

Managerial Studies. You can sign the courses up tomorrow morning.

Man: Fine. Now, is there a course in Sociology in the evening?

Woman: There are courses at 18.30 on Monday and Wednesday and at 19.30 on Tuesday and Thursday. There's also a Social Science course on Friday.

Man: Ok. I can make the 19.30 class.

Woman: Both classes are still open. You can register when you come in. Please come in thirty minutes before class to pick up the registration forms.

41. What is the purpose of the phone call? (12 seconds)
42. What is the Managerial Studies course? (12 seconds)
43. What Morning course does the man choose? (12 seconds)
44. When does he go to evening class? (12 seconds)
45. When does he have to register for this class? (12 seconds)

Sample 3. Short - News Test

1. a) since 1878
- b) since 1987
- c) since 1978
- d) since 1887

Transcript

Directions: In this part you will hear short news. At the end of each news, a person will ask a question about what was said.

1. UK Booms

The British once famous for being a nation of shopkeepers also seem to be a nation of spenders according to latest retail sales and house price figures. The new data from the Confederation of British Industry the CBI showed retail sales in the pre Christmas run up at their fastest growth rate since 1987.

1. Based on CBI, when has there been a growth in retail sales in the pre Christmas?

Sample 4. Extended-news Test

1. a) to supply their essentials
- b) not to lose their ability to buy
- c) to help the government
- d) to raise the prices
2. a) to increase exports
- b) to support the government
- c) to run a poll at the weekend

- d) to decrease the value of pesos
3. a) brought about an increase in the price of essentials
- b) helped people return to the hyperinflation
- c) solved a lot of problems as well as inflation
- d) ended the one - to - one parity between the two monetary unit
4. a) buy less than before
- b) return back to 1380s
- c) get rid of foreign investors
- d) rush to the shops

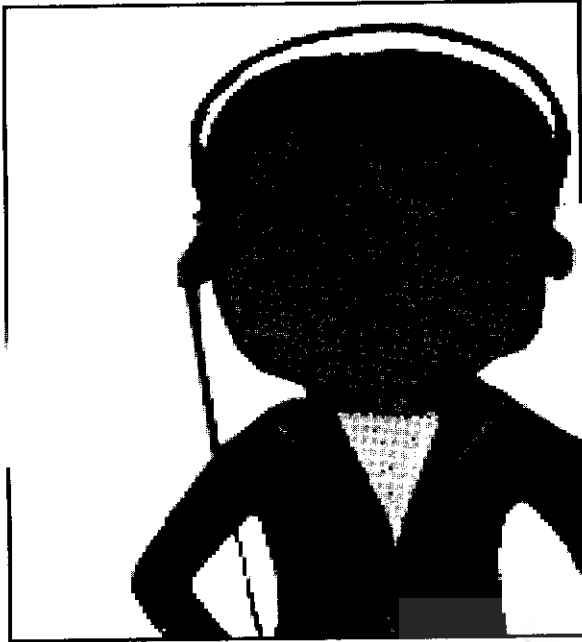
Transcript

Directions: In this test, you will hear some extended news. After each of them, you will be asked some questions. You will hear these news and the questions about them just one time. They will not be written out for you. Therefore, you must listen carefully to understand what the speaker says.

1. Argentinians fear price hikes after devaluation

Argentina is trying to stop its currency devaluation from bringing a return of price rises that could re-ignite the social unrest. Thousands of people have queued up to withdraw and spend their pesos before their purchasing power falls by around 30 percent. Some have already noticed prices of everyday essentials creeping up, following the decision by newly-elected President Eduardo Duhalde to fix the exchange rate at 1.40 pesos to the dollar. "With the new man in power, it's definitely bad for us," said one Buenos Aires resident. "Prices have risen, they're advising us not to the shops, but from what I've seen things like bread are already more expensive." With people fearing a return to the hyperinflation of the 1980s and a rapid decline in the peso, Economy Minister Jorge Remes Lenicov pleaded with shopowners and consumer groups to guard against mark-ups. The new government is trying to lift Argentina out of a four-year recession by boosting exports and reducing labour costs. A poll at the weekend showed a majority of Argentinians backed the move to end the one-to-one parity between the peso and the dollar. But there are fears that it will increase debt servicing costs and undermine foreign investors' confidence in Argentina even further.

1. Why do people remove their money from banks?
2. What is the new government's solution to the problem?
3. What was the effect of the new president's decision?
4. What were people asked to do?



Appendix

(sample Items)

Sample 1. Short - Conversation Test

21. (A) He didn't go to Chicago.
 (B) He had a good time in Chicago.
 (C) He spent his vacation here.
 (IV) He didn't enjoy his trip.

Transcript

21. Man A: How was your trip to Chicago?

Man B: To tell the truth I would rather have spent my vacation here.

Question: What does the second man mean? (12 seconds)

Sample 2. Extended - Conversation Test

41. (A) to register for a course.
 (B) To enquire about a course.
 (C) To confirm a registration.
 (D) To drop a course.
42. (A) At 19.30.
 (B) At 08.00.
 (C) At 08.30.
 (D) At 18.30.
43. (A) Sociology.
 (B) Social Science.
 (C) Policy Studies.
 (D) Managerial Studies.
44. (A) Tuesday and Thursday.
 (B) Tuesday.
 (C) Monday and Wednesday.
 (D) Friday.
45. (A) 19.30.
 (B) 19.00.
 (C) 18.30.
 (D) 20.00.

Transcript

Woman: Hello. Glenville college.

Man: Do you have a course on Managerial Studies at about 8.00?

Woman: Yes sir, there are courses every day from 8.30 a.m but I'm sorry, all courses are full for this semester. the Policy Studies course is still open and that's in the afternoon.

Man: No, the afternoon's impossible. Could you check the morning courses again?

Woman: One moment. Yes sir, there's been a drop in

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EFL subjects in listening comprehension. In the case of the low group, there were significant differences among different tests: short - conversation vs. extended-conversation and short - news vs. extended - news.

Finally, as Table 4. indicates, for high - group learners, different test - methods and genres did not consistently affect their performances in listening comprehension tests. But in the case of the two other groups, there were significant differences among participants in various listening comprehension tests.

On the whole, it can be concluded that the proficiency levels of the learners, different genres and test - methods affect the EFL learners' listening comprehension performances. The findings, then, support and expand the previous research on listening comprehension performance and assessment (Shohamy & Inbar, 1991; Berne, 1992; Shohamy, 1994, to cite a few).

Conclusion

This study was conducted to probe the possible effects of test methods as well as genres on the EFL learners' listening comprehension performance with respect to their general language proficiency levels. The findings reveal that the test method (short and extended context in the case of this study) significantly affected the performance of the EFL learners in listening comprehension tests. As for the second research question, the effect of different genres, i.e. news and conversation in this study, on the EFL learners' performance in listening comprehension tests was established. Finally, the findings indicate that the effect of test method and genre on listening comprehension vary with the proficiency level

of the EFL learners.

A straightforward implication of the findings is that proficiency levels of the EFL learners must be considered in material - developing, teaching and testing listening comprehension. By the same token, they imply that testers should be aware of the fact that EFL learners' listening comprehension performance may be affected by the genres and test - methods as two influential test characteristics.

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Table 4. The Scheffe test for comparing the test-methods and genres across language proficiency levels

	HSC	HXC	HSN	HXN	MSC	MXC	MSN	MXN	LSC	LXC	LSN	LXN
	X=18.33	X=15.91	X=17.00	X=14.17	X=13.65	X=11.81	X=12.86	X=9.86	X=10.31	X=9.70	X=10.69	X=7.79
HSC	5.70	3.08	38.96*	10.88*	50.15*	63.13*	195.94*	28.83*	77.61*	111.09*	277.36*	
HXC	2.67	5.27	8.35*	6.03	73.57*	25.41*	77.22*	33.37*	16.79*	67.13*	127.66*	
HSN	2.79	23.68*	0.74	8.52*	11.75*	2.02	9.23*	36.71*	128.08*	17.85*	91.65*	
HXN	5.08	1.67	3.83	6.19	49.86*	20.64*	19.63*	2.26	3.83	39.41*		
MSC	15.32*	0.62	28.75*	2.61	13.49*	15.32*	0.62	0.01	0.91	2.54		
MXC	0.32	0.30	2.20	9.00*	10.20*	2.96	0.32	0.30	18.25*			
MSN	2.20	2.20	9.00*	10.36*	13.49*	15.32*	2.61	2.20	9.00*	10.36*		
MXN												
LSC												
LXC												
LSN												
LXN												

P<05 (T CRITICAL=6.20)

(*: denotes significant differences)

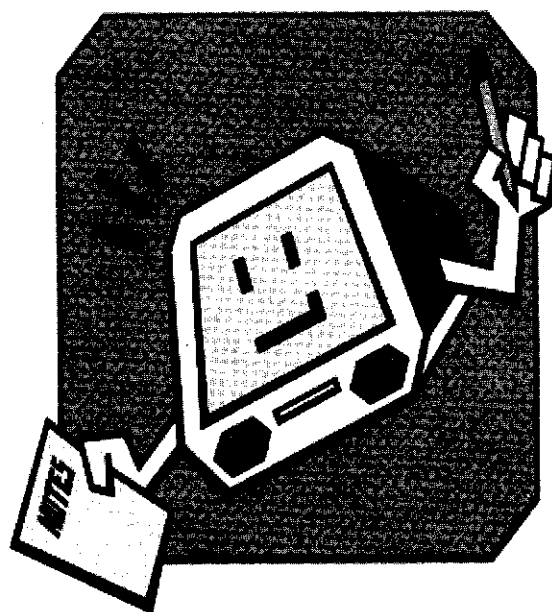
HSC = High - group short-conversation test MSN = Mid - group short-news test
HXC = High - group extended-conversation test MXN = Mid - group extended-news test
HSN = High - group short-news test LSC = Low - group short-conversation test
HXN = High - group extended-news test LXC = LOW - group extended-conversation test
MSC = High - group short-news test LSN = Mid - group short-news test
MXC = Mid - group extended-conversation test LXN = Mid - group extended-news test

performance. However, as Table 3 depicts, there is no significant interaction between the test method and language proficiency level.

Also, as presented in the table, there are meaningful differences between the genres (news and conversation) in the EFL learners' listening comprehension. This rejects the second null hypothesis of the study addressing the probable effect of different genres on the EFL learners' listening comprehension. The fact that the more literate text, the news, was found to be more difficult, may be related to the level of familiarity of the students with the genre. These learners are usually exposed to a greater amount of dialogues than to news. This limited exposure to certain genres may hinder comprehension, just as ample exposure would enhance it.

Additionally, the table shows that there are significant differences among the scores of learners of different proficiency levels in various listening tests. However, the interaction between different genres and the proficiency levels of the subjects was not significant. Finally, the results of MANOVA confirm a significant interaction between different genres and test - methods in listening comprehension tests. The findings, then, reject the third null hypothesis of this study. Accordingly, it can be concluded that there are significant differences among subjects' performances in listening comprehension tests of various methods and genres with reference to proficiency levels of the EFL learners.

In order to locate the exact places of differences in the subjects' performances, a Scheffe test was run. Table 4 indicates the results of the Scheffe test. Based on these comparisons, it can be observed that the differences of highgroup participants, only in the case of short-conversation and extended - news tests were significant. It seems that different listening



comprehension tests pose less difficulty for the high proficient learners. To compare this group with the intermediate group, in most of the cases, there were significant differences (e.g., HSC vs. MSC = 10.88* or HXC vs. MSN = 25.41*). Also there were statistically meaningful differences between the high and low group participants in the case of different genres and test - methods or their combinations. However, the differences between mid and low groups, were significant only in a few cases (i.e., MSC vs. LXC = 19.63*, MSC vs. LSN = 20.64* , MSC vs. LXN = 107.26, MXC vs. LXN = 39.41*, MSN vs. LSC = 15.32*, MSN vs. LXC = 28.75*, MSN vs. 34.81*).

As for the intermediate group, the differences between extended - news test and the other tests were significant (i.e., MSC vs. MXN = 49.86*, MXC vs. MXN = 10.20*, MSN vs. MXN = 13.49*. So, it was found that not only different genres or test - methods, but also their combination affected the performance of the intermediate group of the

given to the subjects in order to assess their language proficiency levels. Then, the four different tests, i.e., short-conversation, extended-conversation, short-news, and extended-news were administered to the same participants in four separate sessions. Adequate time intervals were planned in the administration schedule in order to nullify the subjects' fatigue as well as testing effect.

Design

The dependant variables included in this research were the scores of four different listening comprehension tests: short - conversation, extended - conversation, short-news, and extended-news. The independent variables were proficiency levels (high, intermediate, and low), genre (news and conversation), and also test-methods (short and extended contexts). Since the researcher did not have any control over the manipulation of the independent variables and because there was no treatment, an 'ex post facto' design, a subcategory of descriptive research, was followed. That is, in this research, the researchers aimed at exploring the degree of type of the relationship between variables rather than a cause-and-effect directionality.

Results and Discussion

Initially, descriptive statistics were carried out for all measures involved in this study. The results are reported in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for different tests of this study

TESTS	N	RANGE	MIN	MAX	SUM	MEAN	Std. DEVIATION	VARIANCE	RELIABILITY
TOEFL	90	88.00	29.00	117.00	5555.00	61.72	18.06	326.46	0.89
SHORT CONVERSATION	90	23.00	4.00	27.00	1244.00	13.82	5.27	27.83	0.76
EXTENDED CONVERSATION	90	23.00	2.00	25.00	1103.00	12.25	4.62	21.40	0.68
SHORT NEWS	90	18.00	5.00	23.00	1194.00	13.26	7.09	16.80	0.58
EXTENDED NEWS	90	18.00	3.00	21.00	929.00	10.32	3.75	14.06	0.54

Table 2. illustrates the correlation coefficients between TOEFL test and all four different tests in this study (short-conversation, extended-conversation, short-news, and extended-news). The correlation coefficients show moderate to high relationship between the scores for TOEFL test and all other tests.

Table 2. Correlation coefficients for all tests used in the study

	TOEFL	SHORT CONVERSATION	EXTENDED CONVERSATION	SHORT NEWS	EXTENDED NEWS
TOEFL		0.71*	0.62*	0.70*	0.76*
SHORT CONVERSATION			0.49*	0.75*	0.57*
EXTENDED CONVERSATION				0.52*	0.67*
SHORT NEWS					0.68*
EXTENDED NEWS					

*: All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In order to investigate the research hypotheses, at first MANOVA analysis (repeated measure) was conducted, the results of which are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. MANOVA test for the test-method, genre, language proficiency, and their interactions

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	Sig. OFF
Genre	136.39	1	136.39	19.78	0.00
Proficiency* Genre	7.29	2	3.64	0.53	0.59
Error (Genre)	599.83	87	6.09		
Method	446.23	1	446.23	36.16	0.00
Proficiency* Method	11.93	2	5.97	0.48	0.61
Error (Method)	1073.69	87	12.34		
Genre* Method	39.30	1	39.30	7.38	0.00
Proficiency* Genre *Method	14.28	2	7.14	1.34	0.27
Error (Genre)	599.83	87	6.89		
Proficiency Level	2409.81	2	1204.91	41.12	0.00
Error (Proficiency Level)	2549.19	87	29.30		

(P<.05)

As Table 3 illustrates, there are significant differences among various test methods (short-context and extended-context). This result rejects the first null hypothesis and confirms the effect of different test methods on the EFL learners' listening comprehension

To examine the above research questions, the following corresponding null hypotheses were formulated:

HO₁: The short and extended contexts as two different test methods do not affect the EFL learners' listening comprehension performance.

HO₂: Different genres (news and conversation) do not affect the EFL learners' listening comprehension performance.

HO₃: There is no interaction between test method, genre and the proficiency level of the EFL learners in their listening comprehension performance?

Method

Participants

In this study, a sum of 90 female participants were selected from the total population of the BA fourth-year students of English Literature and Translation in Islamic Azad University of Karaj (N = 450). The subjects were screened into three proficiency levels based on their performance on a TOEFL test. Grouping was done based on the dispersion of the TOEFL scores around the mean.

Instrumentation

In order to examine the research hypotheses of this study, two short-context and two extended-context listening comprehension tests in two different genres, i.e. 'conversation' and 'news', were prepared. A brief terminology note seems in order here. By short context test we mean "the brief stimulus materials—perhaps only one, two, or three sentences— followed by one or two questions testing comprehension of overall meaning" (Jafarpur, 1987, p. 197). Also,

extended context listening comprehension test are operationally defined as "radio broadcasts, lectures or conversations of about 3-5 minutes, each followed by several questions" (Weigle, 2000, p. 450). A TOEFL test (1993) was utilized in this study as a general language proficiency measure. It consisted of 150 multiple-choice items in three sections: listening comprehension, structure and written expression, vocabulary and reading comprehension.

As for short and extended context tests, each test comprised 30 multiple choice items. The short and extended context tests for conversation were chosen from the existing TOEFL test versions (NTC's Practice Tests for the TOEFL, 1990; Cambridge Preparation for the TOEFL Test, 1993), but the news tests (short and extended) were constructed by the present researchers. Initially, some pieces of news from the Euronews channel were transcribed and a pool of listening comprehension items were developed. Then, the instructions, transcriptions and the stems of the items were read by a native-like person in natural speed. The whole tests were reviewed by some university professors and revised, based on their feedback. Before the administration of the test to the intended participants, all four tests were piloted with all the participants of an 'English Conversation' class in a private institute to study their psychometric values. Further revisions were carried out according to the results of the item analyses. All tests enjoyed acceptable concurrent validity as checked against the standard test with moderate to high reliability indices.

Procedures

First, the full version of the TOEFL test was

types of activities that 'are considered by the speech community as being of the same type' (Richards et al., 1992, p. 156). A genre is more than just its discourse structures and patterns of language. There are many factors that are important to consider, such as, the sociocultural context of the text, the purpose of the text, the audience of the text, expectations of the particular discourse community, and the relationship the text has with other instances of the genre (Paltridge, 2000).

Rubin and Raforth (1984) introduced the notion of 'listenability' which is a 'function of orality in language', or the degree to which a passage exhibits features common to oral speech. Accordingly, the more 'listenable' a text is, the more it is accessible to listening, and since orally-oriented texts contain a greater degree of listenable features, it is logical to assume that these text types will be easier for the listeners to comprehend. Approaching the issue of text type and comprehension difficulty from the point of view of language testing, Shohamy and Inbar (1991) found an order of difficulty for types of texts: news broadcasts; lectures; and least difficult, a consultative dialogue.

Berne (1992) considered whether the listening comprehension of FL learners varied according to text type and assessment task. She found that, although text type was not a significant factor in testing for main ideas, it was significant in the comprehension of details. However, this difference emerged only on the multiple-choice test type; neither the open-ended task nor the cloze task showed a difference.

Previous research has also found that question type is another significant factor in second language comprehension performance

(Shohamy, 1994). The effects of different question types have been investigated in second language reading comprehension research (Shohamy, 1984) and in second language listening comprehension (Shohamy & Inbar, 1991).

Considering the current paucity of research evidence about the factors influencing EFL listening comprehension, the present study aimed at probing the possible effects of short and extended contexts as two different test methods and also different genres (news and conversation) on the EFL learners' listening comprehension performance. Furthermore, it intended to examine whether the effects of the test methods and different genres in listening comprehension tests vary with reference to the EFL learners' proficiency levels. The rationale behind including 'conversation' and 'news' as the two genres in this study is their high frequency in real life communication. In addition to theoretical implications, the findings of this study may promise some contributions to EFL listening comprehension instruction, testing, and materials development. More specifically, the following questions motivated the present study:

- Q₁: *Do the short and extended contexts as two different test methods affect the EFL learners' listening comprehension performance?*
- Q₂: *Do different genres (news and conversation) affect the EFL learners' listening comprehension performance?*
- Q₃: *Is there any interaction between test method, genre and proficiency level of the EFL learners in their listening comprehension performance?*

text, interlocutor, task, listener, and process characteristics.

Buck (1990, 1991, 1994) maintains that successful listening comprehension involves an interaction between linguistic skills, background knowledge, knowledge of the context and inferencing skills. Furthermore, previous research shows that second language listening comprehension performance may be affected by variables such as age (Seright, 1985), gender (Bacon, 1991), background knowledge (Markham and Latham, 1987), increased exposure to authentic language (Herron and Seay, 1991), and different types of speech modifications and simplification (Long, 1985).

By the same token, research has highlighted the most important individual variables which may affect second language listening comprehension ability as proficiency level, memory and attention, and the amount of background knowledge. Language proficiency level is normally assumed to be a major variable in all listening contexts. However, as Rubin (1994) states "It is not clear what role grammar, vocabulary, background knowledge of the culture, and knowledge of discourse processes play at different proficiency levels" (p.206). Although the above-mentioned factors have been investigated in relation to the processing of listening comprehension, the main point of the argument regarding testing listening comprehension is that the testees' performance may also be affected by varying the stimulus materials and question types used to assess it (Rost, 1990).

One research topic of obvious interest is the test method and its possible influence on listening test scores. "A language test-taker's performance is a function of two constant

variables; his/her language ability and test method" (Yi'an, 1998, p.21). As Buck (1990) argues, a sketchy review of the literature on listening comprehension, in both first and second languages, suggests that there is no generally accepted, explanatory theory of listening comprehension on which to base the assessment and testing of second language listening ability. The special way test method facets are designed and controlled, and the correspondence between these and the features of language use contexts may have a direct impact on the 'authenticity' of the test and test tasks. Consequently, the performance on language test varies as a function both of an individual's language ability and of the characteristics of the test method (Bachman, 1990). More specifically, test performance is affected, among other things, by 'facets' or characteristics of test methods. Test method facets include: Testing environment, Test rubric, Test organization, Time allocation, and Instructions (ibid).

Text type has been noted as a factor affecting listening comprehension. As Tannen (1982) contends, texts can be viewed as ranging along planning; the degree of involvement with the target audience who provide feedback and signal understanding; the type and degree of shared context; the prosodic features which texts embody (stress, intonation, pauses, gestures and facial expressions); the clarity of delivery and the amount of redundancy.

In recent years, genre as a consequential component of discourse has attracted a lot of attention in second language pedagogy and assessment. Traditionally, genres were simply defined as classes of texts or text-types; they were used for the classification of texts (Hyon, 1996). Currently, the term 'genre' describes

comprehension performance with respect to their language proficiency levels. Four different listening comprehension tests (short-conversation, extended-conversation, short-news, and extended-news) were administered to 90 female university students in their last year of BA degree of English literature and translation. The results indicated that the test-method and genre generally affected EFL learners' listening comprehension performance. However, the higher level of language proficiency, the less difficulty the learners had in different listening comprehension tests with various genres and test-methods. Therefore, it is concluded that various genres, test-methods, and language proficiency level as influencing factors in improving the participants' listening comprehension must be considered in materials development, as well as teaching, and testing of EFL listening comprehension.

Key Words: listening comprehension, genre, test-method, short-context, extended-context, language proficiency.

Introduction

Following the emergence and prominence of ideas regarding the significance of comprehensible input in second language acquisition during the 1980s, much has been published on the nature of the listening process (Boyle, 1984; Brown, 1986; Dunkel, 1986; Faerch & Kasper, 1986; Anderson & Lynch, 1988) and the methodology for teaching listening comprehension (Long, 1989; Brown, 1990; Lund, 1990; Nunan, 1999). A distillation of findings from the various, and often conflicting, research studies and theoretical discussions reveals that there seem to be two major views underlying the current literature on the listening comprehension process (Rost, 1990). First, Listening comprehension is an interactive process, not a passive skill as previously perceived (Rost, 1990). That is, the listening text, the complete context of the text (both external & internal to the listener) and the task demands or responses required of the listener are inter-related. Semantic and syntactic systems are all operating simultaneously and both **top-down** and **bottom-up** processes are involved (Cook,

1989; Rost, 1990). Therefore, text and task cannot be separated because listeners' interpretation of the text depends on demands of the tasks and responses to tasks depend on listeners' interpretation of the text (Rost, 1990). Second, listening comprehension is essentially a cognitive activity (Winitz, 1981; Buck, 1990). It is argued that general cognitive skills could be developed through the vehicle of listening comprehension and that cognitive skills so developed might not have been previously developed in the first language. Therefore, listening comprehension tasks can be used to develop general listening and general learning strategies (Rost, 1990).

Whereas the earlier theories of listening comprehension were essentially bottom-up (e.g., Taylor, 1981), the subsequent pedagogical research on listening comprehension made significant refinements in the process of listening. These studies looked at the effect of a number of different contextual characteristics and how they may affect the speed and efficiency of processing aural language (Brown, 2001). Rubin (1994) identifies five such factors;

The Effect of Short and Extended Contexts in Different Genres (News & Conversation) on the EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension



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چکیده

این پژوهش، تأثیر روش‌های آزمون (متن‌های کوتاه و بلند) و همچنین گونه‌های زبانی (خبر و مکالمه) را روی درک شنیداری فراگیران زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی، با توجه به سطح مهارت زبانی آن‌ها بررسی می‌کند. چهار آزمون درک شنیداری متفاوت (مکالمه کوتاه، مکالمه بلند، خبر کوتاه و خبر بلند) هر کدام در یک جلسه از ۹۰ دانشجوی دختر به عمل آمد که در سال آخر دوره لیسانس در رشته‌های ادبیات و مترجمی زبان انگلیسی تحصیل می‌کردند. به منظور معتبرسازی این آزمون‌ها، یک آزمون تافل نیز در مورد همان افراد انجام شد. نتایج این پژوهش، بیانگر این نکته بودند که هرچه سطح مهارت زبانی بالاتر باشد، فراگیرنده مشکلات کم‌تری در آزمون‌های درک شنیداری خواهد داشت. به هر حال، می‌توان نتیجه گرفت که گونه‌های زبانی و روش‌های متفاوت آزمون و همچنین سطح مهارت زبانی، به عنوان عوامل مؤثر در پیشرفت درک شنیداری باید در تهیه مطالب، تدریس و ارزشیابی درک شنیداری مورد توجه قرار گیرند. کلید واژگان: درک شنیداری، گونه زبانی، روش آزمون، متن کوتاه، متن بلند، مهارت زبانی.

Abstract

This paper reports on a study which investigated the effects of test-methods (i.e., short and extended contexts) as well as genres (i.e., news and conversation) on the EFL learners' listening