

# The Empirical Research on Affecting Factors of EFL Listening Test Result

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**Abstract.** Listening is an important part of language learning, listening effects directly affect the learner's language knowledge acquiring state. About EFL qualifying examination, there are many factors on learner's listening test, not only the learner's personal factors, but also external factors. The author's research on the foreign language college's students of 2011 in this university found that the students' pragmatic competence, the difficulty level and the output mode of the listening materials affected the students' EFL listening test result. While the difficulty level and the output mode of the listening material affected the validity of the test result.

## Introduction

The affecting factors of EFL listening test are various, generally divided into the students' personal factors and external factors. The personal factors are mainly about the students' English communicative competence and his personal characteristic. The former includes the students' linguistic competence and pragmatic competence and personal characteristic includes the students' scientific and cultural level, cognitive ability, the obtained listening skills, etc. But the external factors include extensive aspects and have a strong chance. And it also includes method factors. Test's external environment, text's prompts and directions, the students' information obtainment and text time, etc are all belong to the external factors while EFL listening test and these factors may affect students' listening test results.

In personal factor, English communicative competence divides into linguistic competence and pragmatic competence. In these two competences, linguistic competence is the foundation of language learning and the pragmatic competence is formed on the extension of linguistic competence. But in EFL listening test, it mainly tests students' English communicative competence. So, linguistic competence is of the utmost importance. And the student who has a strong linguistic competence will accordingly get a high score.

On external factors, the test standard is an important affecting factor of the students' listening test result. But it is very complicated; no one can make sure that the validity and the reliability of the test are up to the standard and effective.

Bachman found through the research that the method of students' linguistic competence test also affects listening test result, students may react differently according to different listening materials and this may affect students' test scores. All in all, the factors affect EFL listening test are various and very complicated. And doing an empirical research can contribute to more research findings to urge teachers to take a targeted teaching method to cultivate students' linguistic competence, and to promote their English level.

## Research method

### Research object

The research objects of this paper are 45 students in a class of the English department of the foreign language college of 2011 in this university, including 11 boys and 34 girls. Test them with the listening materials of CET-4 in June and December this year in a formal phonetic classroom. They are in a same external environment, take the examination at the same time, and the test time is according to the listening test time of CET-4. Listening material consists of 3 parts, Section A:

NO.11——NO.18, these are simple conversations, each conversation with one question. Section B: NO.26——NO.35, includes 3 short passages. Section C: Listening and filling the blanks, among them, NO.36-NO.43 is about words while NO.44-NO.46 is about long sentences. The total score was 248.5 points. The test indicates that the students' scores are all above 100 points in these two test.

### **Research questions**

The author's research project focuses on 3 questions:

The relation between EFL listening test result and the students' English pragmatic competence.

The relation between EFL listening test result and the output mode of listening materials.

The relation between EFL listening test result and the difficulty of inputting language.

## **Research result**

### **The relation between the students' English pragmatic competence and EFL listening test result**

By analyzing students' test results of these two test with SPSS16.0 ,on average mark, comparing these two test average mark found that  $p < 0.05$ , and it indicated that there is a significant difference of the average mark between these two tests. Then, analyzed on the questions, there are 8 alternative-answer questions in the first test but only 3 in the second test form NO.11-NO.25. And the average mark of the first test is higher than that of the second test. It shows that alternative-answer question is easier and also there is a significant relation between English pragmatic competence and EFL listening test result, the pragmatic competence affecting the students' testing result.

Next, analyzed the average mark of NO.11-NO.25 and NO.26-NO.46, finding that the results of these two tests all show that the average remark of NO.11-NO.25 are obviously higher than that of NO.26-NO.46. Among them, NO.26-NO.46 are 3 short passages and a short "listening and filling words" passage, which requesting students' strong ability of the listening, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, etc, testing the students' comprehensive language skills .It reflected: the students' listening test result were affected by the linguistic competence, While the linguistic competence is the foundation of pragmatic competence. That's to say, pragmatic competence affected students' listening test result.

On teaching, teachers also pay attention to the cultivation of the students' linguistic competence, pragmatic competence and English communicative competence. For example, teachers take activities like short passage dictation, talk-show, English Salon and so on in class, and extracurricular activities like English dub match, English salon, etc. These sufficiently indicate that teachers paid attention to the cultivation of students' English communicative competence, the vocabulary building, the flexible use of grammar, and language communication, etc., but according to the test result, the students' English communicative competence should be improved. Because questions in these two tests are not so that relative to students' life, many contents are those they are not involved, and these affected students' comprehension. So it require teachers to pay attention to culture introduction and culture infiltration in their daily teaching activities, to cultivate the awareness of intercultural communication.

In classroom activities teachers should guide students to think about the cultural differences from the language actively, permeate more knowledge of language cultural background, make them know more about the language culture differences, encourage them to thinking in an English way and reduce mistakes. Meanwhile, when carrying out classroom activities and extra-curricular activities, teachers should analyze the listening test content comprehensively and add more contents relative to the listening test excepting the activities students interested and the activities closely relative to their life to shorten the distance between the students and the listening test.

In addition, EFL listening test also should promote its validity, the test contents that away from students' life could not test English communicative competence correctly. In other words, the making validity of EFL listening test is not effective. So the prompter of EFL listening test should make sure of the factuality of listening materials, promote the availability of listening materials, use more

contents that relative to students' life according to the cultural differences, promote listening test's making validity and test students' English communicative competence comprehensively .

### **The relation between output mode and listening test result**

About the output mode, NO.11-NO.35 is Multiple Choice and NO.36-NO.46 are "Fill in the blank". Both of these two test result shows the average mark of Multiple Choice much higher than that of "Fill in the blank". Conversations in Section C were not difficulty in these two test, they were played 3 times up to the standard of CET-4 and the time was enough to the students.

But this part was filling the blanks. It tested students' dictation skills but not saw about their comprehension or other skills. As with the Multiple Choice, its output mode is easy. Students can guess the right answers before they finished the listening most times. The "Fill in the blank" output mode is much more difficult, especially on the expression. That's to say the output mode of these two parts is not equal in validity. From the communicative language theory, whether Multiple Choice's output mode or Fill in the Blank's is not applied in our daily life and it could not test out students' listening skills in practical. And it indicates the output mode affected EFL listening result.

Although EFL listening material output mode is not up to listening communicative competence, teachers should make some efforts to promote their listening test scores. Pronounce correctly is the foundation of English listening communication. Teachers should let them know about the oral character ,familiar with the phonetic feature ,understand the rule of tune change and find out the speaker's intention from these, play more BBC in the class to shorten the time that sound reached brain and the signal be activated and psychological reaction made by man. Meanwhile, they also should encourage students to form the habit of listening BBC imperceptibly, arranging listening to the radio as homework to urge them to listen to the broadcast, organizing discussion about broadcast program to motivate their passion. Let them know how to distinguish Velocity of sound, familiar with the tune change in fast word speed, catch the stress in the sentences and finding out speaker's implications, etc.

After having made the listening foundation, they should learn extensive listening. They should listen intensively, listening word by word until understood the materials on the beginning of listening practice. And after getting familiar with the materials, they should read loudly to train their word speed and make language sense. Extensive listening is opposite to intensive listening and it focuses on getting the main idea and intention of the material and cultivates the ability of getting important information.

The validity of listening material content is not enough in EFL listening test. The prompter should find out more output mode, adopt

More output mode and promote its validity to test out students' English listening communicative competence.

### **The relationship between difficulty of inputting language and listening test result**

There is a significant difference between average mark of first listening test and that of second listening test. The content of the first listening test is relatively easier and more related with students' life from aspect of listening test material; while from the aspect of types of literature, there are two narrative essays and one argumentation in the first listening test, however in the second listening test, two argumentative writings and one exposition are written. There are more short sentences and oral language usage in the first listening test while more long sentences and complicated grammar are used in the second listening test in the aspects of sentence and structure of that .Through above analysis, the second listening test is more difficult than the first listening test, that's to say, inputting language difficulty degree in listening material are different. The significant difference in the two test indicates that difficulty degree in the inputting language affected the result of listening test , besides whether students can understand listening material in the first time are affected by other factors such as forms of literature , theme, the amount of information ,structure of sentence , vocabulary and so on .The difference of difficulty in inputting language shows that avidity of synchrony is not high in the aspect of listening material , which affected the fairness and impartiality of EFL proficiency test and avidity of listening test.

From prompter of EFL listening test, the unity of difficulty degree in inputting language, proper scales in vocabulary, structure of sentence, theme, and types of literature and so on must be paid much attention to. At the same time, we must improve avidity of synchrony of listening material.

As to teachers and students, teachers must pay attention to cultivating students' linguistic competence and help them lay a good language foundation. Students should enhance basic listening skill practice and form a good habit of listening. No matter listening broadcast and passage or talk with others face to face, they should listen with an English thought, avoiding translating it before they understand it. In this aspect, they should listen more English broadcast in free time, refer to the dictionary more, repeat following the tape or broadcast to form an English thought gradually. When listening to English materials, for example: they should preview the questions ,listen with the question ,put themselves in a leading position, learn to search for the key words and intonation ,combine English culture background to understand the listening material ,when they listening to some test questions. Besides, no matter in the intensive listening in the beginning or in the following extensive listening, students should form a habit of writing while listening and write down all the key words to provide proof for the following choice and obtainment of the intention and main idea of the listening materials. Writing while listening is an active thought process of predicting, judging and referring to listening material contents, and it is very helpful in promoting listening skills.

## **Conclusion**

Students' English pragmatic competence, the difficulty of the input language of listening materials, and the output mode of listening materials affected students' test result. Listening practice is an important part of language learning, and it's also an essential part of language attainment. EFL candidates should recognize the facing situation, do targeted listening practice, and make a good language foundation to improve their English listening skills. Meanwhile, they should practice listening according to the listening test content, form an English thought, and think from the culture to promote test scores.

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