ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of metacognitive strategy training on matriculation ESL students’ metacognitive awareness and their listening competency. 31 ESL matriculation students took part in this study. Strategy training which was focused on planning and evaluation, directed attention, person knowledge, mental translation and problem solving components and was conducted for 9 weeks. Then, students went through another 4 weeks of online listening practices without any guidance. Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) was utilised to identify the changes in students’ metacognitive awareness. MALQ was given three times which were first before (Pre) and second (Post) after the strategy training. While the third (Post 2) time was given immediately after online listening practices to re-examine participants’ metacognitive awareness. A comparison of before and after MALQ results revealed that planning-evaluation and directed-attention components had statistical significant difference in the Paired Sample t-test. However, mean scores for planning-evaluation and directed-attention, problem solving components have increased. Meanwhile, comparison between MALQ results after the training and online listening practices showed that only directed-attention component had statistical significant difference. Thus, metacognitive strategy training has some positive effects on learners’ metacognitive awareness.

Keywords: Metacognitive Awareness, Metacognitive Strategy Training, Matriculation, Malaysian, ESL

1. Introduction

Listening skill is the most important language skill that needs additional importance in the teaching and learning of English. This is because we spent most of our time in listening than other skills. Celce-Murcia and Olshstain (2005) also agreed that human speak, four times as much time as they read, and five times as much time as they write. Likewise, Dehghani and Jowkar (2012) had similar opinion of listening skills being the most important skill because the authors agreed that listening skill can be linked with all other language skills as it is the main skill that learners need to improve first. In terms of listening skill in ESL/EFL academic context, for many years ago it is a known fact that students’ outcome such as their correct answers in listening activities or even students’ listening scores were given more importance than the process of understanding texts in listening activities. Usó-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2006) also stated in their study that learners of ESL or EFL usually encounter listening as a test, instead of emphasizing listening as part of the process in acquiring second language proficiency. Thus, teachers of ESL/EFL commonly focus on students’ correct answers while listening.

Due to giving importance to the outcome or product of the listening skill, many students fail to be successful listeners. It implies that they are unable to understand or comprehend the text that they listen. Listening skill is still the toughest language
skill to be mastered. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) also agreed that in English as a Second Language (ESL), listening is the weakest skill for many students and it received the least structured support in the syllabus. However, Siegel (2013) stated that recently in L2 listening instruction students’ cognitive and metacognitive processes during listening were given more focus because there has been a shift to understanding the process-based approach than product-oriented approach. Mendelsohn (1994) stated that process-based approach involves raising learners’ awareness on strategies and helping or assisting students to use those strategies effectively during the process of understanding. Students should be made aware of the strategies that can guide them to be successful listeners. To make the teaching and learning of listening explicit, teachers should consider the concept of metacognition. Thus, this study attempts to investigate whether metacognitive strategy training could increase their metacognitive awareness in listening.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Studies on the Effects of Metacognitive Strategy Training

There are three main aspects in metacognitive strategies; plan, monitor and evaluate. In other words, metacognitive strategies permit listeners to be prepared before listening by planning on how and what strategies they plan to use during listening. In the planning strategy, listeners need to master the skills of prediction and what they are expected to do in the planning phase. In addition, listeners are also able to observe the process of their own listening outcome actively while in monitoring stage. During this real listening phase, listeners will interpret the audio text by using inferencing skill. Evaluate here means listeners are able to check their own listening performance by evaluating what strategies worked and what did not. Asking students on the effectiveness of the strategy used will help the process of evaluation.

O’Malley and Chamot (1994) emphasized that for future learning, learners must have the ability to monitor and control their performances. This raising awareness of learners own mental process can be called “metacognitive knowledge” which was introduced by Flavell (1976). According to Flavell, metacognition in simple term is ‘thinking about one own’s thinking’. Briefly, learners would plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning. Raising awareness and support from teachers during listening lessons, clearly reflects metacognitive processes. Henter and Indreica (2014) explained that levels of metacognitive awareness include thinking about what we think, how we think and why we think in a certain way. Flavell also emphasized that metacognitive knowledge plays an important role in many cognitive activities related to language use, e.g. oral comprehension or communication of information, reading comprehension, and writing, to language acquisition, and to various types of self-instruction (Flavell, 1979, pp. 906). Recently, many studies have been carried out in listening skill on the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies in improving learners’ listening comprehension.

Recent studies (Maryam, 2018; Nejad, 2015; Faridah, 2013) have been investigating the effect metacognitive strategy training on students’ listening performance either in EFL or ESL contexts. All these studies showed that the experimental group performed better than the control group. Maryam studied 50 participants whose English ability was average level among 60 students at the state University of Qom. Whereas, Nejad explored the effect on 58 female Iranian beginner EFL students. On the hand, Faridah investigated 56 students who were involved in the English Language program at International Islamic University, Gombak, Malaysia. In addition, Mansoor and Ebrahim (2014) investigated 90 intermediate EFL listeners in three groups. Unlike the above studies which only had two groups participated in their studies; experimental and control group. Mansoor and Ebrahim had three groups in their study. The researchers used two different methods of integrating metacognitive strategies in the experimental groups. Group one used the linear instruction of a ten-week metacognitive strategy training. Group two on the hand, used Metacognitive Pedagogical Sequence to apply their metacognitive strategies. The third group, the control group did not receive any guidance from the teacher or any strategy training however, control group used the same listening materials. The overall results of this research proved that the treatment groups did statistically significant compared to the control group. Highest mean scores obtained by the experimental group which

used Metacognitive Pedagogical Sequence. The results of this study also suggest that there is a difference between treatment and control group listeners where it seems to lie in the use of metacognitive strategy. The treatment group listeners managed at employing metacognitive strategy to assist their processing of input. Even though these empirical studies which studied the impact of metacognitive instruction on listening comprehension have been very encouraging, they are lacking of in terms studies of increasing or maximising students’ metacognitive awareness.

2.2 Listening and Malaysian Academic Setting

In the Malaysian ESL academic context listening skill has been given less significance. This can be clearly highlighted by observing at all the formal standardized examinations in Malaysia. For instance, Malaysian public examination such as Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), which can be used to be compared with Cambridge O Level did not have any scope for listening skill. Reading, writing and speaking skills were tested in SPM. However, in Malaysian University English Test (MUET), listening skills were tested but only given the weightage of 15% from the overall percentage of overall MUET scores. Reading skills were given the highest weightage (40%). It should be noted that MUET is used as a requirement criterion for future graduates’ admission to public universities. Hence, it can be concluded that listening skills were not given sufficient attention in language learning as a whole.

These inattention of listening skills leads to other consequences for post-SPM students because these SPM leavers will mostly enrol for higher level of education such as matriculation programs or other pre-university programs without any specific exposure to listening skill. Students may face some difficulties at higher learning institutions as their academic learning methods such lectures, seminars, talks and workshops require them to be efficient in ESL listening skills. Lye and Goh (2016) also stated that poor ESL listening skills became a problem as extensive amount of knowledge is communicated through listening. Thus, teaching listening strategies for future tertiary students is considered important because they need these effective strategies to equip themselves to become better listeners, in order to be successful in universities.

There are three kinds of listening comprehension strategies; cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective (Azmi, Bingol, Celik, Yidliz, & Tugrul Mart, 2014). Abbas Pourhosein Gilakjani and Narjes Banou Sabouri (2016) said that strategies that need be mastered depends on the learners’ listening level. Daljeet, Suraini and Haliza (2017) emphasized that for almost two decades the use metacognitive strategies to guide listening process and outcome of listening has been increasing. For the purpose of this study, metacognitive strategies were chosen to be included in the listening strategy training because of the matriculation students are required to be independent learners unlike their primary and secondary schools experiences. Matriculation students in this study mainly use their listening skills to answer MUET listening paper and also due to the fact that matriculation is a pre-university program, one of their studying method is listening to lectures. These students need to be taught on how to self-regulate their own listening process as a preparation for their higher studies at public universities. It is assumed that training students with effective metacognitive strategies may develop self-regulated learning because it allows students to choose their goals, monitor the progress and evaluate their own learning outcomes. Thus, further studies in many contexts are needed to identify whether metacognitive strategies help students to self-regulate their own learning.

Several studies (Faridah, et. al, 2013; Selamat & Sidhu, 2013) which investigated impact of metacognitive strategies on Malaysian students’ listening comprehension. Faridah investigated the effectiveness with 54 pre-university students at the Centre for Languages and Pre-Academic Development (CELPAD), International Islamic University Malaysia. Results of this study showed that 29 students in the experimental group did considerably better than the control group. However, it was not statistically significant in difference. Yet, the authors proved that students in the experimental group had expanded their strategy range and used these strategies more frequently. On the other hand, Selamat and Sidhu (2013) revealed that 34 first-year students from the Faculty of Education in a public university in Malaysia recorded higher in the listening test after the students were exposed with metacognitive strategies on their lecture listening comprehension abilities. Both studies showed consistent
findings with current literature that there are some effects of metacognitive strategy training where some listeners with different listening abilities will have different level of improvement in their listening performance. However, studies related to the effect of metacognitive strategies on students’ listening comprehension are still lacking in Malaysia. Therefore, more studies in terms of Malaysian academic setting especially tertiary levels are essential to prove the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies on raising students’ metacognitive awareness to improve their listening comprehension. Thus, the current study made an attempt to answer the following question: 1) Does metacognitive listening strategy training have any significant effect on ESL matriculation students’ metacognitive awareness?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

There were 31 Malaysian matriculation students participated in this study. Participants were selected using convenience sampling. Convenience sampling method was used because of the easy access to the participants. Students are from two intact classes. The participants are homogenous in terms of their age which is 18 years and all of them have completed Malaysian Certificate of Education. It is a national examination which is compulsory for all fifth-form secondary school students in Malaysia. Besides, it is also the main measurement for admission to matriculation program which is a pre-university program. Participants had studied English language since they were six years old. Their English proficiency levels are in the range of low to high intermediate level. These two classes need to enrol for an English course for two semesters. One class (Class A) with 15 students while another class (Class B) with 16 students were assigned for this study. Class A and Class B were treated as the intervention groups which received metacognitive listening strategy trainings that were integrated into normal listening lessons.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ)

Participants were given Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) before (Pre) and after (Post 1) the strategy training. In addition, to further identify the changes in participants’ metacognitive awareness, MALQ will be given for the third (Post 2) after the online listening practices. The questionnaire was adapted from Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal and Tafaghodtari (2006). MALQ were selected because it was developed based on Flavell’s metacognition theory which is the basic principle of MST and models of metacognitive strategies. MALQ has been tested in many researches with large number of respondents in different countries with various levels. It has 21 items measuring metacognitive knowledge, each item is rated on a six point Likert scale ranging from 1(strongly disagree) to 6(strongly agree) without a neutral point so that respondents could not hedge. MALQ consists of five components, including planning-evaluation (Questions 1- 6), directed attention (Questions 7-10), person knowledge (Questions 11-13), mental translation (Questions 14-16), problem-solving (Questions 17-21). Problem solving items infer on what is not understood and monitoring those inferences. Planning-evaluation items are about how listeners prepare themselves for listening efforts. Mental translation reflects bottom-up processing to listening comprehension. Besides that, directed attention includes items on how listeners stay focus and concentrate on their listening tasks. Finally, the fifth component is person knowledge which includes items that reflect learners’ perception on how they learn best and also their self-efficacy.

MALQ has been validated by the developers using both exploratory and confirmatory analysis by a large sample of different foreign language learners including Iranians (Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal & Tafaghodtari, 2006). MALQ also has been validated using an Iranian sample (Rahimi & Katal, 2012) and the result of exploratory and confirmatory analysis supported the five components. MALQ is also used in many other studies to identify and also as an instrument to increase metacognitive awareness of learners. Li (2013) stated that MALQ can be used to increase learners’ awareness on their listening process and other related cognitive activities. For this study, the items in the questionnaire went through back to back translation process (English – Malay – English) language to ensure that participants understood all the items given. Question 9 was deleted after the pilot study to increase the overall reliability. Cronbach’s Alpha showed 0.803 with 20 items.

3.2.2 Procedure and training materials

Firstly, metacognitive listening strategy training module designed by the researcher based on the Metacognitive Pedagogical Sequence (MPS) Instruction developed by Vandergrift and Goh (2012). This model integrates metacognitive strategies into listening activities. Table 1 provides more description of Pedagogical Sequence. The MPS model includes three listening stages. The first listening stage involved planning and predicting. This is followed by listening to the text for second time where students verify and make revisions to their predictions earlier. Students discussed their understanding of the text and reconstruct their ideas after each listening. Finally, the third listening to verify any missing information from the text. Sample metacognitive pedagogical sequence can be referred in Appendix 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning/Predicting</th>
<th>First verification stage and plan with peers for second form</th>
<th>Second verification stage and text reconstructive</th>
<th>Final verification stage</th>
<th>Reflection and goal setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher gives the context of the topic by using pictures or any other suitable method and students predict relevant information about the topic.</td>
<td>Students will verify their prediction and plan with their friends for second time listening. Students should add any new information that they did not understand at the first step.</td>
<td>At this phase, students review their information from stage and text reconstructive.</td>
<td>Students will listen to the text for the third time and also the final time, and if required they can add new information that they have missed from previous stages.</td>
<td>Learners reflect on their listening performance, the difficulties they encountered, and the way they should face listening tasks in future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lesson plans for the listening metacognitive strategy training followed the MPS stages. Lesson plans were validated by experts in the subject matter. Some changes have been made in terms of the language in the lesson plans after the validations. The sample lesson plans for the metacognitive strategy training please refer to Appendix 1. The worksheets for listening activities and audio CD were selected from Choo, Yeoh, Stanley and Yee’s (2014) Ace Ahead Text MUET Sixth Edition book. This book was selected because it has been reviewed by a team of experienced teachers from the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) advisory board and the activities were similar to the listening test questions.

After the module was prepared and validated by experts in the field, the researcher trained another English teacher on how to use the metacognitive listening strategy training module. Then, the intervention in the classrooms and online listening practices were carried out. The entire intervention took 14 weeks to be completed: one week was allocated explaining the metacognitive strategies to the students, nine weeks for the Metacognitive Strategy Training in the classrooms and four weeks of online listening practice phase for the both classes. The teachers followed the listening lesson plans in the module step-by-step for nine weeks in the classroom. Then, students will participate in the online listening activity on their own. Students accessed to the online listening activities through the matriculation portal under English unit. Sample lesson plan for online listening can be refereed in Appendix 2.

4. Data Analysis, Findings and Discussions

Data analysis were carried out using SPSS (Version 22.0) and to identify whether strategy training had any significant effect on students’ metacognitive awareness paired-sample t-test were carried out on the strategy use mean scores of five main components. First, a comparison of MALQ results before (Pre) and after (Post 1) metacognitive strategy training were conducted. Then, to further examine the changes of metacognitive awareness the data of MALQ (Post 2) after the online listening practice were compared with Post 1.

The results in Table 2 indicate that there is a significant increase in two types of components in metacognitive strategies namely planning-evaluation and directed attention. This suggests that students used more on planning-evaluation and directed attention strategies after the metacognitive strategy training. Behnam Arabi Zanjani and Siros Izadpanah (2016) also had similar findings in their study where their effective students used more planning and monitoring strategies and evaluation strategy was the least type strategy employed by the effective listeners. Zeynab Esmaeli, Saeed Taki, and Yasaman Rahimian (2017) also added to these findings that planning and evaluation strategy was used at medium level while problem solving strategy was used most frequently.

In terms of mean scores, the mean scores increased for the mean of planning and evaluation, directed attention, and problem solving components between Pre and Post results MALQ.

Table 2: Results of paired-sample t-test for five metacognitive components for Pre and Post 1
Further paired-sample t-test was conducted in order to identify whether even after the classroom metacognitive strategy training students were still able to use metacognitive strategies on their own for listening practices. However, results in Table 3 showed that only mean score of directed attention component show a significant difference. This indicated that students only use one out five components in metacognitive strategies which is directed attention component for the online listening practices.

Table 3: Results of paired-sample t-test for five metacognitive components for Post 1 and Post 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Mean SD</th>
<th>t df p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning Evaluation</td>
<td>4.8859</td>
<td>.55803 1.045 30 .004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directed Attention</td>
<td>5.2903</td>
<td>.60088 1.313 30 .002*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person Knowledge</td>
<td>4.0161</td>
<td>1.12427 3.406 30 .035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>4.5871</td>
<td>.60279 3.954 30 .035</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results presented above are derived from Pre, Post 1 and Post 2 MALQ results. In summary, the matriculation students seemed to be using directed attention at both classroom training and online listening practices.

5. Conclusion

This study addresses the issues of investigating the effectiveness of metacognitive strategy training in improving L2 listeners’ listening performance and metacognitive knowledge. If the metacognitive strategy training proved to make a difference in both L2 listeners’ listening level and metacognitive knowledge, it can be used as an important variable in guiding listeners understanding a listening text. A research by Selamat and Sidhu (2011) revealed that students at one of the Malaysian local universities perceived the metacognitive strategy training as helpful in developing their lecture listening skills and also it allows them to be more effective in understanding the information given during lectures. In addition, improvement in metacognitive knowledge also will encourage learners to manage their own learning processes. Learners would be able to perform well in their academic achievement by improving their listening skill. As explained at problem statement section, most of the tertiary education teaching and learning processes involve listening skill. Carrier (2003) stated that capability of utilising effective strategies in students’ academic listening is very important for L2 learners. Thus, this research will be beneficial as it provides one possible method of helping learners to improve their academic performance by providing them with effective listening strategies through metacognitive strategy training.

Besides that, this present study also is one of the rare studies that will provide valuable information from a post delayed test for improving students’ listening comprehension. There is a need to investigate the effect of extended practice on listeners listening comprehension because it is still under researched in terms of Malaysian context. So far, researches were more focused on the effects of MST on language learning. Nik Suriana (2000) and Habibian (2015) investigated the effect of MST on learners’ reading performances. There is also a study investigating the use of metacognitive strategies on academic performances in general (Norhean Zulkiply, Mohamad Radian Kabit & Kartini Abd Ghani, 2008). There are few studies which investigated the impact of MST on Malaysian learners’ listening comprehension (Faridah, 2011; Selamat &Sidhu, 2011). Thus, this current study not only contributes to the increasing knowledge on the effectiveness of MST in enhancing students’ metacognitive awareness, but it is also innovative, as it added the element of online listening practice. Therefore, findings from this study would be the one of the few to provide new visions into current issues on MST together with online listening practice in Malaysian context.

Furthermore, the results of the study would be useful for curriculum planners and educators. Information on how to effectively include strategy training in listening lessons can be gained from the study. Listening lesson plans integrated with metacognitive strategies will be provided from this study for future use of teachers and curriculum planners. This is necessary because current methods of teaching listening in Matriculation program did not help much in enhancing learners’ listening comprehension. According to Carrier...
(2003), knowing how to systematically teach metacognitive strategies in L2 classroom is vital because the success of learners to comprehend authentic aural inputs meaningfully, would prepare them for high academic achievement. Hence, this research will provide techniques in effectively implementing metacognitive strategies for improving learners’ listening comprehension. Future studies on metacognitive strategy training could include a control group to see the differences in students’ strategy use.

References


Vandergrift, L. (2002). It was nice to see that our predictions were right. Developing metacognition in L2 listening comprehension. Canadian Modern Language Review, 58, 555-575.


Appendix 1: Sample lesson plan for metacognitive strategy training using MPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Students will be introduced to metacognitive strategies in the first week.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogical sequence handout &amp; worksheets on MetSI.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students will be asked how many hours they sleep daily</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Then, students will fill in Part A and Part B of the Pedagogical sequence handout after knowing the topic ‘Relationship between Sleep Deprivation and Health’ mentioned by the teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Session</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Then, students will answer part C from the Pedagogical Sequence. After taking notes, they will compare their answers with a partner and add any valuable information that were missed out in Part B.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Students will learn the test again and they will answer the questions written in Part B.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Next, there will be a class discussion, focusing on what they have noticed, students will discuss what they think is interesting and exchange opinion in relation to the content of the lesson.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final reflection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Students will reflect strategies that they used and plans for next lesson activity.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflective Journal Writing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Then, students will fill in the reflective journal written from.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Finally, students will mark the relevant boxes in the students’ performance checklist from to ensure that they have completed all the steps for MetSI.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2: Sample lesson plan for online listening practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Students will be introduced to the new listening task.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Then, students will answer the questions written in the student handout</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Finally, students will mark the relevant boxes in the students’ performance checklist from to ensure that they have completed all the steps for MetSI.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Sample Pedagogical Sequence Hand-out

Pedagogical sequence hand-out will be given to the students in the_research_group only before listening to the text and will be used throughout the lesson.

- Part A: Write down three main ideas that you think you will hear in the text.

- Part B: Share your predictions with your partner and write at least two more ideas that your partner included in his/her list of predictions and that you consider the logical possibilities.

- Part C: Listen to the text and put a (✓) mark that you (A) and your partner (B) predicted and it was mentioned in the text, then write down any other ideas that you have not predicted but were mentioned below.

- Part D: After verifying your predictions and discussing with your partner, listen to the text again to check your results and to enrich and stimulate comprehension between you and your partner. Add any further points and important points and details that you may have understood during first time.

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