

**THE USE OF ADVANCE ORGANIZERS TO PREPARE COLLEGE STUDENTS
TO LISTEN IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

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ABSTRACT

This sequential mixed-methods study examined the effect of the use of advance organizers on a video-based listening comprehension task performed by 124 EFL college students in three experimental conditions. In the first phase, each participant completed an advance organizer activity, watched a video segment, took a listening comprehension test, and completed an attitude survey; the second phase consisted of a focus group discussion, which was used to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of the quantitative data so as to arrive at a more comprehensive analysis. The results showed that students performed best when they had question preview (QP) as an advance organizer prior to viewing the target video, moderately well when they had summary of major scenes (SMS) with accompanying pictures, and poorest when they had cultural background cues (CBC). Statistical analyses indicated that the QP Group was significantly different from the other two groups; however, the SMS Group and the CBC Group did not differ significantly. The implications of this study and suggestions for future research on the use of advance organizers in the second/foreign language classroom are discussed.

Key Words: advance organizer, video-based, mixed-methods study, listening comprehension, culture background cues

INTRODUCTION

Comprehension plays an important role in the process of second language acquisition. Krashen's *Input Hypothesis* (1985) makes the claim that humans acquire language by understanding messages which come in the form of comprehensible input. Although Krashen's claims have often been challenged, there is universal agreement among second language

researchers that such input is a central factor in language learning. It is thus crucial to find the best ways to make the input comprehensible to a second/foreign language learner.

During the 1970s, cognitive psychology began focusing on the individual as an active processor of linguistic input, and looking at the major role played by the individual's background knowledge in the comprehension process. Schema-theoretic perspectives on comprehension, developed in this period, are guided by the idea that input is overlaid upon an individual's cognitive structure (previously acquired or background knowledge) in order to find a match.

Recognizing the importance of background knowledge for success in comprehension, Ausubel (1960) first advocated the introduction of relevant concepts used as advance organizers to enhance comprehension and retention of language materials. Ausubel (1968) defined the advance organizers as "relevant and inclusive introductory materials...introduced in advance of the learning material" (p. 148). The claim that the use of advance organizers helps learners activate background knowledge, which facilitates comprehension and retention of L2 texts, has been well-documented in L2 research on listening comprehension. In order to investigate what kind of advance organizer condition is most effective in making aural input more comprehensible to the language learner, Herron, Hanley and Cole (1995) compared the effect of two advance organizer conditions on students' retention of information in French videos. In the first advance organizer condition, the teacher read aloud six sentences which summarized in chronological order the major scenes from a video lesson. The major difference in the second advance organizer condition was that each sentence read aloud by the teacher was also accompanied by a picture relevant to the context. The findings of the study suggested that students' comprehension and retention of information was significantly more enhanced in the second advance organizer condition, in which more contextually relevant background knowledge about the video was activated prior to their listening task.

A recent study conducted by Wilberschied and Berman (2004) is very similar in nature to the preceding research. They studied 61 elementary school students of Chinese as a foreign language, using videos from authentic Chinese TV broadcasts with two types of advance organizer. In a design reminiscent of the Herron et al. (1995) study, they used a summary of major scenes presented in chronological order with accompanying pictures taken directly from the video, and compared this advance

organizer condition with another type of advance organizer in which description of major scenes was presented without accompanying pictures. Though the study failed to establish a significant difference in listening comprehension between the two advance organizer conditions, interview results indicated that the young learners prefer the advance organizer condition with pictures to the one with text alone.

To encourage students to ponder what might be included in the upcoming video, Herron, York, Cole and Linden (1998) designed a study to compare comprehension and retention of video in two experimental conditions and one control condition. The difference between the two experimental conditions lay in the format of advance organizers. As advance organizers, short descriptions of upcoming scenes in the video were presented in either a declarative mode or an interrogative mode. The control condition had no advance organizer available before the video viewings. Data from 10 video viewings were collected from a total of 67 students enrolled in a 15-week second-semester French course. The results showed that the mean scores of the two advance organizer groups were significantly higher than the scores of the control group, but there was no statistically significant difference in mean scores between the declarative mode and the interrogative mode. These results again suggested that it is significantly better to incorporate advance organizers into lessons plans, so that students will not attack a listening activity unprepared. The study confirmed that student comprehension is facilitated by a framework of clues about what is to come in a video.

The interest in advance organizers and their facilitative role in listening comprehension have been further explored by Teichert (1996) using multiple advance organizers. He compared student listening comprehension performance by applying Illustrations, Brainstorming, and Question as advance organizers along with video- and audiotapes. His participants were 50 college students enrolled in three intermediate German conversation classes. Students in the control group, on the other hand, did not receive the advance organizer treatment or the supplementary video and audio materials. Findings indicated that students who had been exposed to the advance organizer condition developed superior listening skills in a standardized listening post-test in comparison with those in the control group. The results again supported positive benefits for using advance organizers to activate listener's schematic knowledge.

Two studies conducted by Chung (1999, 2002) showed that an

advance organizer plus captioning or the use of multiple advance organizers are more useful in enhancing listening comprehension than either treatment alone or lack of advance organizers. In the earlier study, she examined the effects on EFL students' listening comprehension of using video texts together with a variety of techniques. A total of 170 students (four groups) were recruited for this study. Each group viewed four different video segments in four different conditions based on a Latin Square design. The treatments included an advance organizer of six to eight sentences related to the video segment, captions, a combination of both, and neither (control condition). A multiple-choice question format was administered right after each treatment to assess the participants' listening comprehension. The results indicated that the caption group and the combined group both scored significantly higher than the advance organizer group and the control group. Nor were there significant differences between the advance organizer group and the control group. These results underscore the need to study different kinds of advance organizers. The findings also suggested that playing video alone without any technique is not considered effective in language teaching. Only when a video is accompanied with some facilitating technique do language learners benefit from this authentic language input.

In the later study, Chung (2002) investigated the effects of two advance organizers—question previewing and vocabulary pre-teaching—on English video comprehension of 188 EFL learners. The results showed that learners taught with a combined treatment of the two advance organizers outperformed those who received vocabulary pre-teaching treatment or neither treatment on the multiple-choice and the open-ended test items. Berne (1995) and Elkhafaifi (2005) also noted that the top-down processing involved in a question preview activity encourages listeners to pay close attention to the overall message or content of the listening passage rather than to the individual words or structures. In addition, supplying the listeners with questions enables them to make use of previous knowledge specific to the listening passage when they process the listening passage content.

Even though most of the existing research seems to indicate that multiple advance organizers work better for language learners in the listening process, counterevidence is found in one empirical study which turns the advantage of using multiple advance organizers in comprehension into a disadvantage. Chung and Huang (1998) explored the effects on the students' listening comprehension of L2 videos of three

aural advance organizer conditions—the introduction of main characters, pre-viewing key vocabulary, and a combination of both. Students' listening comprehension performance was assessed by 10 multiple-choice questions. The results showed that pre-viewing key vocabulary was the most effective way to facilitate listening comprehension, followed by the introduction of main characters. However, surprisingly, a combination of both techniques was the least effective. It would seem that the extra efforts the learners had to make to process the combined pre-viewing information could challenge them beyond the limits of their cognitive capacity, which in turn may offset the facilitative effect of such multiple advance organizers. Additionally, providing too much information or detail prior to viewing a video for comprehension might be considered demotivating. The study's authors suggest that language instructors take into account their students' concentration span.

In all of the studies, one common thread is that the facilitative role of the right advance organizer approach to any listening task is unquestionable. Almost no research to date, however, has used cultural points in the form of an advance organizer to enhance listening comprehension, in spite of the fact that the use of cultural background cues prior to a listening task has been suggested among the list of effective advance organizers for videos (Chung, 1999; Herron, 1994). With the advance of technology, more and more video- and multimedia-based language teaching programs are now available in second/foreign language curricula. Further research on the development of other effective advance organizers is absolutely necessary in order to make the media-based language teaching materials comprehensible to students.

In this two-phase, sequential mixed-methods study, quantitative instruments were used to investigate the effect of advance organizers on a video-based listening comprehension task performed by college students in an EFL context. First, student performance in the experimental manipulation was assessed via a multiple-choice comprehension test. A survey was also conducted, which was intended to address the issue about participants' attitudes toward the role of advance organizers in their comprehension process. The second phase consisted of a focus group discussion, which was used to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of the quantitative data that could not be explained statistically, so as to arrive at a more comprehensive analysis. The specific questions to be addressed in the current study are:

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- (1) Do EFL students' video-based listening comprehension scores vary as a function of different types of advance organizers? If so, which type of advance organizer is considered more effective and helpful in enhancing listening comprehension? (Hypothesis 1: EFL students who are exposed to different advance organizer conditions will perform differently in their listening comprehension scores.)
- (2) What are students' attitudes and opinions toward advance organizers in their listening process? What specific ways do they report that advance organizers help them, or what problems do they find in doing so?

RESEARCH METHOD

Participants

Convenience sampling was used in selecting sophomores from a national university of science and technology. A course entitled Practice of English Listening and Speaking is required in the second-year curriculum of this university. An intermediate-level English listening comprehension component from a mock General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) distributed by the Language Training and Test Center is used by the institute as a placement test before the sophomores can formally register for the required course. Students who pass this level are expected to be able to understand general conversations and inquiries in daily life situations and grasp the general meaning of public announcements, weather forecasts and advertisements.

Based on the results of the placement test, students are grouped into three ability levels, Level A with two classes, Level B with seven classes, and Level C with three classes. Students in Level A are recognized as having higher listening proficiency than those in Level B. Students in Level C are considered as less proficient than those in Level B. Each level is composed of students from different academic departments and there are approximately 45 students in each class. Three intact classes with a total of 135 students were randomly chosen from Level B as participants because their proficiency level was representative of the whole. They had studied English for at least seven years, and Mandarin Chinese is their first language. After the experimental treatment and initial data screening, it was found that some of the data collected were

incomplete, and thus they were discarded. Only data collected from the remaining 124 participants were used for analysis.

Design and Experimental Manipulation

This study used a one-way ANOVA independent design. A chart to illustrate the specific research design is provided in Figure 1. In this experimental design, advance organizer with three levels was the independent variable; the dependent variable was the participants' scores on the Video-Based Listening Comprehension Test administered to them immediately after the experimental treatment.

Advance Organizer Class	Question preview	Cultural background cues	Summary of major scenes
Class 1 (<i>n</i> = 43)	Subgroup 1 (<i>n</i> = 13)	Subgroup 2 (<i>n</i> = 14)	Subgroup 3 (<i>n</i> = 16)
Class 2 (<i>n</i> = 39)	Subgroup 4 (<i>n</i> = 12)	Subgroup 5 (<i>n</i> = 13)	Subgroup 6 (<i>n</i> = 14)
Class 3 (<i>n</i> = 42)	Subgroup (<i>n</i> = 14)	Subgroup 8 (<i>n</i> = 15)	Subgroup 9 (<i>n</i> = 13)
Total (<i>N</i> = 124)	39	42	43

Figure 1. A One-way Between-subjects Research Design

Instrumentation and Materials

Experimental packets

The author prepared three different sets of experimental packets in the form of advance organizers for this study. Inside each packet were clear instructions written in the participants' first language, materials related to one of the three advance organizers, a Video-Based Listening Comprehension Test (the same as that used in the advance organizer condition of question preview), and an attitude survey.

One of the three advance organizer conditions was six short sentences written in Chinese that summarized the major scenes, in chronological order, accompanied by authentic pictures taken directly from the target video (see Appendix A). Below each picture was the

corresponding description about the content of the picture. Findings from Wilberschied and Berman's study (2004) showed that using authentic pictures taken directly from a video effectively provides accurate clues to the video content, and it is also relatively simple and easy to implement.

Another advance organizer condition was designed as scaffolding material to activate the participants' cultural background schemata and to provide mental stimulation of the content in the upcoming listening text. The advance organizer activity used in the study is a variation on a technique described in Tomalin and Stempleski's *Cultural Awareness* (1993). In *Teaching Culture*, Seelye (1988) provides a framework for achieving seven goals of cultural instruction, and one of them is to help students develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture. Based on this framework, the author compiled a list of 13 generalizations about the target culture relevant to understanding the video segment (see Appendix B). Some of the generalizations are true and some are false. Participants read each statement, evaluated it and marked it either probably true or probably false. Answers to these generalizations were provided on the back of the task sheet and they were strongly advised to check against their own answers after they had completed the task. Each false statement was already explained in the answer key section to heighten their awareness of the target culture.

The third advance organizer condition was a comprehension question preview, containing the same items as the Video-Based Listening Comprehension Test (see Appendix C). Participants in this activity read the eight multiple-choice questions and possible responses. Question previewing before students listen to the text has a positive psychological value in that it provides schema for comprehension and sets a specified purpose (Berne, 1995; Brindley, 1998; Buck, 2001; Elkhafaifi, 2005; Omaggio, 1993; Sherman, 1997).

The reason that a control group with no advance organizer treatment was not included in the study is that previous studies related to the use of advance organizers to enhance comprehension all suggested the facilitative effect of advance organizers on comprehension and retention of language materials. Thus, it seemed safe, in designing this study, to assume that advance organizers do help comprehension. The question, then, became, "Which type of advance organizer is most effective?"

Target video

The video tape used in the study was from the Atlas Video Lab Guide Series (A) produced by International Thomson Asia ELT for

teaching English as a Foreign Language at the intermediate to high-intermediate level. The video segment used in the study was Unit 9, and the participants' instructors said that it had never been used in their classes. Videos have been said to enhance listening comprehension for a story because background information about all the characters and some extralinguistic features can be filled in visually. Rubin (1990) argued that "video can serve as a haven to enhance listening comprehension if it is selected so that it provides sufficient clues for information processing. It is the selection that is critical, not just the use of video alone" (p. 315). This explains why a fictional narrative like this was chosen for the study rather than a video in which a 'talking head' narrates a whole story and provides little visual support for content.

Video-Based Listening Comprehension Test (VBLCT)

A multiple-choice listening comprehension test, which was used to assess the participants' listening performance, was presented through two basic formats: in the form of questions and in the form of sentence completion. The former was basically an interrogative statement followed by four alternative responses, while the latter was an incomplete sentence followed by four alternative completions. Participants were required to choose the best response among the four to answer the corresponding comprehension question. As recommended by Buck (2001), multiple-choice questions can be used to test a variety of listening sub-skills, "from understanding at the most explicit literal level, through combining information from different parts of the text, making pragmatic inferences, understanding implicit meanings, to summarizing and synthesizing extensive sections of text" (p. 146). Cheng (2004) found that test takers prefer the multiple-choice format because the alternative responses facilitate comprehension of verbal stimuli. Additionally, a positive feature of using a multiple-choice format is the ease and objectivity of correction. Each multiple-choice question that was correctly answered was given a score of one point with a full score of eight.

The validity of the VBLCT was established via expert opinion. A total of three ESL/EFL experts were asked to view the target video and to rate the construct validity of the VBLCT, based on the relevance and appropriateness to the video content. Each expert rated the test individually, using a five-point Likert Scale with a range from 5 points (highly relevant/appropriate) to 1 point (highly irrelevant/inappropriate). Any question on the test was eliminated when it was rated below three

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by at least two raters, an indication of low degree of relevance or appropriateness to the content. The final version of the VBLCT was composed of eight multiple-choice questions.

Results from the pilot study described below indicated that correlation coefficient between two halves of the VBLCT (i.e. between the odd-numbered and even-numbered items of the test), which were assumed to be parallel, was .92 ($p < .05$). This figure indicated a strong positive relationship. As such, internal consistency reliability estimated by the split-half reliability approach showed the reliability of the VBLCT.

Attitude survey

An attitude survey containing six statements about the role of advance organizers in listening comprehension was developed. Using either a 'Yes' or a 'No', participants were asked to respond to each of the items in the questionnaire by indicating whether or not they agreed or disagreed with each statement. In addition, some statements required the participants to provide additional comments on their own answers.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to ensure the clarity of the attitude survey as well as the VBLCT and to measure the reliability of the VBLCT. Fifty-two students from another university of science and technology with a similar language proficiency level based on the GEPT Test were recruited to participate in the pilot study. Prior to video viewing, all of them were provided with the same advance organizer condition in the form of cultural background cues. This type of advance organizer was pilot-tested because it had never been employed in previous studies, in comparison with the other two types. After video viewing, half of the pilot study participants by random selection were given the odd-numbered items of the VBLCT while those remains were given the even-numbered items. Then they completed the survey which was aimed at eliciting their attitudes toward the role of advance organizers in their listening process. The author wanted to know if specific information might be needed before they could make a judgment, so the survey could be modified accordingly to avoid ambiguity and to ensure its clarity.

Experimental Procedures

This section describes step-by-step procedures for conducting the experiment. The procedure for quantitative data collection took about two weeks. First, the author in the absence of the participants' instructors was present in each of the three intact classes as previously scheduled and went through the same procedures in each class. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the things they had to do in the experiment, and compensation for participation. They knew their participation in the study was voluntary.

The author then took out three sets of experimental packets he had prepared prior to the experiment, and the three sets of packets with different advance organizer conditions were distributed to approximately one-third of the students in each class. They were given five minutes to complete the required task. The VBLCT used to measure their understanding of the target video was administered to them immediately after the experimental treatment. The survey was given to the participants to complete after they had been exposed to the treatment and had finished their VBLCT. There was no time limit in either answering the listening comprehension questions or completing the survey.

Quantitative Data Analysis

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedure was used to compare three levels of advance organizer on the VBLCT. Post hoc procedures were conducted to determine which groups differed when the main effect was found significant. For the analysis of the attitude survey, a chi-square test along with a percentage report was used to determine whether the number of responses, positive and negative, was equally distributed for each of the statements in the questionnaire. Participants' additional comments were collected and used to develop part of the questions for the second-phase focus group discussion.

Focus Group Discussion

Since the author was also interested in information generated through group interaction and discussion with regard to the use of advance organizers in the listening task, a focus group discussion with two questions was employed to collect the aforementioned information. In the discussion, participants were able to build on each other's ideas,

responses, and comments in order to provide in-depth views that were not attainable in a one-on-one interview. The discussion was conducted one week after the first-phase quantitative study.

Eighteen participants, two from each of the nine subgroups in the first-phase quantitative study, were randomly selected to participate in the discussion from among those who had left their e-mail address or phone number in the attitude questionnaire, stating that they were willing to participate in a focus group discussion if selected.

During the discussion, the author explained what a focus group discussion was and how it worked, informed them that the discussion would be recorded, and assured them that all information collected would be kept confidential. They were grouped into three heterogeneous subgroups (six people in each) based on the particular advance organizer condition in which they had worked in the first phase, so that all participants in a discussion subgroup could express how they felt about that particular advance organizer condition and respond to the questions that had been prepared by the author. Thirty minutes were allocated to the discussion of their experience in the advance organizer issue, which was broken down into two questions. The two co-facilitators and the author kept the discussion on track, prompted each participant to express their opinions in the two discussion sessions, and made sure every participant was heard. The facilitators, however, did not express their own opinions or make judgments on the opinions of the participants. A volunteer from each group then reported what they had agreed or disagreed about in the group discussion.

Analysis of the Discussion

Goldenkoff (2004) stated that, depending on the purpose of the focus group discussion, an analysis of the focus group discussion can be relatively simple and straightforward, involving just a summary of major themes, or may call for more complex content analyses and comparisons across groups. Since the purpose of the discussion was purely explanatory, a brief summary and analysis, which highlighted major themes, was considered sufficient. Participants' remarks were first thematically categorized, transcribed word for word, and literally translated from Chinese into English into a computer. Findings from the focus group discussion are reported and discussed in the following section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Results for Research Question #1

Table 1 summarizes the means of the VBLCT, divided by advance organizer condition, whereby participants had question preview, cultural background cues, and summary of major scenes with accompanying pictures. The Question Preview (QP) Group ($M = 5.73$, $SD = 1.05$) scored the highest, followed by the Summary of Major Scenes (SMS) Group ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.16$); the Cultural Background Cues (CBC) Group ($M = 4.66$, $SD = 1.26$) scored the lowest.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Three Advance Organizer Groups

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Question Preview (QP)	39	5.73	1.05
Cultural Background Cues (CBC)	42	4.66	1.26
Summary of Major Scenes (SMS)	43	4.93	1.16
Total	124	5.10	1.23

The results revealed a significant effect, $F(2, 121) = 9.04$, $p < .001$, as Table 2 demonstrates. Eta squared (η^2) for advance organizer was about .13, which, according to Cohen (1988), is very close to a large sized effect. The post hoc Tukey HSD Test was conducted to determine which groups were different from which other groups. This analysis, as displayed in Table 3, revealed that the QP Group scored significantly higher than both the CBC Group ($p < .001$) and the SMS Group ($p = .007$). The CBC Group, however, was not significantly different from the SMS Group ($p = .528$).

Table 2. One-Way ANOVA Summary Table Comparing Advance Organizer Conditions on the VBLCT

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between groups	23.34	2	11.67	9.04	< .001
Within groups	156.65	121	1.29		
Total	179.99	123			

Table 3. Pairwise Comparison Results on VBLCT by Advance Organizer

(I) Advance organizer	(J) Advance organizer	Mean difference (I - J)	SE	p
QP	CBC	1.07	.27	< .001
	SMS	.80	.26	.007
CBC	QP	-1.07	.27	<.001
	SMS	-.27	.26	.528
SMS	QP	-.80	.26	.007
	CBC	.27	.26	.528

Based on the quantitative analyses, Hypothesis 1, which states that EFL students who are exposed to different advance organizer conditions will perform differently in their listening comprehension scores, is not rejected. Judging from this analysis, readers can feel confident in assuming that the advance organizer activity of question preview has functioned to prepare students to succeed more fully on the comprehension test items than have the other two types of advance organizer activities.

Qualitative Results for Question #1

In order to provide multiple perspectives on the results and to assist in interpreting the findings of the quantitative data, a focus group discussion with a few participants was conducted after the first-phase study. The first question for discussion was, "Based on your advance organizer treatment, how did you feel about it?" Following are the group discussion results reported by a volunteer from each group. The author was responsible for transcribing their group reports and literally translating it from Chinese into English.

QP Group: We think that question preview plays an important role in the listening task. By previewing the comprehension questions and the responses, we developed a framework in our mind, and we knew clearly what information we needed to listen for without losing our focus in the listening process. We were also less tense and nervous in the listening task. Even though some of the hypotheses we had made were incorrect after we verified them in the film, we like this activity. We think it is interesting and motivating to test our hypotheses in a listening task.

CBC Group: We do not think cultural background cues really helped in the listening task. It seems that the cues were not closely related to the

video content. We had trouble making an association between the video content and this type of advance organizer treatment. In addition, the cultural issues are too general to be captured in the pre-listening activity. Despite the limited value of the cultural background cues in the comprehension process, we believe it is better to have this type of advance organizer as a pre-listening activity than having nothing at all prior to viewing the target video.

SMS Group: Basically, reading the summary of major scenes with accompanying pictures is considered very useful. Reading the description, we were able to easily understand the main ideas about the video content; however, it would have been better if more detailed information and more pictures had been given in the summary. In this way, it was more likely for us to make a more accurate prediction.

Discussion

The use of advance organizers as an instructional strategy is intended to help a learner to anchor unfamiliar new material to some script that is already known by the learner in his/her cognitive structure; the advance organizer either provides this script, or links to the learner's prior knowledge, activating an existing script. The findings of this study confirm and support the interpretation of the positive results of previous research on advance organizers in that advance organizers are helpful to listening comprehension of new material by activating background knowledge and providing contextual clues to upcoming information.

Regarding the effect of advance organizers on the video-based listening comprehension performance, results indicated that the QP group scored significantly higher than both the CBC Group and the SMS Group; however, the CBC Group and the SMS Group did not differ significantly. The quantitative results, in tandem with previous research on the effect of question previewing on L2 listening comprehension (Berne, 1995; Brindley, 1998; Buck, 2001; Cheng, 2004; Chung, 2002; Elkhafaifi, 2005; Omaggio, 1993; Sherman, 1997), highlight the positive psychological value of question preview for a listening task in that question preview provides schema for comprehension and sets a specified purpose. This type of advance organizer prepared students well for the listening task by supplying relevant information about the upcoming listening text. They actively searched for answers while listening because they knew what information they needed to listen for. As observed in Chung's (2002) study, multiple choice questions used as an advance organizer provide

“retrieval cues that can facilitate recall of information from the listening passage” (p. 239). Cheng (2004) suggested multiple choice questions provide retrieval clues and guessing chances through reading printed information and help students predict the topic before they listen to the spoken stimuli. For lower achievers, a higher percentage of selected responses in the test format enables them to “experience success in a positive, non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom” (p. 551).

The qualitative data from the focus group discussion further our understanding gained from the statistical analyses. Participants in the QP Group thought that question preview altered the nature of the listening process, and they listened to the text with a focus or task in mind. The certainty of knowing what to listen for in the listening task reduced their anxiety level because they could focus their attention on the appropriate parts of the video text. They were motivated and felt more confident while listening. In this study, it appears that the use of an advance organizer in the form of question preview effectively “helped the foreign language learner navigate in the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) and progress from an actual development level toward a potential one” (Herron, 1994, p. 194). Reflecting on the QP method as the most successful individual outcome in this study, the author would not immediately say that language teachers should use this advance organizer all the time in planning their lessons. It may be true that the QP organizer in the multiple-choice format works better than the other two advance organizers when the goal of a listening task is for the learners to focus on certain parts of a video on the search of answers to some comprehension questions. The facilitative effect of the QP organizer, however, may be reduced when open-ended test items, which require in-depth answers, were used as an advance organizer.

Although the difference between the SMS Group and the CBC Group did not reach statistical significance, the SMS Group ($M = 4.93$) scored higher than the CBC Group ($M = 4.66$). It is possible that summary of major scenes with accompanying pictures, in comparison with cultural background cues, provides contextual support and background knowledge to the information contained in the video, which makes this type of advance organizer more meaningful than general cultural information, and thus means that this type of organizer involves a higher level of cognitive analysis. The deeper or the more meaningful the processing, the more impact it should have on the comprehension and retention of the listening stimuli, according to the depth-of-processing approach to

memory (Craik & Lockhart, 1972). In addition, reading a summary of major scenes with accompanying pictures also reflects typical behavior, as some people do read a short synopsis about TV programs and movies in the newspaper before they view them (Berne, 1995; Herron, 1994). Thus, the familiarity of the task may have increased the students' comfort level with the video viewing, and is another possible reason why students in the SMS Group benefited more in this type of advance organizer than those in the CBC Group.

It is interesting that the students' verbal reports coincided closely with the quantitative results; in other words, the group that did best also felt most positive about their advance organizer activity. Participants in the SMS Group were moderately disappointed, in that they expected more detailed information and more pictures. Had there been more contextually related pictures and description, there may be a significant difference in the VBLCT completed by these two groups. Finally, those whose pre-viewing activity consisted of generalizations about cultural practices were least satisfied, which again fits in with their having achieved the lowest comprehension scores. Of course, unlike the question preview and the summary of major scenes with accompanying pictures taken directly from the video, the cultural background information inevitably related only indirectly to the video's content. Moreover, it stands to reason that cultural information is typically integrated in a way that helps a viewer understand why something is happening in a story, so as to make the story more comprehensible. As such, cultural discussions may function better as an advance organizer that prepares students for the comprehension of a text in which the cultural practices are quite different from the perspectives of the students' own culture.

Quantitative Results for Question #2

Table 4, based on the frequency of participants' responses, shows the percentage of how the participants rated statements about advance organizer treatment, and it also shows the results of the chi-square test. A significant difference was found in the responses to the three survey items. Table 5 shows the percentage of how the participants in different advance organizer groups rated statements about their treatment, and it also shows if the difference was significant across treatment groups. No significant difference was found in the responses to the three statements across the three treatment groups.

Table 4. Chi-Square Analysis of Survey Items 1, 4, and 5

Survey item	Response	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	
1. Do you think prediction plays a crucial role in the listening process?	Yes	116 (93.5%)	94.07	1	< .001
	No	8 (6.5%)			
4. Do you think it is more difficult to comprehend a spoken text without relevant prior/background knowledge?	Yes	97 (78.2%)	39.52	1	< .001
	No	27 (21.8%)			
5. Do you think the advance organizer treatment helped you activate your background knowledge with which you could predict what you were going to hear later in the video text?	Yes	120 (96.8%)	108.52	1	< .001
	No	4 (3.2%)			

Qualitative Results for Question #2

Following are some comments from the discussion with regard to what specific ways advance organizers help them enhance their better understanding of the target video, as well as what problems they find in doing so.

QP Group:

- QP is helpful in predicting the video content.
- An advance organizer in the form of QP is closely related to the background information needed for the video content.
- QP helps predict possible answers to comprehension questions.
- QP helps understand the main idea, just like browsing the introduction section of a book.
- QP is very helpful in the video viewing process because listeners clearly know what to listen for without losing a focus.
- QP is useful in eliminating responses that seem impossible or inappropriate, and it also helps understand the dialogue better by previewing some key words that appear in the multiple-choice questions.
- QP helps predict what information we should pay attention to, so we feel more comfortable and relaxed in the listening task.

Table 5. Chi-Square Analysis of Survey Items 2, 3, and 6 by Advance Organizer

Survey item		Advance organizer			χ^2	df	p
		QP	CBC	SMS			
2. Do you like organizer-aided video listening activities?	Yes	37 (94.9%)	36 (85.7%)	41 (95.3%)	3.32	2	.191
	No	2 (5.1%)	6 (14.3%)	2 (4.7%)			
3. Do you think you would have comprehended the video better without the aid of advance organizers?	Yes	1 (2.6%)	4 (9.5%)	1 (2.3%)	3.03	2	.220
	No	38 (97.4%)	38 (90.5%)	42 (97.7%)			
6. Do you think you were less likely to formulate a wrong hypothesis because advance organizer treatment helped you narrow down the number of possible interpretations of the text?	Yes	34 (87.2%)	32 (76.2%)	36 (83.7%)	1.77	2	.413
	No	5 (12.8%)	10 (23.8%)	7 (16.3%)			

CBC Group:

- The cues need to be narrowed down and revised so as to fit the video content better.
- CBC, in some way, helps us make an association between the video content and the advance organizer, but the prediction seems to be not very accurate and different from the video content.

SMS Group:

- Reading the summary of major scenes in advance helps predict what possible questions to be asked.
- SMS helps predict what is going to appear in the dialogue on the video.
- SMS helps us get a general understanding of the video context, and it is much easier for us to choose the answer to the comprehension questions.
- SMS helps us understand the mains ideas, and the listening process is considered more efficient and effective.
- SMS helps us grasp the main idea about the video content, and it is less likely to make an incorrect hypothesis or wrong prediction.

Discussion

The second research question examined students' attitudes and opinions toward advance organizers in their listening process. Specifically, the author would like to know what specific ways students think that advance organizers help them in the listening task or what problems they find in doing so.

Findings of this study generally confirm literature on the effectiveness of advance organizers in L2 listening comprehension (Berne, 1995; Chung, 1999, 2002; Herron, 1994; Herron, Hanley, & Cole, 1995; Herron, York, Cole, & Linden, 1998; Teichert, 1996; Wilberschied & Berman, 2004). Listening is a complex cognitive process that involves the listener and many other variables. Among the variables, background knowledge or prior knowledge organized around schemata plays a crucial role in theories of first and second language listening comprehension. The introduction of a comprehension activity prior to a listening task helps listeners activate their background knowledge, which in turn improves the measure of listening comprehension.

Students in both the QP Group and the SMS Group had a more positive attitude toward their pre-viewing introductory activities. These activities effectively bridged the gap between their imperfect linguistic knowledge and the upcoming listening material. On the other hand, students in the CBC Group, despite the non-significant differences in the comprehension scores between this type of advance organizer and the summary of major scenes, did not think that the cultural background cues were as useful as the other two types of advance organizers. As reflected earlier in Research Question One, participants said they felt that the nature of cultural background cues were not so helpful or facilitative as question preview or summary of major scenes with accompanying pictures, because they thought the cues were not so closely related to the video content. When the author developed the advance organizer in the form of cultural background cues, he tried to give the students a whole picture about dating customs and social behavior in the UK and the US, and thus incorporated into this type of advance organizer some other cultural information which was not covered on the video. The lack of fit between his intention and the students' expectations probably explains why the participants had a higher negative value for the effectiveness of cultural background cues in enhancing their understanding of the video.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

A survey study conducted by Powers (1986) suggested that most U.S. and Canadian professors of a variety of disciplines gave the receptive skills of listening and reading the highest rating when asked to indicate the relative importance of language skills for international students' success in their academic departments. Given the importance of listening in second language acquisition and language communication, any relevant assistance to help L2 listeners better comprehend the aural material deserves our careful consideration.

The findings of this research support the use of advance organizers to facilitate L2 video listening comprehension for intermediate-level EFL college students. Not only can an advance organizer be used for supplying relevant information to the listening material, but it can also function as a guide by providing listeners with a focus in their mind so as to approach a listening task in a more effective way. Although the use of various advance organizers for video listening leads to higher listening comprehension, there is reason to fear that second/foreign language educators do not have much time before class to prepare an effective advance organizer for supporting relevant connections of prior knowledge to the content and the context of the listening material. Two things, therefore, need to take into consideration before the implementation of a pre-listening comprehension activity. One is the format and the presentation of the advance organizer. Advance organizers should be simple to construct and do not take too much limited class time for language teachers to present, or language teachers may hesitate to use them in the second/foreign language classroom prior to students viewing a foreign language video, which is likely to make the listening/viewing experience less profitable and effective. The other thing that deserves our attention is the content of the advance organizer. No matter what types of advance organizer language teachers create, it is important that the content of the advance organizer be closely related to the aural material. An advance organizer that contains too much indirect relevance to listening stimuli distracts students' attention and is likely to offset the facilitative effect of advance organizers on comprehension.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The relative effectiveness of advance organizers used in the study

may vary as a result of learners' listening proficiency and of the format of the listening comprehension test. In this study, all of the participants were rated intermediate proficiency EFL college learners. This sampling procedure decreases the generalizability of findings to other language learners at various ages and proficiency levels. Additionally, the students' performance on the comprehension test may also vary as a function of using other types of listening assessment measures. Including both written recall protocols in students' L1, for example, and the multiple-choice format might have provided a more reliable result for evaluation of students' listening comprehension.

The present study has answered some questions regarding the effects of advance organizers on the video-based listening comprehension, but it has also raised some other questions that are worth further research.

First, all of the participants in the current study are rated intermediate proficiency EFL college students who viewed a fictional narrative video for comprehension. Future studies could use language learners at various ages and proficiency levels and different text types to investigate whether the results would be supported, or whether these groups reacted differently to the set of advance organizers used here. In particular, future studies, in comparison with other types of advance organizers, could explore the effectiveness of cultural background information in enhancing the comprehension of a culturally specific text of which a listener/viewer has not had any previously acquired knowledge.

Second, reading the summary of major scenes with accompanying pictures reflects typical behavior as some people do read a short synopsis about TV programs and movies before viewing them (Berne, 1995; Herron, 1994). Students' comments from the focus group discussion indicated that they expected more contextually related pictures and description in this type of advance organizer treatment. Future studies could investigate what might be an optimal number of pictures to use and how much information needs to be included in this type of advance organizer.

As a last direct extension of this study, the participants, in general, were positive about the various introductory activities prior to viewing the video. Future investigation could explore the effectiveness of other types of advance organizer in enhancing listening comprehension. It could also, as suggested by Teichert (1996), identify the maximum number of advance organizers that yields the best results.

Moving to the broader picture, of course, the questions being asked

here have been highly limited in scope; in particular, basic comprehension has been seen as the main learning goal to be measured, along with some sense of student motivation and perceptions. It is possible that the relatively successful QP method might, in focusing students' attention on the search for certain details, have made them less sensitive to remembering other parts of the video, or less able to link parts of the plot together meaningfully. Future studies could explore the relationship between the format of question preview and students' long-term retention of a listening text, or their ability to recall the content of a video presentation.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to provide clues regarding how the use of advance organizers would affect video-based listening comprehension. The use of multiple forms of data collection in the study provides a more comprehensive analysis on the outcomes of this research than previous studies. With more and more video- and multimedia-based language programs available in the second/foreign language curricula, the implications of this study are useful to language educators who have to plan activities for a multimedia instructional environment.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Summary of Major Scenes with Accompanying Pictures

	
(1) Kate is bringing her new boyfriend, Andy, home to meet her parents.	(2) Andy is very nervous and worries about what Kate's parents will think of him.
	
(3) During dinner, Kate's father asks Andy about his family and where he is from.	(4) Everything goes well until Kate's mother finds something 'weird' in Andy's salad.
	
(5) After dinner, Kate's father asks Andy what he does for a living.	(6) Kate's father has a surprise for Andy.

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Appendix B. Cultural Background Cues (with explanations in square brackets and reference answers)

The statements below give culture information about dating customs and social behavior in the UK and the US. Some of the generalizations are true and some are not. Read each statement and decide it's probably true (T) or probably false (F). See how much you can understand another culture.

1. (T) Most young people in the US start dating in their mid-teens.
2. (T) A man often goes to pick up his date at her home.
3. (T) Women may invite men to parties or other social events.
4. (T) Teenagers meet members of the opposite sex at school, parties, or other social events.
5. (T) Teenagers and young adults meet and choose their own dates.
6. (T) Men and women sometimes date people of different economic, ethnic, social, or religious backgrounds.
7. (F) Because American/British parents always respect their children's choice of their own dates, they never object. [**Although parents respect their children's choice, they sometimes object.**]
8. (T) When young adults bring their dates to meet their parents, that implies they have a serious relationship.
9. (F) It's considered impolite that parents ask what their children's dates do for a living. [**It's not unusual that parents do so when meeting their children's dates or any new person.**]
10. (F) When invited to a dinner party, people usually arrive 10 minutes later than the appointed time. [**People usually arrive within 15 minutes of the appointed time.**]
11. (T) A hostess is very embarrassed when there is a flaw in the food she prepared.
12. (F) You are a guest in a British or American friend's home. Your friend (not very close) asks if you would like something to drink. You say "That's OK. I can get it myself" if you really would like a drink. [**This would be appropriate only with very, very close friends, but you say "Yes, please" if you two are not so close.**]
13. (F) You've just been introduced to a British or American friend's parents, and you say "Hello" and bow to show your respect. [**Bowing is not a custom in the UK or the US. The usual response to an introduction is something like, 'It's nice to meet you and shaking hands.'**]

[Evaluation (based on the number of correct answers)]

13: You have a very good understanding of the UK and the US culture.

11~12: Your performance is good. 9~10: Your performance is fair.

Below 9: You don't seem to understand the UK and the US culture well.

Appendix C. Video-Based Listening Comprehension Test (VBLCT)

1. () Why did Andy look worried and nervous outside Kate's house?
(A) Because he forgot to bring a gift for Kate's parents.
(B) Because he didn't think he had got a decent job.
(C) Because he was late for the dinner.
(D) Because he was not a college graduate.
2. () _____ still live(s) in Alaska.
(A) Andy's sisters (B) Andy's brother
(C) Andy's parents (D) Andy himself
3. () What is probably NOT true about Andy?
(A) He is good at identifying butterflies.
(B) His brother might be interested in conservation.
(C) He's an auto mechanic.
(D) He doesn't have any sisters.
4. () What was Kate's mother sorry for?
(A) Because Andy did not like the fried chicken.
(B) Because the food was stone cold and tasted bad.
(C) Because she did not prepare enough food and drinks.
(D) Because something was wrong with the salad she had prepared.
5. () The caterpillar is special because of _____.
(A) its size (B) its color
(C) the way it moves (D) its rarity
6. () What is NOT true about Kate's father?
(A) He has got a terrific motorcycle.
(B) He agrees with Andy on his comments about the caterpillar.
(C) He used to be an electrical engineer.
(D) He does not know how to fix his motorcycle.
7. () What can be inferred from the story?
(A) Meeting one's boyfriend's/girlfriend's parents can make one nervous.
(B) Kate's parents are going to retire soon.
(C) Kate's parents do not think Andy is a trustworthy person.
(D) Andy is going to break up with Kate soon after meeting her parents.
8. () Everyone was happy at the end of the story because _____.
(A) they had made a great vacation plan to Alaska
(B) they had found a place to put the caterpillar in
(C) Kate's father told an interesting story about his motorcycle
(D) Andy finally got Kate's father's motorcycle fixed