



## LISTENING STRATEGIES OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS WITH VARIED TEST TASKS

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### ABSTRACT

*Listening is a complex process and crucial in the development of second language competence. The present study investigated the relationship among four different test tasks and different test-taking strategies used by Iranian EFL learners. Sixty EFL male and female learners participated in this study. The instruments of data collection of this study included one language proficiency test, test-taking strategy questionnaire, interview and a listening comprehension test. Analysis of findings indicated that the frequency use of test-taking strategies among participants of four different test-tasks was significantly different.*

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**Keywords:** Listening, Test-tasks, Pre-listening strategies, While-listening strategies, EFL Learners, Chi-square.

Received: 6 January 2014 / Revised: 18 January 2014 / Accepted: 21 January 2014 / Published: 24 January 2014

### 1. INTRODUCTION

There has been a general agreement in L2 listening research that all second language learners encounter difficulties while listening to the target language. However, the degree and types of the difficulty differ, and huge L2 listening research has been conducted to examine these differences. Much attention in second language learning has been devoted to identifying the factors that can influence the listener difficulties (Flowerdew and Miller, 2005). L2 listening research has focused on some factors such as speech rate (Conrad, 1989; Blau, 1990; Griffiths, 1990), phonological features (Henrichsen, 1984), and text cues used by learners (Conrad, 1985)

Other studies have focused on the learner characteristics that affect an individual's listening comprehension such as language proficiency (DeFilippis, 1980; Murphy, 1985; 1986; O'Malley et

*al.*, 1989), memory (Call, 1985; Greenberg and Roscoe, 1987), background knowledge (Markham and Latham, 1987; Chiang and Dunkel, 1992), and anxiety (Zheng, 2008).

The use of listening strategy has been studied extensively over the past two decades, particularly focusing on identifying the strategies used by higher versus lower-proficiency learners in terms of quality and quantity, cues and sequences, and strategy instruction. Research in this area has shown that: (a) more advanced listeners use increasingly varied strategies than less advanced listeners (Murphy, 1987; Chien and Li, 1998; Goh, 2002; Chao and Chin, 2005); (b) the better a listener's proficiency, the more metacognitive strategies he or she uses (Vandergrift, 1997a; 1997b); (c) when encountering more difficult texts, listeners tend to use bottom-up strategies (Bacon, 1992; Vogely, 1995); (d) successful learners can use both linguistic and background knowledge at the same time, although poor learners may overrely on one kind of knowledge (Rost and Ross, 1991; Vandergrift, 1997b); (e) native speakers of English and advanced learners of English mainly use semantic cues, whereas intermediate L2 learners rely more on syntactic cues (Conrad, 1985); and (f) in relation to strategy instruction, no immediate effect on enhancing listening comprehension was found in most studies (Mendelsohn, 1994; 1998; Thompson and Rubin, 1996; Field, 1998; Vandergrift, 1999) except for Goh and Taib (2006), and higher listening proficiency was assumed to be needed to make the instruction effective.

This study investigates strategies Iranian L2 learners use to understand spoken input under varied forms of listening tasks. Test-taking strategies are strategies that respondents apply to tasks in language tests (Cohen, 1998). In this study the number of test-taking strategies is 23 which consists of pre-listening strategies and while listening strategies.

There are four varied forms of listening tasks in this study. The first one is previewing questions. In this group before taking the test learners can study the questions. The second form of listening task is repeated input in which learners can listen to the audio twice and then answer the questions. The third form is topic preparation in which examiner explains the content of the listening before giving the test. The fourth form of listening task is vocabulary instruction in which the key words and expressions are introduced to students before the test.

## **2. RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS**

The present study is an attempt to investigate the following question:

To what extent are test-taking strategies employed by Iranian L2 learners different for four test tasks (previewing questions, repeated input, vocabulary instruction, and topic preparation)?

This question is reformulated into the following null hypothesis to be checked:

H0: There is no significant difference among different test-tasks with regard to different test-taking strategies use.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Participants and Instruments

This is a quantitative and qualitative study in which the participants were chosen from among the EFL learners of Nahid Institute in Shahreza, Iran. A total of 60 students participated in this study, all of whom were native speakers of Persian but studied English for more than ten terms in the institute and were between 15-25 years old. They were at intermediate level, based on their performance on the institute placement test and were put into 4 groups (previewing questions, repeated input, vocabulary instruction, and topic preparation). The participants of the study were both male and female. The rationale for selecting participants at this proficiency level (intermediate) was the relative familiarity with English and with listening comprehension skill among them.

The instruments of the study consisted of a listening comprehension test, English listening strategies questionnaire, and interview.

#### 3.2. Procedure

The study was conducted in Nahid Institute in Shahreza. The selected students were first divided into four different groups, and in each group there were 15 learners. Then, each group took the listening comprehension test (appendix C) with a different form of test-task.

After the listening comprehension test a listening strategy questionnaire was given to students to determine the frequency of the strategies used in different test-tasks.

Some of the examples of the pre-listening strategies are:

- Anticipate the words and phrases you are most likely to hear.
- Predict possible answers to the questions to prepare yourself to hear the answers.
- Anticipate synonyms and ideas expressed in different words.
- It is not necessary to understand all of the words.

The while-listening strategies are:

- Pay attention to instructions.
- Meaning is primary, not grammar or spelling.

After that the students were interviewed to get further information regarding their ideas about the test-tasks.

#### 3.3. Data Analysis

The descriptive statistics including frequency use of test-taking strategies by participants in four groups of test tasks were provided. The software SPSS version 12.5 was employed to analyze the data. In addition to descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, namely Chi-square, was run to check whether there were any significant differences among the participants of the four groups of test-tasks as far as the frequency use of test-taking strategies were concerned. Moreover, the SPSS software was used to run Cronbach's alpha reliabilities for the questionnaire and listening comprehension test.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Investigating the Null Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the study intended to find out if there are any differences among the four test-task groups regarding the use of test-taking strategies. For this purpose, the responses of the four groups (previewing questions group, repeated input group, topic preparation group, vocabulary instruction group) to the test-taking strategies questionnaires were compared through employing chi-square statistical procedure. Tables 4.1a to 4.1d indicate the percentages for each group, and Table 4.2 shows the results of the chi-square for each item separately.

The researcher found the most and the least frequent strategies used by the participants in four different groups as displayed in the following tables.

**Table- 4.1.a.** The Percentage for Group One (previewing questions group)

| Items* | Percentage |         |       |           |       |
|--------|------------|---------|-------|-----------|-------|
|        | always     | usually | often | sometimes | Never |
| 1      | 6.6        | 0       | 66.8  | 20        | 6.6   |
| 2      | 6.6        | 33.4    | 40    | 20        | 0     |
| 3      | 13.4       | 73.4    | 6.6   | 6.6       | 0     |
| 4      | 26.6       | 20      | 13.4  | 33.4      | 6.6   |
| 5      | 20         | 6.6     | 0     | 26.6      | 46.8  |
| 6      | 26.6       | 53.4    | 20    | 0         | 0     |
| 7      | 0          | 80      | 6.6   | 13.4      | 0     |
| 8      | 53.4       | 33.4    | 6.6   | 6.6       | 0     |
| 9      | 66.8       | 0       | 13.3  | 6.6       | 13.3  |
| 10     | 6.6        | 46.8    | 40    | 0         | 6.6   |
| 11     | 0          | 86.8    | 6.6   | 6.6       | 0     |
| 12     | 0          | 13.4    | 0     | 46.6      | 40    |
| 13     | 0          | 0       | 60    | 40        | 0     |
| 14     | 20         | 46.8    | 6.6   | 26.6      | 0     |
| 15     | 0          | 6.6     | 0     | 53.4      | 40    |
| 16     | 6.6        | 40      | 6.6   | 33.4      | 13.4  |
| 17     | 0          | 0       | 0     | 46.7      | 53.3  |
| 18     | 0          | 86.8    | 0     | 6.6       | 6.6   |
| 19     | 6.6        | 73.4    | 20    | 0         | 0     |
| 20     | 0          | 6.6     | 40    | 53.4      | 0     |
| 21     | 6.6        | 0       | 46.8  | 6.6       | 40    |
| 22     | 6.6        | 13.4    | 66.6  | 13.4      | 0     |
| 23     | 26.6       | 13.4    | 0     | 13.4      | 46.6  |

\*Items explanations are available in appendix A.

As it is shown in the above table the first group which are the previewing questions group tended to use the following strategies more: filling the gaps by guessing the words (53.4%), guessing the meaning of the words by using context clues (66.8%), paying particular attention to repeated words (86.8%), using title to predict what the speaker would say and listening for topic, then details (86.8%).

They did not use the following strategies much: telling themselves that they are good listeners before the test (20%), listening for grammatical structures (13%), imagining a picture of the context

to comprehend texts (6.6%), taking notes(0%), monitoring their attention (6.6%) and closing their eyes and listening(23.6%).

**Table- 4.1.b.** The Percentage for Group Two (repeated input group)

| items | Percentage |         |       |           |       |
|-------|------------|---------|-------|-----------|-------|
|       | always     | usually | often | sometimes | Never |
| 1     | 53.4       | 33.3    | 0     | 0         | 13.3  |
| 2     | 26.7       | 40      | 13.3  | 20        | 0     |
| 3     | 66.8       | 6.6     | 13.3  | 0         | 13.3  |
| 4     | 0          | 40      | 46.7  | 13.3      | 0     |
| 5     | 33.4       | 13.3    | 20    | 26.7      | 6.6   |
| 6     | 13.3       | 46.7    | 33.4  | 0         | 6.6   |
| 7     | 33.4       | 6.6     | 46.7  | 13.3      | 0     |
| 8     | 33.4       | 6.6     | 26.6  | 33.4      | 0     |
| 9     | 46.6       | 33.4    | 20    | 0         | 0     |
| 10    | 0          | 13.4    | 80    | 6.6       | 0     |
| 11    | 0          | 66.6    | 33.4  | 0         | 0     |
| 12    | 0          | 0       | 40    | 26.6      | 33.4  |
| 13    | 20         | 40      | 0     | 40        | 0     |
| 14    | 46.7       | 53.3    | 0     | 0         | 0     |
| 15    | 40         | 20      | 6.6   | 26.8      | 6.6   |
| 16    | 0          | 26.6    | 13.4  | 33.4      | 26.6  |
| 17    | 0          | 0       | 26.6  | 53.4      | 20    |
| 18    | 33.4       | 46.8    | 6.6   | 6.6       | 6.6   |
| 19    | 13.4       | 6.6     | 80    | 0         | 0     |
| 20    | 6.6        | 33.4    | 26.6  | 0         | 33.4  |
| 21    | 33.3       | 66.7    | 0     | 0         | 0     |
| 22    | 66.7       | 20      | 0     | 13.3      | 0     |
| 23    | 0          | 26.6    | 0     | 20        | 53.4  |

As it can be seen above the second group which are the repeated input group tended to use the following strategies more: thinking about the purpose of the test and then choosing the strategies to manage it (53.4%), preparing themselves in advance to pay full attention to the tasks (66.8%), guessing the meaning of the unknown words by using context clues and relationship between speakers (46.6%), linking what they know with what they hear (46.7%), using the title to predict what the speaker would say (80.2%), monitoring their attention (100%) and trying to relax (66.7%). They did not use the following strategies much: listening for grammatical structures (0%) and closing their eyes and listening (26.6%).

**Table- 4.1.c.** The Percentage for Group Three (topic preparation group)

| items | Percentage |         |       |           |       |
|-------|------------|---------|-------|-----------|-------|
|       | always     | usually | often | Sometimes | Never |
| 1     | 0          | 6.6     | 33.4  | 60        | 0     |
| 2     | 0          | 6.6     | 46.8  | 40        | 6.6   |
| 3     | 60         | 0       | 6.6   | 26.8      | 6.6   |
| 4     | 53.3       | 0       | 13.3  | 33.4      | 0     |
| 5     | 46.6       | 13.4    | 6.6   | 13.4      | 20    |

|    |      |      |      |      |      |
|----|------|------|------|------|------|
| 6  | 6.6  | 6.6  | 26.8 | 53.4 | 6.6  |
| 7  | 26.8 | 20   | 33.3 | 13.3 | 6.6  |
| 8  | 40   | 20   | 26.7 | 13.3 | 0    |
| 9  | 46.6 | 13.4 | 13.4 | 26.6 | 0    |
| 10 | 20   | 26.7 | 6.6  | 20   | 26.7 |
| 11 | 0    | 26.7 | 33.3 | 20   | 20   |
| 12 | 46.7 | 6.6  | 0    | 26.7 | 20   |
| 13 | 13.3 | 0    | 33.4 | 53.3 | 0    |
| 14 | 6.6  | 0    | 40   | 46.8 | 6.6  |
| 15 | 0    | 6.6  | 40   | 6.6  | 46.8 |
| 16 | 33.4 | 13.3 | 33.4 | 13.3 | 6.6  |
| 17 | 0    | 6.6  | 46.8 | 6.6  | 40   |
| 18 | 6.6  | 6.6  | 26.8 | 53.4 | 6.6  |
| 19 | 53.4 | 0    | 33.3 | 13.3 | 0    |
| 20 | 0    | 20   | 73.4 | 6.6  | 0    |
| 21 | 53.4 | 0    | 6.6  | 6.6  | 33.4 |
| 22 | 6.6  | 46.8 | 6.6  | 40   | 0    |
| 23 | 20   | 13.3 | 13.3 | 46.8 | 6.6  |

The third group which are background information preparation group tended to use the following strategies more: preparing themselves in advance to pay full attention to the tasks (60%), doing more listening practice, memorizing more words (53.3%), telling themselves they are good listeners before the test (46.6%), guessing the meaning of unknown words by using context clues and relationship between speakers (46.6%), listening for grammatical structures (46.7%), listening for topic then details (53.4%) and monitoring their attention (53.4%).

They did not use the following strategies much: imagining a picture of the context to comprehend the texts (6.6%) and taking notes (6.6%).

**Table- 4.1.d.** The Percentage for Group Four (vocabulary instruction group)

| items | Percentage |         |       |           |       |
|-------|------------|---------|-------|-----------|-------|
|       | always     | usually | often | Sometimes | Never |
| 1     | 26.7       | 26.7    | 26.7  | 13.3      | 6.6   |
| 2     | 26.7       | 0       | 33.3  | 13.3      | 26.7  |
| 3     | 46.7       | 20      | 0     | 33.3      | 0     |
| 4     | 6.6        | 13.3    | 13.3  | 53.5      | 13.3  |
| 5     | 13.3       | 20      | 20    | 46.7      | 0     |
| 6     | 20         | 33.3    | 26.7  | 6.6       | 13.4  |
| 7     | 6.6        | 53.5    | 13.3  | 6.6       | 20    |
| 8     | 20         | 53.4    | 20    | 6.6       | 0     |
| 9     | 33.4       | 6.6     | 13.4  | 40        | 6.6   |
| 10    | 33.4       | 6.6     | 13.3  | 26.7      | 20    |
| 11    | 13.3       | 0       | 13.3  | 53.4      | 20    |
| 12    | 33.3       | 20      | 20    | 0         | 26.7  |
| 13    | 0          | 33.3    | 33.3  | 20        | 13.4  |
| 14    | 26.7       | 13.3    | 26.7  | 33.3      | 0     |
| 15    | 46.8       | 6.6     | 20    | 13.3      | 13.3  |
| 16    | 13.3       | 20      | 26.7  | 33.4      | 6.6   |
| 17    | 0          | 26.8    | 6.6   | 6.6       | 60    |
| 18    | 20         | 20      | 26.7  | 20        | 13.3  |

|    |      |      |      |      |      |
|----|------|------|------|------|------|
| 19 | 13.3 | 33.4 | 0    | 40   | 13.3 |
| 20 | 13.3 | 20   | 33.4 | 26.7 | 6.6  |
| 21 | 13.3 | 13.3 | 46.8 | 13.3 | 13.3 |
| 22 | 26.7 | 40   | 26.7 | 0    | 6.6  |
| 23 | 6.6  | 0    | 6.6  | 26.8 | 60   |

The fourth group which is vocabulary instruction group tended to use the following strategies more: preparing themselves in advance to pay full attention to the tasks (46.7%), focusing on the message not every word (60.1%), filling the gaps by guessing (73.4%), imagining the picture of the context to comprehend texts (46.8%), and trying to relax (66.7%).

They did not use the following strategies much: taking notes (26.8%) and closing their eyes and listening (6.6%).

**Table- 4.2.** The Results of Chi-square Calculation

| Items | $\chi^2$ | df | P    |
|-------|----------|----|------|
| 1     | 44.264   | 12 | .000 |
| 2     | 28.305   | 12 | .005 |
| 3     | 37.829   | 12 | .000 |
| 4     | 31.777   | 12 | .001 |
| 5     | 21.782   | 12 | .040 |
| 6     | 29.865   | 12 | .003 |
| 7     | 31.629   | 12 | .002 |
| 8     | 19.643   | 12 | .074 |
| 9     | 21.031   | 12 | .050 |
| 10    | 36.794   | 12 | .000 |
| 11    | 43.812   | 12 | .000 |
| 12    | 34.711   | 12 | .001 |
| 13    | 33.378   | 12 | .001 |
| 14    | 33.302   | 12 | .000 |
| 15    | 37.721   | 12 | .001 |
| 16    | 17.255   | 12 | .140 |
| 17    | 31.890   | 12 | .000 |
| 18    | 36.899   | 12 | .000 |
| 19    | 60.650   | 12 | .000 |
| 20    | 34.051   | 12 | .001 |
| 21    | 50.567   | 12 | .000 |
| 22    | 44.078   | 12 | .000 |
| 23    | 22.367   | 12 | .034 |

According to the chi-square table, that is, Table 4.2, with regard to test-taking strategy use, the amount of chi-square is high enough to be significant for all items except items 8 and 16. In other words, the four groups involved in this study only hold the same opinion for questions 8 and 16, but for all other items their opinions were significantly different. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that, “there is no difference between different test-tasks with regard to different test-taking strategies use” is rejected. In other words, students in groups of different test-tasks, used different test-taking strategies as far as frequency use of strategies was concerned.

## 4.2. The Results of Interview

Based on the interview the researcher conducted with participants of the four test-task groups to investigate the participants' viewpoint further, the researcher collected the following information from among the participants of the four test-task groups.

### 4.2.1. Previewing Questions Group

**Table- 4.7.a.** The result of interview for group one

| Items* | percentage |     |
|--------|------------|-----|
|        | Yes        | No  |
| 2      | 60         | 40  |
| 3      | 20         | 80  |
| 5a     | 60         | 40  |
| 5b     | 40         | 60  |
| 5c     | 0          | 100 |
| 5d     | 60         | 40  |
| 5e     | 80         | 20  |
| 5f     | 50         | 50  |

\* For a detailed description of every item, see appendix B.

**Table 4.7.b.** The result of interview for group one

| Items* | Percentage           |                         |       |                  |                               |                    |
|--------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------|------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1      | difficult            | Challenging             |       |                  | easy                          |                    |
|        | 40                   | 60                      |       |                  | 0                             |                    |
| 4      | Watching TV programs | Listening English Songs |       |                  | Taking English Listening test |                    |
|        | 0                    | 0                       |       |                  | 100                           |                    |
| 5g     | Speed                | accent                  | topic | Unfamiliar words | Long sentences                | overloading memory |
|        | 40                   | 20                      | 20    | 60               | 0                             | 20                 |

\*For a detailed description of every item, see appendix B.

As it can be seen in the above tables, in the first group 60% of learners found this kind of test – task challenging and 40% found it difficult. 60% of the learners liked previewing questions as a test-task. 90% of the learners were not anxious before this test. All of the learners expressed taking an English listening test is the most stressful situation. 60% of the learners translated what they heard into Persian. None of the students took notes while listening. 90% of the learners continued listening when they heard the words or phrases that seemed quite unfamiliar to them. 50% paid full attention to the listening.

The major difficulties in understanding the listening passages for 20% of the learners were accent, 60% unfamiliar words, 20% topic, 40% speed and 20% overloading memory.



#### 4.2.2. Repeated Input Group

**Table- 4.8.a.** The result of interview for group two

| Items | Percentage |     |
|-------|------------|-----|
|       | yes        | No  |
| 2     | 60         | 40  |
| 3     | 20         | 80  |
| 5a    | 40         | 60  |
| 5b    | 0          | 100 |
| 5c    | 0          | 100 |
| 5d    | 60         | 40  |
| 5e    | 100        | 0   |
| 5f    | 100        | 0   |

**Table- 4.8.b.** The result of interview for group two

| Items | Percentage           |        |                         |                  |                               |                    |
|-------|----------------------|--------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1     | Difficult            |        | challenging             |                  | Easy                          |                    |
|       | 40                   |        | 60                      |                  | 0                             |                    |
| 4     | Watching TV programs |        | Listening English songs |                  | Taking English listening test |                    |
|       | 0                    |        | 0                       |                  | 100                           |                    |
| 5g    | Speed                | Accent | Topic                   | Unfamiliar words | Long sentences                | Overloading memory |
|       | 40                   | 40     | 0                       | 60               | 0                             | 20                 |

In the second group 60% of learners found this kind of test–task challenging and 40% found it easy. 60% of the learners liked repeated input. 90% of the learners were not anxious before this test. All of the learners expressed taking an English listening test is the most stressful situation. 40% of the learners translated what they heard into Persian. None of the students took notes while listening. All of the learners continued listening when they heard the words or phrases that seemed quite unfamiliar to them. 60% guessed a lot of answers.

The major difficulties in understanding the listening passages for 40% of the learners were accent, 60% unfamiliar words, 40% speed and 20% overloading memory.

#### 4.2.3. Topic Preparation Group

**Table- 4.9.a.** The result of interview for group three

| Items | Percentage |     |
|-------|------------|-----|
|       | yes        | no  |
| 2     | 100        | 0   |
| 3     | 50         | 50  |
| 5a    | 50         | 50  |
| 5b    | 25         | 75  |
| 5c    | 0          | 100 |
| 5d    | 50         | 50  |
| 5e    | 75         | 25  |
| 5f    | 50         | 50  |

**Table- 4.9.b.** The result of interview for group three

| Items | Percentage           |                         |       |                               |                |                    |
|-------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1     | Difficult            | Challenging             |       | easy                          |                |                    |
|       | 0                    | 25                      |       | 75                            |                |                    |
| 4     | Watching TV programs | Listening English songs |       | Taking English listening test |                |                    |
|       | 0                    | 0                       |       | 100                           |                |                    |
| 5g    | Speed                | accent                  | topic | Unfamiliar words              | Long sentences | Overloading memory |
|       | 45                   | 50                      | 0     | 75                            | 0              | 0                  |

In the third group, 75% of learners found this kind of test –task easy and 25% found it challenging. All of the learners liked topic preparation as a test-task. 50% of the learners were not anxious before this test. All of the learners expressed taking an English listening test is the most stressful situation. 50% of the learners translated what they heard into Persian. None of the students took notes while listening. All of the learners continued listening when they heard the words or phrases that seemed quite unfamiliar to them. 75% guessed a lot of answers.

The major difficulties in understanding the listening passages for 50% of the learners were accent, 75% unfamiliar words and 75% speed.

#### 4.2.4. Vocabulary Instruction Group

**Table- 4.10.a.** The result of interview for group four

| items | Percentage |      |
|-------|------------|------|
|       | Yes        | No   |
| 2     | 87.5       | 12.5 |
| 3     | 87.5       | 12.5 |
| 5a    | 12.5       | 87.5 |
| 5b    | 12.5       | 87.5 |
| 5c    | 25         | 75   |
| 5d    | 50         | 50   |
| 5e    | 100        | 0    |
| 5f    | 87.5       | 12.5 |

**Table- 4.10.b.** The result of interview for group four

| items | Percentage           |                            |       |                                |                |                    |
|-------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1     | Difficult            | Challenging                |       | Easy                           |                |                    |
|       | 0                    | 62.5                       |       | 37.5                           |                |                    |
| 4     | Watching TV programs | Listening to English songs |       | Taking English listening tests |                |                    |
|       | 0                    | 0                          |       | 100                            |                |                    |
| 5g    | Speed                | accent                     | Topic | Unfamiliar words               | Long sentences | Overloading memory |
|       | 62.5                 | 50                         | 0     | 50                             | 37.5           | 0                  |

In the fourth group, 62.5% of learners found this kind of test –task challenging and 37% found it easy. 87.5% of the learners liked vocabulary instruction as a test-task. All of the learners expressed taking an English listening test is the most stressful situation.

12.5% of the learners translated what they heard into Persian. 25% of the students took notes while listening. All of the learners continued listening when they heard the words or phrases that seemed quite unfamiliar to them. 37.5% guessed a lot of answers.

The major difficulties in understanding the listening passages for 50% of the learners were accent, 50% unfamiliar words, 62.5% speed and 37.5% long sentences.

## 5. DISCUSSION

All four different listening test-tasks influenced the frequency of learners' use of strategy to some extent. In the first group before listening, most students tried to predict the topic based on the questions, and while listening they tried to match the words in the question with words in the listening. The repeated input task helped students to be more confident and listen with a higher concentration. The students of topic preparation group tried to pay attention to details since they knew the topic. At last, the students in vocabulary instruction group before listening tried to predict the content of listening based on the words were taught before the test.

The results obtained from this study are consistent to some extent with those of [Ching and Chang \(2008\)](#) who examined the strategies that EFL students used and how they adjusted these strategies in response to various listening test tasks. The test tasks involved four forms of listening tasks: previewing questions, repeated input, background information preparation, and vocabulary instruction. Twenty-two participants were enlisted and interviewed from a sample of 160 business major students based on their listening anxiety levels. According to [Ching and Chang \(2008\)](#) results showed that various listening tasks influenced test takers' listening strategies by varying degrees, with previewing test questions tending to have a greater effect on strategy use than other types of support.

The interview results reveal that the third group (topic preparation group) found out the task easy because they feel confident when they know about the content. So, they can listen with more concentration.

Moreover, all of the students in four groups expressed taking English listening test is the most stressful situation. They believe as they are watching English movies, they understand the content (e.g. vocabulary) by watching actors' role play; they express listening to English songs is accompanied with pleasure. However, in taking English listening test they cannot see the speaker to guess some vocabularies based on speakers' gesture.

Just 25 percent of students in vocabulary instruction group took notes while listening. None of the students of the other three groups took notes since they thought it is time consuming and they may miss some parts of listening.

Compared to other groups, mostly the students of topic preparation group guessed the answers. They relied on their guesses because they knew the topic and they were somehow sure about their guesses.

Accent was a minor problem for the first group (previewing questions) because they previewed questions before the test, so sentences were familiar to them. Unfamiliar words and speed were the major difficulties for the third group (topic preparation) because there were no vocabulary instructions or repetition. According to the obtained results based on the interview topic preparation is the easiest kind of test-tasks.

## 6. CONCLUSION

With regard to the aim of study, it is concluded that the tasks students receive for listening comprehension test is influential on the variety of test-taking strategies while listening to test and after the test as well. Therefore, instructors can get the most advantages from the test-taking strategies interesting to students to help students perform much better on their test. To this end, language instructors are recommended improve their students' confidence and concentration by introducing the topic before the test. This task also helps students guess more frequently and it is the easiest task compared to other tasks, as reported by the participants.

Furthermore, it is imperative for language instructor to resolve some of the difficulties that students have in the perception of right vocabularies pronunciation through previewing questions that contain some of the test vocabularies. The prediction of content of listening comprehension, as stated by the participants of the study, could be facilitated through the instruction of the vocabulary.

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Contributors/Acknowledgement: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### **English Listening Strategies Questionnaire**

This is a questionnaire on English listening strategy use especially designed for speakers of other languages learning English. You will find statements about strategy use when you listen to English in different situations. There are no right or wrong, good or bad answers to these statements. Please answer in terms of how well the statement describes you. Do not answer what other people think you should do. Before you answer the statements, please read the definitions of listening strategy scales first.

5: ALWAYS means that the statement is true of you almost always.

4: USUALLY means that the statement is true more than half of the time.

3: OFTEN means that the statement is true about half of the time.

2: SOMETIMES means that the statement is true less than half of the time.

1: NEVER means that the statement is never true of me.

#### **A BEFORE TAKING AN ENGLISH LISTENING TEST**

1. Before taking an English listening test, I think about the purpose of the test and then choose strategies to manage it.

2. If I know the content that will be tested, I try to think of possible questions that I will have to answer.

3. I prepare myself in advance to pay full attention to the tasks.

4. Even though I don't know what will be tested, I will do my best to do the preparation, e.g., Doing more listening practice, memorizing more words.

5. I tell myself that I am a good listener and I can do well on my listening tasks.

#### B WHILE TAKING AN ENGLISH LISTENING TEST

6. I try to hear every word clearly.

7. I focus on the message (main ideas and key words), not every word.

8. I fill the gaps by guessing based on words and phrases I understand.

9. I guess the meaning of unknown words by using context clues, such as the situation (e.g., a supermarket) and relationship between speakers (e.g., a salesperson and a customer).

10. I pay more attention to pronunciation, e.g., stressed words, and the variation of intonation.

11. I pay particular attention to repeated words.

12. I listen for grammatical structures, for example, the verb tenses, the passive voice, etc.

13. I give up on the words I don't understand or miss so I can keep up with the speaker.

14. I link what I know and my previous experience with what I hear.

15. I imagine a picture of the context to comprehend texts.

16. I have to mentally translate what I hear into Persian, so I can understand what the speaker says.

17. I take notes.

18. I use the title to predict what the speaker would say and listen to confirm my prediction.

19. I listen for topic, then details.

20. I repeat words or phrases softly or mentally.

21. I monitor my attention. If I am absent-minded, I will refocus immediately.

22. I try to relax myself, and keep telling myself it is useless to be anxious.

23. I like closing my eyes and listening.

#### Appendix B

##### Post-listening Interview

1. What do you think of this type of listening? (difficult, challenging, easy? Please offer the reasons).

2. How do you like this type of listening test? (like or dislike it, and why?)

3. Were you anxious before you took the test? (if yes, then why? If no, then why not?)

4. In what situations do you feel anxious? For example, when you watch English TV programs, listen to English songs, or take English listening tests.

5. Since you reported that you are/aren't anxious while listening to English, could you tell me how you took the test just now. For example:

a. Did you have to translate what you heard into Iranian?

b. Could you tell the keywords, or the main sentences?

c. Did you take notes?

d. Did you guess a lot of answers?

- e. Did you continue listening when you heard the words or phrases that seemed quite unfamiliar to you?
- f. Did you pay full attention to the listening?
- g. What were the major difficulties for you in understanding the listening passages, for example: speed, accent, topic, unfamiliar words, long sentences, and overloading the memory?

### Appendix C

#### Listening Comprehension Test

Listen to this guide speaking about the historical Haybridge Hall, then choose the best answers for questions 1-6.

1. The guide to Haybridge hall is in hand in ..... Languages.

- a.5
- b.7
- c.6
- d.9

2. What was Haybridge hall originally called?

- a. Hawken Hall
- b. Normandy Landings
- c. Hoaten Hall
- d. English Heritage

3. How had Jack Hawken become rich? Because he .....

- a. was a businessman .
- b. was local.
- c. owned haybridge hall.
- d. was successful in wool export.

4. Where is Dawson Conservatory located?

- a. behind the main guest bedroom
- b. beside the church
- c. behind the ticket office
- d. beside the ticket office

5. The British Army was using Haybridge Hall as a/an ..... for the 8th Army.

- a.Headquarters
- b.Church
- c.Garrison
- d.Farmland

6. Why did the building come to be owned by the charitable organization English Heritage?

- a. The British Army took over the property.
- b. There were no other surviving members.
- c. The Second World War began.
- d. It would prove too costly for Hoaten family to move back into Haybridge Hall.

Listen to the conversation and answer the questions 7-12.

7. What did the teacher want to speak to Billy's mother about?

- a. Billy's work
- b. His improvement
- c. His article in school newspaper
- d. His age

8. How was the story that Billy wrote back in school newspaper?

- a. It had some problems.
- b. It was well-crafted.
- c. It had misspelling.
- d. It was not very well regarding his age.

9. Why didn't Billy do his best last year?

- a. He didn't like the teacher.
- b. He was new in that school.
- c. He was new to that area.
- d. Time of the class was not good.

10. What does concern Billy's teacher? Billy's problem with.....



- a. spelling
  - b. speaking
  - c. his mother
  - d. his teacher
11. What does the teacher think of Billy's problem?
- a. It is a serious problem.
  - b. The teacher is worried about that.
  - c. Billy may have a mild form of dyslexia.
  - d. Billy doesn't need to see a specialist.
12. When did teacher's son have dyslexia?
- a. When he was 12.
  - b. When he was 20.
  - c. When he was 15.
  - d. Since last year.

Peter and Anna speak together. Listen to their conversation and answer the questions 13-19.

13. Where did Peter and Anna last meet up?
- a. At the department store
  - b. At the Bookstore
  - c. At the Computer software company
  - d. At Cathy's graduation party
14. How has Peter's beard changed?
- a. It is longer.
  - b. It is shorter.
  - c. He has no beard.
  - d. He changed the style .
15. Why did Peter get his hair cut short?
- a. He got tired of that style.
  - b. He got tired of washing it.
  - c. He got tired of brushing it so often .
  - d. b and c
16. How long hasn't he had beard?
- a. Since last week
  - b. For 3 years
  - c. Since four year ago
  - d. Not for a long time
17. Where did Peter use to work?
- a. In the bookstore
  - b. At the department store
  - c. At software company
  - d. For his father
18. Why did Anna move into a new apartment? It was .....
- a. far from her job
  - b. too small for her
  - c. very old
  - d. too big for her
19. When can Peter call Anna?
- a. Any time
  - b. In a day or two
  - c. This week
  - d. After 7 p.m

Listen to Ben and Gemma, then answer the questions 20-25.

20. Why does Gemma mention the horoscopes in The Times?
- a. To say it was a serious paper.
  - b. To say something she was going to miss.
  - c. As a way of criticizing the newspaper.
  - d. to mention the horoscopes' importance.
21. How does Ben justify the heavy baseball coverage in The Times?
- a. There is little else to write about.
  - b. There's no shame in celebrating success.

- c. The other newspapers don't give a lot of space.                      d. this is a baseball city, so they have to write about it.
22. What does Ben think about those who work for The Journal?
- a. They write awful, boring articles.    b. They write articles which are of little relevance to him.
- c. They would like to write for better newspapers.                      d. They are ashamed of their city.
23. What does Gemma think will happen to the jobs that are currently advertised in The Times?
- a. The local economy will be affected but not destroyed.                      b. People will find in the ads in other newspapers.
- c. One of the other newspapers will open a local jobs newspaper.                      d. The local economy will be wrecked.
24. What two purposes does Gemma think local people use a local newspaper for in the age of TV and Internet?
- a. Jobs and obituaries    b. Jobs and TV listing
- c. To find out what's on locally and who's died.                      d. baseball stats
25. What do Gemma and Ben agree about?
- a. Prices are likely to rise in the near future.                      b. They will both stop buying local newspapers.
- c. There are too many local newspapers.                      d. it will destroy the local economy.

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