you discover about yourself and your listening comprehension ability of English oral texts that you didn't realize before?

APPENDIX P
Sample Interview Summary Form

Group or Name of Contact: _____

Interview Date: _____

Today's Date: _____

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this interview?

2. Summarize the information you got (or failed to get) on each of the target questions you had for this interview. (also give a code to this information)

Question #	Information	Code Assigned

3. Anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating, or important in this interview?

4. What new (or remaining) target questions do you have regarding the next interview at this site?

APPENDIX Q
Observation Summary Form

Group Observed: _____

Name of Teacher: _____

Observation Date: _____

Today's Date: _____

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck you during this observation?

2. Summarize the information you got (or failed to get) on each of the target questions you had for this observation. (also give a code to this information)

Question #	Information	Code Assigned

3. Anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating, or important in this observation?

4. What new (or remaining) target questions do you have regarding the next observation at this site?

APPENDIX R
Listening Diary Summary Form

Diary Identification #: _____

Name of Student Completing Diary: _____

Today's Date: _____

1. What were the strategies that the student identified as using during the diary writing?

2. What were the listening problems that the student idenfied as having during the diary writing?

3. Summarize the important information from the diary that relates to my research questions

Page #	Information	Code Assigned

4. Anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, or illuminating, as you read this diary?

Page #	Information	Code Assigned

APPENDIX S

Retrospective Interview Summary Form for Think-aloud Protocols

Site: _____

Name of Contact: _____

Interview Date: _____

Today's Date: _____

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this interview?

2. Summarize the information you got (or failed to get) on each of the target questions you had for this interview. (also give a code to this information)

TAP Segment #	Corresponding Question #	Information	Code Assigned

3. Anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating, or important in this interview?

4. What new (or remaining) target questions do you have regarding the next interview at this site?

APPENDIX T
Researcher's Journal/Memo Summary Form

Type of Entry (Journal/Memo): _____

Page # of entry: _____

Date of Entry: _____

Today's Date: _____

1. Summarize the important information from the entry that relates to my research questions

   Information Code Assigned

2. What emergent thoughts or new questions are in the entry that I should ask in my next interview or answer in my next observation?

3. What preliminary conclusions or thoughts are listed in the entry that I should consider in my next interview or observation?