



The Interrelations of Different Listening Strategies Employed by IELTS Candidates

KEYWORDS

listening strategies; a second language; IELTS candidates

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ABSTRACT *“Language is inarguably, one of the most remarkable characteristics that humans have been endowed with. One’s whole person is affected as one struggles to reach beyond the confines of one’s first language and into a new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling, and acting. Listening strategies are the thoughts and actions that learners employ to accomplish a learning goal. However, limited research has been carried out with regard to the listening comprehension strategies of the IELTS candidate groups. The main goal of this study is to identify and compare the listening strategies of IELTS (International English Language Testing System) Academic and General candidates. The main sample of the study was 100 IELTS candidates, selected on the basis of simple random sampling technique.*

Introduction

Listening is an important gateway to successful communication and interaction, lack of which may lead to communicative failure. During the past two decades there have been important innovations and variations involved within the field of language learning and teaching, resulting in more emphasis on learners and learning rather than teachers and teaching. This means that how learners process new information and what kinds of strategies they employ to understand, learn or remember the information have been the main concerns of the researchers dealing with the area of second language learning (Hismanoglu, 2000).

The present study is an attempt to investigate the IELTS candidates’ listening comprehension strategies to specify the interrelations in employing different listening strategies by those candidates. ‘The international English language testing system (IELTS) is the world’s most popular English language proficiency test for higher education and global migration, with over 2 million tests taken in the last year. ‘IELTS is accepted by more than 8,000 organizations worldwide. These include universities, immigration departments, government agencies, professional bodies and multinational companies. International teams of writers contribute to IELTS test materials. Ongoing research ensures that IELTS remains fair and unbiased. Test writers from different English-speaking countries develop IELTS content so it reflects real-life situations. “IELTS has two versions – Academic and General Training. The Academic test is for those who want to study at a tertiary level in an English-speaking country. The General Training test is for those who want to do work experience or training programmes, secondary school or migrate to an English-speaking country.

Re-statement of the Problem

A number of factors affect listening comprehension including exposure, familiarity with content, attitude, tolerance of ambiguity, patience, motivation, amount of listening practice, listening comprehension complexities, immateriality of the message to be negotiated, acoustical conditions of listening test venues, among others. According to Rivers (1981), fleeting and immaterial nature of spoken utterances can be the other peculiar problems affecting listening comprehension. Listening is viewed to be an active and complex process which allows listeners to understand by

integrating information from a variety of sources, such as phonetic, phonological, prosodic, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic sources (Lynch, 1998 cited in Lotfi 2012). The complexity that underlies the process of listening comprehension exerts considerable processing demands on L2 learners, making listening the most difficult skill of all to master (Graham, 2006). Some situations, such as unidirectional listening where listeners cannot or do not have an opportunity to interact with the speaker as in the case of IELTS candidates who either listen to a CD player, or to some other media and multimedia devices (Rost, 1990) might face much greater difficulty than others (Wipf, 1984).

Re-statement of the Research Question and null hypothesis

Considering the above-mentioned problems, the following research question has been posed: ‘Were there any significant interrelations among listening strategies employed by different IELTS candidate groups?’ The null hypothesis led: ‘There were no significant interrelations among listening strategies employed by IELTS candidates.’

The data collected from the listening test and the listening comprehension strategies questionnaire was analyzed using four statistical instruments: one sample t-test, an independent-samples t-test, correlation coefficient and one-way anova of SPSS. In order to find legitimate answer to the above-mentioned research question and to see whether the null hypothesis is rejected or confirmed, meticulous statistical analyses were conducted on the data obtained from the listening tests taken by the IELTS general and academic candidate groups.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to see if there were any significant interrelations between listening strategies employed by different IELTS candidate groups. These findings were, however, inconsistent with previous findings that suggest proficient listeners use more meta-cognitive strategies than less proficient listeners (e.g., Murphy, 1985; Henner Stanchina, 1987; O’Malley, Chamot, and Kupper, 1989). De Fillipis (1980) examined second-semester elementary French learners to find the listening strategies of both more successful and less successful listeners. He found that both skillful listeners and unskillful listeners were more similar than dissimilar. Both

groups reported using the same list of strategies. The research question led: 'Were there any significant differences between listening strategies employed by different IELTS candidate groups?' In order to answer this question, the responses of the two IELTS candidate groups were compared using one sample t-test. The t-test results showed that as far as the overall use of adopted strategies was concerned, there were no distinct differences of means found between the two IELTS candidate groups. Therefore, our hypothesis was not supported by the findings of this study. In other words, means of cognitive, meta-cognitive, compensation, memory-related, affective, and social strategies among general IELTS candidates were 3.728, 3.684, 3.52, 3.59, 3.6 and 3.837. Means of cognitive, meta-cognitive, compensation, memory-related, affective, and social strategies among academic IELTS candidates were 3.677, 3.468, 3.63, 3.45, 3.448, and 3.65 respectively. Table 1 indicates these statistical numbers. These meticulous statistical analyses indicate no meaningful match or relationship in strategy use. These statistical numbers show similarity than dissimilarity; therefore, our null hypothesis is confirmed meaning that there were no significant interrelations between listening strategies employed by each group.

In sum, the strategies employed by the two different IELTS candidate groups had no meaningful interrelations. As the collected and analyzed data by using four statistical instruments indicated the obtained data contained as much valid information as possible. The instruments included: one sample t-test, an independent-samples t-test, and correlation coefficient of SPSS. Finally, one-way anova in dealing with English Language Study Period (ELSP) was also employed.

Table 1: Different Strategies & their Means Obtained by Different IELTS Candidate Groups

General					
MoCog	MoMeta	MoCom	MoMem	MoAff	MoSoc
MoCog = mean of cognitive	MoMeta = mean of metacognitive	MoCom = mean of compensation	MoMem = mean of memory	MoAff = mean of affective	MoSoc = mean of social
3.728	3.684	3.52	3.59	3.6	3.837

Academic					
MoCog	MoMeta	MoCom	MoMem	MoAff	MoSoc
3.677	3.468	3.63	3.45	3.448	3.65
All					
MoCog	MoMeta	MoCom	MoMem	MoAff	MoSoc
3.703	3.576	3.575	3.52	3.524	3.724

In this empirical investigation, IELTS general candidate groups used the highest mean of strategies which came out to be 3.837 which was related to social strategies, whereas the same candidate groups utilized the lowest mean of strategies which was 3.52, related to compensation strategies. As it is seen both in table 1 and in the interpretation of this finding there is no meaningful interrelation between 3.837 and 3.53. This comparison shows meager difference about strategy use among IELTS general candidate groups. Moreover, the other IELTS candidate groups i.e. academic candidates used the highest mean of strategies which came out to be 3.677 which was related to cognitive strategies, whereas the same candidates utilized the lowest mean of strategies which was related to affective strategies which came out to be 3.448. Again Table 1 highlights this finding.

The results of this finding indicate that there is no significant difference of strategy use among both IELTS candidate groups. Therefore, our null hypothesis which led: 'There were no significant differences between listening strategies employed by different IELTS candidates' is confirmed.

In this investigation, the researcher also found that the elements of 'GENDER' and MOTHER TONGUE of the candidates, which was either Panjabi or Hindi had no impact on the IELTS candidates' listening performance, nor did they affect their use of different strategies i.e. the cognitive, meta-cognitive, compensation, memory-related, affective and social strategies.

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