Enhancing Listening Performance through Schema Construction Activities

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Abstract—"A schema is a general term for a conventional knowledge structure that exists in memory" (Yule, 2006, p. 132). There however still has been a controversy over the role of schema construction activities as an aid to L2 listening learning. This research thus aims to examine the effect of schema construction activities on EFL learners' listening performance at Saigon Technology University (STU).

Index Terms-schema, listening performance, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Vietnam

I. INTRODUCTION

Teachers tend to overlook the process of helping students learn to listen (Vandergrift, 2004). Moreover, both language teachers and learners have propensity to ignore the magnitude of listening comprehension skill since their attention is fixed so completely on their ultimate goal, speaking (Chastain, 1988, p. 192). Furthermore, from Vandergrift's (2004) standpoint, "listening is probably the least explicit of the four macro language skills, making it the most difficult skill to learn" (p. 3). In a similar vein, Khanh (2006) contends that "listening has always been presumed to be the most difficult and boring skill to practice" (p. 51). Buck (2001) discerns several difficulties which can be confronted in listening tasks such as unknown words, unfamiliar topics, fast speech rate, and strange accents. Do's (2007) study divulges that "teachers concentrate on presenting vocabulary and structures so much that they may not have enough time to organize other necessary activities or they cannot recognize the importance of the other ones" (p. 115). Presenting some new words to students before listening is to some extent indispensable. Nonetheless, the question is how teachers present them to students. Should the teacher himself/herself introduce new words students are going to listen to while all students are receiving these new words passively? Or should the teacher give students chances or tasks through which they themselves can retrieve previous knowledge in their mind to learn new words actively? Should students be considered as an active processor who brings their prior knowledge to the context of listening text?

Shu (2009) highlights that "traditionally, in language teaching, listening comprehension used to be thought of as a passive skill. Like reading, listening comprehension is now no longer regarded as a passive skill. The decoding of a message calls for active participation in communication between participants" (p.133). Nevertheless, students tend not to be active in their learning to listen, but depend passively on the instruction of teachers (Vandergrift, 2004). This should be changed since Harden and Dent (2005) insist that "the purpose of teaching is to facilitate learning" (p. 209). Do (2007) underscores that "teachers should improve their ways of performing the first stage in order to make their students well-prepared for their listening" (p. 115). As usual, teachers get accustomed to the traditional lecture method, which is "a passive, one-way method of transferring information" (Sullivan and McIntosh, 1996, p. 1) and "lecturing is frequently a one-way process unaccompanied by discussion, questioning or immediate practice, which makes it a poor teaching method" (McIntosh, 1996, p. 1 cited in Sullivan and McIntosh, 1996, p. 1). Furthermore, "lack of interaction is considered one of the major limitations of the traditional lecture" (Munson, 1992 cited in Sullivan and McIntosh, 1996, p. 1). Indeed, preponderance of the students in Do's (2007) research alleged that "the solution that teachers should improve their methods of teaching listening skill is more essential than the solution that the school should equip more facilities for listening practice" (p. 122). More crucially, Edlich (1993, cited in Sullivan and McIntosh, 1996) argues that "the lecture format for large classes is outdated and ineffective" (p. 1).

It is urgent for both EFL teachers and EFL learners to change their mind to have more appropriate teaching methods and learning styles in listening classrooms so that there would be no longer the phenomenon that "teachers were attempting to teach them only the pertinent information that they would need to pass a test" (McMahon, Lytle and Smith, 2005, p. 180). Do (2007) also writes that "it seems that the teachers only tried to cover the listening tasks in the textbook with a focus on linguistic content, and the students pretended to listen by 'picking up' as many answers from

teachers as possible" (p. 124). Hoang's (2006) findings reveal that teachers still thought pre-listening and post-listening phases are of little magnitude and that

"consequently, when teaching listening, they just played the cassette tape, asked the learners to listen and then checked answers without any pre-listening activities. It is likely that with this way of teaching, these teachers think that listening is the easiest skill to teach" (p. 85).

A potential remedy to the above drawback is the application of a variety of schema construction activities which render listening classes more enjoyable and especially immerse learners in their own listening learning. Long (1987) contends that activities in pre-listening and post-listening phases play a crucial role in facilitating EFL learners' listening learning since these activities provide the learners with chances to utilize their schemata, what they have already known before, to learn and build new knowledge or new schemata. From Mendelsohn's (1995, cited in Mendelsohn and Rubin, 1995) view, pre-listening activities need "to activate the students' existing knowledge of the topic in order for them to link this to what they comprehend and to use this as a basis of their prediction and inferencing" (p. 124). Listening learning will be enhance if learners generate meaning by activating existing knowledge (Goh, 2002). Nguyen's (2009) research demonstrates that schema construction is "an essential approach to link new information in the topic to the students' prior knowledge to activate the students' interest and curiosity in reading comprehension" (p. 66) and it may work for listening comprehension. Hoang (2006) adds that the lack of practicing bottom-up or top-down processing will hinder learners from listening effectively. The role of students thus needs to be changed "from passive observer to active participants" (Sullivan and McIntosh, 1996, p. 2). Brown (1990) also hopes that "active listeners will use all relevant background knowledge" (p. 11) for learning listening in particular and acquiring second language in general.

There however still has been a controversy over the role of schema construction activities as an aid to L2 listening learning. Some studies indicated that schema construction facilitated learning process of L2 listeners (Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994; Brown and Smith, 2007). In contrast, some studies reported that schema construction tasks did not improve listening comprehension (Chiang and Dunkel, 1992; Jensen and Hansen, 1995). This research thus aims to investigate the effects of schema construction activities on EFL learners' listening performance.

It is crucial to investigate influential factors to learners' systematic learning in the classroom (Slavin, 2008; van Merrienboer & Kirshner, 2007). This research aims to examine the effect of schema construction activities on EFL learners' listening performance at Saigon Technology University (STU). The empirical research was guided by the ensuing research question:

How do schema construction activities enhance EFL learners' listening performance?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter commences with a review of the two constructs "listening" and "schema" pursued by review on benefits of schema construction on language learning as the major theoretical framework for the study. Findings of empirical studies on the linkage between schema construction and listening comprehension are succinctly displayed.

A. Listening

Listening is "the means to immediate oral production" (Anderson and Lynch, 1988, p. 64). From From Rubin and Meldelsohn's (1995) standpoint, listening is "an active process in which a listener selects and interprets information which comes from auditory and visual clues in order to define what is going on and what the speakers are trying to express" (p. 151). Buck (2001) maintains that "listening involves both linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge" (p. 247). Linguistic knowledge indicates "knowledge of phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics, discourse structure, pragmatics and sociolinguistics", whereas non-linguistic refers to "knowledge of the topic, the context and general knowledge about the world and how it works" (ibid, p. 247). Furthermore, listening is deemed to be synonymous with 'experiencing contextual effects', namely, 'listening as a neurological event (experiencing)' overlays a cognitive event (creating a change in a representation) (Rost, 2002, p. 3). As a recap of above views on listening, Jeon (2007) writes:

"Listening has been characterized as a set of activities that involves an individual's capacity to apprehend, recognize, discriminate, or even ignore certain information. It has also been considered to contain complex and active processes that are involved in linguistic knowledge, personal expectation, cognitive processing skills, and world knowledge. Listening involves interaction and negotiation with a speaker and requires prior experience of a listener to best understand and interpret what a speaker says" (p. 50).

B. Schema

1. Definitions and typologies of schema

"A schema is a general term for a conventional knowledge structure that exists in memory" (Yule, 2006, p. 132). Schemas are defined as "building blocks of cognition" (Rumelhart, 1980, p. 34) and "skeleton around which the situation is interpreted" (Rumelhart, 1980, p. 37). In the same vein, Taylor and Crocker (1981, p. 91) view a schema as "a cognitive structure that consists in part of the representation of some defined stimulus domain. The schema contains general knowledge about that domain, including a specification of the relationships among its attributes, as well as specific examples or instances of the stimulus domain" and "the schema provides hypothesis about incoming stimuli,

which include plans for interpreting and gathering schema-related information". Likewise, Brewer and Nakamura (1984) underscore that "schemas are the unconscious cognitive structures that underlie human knowledge and skill" (p. 136). Myhill, Jones and Hopper (2006, p. 21) also deem schema as 'the mental map' or set of mental connections we had in our head about a particular idea of thing.

Carrell (1983) categorizes schemata into two typologies – content schemata and formal schemata. The former denotes "background information" on the topic and the latter refers to "knowledge about how discourse is organized with respect to different genres, different topics, or different purposes (e.g., transactional versus interactional), including relevant sociocultural knowledge" (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000, p. 102). From Juan and Flor's (2006) view, "content schema are networks of knowledge on different topics and formal schema are derived from our knowledge of the structure of discourse is being listened to make it easier to engage in top-down processing strategies, such as predicting and inferencing" (p. 93).

2. Moving patterns of schema

"Schemata are abstract cognitive constructs where knowledge is processed, stored and activated" (Hui, 2005, p. 18). Numerous researchers thus have applied theory of schema to their research on reading and speech. Xie (2005) writes that

"Modern schema theorists believe that schema, a data structure of general structure of general ideas stored in memory, consists of variables and slots. According to such a principle, meaning exists neither in oral nor in written language itself, but in the reader's mind, depending on the activation of his or her brain schemata whose controlling structure or basic moving pattern is navigated through bottom-up data-driven-processing and top-down concept-drivenprocessing" (p. 67).

He also adds that "top-down processing facilitates the assimilation of new information into the information already stored" (p. 68). Cognitive psychologists indeed share the view that all prior knowledge of a person was stored in the cognitive structures of the brain. Thus, prior knowledge has to be activated within these structures through an introductory instructional strategy so that new knowledge can be acquired. From bottom-up and top-down perspectives, Rost (2001) maintains that "listening involves 'bottom-up' processing, in which listeners attend to data in the incoming speech signals, and 'top-down' processing, in which listeners utilize prior knowledge and expectations to create meaning" (p. 7). Vandergrift (2004) further discuss that

"listeners use top-down processes when they use context and prior knowledge (topic, genre, and other schema knowledge in long-term memory) to build a conceptual framework for comprehension; listeners use bottom-up processes when they construct meaning by accretion, gradually combining increasingly larger units of meaning from the phoneme-level up to discourse-level features" (p. 4).

It is crucial for listeners to learn how to implement these processes effectively for different listening aims. There is a consensus that "bottom-up processing is applied to gather information on phonology, lexis, syntax and grammar to build up an understanding of what is perceived. Top-down processing, however, makes use of previous knowledge and experience (schema) to predict, filter, analyze and interpret the information received" and "top-down processing emphasizes the importance of listener's background knowledge" (Nunan, 2007, p. 32).

C. Effects of Schema Construction

1. Schema activation and motivation

Brown (2000) maintains that "a listener will be successful with the proper motivation" (p. 143). "The motivation for listeners should be pleasure, interest and growing confidence at being able to understand the spoken language" (Byrne, 1976, p. 15). From Brown's (2006) view, "it is just as important to give the students the opportunity to use what they already know-their prior knowledge - to help them do the task," and "it really doesn't matter whether the words actually will appear in the listening task because activating prior knowledge, in addition to helping comprehension, motivates students by bringing their lives to the lesson" (p. 4).

Harden and Dent (2005) also contend that "it might be that the new material to be presented will need activation of more than one set of existing knowledge structures," which implies "pulling together previously acquired knowledge from several different areas of experience" (p. 207). This schema activation is thus "important in the learning experience that teachers need to consider much more carefully how to help learners prepare for the session and how to begin the session to ensure maximum readiness for the new material to be presented" (p. 207).

2. Schema construction and listening performance

"A schema is an individual's collection of prior knowledge that provides a context for meaningful interpretation of new information" (Anderson, 1984, cited in Hunt and Touzel, 2009, p. 57) and "schemas change with the accretion of new knowledge and the tuning and reconstruction of prior schemas" (Carlo and Edwards, 2005, p. 148).

Nunan (2007) allege that "comprehension relies on listeners' successful activation of their prior knowledge (schemata)" (p. 35). Likewise, Fitch and Hauser (1990, cited in Hargie, 1997) highlight that "another way of examining the acquisition of information in spoken messages may involve the use of schemas" (p. 245).

Comprehension is an interactive process between the learner and the material (Pichert, 2002). The listeners have the myriad sources of information which make listening comprehension easier (Rost, 2002). In other words, listening comprehension is influenced by the information that an individual has in the mind or from stores of memory; therefore,

schematic knowledge is overtly beneficial to listening comprehension and "relevant schemata must be activated" (Carrel, 1988, p. 105).

According to schema theory, listening entails "more or less simultaneous analysis at may different levels – from the textual levels of graphophonemic, morphemic, semantic, and syntactic features, to the experience-based levels of knowledge of specific content, pragmatics, and interpretitive thinking" (Orasanu, 1986, p. 35). Edwards and McDonald (1993) highlight that "schema theory details how people store and use knowledge about a domain. The theory predicts what information people will select for memory storage, that information will be abstract, and that the information will be interpreted in light of existing knowledge and integrated into the existing network" (p. 60). The myth behind how listeners map new information to their existing schema during the listening process still has appealed to researchers' interests.

O'Malley and Chamot (1989) observe that "listening comprehension is an active and conscious process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual information and existing knowledge, while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfill the task requirement" (p. 420). Furthermore, "listening comprehension is regarded theoretically as an active process in which individuals concentrate on selected aspects of aural input, form meaning from passages, and associate what they hear with existing knowledge" (Fang, 2008, p. 22); thus, appropriate schemata need to be activated during text processing so as to facilitate efficient comprehension (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983).

From a dynamic system theory (DST) perspective, Qiu and Huang's (2012) research investigates the role of dynamic image schema (DIS) in improving the ESL learners' listening comprehension. The research involved forty ESL students from two classes at an American university. Data encompassed the scores of pre- and post-listening comprehension tests, class notes from students, and responses to questionnaires. Research findings reveal the facilitating role of DIS in ESL students' listening comprehension. According to Qiu and Huang (2012), "on the one hand, the construction of DIS allowed ESL learners to organize listening materials in the basic frameworks for systematically information processing; on the other hand, DIS helped to enhance ESL learners' ability of refined sorting, categorizing, predicting, organizing, and analyzing information to reach meaningful re-configuration of knowledge and thus improve their listening comprehension" (p. 241).

Markham and Latham (1987) conducted their research to appraise the impact of religious-specific background knowledge on listening comprehension of adult ESL students (Jeon, 2007, p. 90). Sixty five ESL students who were classified as Muslim, Christian, and neutral, participated in the research. Its findings reveal that the "students adhering to a specific religious group recalled more ideas, and produced more appropriate elaborations and fewer inaccurate distortions regarding passages associated with their particular religion," which denotes that "background knowledge does significantly influence ESL students' listening comprehension" (Jeon, 2007, p. 90).

Long (1990) examines how background knowledge affects auditory comprehension in second language. Research data which was collated from 188 students taking a Spanish courses displays that "background knowledge could help L2 listening comprehension, and that linguistic knowledge played a prominent role in comprehension when apposite background knowledge was not available to L2 listeners" (Jeon, 2007, p. 92).

Sadighi and Zare's (2002) research also found the impact of background knowledge on listening learning. EFL students from two TOEFL preparation classes took part in the empirical research. The experimental group obtained treatment in the form of topic familiarity, and their background knowledge was activated. Then a 50-item TOEFL test of listening comprehension was delivered to both experimental and control groups. Data analysis provides clues to corroborate the impact of prior knowledge on listening comprehension.

Jia's (2010) study investigates the impact schema-activation has on word recognition during listening. Its findings reveal that, in comparison with the control group who does not activate relevant schema prior to listening, the schema activation experimental group not merely can recognize more words, but also can better discern words whose sounds are varied during speech stream, identify efficiently the word among the candidates containing a similar phoneme, and minimize the chances of refusing to accept a word due to its incompatibility with already-constructed interpretation.

Schmidt-Rinehart (1994) implemented an empirical study to examine if an interaction occurred between topical knowledge and L2 listening comprehension. Due to the unclear influence of background knowledge on listening comprehension when it involves L2 listening competence, she expanded Long's (1990) research by adding proficiency level as a variable. The results garnered from ninety university students of Spanish classes of different levels of proficiency, taking immediate recall-protocols, exhibited that topic familiarity had effects on the scores of the recall measures and that there was a consistent increase in comprehension scores across the different levels.

The effect of prior knowledge was also examined by Jensen and Hasen (1995), who posited that students' prior knowledge could bias the tests. After having studied the results of 128 university level L2 learners, they concluded that prior knowledge does not dramatically contribute to L2 listening comprehension, and that more investigation would be necessitated to investigate whether schematic knowledge really facilitates listening comprehension.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

On the search journey for the answers to the research questions, experimental method with data collated through tests was utilized. An experiment, as Nunan (1992) defines, is "a procedure for testing a hypothesis by setting up a situation

in which the strength of the relationship between variables can be tested" (p. 230). Since the current study aims to examine the effects of schema-buiding activities on listening performance, an experiment was a logical approach. Schema-buiding activities were adopted in one class. The pretest and posttest scores of the students of this class were compared with those of the students of another class, in which there was no incorporation of schema-buiding activities. Notwithstanding that the classes were verified to be analogous in their listening proficiency level, they were not randomly assigned to groups of the experiment. This study is thus a quasi-experimental one. "A quasi-experiment has both pre- and posttests and experimental and control groups, but no random assignment of subjects" (*ibid*, p. 41). In a similar vein, Brown and Rodgers (2002) highlight that most second language studies have to be conducted with "already existing intact groups" and therefore "tend to be quasi-experimental rather than truly experimental" (p. 212). Table 1 displays instruments used in previous studies on schema and language skill acquisition.

	TABLE I.						
INSTRUMENTS USED IN PREVIOUS STUDIES ON SCHEMA AND LANGUAGE SKILL ACQUISITION							
Author(s)	Focus of the research	Instruments used					
Hohzawa (1998)	Prior knowledge and listening comprehension	Experimentation with written recalled-protocol and comprehension test					
Sadighi and Zare (2002)	Effect of background knowledge on listening learning	Experimentation with 50-item TOEFL test of listening comprehension					
Ülper (2009)	Influence of the schematic structure of story texts as a visual strategy on listening comprehension	Experimentation with pretest and posttest					
Hayati (2009)	Effect of cultural knowledge on listening comprehension	Experiment with listening pretest and posttest					
Salahshuri (2011)	Effects of topic familiarity on the foreign language listening comprehension	Experiment with listening tests					
Qiu and Huang (2012)	Effects of dynamic image schema (DIS) on ESL students' systematic improvement of listening comprehension	Experimentation with pre- and post-tests, students' class notes, and responses to survey questions					
Farrokhi and Modarres (2012)	Impacts of pre-task activities on improvement of listening comprehension	Experimentation with TOEFL actual test					
Hu (2012)	Schema Theory-based teaching mode of English listening	Two tests (pre-test and post-test) and a three-month teaching experiment					

B. Subjects

The participants in the experiment were 101 first-year students among 435 students from Department of Business Administration at Saigon Technology University. They all take English as a compulsory subject. After these 435 students had taken the same pretest, the two classes D11_QT01 (49 students) and D11_QT04 (52 students) from nine first-year classes of Department of Business Administration at Saigon Technology University were chosen as control group and experimental group respectively since their students had nearly the same background and listening competence level. Certain attributes of the two groups are exhibited in Table 2 comprising the number of students, age, gender, place of high-school study, English learning length and studying at foreign language centers.

	TABLE 2.						
PROFILE OF STUDENTS IN CONTROL GROUP AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUP							
Students' profile	Control group	Experimental group					
-	(49 students)	(52 students)					
1. Age							
• 18	38 (77.55%)	41 (78.85%)					
• 19	9 (18.37%)	8 (15.38%)					
• 20	2 (4.08%)	3 (5.77%)					
2. Gender							
• Male	17 (34.69%)	24 (46.15%)					
• Female	32 (65.31%)	28 (53.85%)					
3. Place of highschool							
• A city, a town	27 (55.10%)	24 (46.15%)					
• A countryside, a mountainous area or a remote area	22 (44.90%)	28 (53.85%)					
4. English learning length							
• Up to 3 years	0 (0.00%)	1 (1.92%)					
• More than 3 years up to 7 years	30 (61.22%)	28 (53.85%)					
• More than 7 years	19 (38.78%)	23 (44.23%)					
5. Studying at a foreign language center							
• Yes	12 (24.49%)	8 (15.38%)					
• No	37 (75.51%)	44 (84.62%)					

The data from Table 2 shows certain similarities between the control group and experimental group in five variables. Firstly, the number of students in both groups was practically similar, with 49 students in the control group and 52 students in the experimental group. The majority of the participants, 77.55% in the control group and 78.85% in the

experimental group, were at the age of 18 since they were full-time freshmen when the research was conducted. The percentages of students at 19 and 20 in both classes were virtually the same as well.

Secondly, the females of the two groups outnumbered the males. In the control group the percentages of females and males were 65.31% and 34.69% respectively while they were 53.85% and 46.15% in the experimental group.

Thirdly, in the control group, the number of students who obtained high school education in a city or a town exceeded that of students who obtained high school education in the countryside, mountainous area, or remote area. Nonetheless, in experimental group, the students studying in the countryside, mountainous or remote area outnumbered the students who studied in a city and a town.

Fourthly, as regards the students' English learning length, most of the students in both classes learned English from over 3 up to 7 years. The percentage of the students (44.23%) who had studied English over 7 years in the experimental group slightly outnumbered that (38.78%) in the control group.

Fifthly, a preponderance of the students in both classes, 75.51% of the students in the control group and 84.62% of the students in the experimental group, didn't take extra classes at any foreign language center.

The students of the control group and the experimental group took the same pretest as the assessment of their entrance listening competence level. The mean scores of the pretest were 5.08 for the control group and 5.05 for the experimental group as displayed in Table 3, which denotes that the students in both classes had virtually the same English listening competence level.

	Groups	Ν	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Scores of pretest	Control group	49	5.08	1.792	.249
*	Experimental group	52	5.05	1.367	.174
	INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T	TABLE 4. -test analysis f	OR THE PRETEST S	SCORES	

	Equality of v	arrances	t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	
Equal variances assumed	3.524	.063	107	104	.726	05	.314	
Equal variances not assumed			105	97.521	.719	05	.315	

The null hypothesis (H_0) posits that there would be no difference in listening pretest mean scores between the control group and the experimental group. Nonetheless, as "Levene's Test for Equality of Variances" in the Table 4 displays, the column "Sig." indicates the value of .063 which exceeded .05; thus, the row "Equal variances assumed" would be analyzed at the column "Sig. (2-tailed)". As the value of Sig. (2-tailed) at the row "Equal variances assumed" was .726 which was greater than .05, the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted. This leads to the conclusion that there was no difference in listening pretest mean scores between the control group and experimental group, which again confirms the similarity in terms of students' English listening competence level between the control group and the experimental group.

C. Experimental Teaching

The experimental teaching was conducted at Saigon Technology University during 15 weeks from February 6, 2013 to May 19, 2013. Students had a 135-minute class meeting every week in which 40 minutes was spent on acquiring listening skill and 95 minutes on acquiring speaking, reading, and writing skills. "International Express, Interactive Editions Pre-Intermediate" was utilized as the course book for both control group and experimental group. The experimental teaching transpired at the pre-listening phase with the aim of activating prior knowledge in the students' memory through schema construction activities.

In the control group, the students learned listening with no schema construction activities. The teacher introduced the listening topic, exposed students to some new words, and immersed them in the listening tasks. After students listened to the listening text and answering its text-based questions, the teacher looked through their answers and provided the feedback to them. The students were not exposed to post-listening activities.

On the contrary, in the experimental group, the students were immersed in listening learning with schema construction activities. Prior to listening to the text, the students were asked to work individually, in pairs, or in groups in activities such as building a list of words and structures, doing crosswords, and discussing the topic they were going to listen to. These schema construction activities prepared the students for the listening text. After the students listened to the listening text, they participated in some post-listening activities such as discussing with group members, sharing views with the entire class, or writing journal.

The experimental teaching aimed at investigating the disparity in the listening performance of the students in the control group (with no schema construction activities) and the students in the experimental group (with schema construction activities) after 15-week English course.

TABLE 5.						
COURSE SYLLABUS						
Course book: International	Express, Interactive Editions Pre-Intermediate					
Class meetings	Units and Themes					
1	Unit 1: First meetings					
2	Unit 2: The world of work					
3 Unit 3: Challenges						
4 Unit 4: Plans and arrangements						
5 Review A						
6 Unit 5: How healthy is your lifestyle?						
7 Unit 6: Flying gets cheaper						
8 Unit 7: Changing lives						
9	Unit 8: Crossing cultures					
10	Review B					
11 Unit 9: For over a century						

The syllabus for English 2 course in the second semester of the school year 2012-2013 at Saigon Technology University is displayed in Table 5.

D. Instruments

This study seeks to examine the factors impacting listening learning and the effects of schema construction activities on EFL learners' listening learning through tests. The set of instrument utilized in the study was pretest and posttest. The aim of the pretest administered at the beginning of the course was to investigate if the control group and the experimental group were analogous in terms of English listening competence level, while the posttests were given upon completion of the course sought to discern whether there was a divergence in the students' listening test performance between the control group and experimental group after 14-week experimental teaching. The pretest and posttest were extracted from the book entitled Longman New Real TOEIC (2009) and had the same format. To eradicate the researcher's potential bias and ensure the objectivity of the results of posttest, the researcher invited her colleagues to mark the posttests of the students in both groups; and the results were delivered back to the researcher.

Unit 10: Will our planet survive?

Unit 11: Getting around in cities

Unit 12: The story of cork

Review C

E. Data Collection Procedure

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As previously indicated, the pretest was conducted on 435 students from nine first-year classes of Department of Business Administration at Saigon Technology University during the first two week of the course from February 6, 2013 to February 19, 2013. The pretest helped find the two classes of virtually homogenous listening competency level which were going to act as the control group and experimental group.

The two classes who had the rather similar listening proficiency level and background were then selected as the control group and experimental group. At the end of the last week, the students in both classes took posttest which served to appraise the progress in listening competence of the students in the experimental group who had been instructed with schema construction activities in comparison with that of the students in the control group who were taught with no schema construction activities.

IV. FINDINGS FROM THE PRETEST AND POSTTEST

So as to examine whether schema construction activities impact on EFL learners' listening performance, tests were employed. After 15 weeks of teaching in which the students of the experimental group had listening lessons with schema construction activities while there was no implementation of these activities in the control group; then they took the same posttest. The results of the posttest were used to examine the difference in the degree of progress in listening competence between the two classes.

There were 49 students in the control group and 52 students in the experimental group. However, few students in both classes didn't take the posttest because they were absent on the day the tests were delivered; therefore, only 46 students in the control group and 51 students in the experimental group took the posttest. The output produced by the independent t-test analysis of the posttest listening scores was presented in Table 6 and Table 7.

GROUP STATISTICS FOR POST-TEST MEAN SCORES							
Groups N Mean Std. Deviation Std. Error Mean							
Scores of posttest	Control group	46	5.68	1.493	.207		
	Experimental group	51	7.04	1.717	.244		

TABLE 6.

INDELENDENT SAMI LES T-TEST ANALTSIS OF THE TOST LES TENINO SCORES								
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	
Equal variances assumed Equal variances not assumed	1.826	.129	-3.506 -3.512	105 104	.002 .002	-1.08 -1.08	.317 .319	

 TABLE 7.

 INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST ANALYSIS OF THE POSTTEST LISTENING SCORES.

The null hypothesis (H_0) claims that there was no difference in listening posttest mean scores between the control group and the experimental group. Nonetheless, as "Levene's Test for Equality of Variances" in the Table 7 demonstrates the column "Sig." had the value of .129 which was greater than 0.05. Therefore, the row "Equal variances assumed" would be observed at the column "Sig. (2-tailed)". Since the value of Sig. (2-tailed) at the row "Equal variances assumed" was .002 which was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. It was, hence, concluded that there was the difference in listening posttest mean scores between the control group and experimental group.

V. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

As in every study, limitations of this study have been discerned (Luu, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2013). This study was conducted on 101 first-year students at Saigon Technology University (STU) only through non-random sampling approach. Therefore, the research findings can be utilized in this university merely or in other schools with similar conditions with caution.

This study also centered on young adult learners of around 18 years old. Learners of different age groups may display different impacts of schema construction activities. Moreover, the participants in this research were at the preintermediate English proficiency level. Another research which involves students with lower or higher level of English proficiency should be conducted to provide more comprehensive results as regards the role of schema construction activities in building EFL learners' listening competence. The research results should be also further tested on students across universities rather than within a case study as in this research.

Even though this research corroborated the relationship between schema construction activities and learners' listening performance, a future research can further investigate whether schema construction activities enhances other language skills, especially productive skills such as speaking and writing. Furthermore, schema construction activities are also intrinsically motivating; therefore, the interconnection between teaching with schema construction activities and learners' motivation can be another research path.

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