



The effect of setting speaking and listening test in Guangzhou High school entrance examination

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Abstract. In order to cultivate the talent people who were capable to communicate or learn from other countries, the government in People Republic of China set up English discipline in 1960s. The conventional educational mode in China is exam-oriented mode. People cast doubt that this mode only emphasize reading and writing, which would hinder students listening and speaking in English discipline. Based on the need for improving educational quality, Chinese educational bureau tried to provide more opportunity for student to speak out and teach students the skill of listening and speaking. Therefore, listening and oral speaking test put forward initially in Guangzhou and Shenzhen high school entrance examination. Some previous research found that some listening and speaking task may have positive effect on listening and speaking acquisition. It is impossible for China to get rid of exam-oriented educational mode. The listening and oral speaking test is the outcome of the educational reform. There is no research on proving listening and oral speaking test, which set in Guangzhou and Shenzhen, has positive effect on improving students' listening and speaking skill and its long-lasting effect on the future study of student. This research aimed at figuring out whether the listening and oral speaking test in high school entrance examination have effect on helping students acquire listening and speaking skill, and have long-term effect on students' future learning. The result showed that listening and oral speaking test develop students listening and speaking test. Moreover, students need to practice for the test so that they have formed some exam techniques or strategies which also assist them for having good performance in other English language test.

Keywords: the quality of education; listening and speaking; language skill acquisition; exam strategy

1 Introduction

In order to adapt to the trend of the globalization, Chinese government set up English discipline in the primary school, middle school, and higher education. Since Chinese educational bureau set up English curriculum in 1960s, the content and the assessment of English was continually reformed based on the necessity of cultivating contemporary talents. However, no matter how the curriculum and syllabus changed, the purpose of

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the English teaching and examination is to let students acquire reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills. Before 2010s, all the exam, like high school entrance examination and college entrance examination, which paid attention to the reading and writing skill but ignore the speaking skill in the test. The situation changed after 2016, it was the first time for Shenzhen and Guangzhou to include the listening and oral speaking test in English text. This test contains three parts, which is reading the passage, answering the questions, and reporting the information in order to improve students' pronunciation and increase lingual input. After the trail of these two cities, many regions in China began to follow this action.

Many scholars have researched the importance of speaking skill and listening skill, also they have stated the essentiality of altering the education policy. According to Blount and Crawford, English is the means of communicating in all areas and there must always be a speaker and listener [1]. The speaking task can affect learners' Second language comprehensibility of acquisition [2]. In other words, they concurred speaking and listening is as crucial as reading and writing skill. When entering the 21st century, lots of countries like China and Japan threw their vision in speaking and listening part. Japanese government indicated that not paying attention to "speaking" and "listening" was a big failure of English education in Japan [3]. Based on Ariyoshi's study, "Communication Skills training" had been set as goals in the Government Curriculum Guidelines for middle and high school [3]. Japanese government aimed at improving students understand the language and communicating in English. Governments are aware of the importance of providing chance for students to exposure to input and generate their own conversation.

All the scholar has examined speaking and listening skill paly essential role in communication. Also, they pointed out that speaking task is beneficial to speakers' comprehensibility and their understand within English context. In order to adapt to globalization, government desire to cultivate the talent to have a grasp of lingual franca. However, all the research conduct and evaluate the general situation. In other word, the method or the way of assessment is not suitable to the specific situation in China. In other words, there is no evidence whether Chinese new policy of oral speaking and listening text is workable or it would have long-lasting effect on students' English learning and English proficiency level.

In this research, the effect of Chinese speaking and listening test on acquiring speaking and listening skill will be examined. Then, how does the students feel about the speaking and listening test. Although it is exam-oriented education mode, they must gain some knowledge when they prepare for the oral speaking and listening test. Moreover, whether they acquire some technique which is beneficial to their future education, like studying English in college or preparing IELTS or TOFEL test.

The anticipate result is that students concur that setting listening and oral speaking test will provide an authentic input for them to comprehend and produce their output so that it could improve their listening and speaking skill. In addition, it could help them to form a good habit on taking similar listening test, which might be beneficial to their future study.

2 Literature review

2.1 The importance of setting Listening and Speaking test in English learning

Listening and speaking are crucial skills for people to learn English. English is a tool for communication and speaking and listening will play a significant role in daily conversation. People need to comprehend the content through listening and generate their own response. According to literature, Blount and Crawford said “all teaching will be better if we study how we communicate and how we listen” [1]. Scholars emphasized the importance of teaching these two skills. However, teaching cannot evaluate the learning outcome, test in listening and speaking is also quite essential in the learning process. Based on the previous research, some scholars figure out that listening and speaking test will improve learners’ ability. Assessment plays an important role in affecting students’ learning [4]. Some listening and speaking test task required speakers to consider a greater number of elements and employ more reasoning, and placed greater time constraints on speakers in formulating their response [2]. It seems that listening test will not only enhance learners’ speaking and listening skill but also improve their comprehensibility. Rana and Rana emphasized that opportunities for learners to practice listening and speaking in a real-life situation is significant for developing their English proficiency [5]. In other words, students need to have test which act as a role of language environment for students to practice speaking and listening. Setting listening and speaking exam will play an important role in English teaching and improve Educational quality.

2.2 Current situation in China

The truth is that listening and speaking skill are not being taken serious in Asian countries. Ariyoshi criticized the Japanese English curriculum that the ability to read the original precisely is the goal of language learning [4]. There is a similar situation in Nepal, English teaching deliberately ignored listening and speaking skills and only taught reading and writing courses in the classroom [5]. Educational mode and policy on English teaching is also an ineligious issue, which might affect students’ acquiring listening and speaking skill. Exam-oriented education has been formulated in China for decades, which objectively urged students, parents and teachers to attach importance to the course learning [6]. Exam-oriented educational mode still has its worthy, for example, using assessment to increase students’ motivation and learning abilities and using assessment to enhance the overall quality of students [4]. Nevertheless, the exam-oriented mode has been criticized a lot since public concur that it only focused on passing exam but not learn knowledge. According to Meng, Tang, and Wu’s conclusion, under the exam-oriented education system in China, the importance of vocabulary and grammar is often greater than oral English ability [6]. Based on intensive debate on the educational mode, Chinese educational bureau has made numerous changes to the curriculum of English language teaching in order to place more emphasis on students’ futures [7]. Zhao concluded that exam-oriented English language education impeded their use

of English in everyday workplace conversation [7]. It means that students need opportunity to speak and listening. It is impossible to give exam-oriented mode which China have stucked for so many years. The problem is that how to improve Chinese students' listening and language under this educational mode.

Chinese government noticed that traditional English exam mainly focus on reading and writing skills. In order to improve this situation, educational bureau started to reform the exam. Therefore, listening and oral speaking test put forward in 2016. The effect of this listening and oral speaking test has not been evaluated yet, the research will evaluate students' perception on improving listening and speaking skill under this test and the effect on their future study.

3 Method

3.1 Data collection

The main method of this research would be the qualitative research method. Furthermore, one student will participate in the interview to talk about their perception of the effectiveness of listening and oral speaking test. The main goal of sampling is to find individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation so as to maximize what we can learn[8]. The interview will last about 40 minutes. All the content in the interview will be recorded by cell-phone and it would be transcribed into the context after the interview so that it could be convenient to be estimated. The lingual franca of this interview will be Chinese Mandarin. Therefore, the transcription will be translated into English at the end of the process.

3.2 Information of participant

This participant will be selected from Guangzhou, Guangdong province in China. The student is the college student at the present and the participant have experienced the High school entrance examination listening and oral speaking test six or seven years ago. Based on the background of exam-oriented educational mode, the student needs to prepare hard on this exam in order to have better academic performance and attend better senior high school. Thus, the student has experience on how to prepare the exam and the participant can explicitly tell what he or she has learnt during the preparation. Moreover, this participant attended CET4 or CET6 test during college period. The score of listening tests in CET4 or CET6 can be regarded as the reference of their learning outcome. Some participants have inclination to have further study in English country. Therefore, they are required to have IELTS (the International English Language Test System) or TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) score. Whether the technique they have learnt or the habit they have gained in preparing high school entrance examination listing and oral speaking test will be beneficial to their IELTS or TOEFL preparation. In short, the participant is required to fulfill the standard that he or she comes from Guangzhou, the student has experienced listing and oral speaking test, and participant will have plan of having further education in foreign countries. The

participant will be selected in a Sino-foreign cooperative education college which called Beijing Normal University Hongkong Baptist University United International College.

3.3 Procedure

Initially, the interviewee will sign informed consent with the interviewer in order to make sure the participant have inclination in participating in this interview. Interviewer will ask the participant several questions. Firstly, the participant will be asked when did the participant attend this exam. Then, interviewer will ask which part in test is effective and valid for improving listening and speaking test, and which examination techniques did participant form during the preparation of listening and oral speaking test. At the last part of the interview, the interviewee will be asked to share whether he or she consider this technique is beneficial for him or her to prepare other language exam like CET4 or IELTS. After the interview, interviewer will transcribe the recording. The interview will be conducted in Chinese which may help interviewee better express his or her perception, therefore, the recording is required to translate into English. Interviewer will show the result to the participant. The transcription of the recording will be used in result and discussion procedure.

4 Discussion

Table 1. The result of the interview

Research questions: 1. Whether the listening and oral speaking test have positive effect on student's language skill acquisition. 2. Whether the listening and oral speaking test in Guangzhou would play an important role in their future study		
Theme1-The effect of listening and oral speaking test	Effect on listening and speaking skill	1. The practice of the test helps students improve their ability of comprehending the recording and extracting the key word from the recording 2. Their pronunciation and intonation have improved
	Effect on exam strategies	1. Students formed a good habit to read the questions and figure out the key word of the question 2. Students can summarize the information through the recording 3. Students can pay attention to their intonation when speaking
Theme 2-The effect for future study	Effect on College English test (CET4)	The technique of extracting information and locating information helps participant cope with this test.
	Effect on IELTS	1. For listening, participant can find out the key words so that she can predict the information before listening what part of speech the blank is going to be. And it could help participant have higher accuracy. 2. For speaking part, participant can organize more logical answer. Participant can notice the pause during speaking

4.1 The effectiveness of improving listening and speaking skill

As the content shown in the table 1, the participant expressed her positive attitude toward the listening and oral speaking test in Guangzhou high school entrance examination. From her perception, the listening and oral speaking test provided chance for her to improve her pronunciation and intonation in speaking. Moreover, when she prepared for listening test, she has gained an ability to extract the key word in the question so that she could capture the answer in the recording more accurately. Comparing with the speaking part, participant show higher praise on the effect on the listening part. When candidate participate in the test, they are allowed to take some note on a blank sheet and they are able to look throw the questions of the test. From the perspective of acquisition in techniques, the written mode allows test-takers to have more control over their strategies [9]. According to Farvardin, Rezaee and Mashhadi's finding, the EFL learners are able to have an access to the clues [9]. In other words, the setting of the Guangzhou listening and speaking test provide opportunity for candidate to read and find out the clue so that it is much easier for candidate to have insightful understanding and comprehension on the context while he or she is listening the recording. Therefore, students might have better listening comprehensibility.

Although listening and speaking test does not provide chance for participant to have a contextual conversation, it still generates a platform for her to speak out. The participant pointed out that the listening and oral speaking test gave her chance to improve her pronunciation and intonation. Moreover, listening and oral test can let students have a chance to improve their summarizing ability. Comparing with the traditional test, listening and oral speaking test focus more on pronunciation and intonation. Except for paying attention to candidate's pronunciation and intonation, no matter the formal test or the daily practice the platform of the test equips with a mechanical assistant which might intellectually provide feedback on the performance of the student. In this way, the students have opportunity to figure out which area they require to improve so that they can make progress. Chang and Hung stated that applying general-purpose software in L2 learning tasks seems to better nurture an authentic and meaningful use of the target language [10]. To intellectual system's credit, students might have better speaking skill acquisition. In the past, students did not have a chance to listen a recoding and summarize the information. According to this evolution of the exam, students can practice and have a grasp in this strategy. Lu and Wang stated that summary writing, to a certain degree, may help in EFL learners' anxiety in the process of oral performance since it can enable them to feel prepared in discourse organization before speech, especially in language expression [11]. Not only can they practice the listening and speaking, but also they can have confidence to express themselves. In this situation, accuracy and fluency can be guaranteed.

4.2 The impact on long-term learning and future learning.

According to the interview, participant concurs that listening and oral speaking test may have long-term effect on her study. She considered that the test has corrected her pronunciation and intonation because of the repeated practice for listening and oral

speaking test. The traditional exam also had function of cultivating students' exam strategy and ability. Listening and oral speaking test focus more on students' speaking skill. It showed stronger desire to improve students' logical sense, pronunciation, and intonation. With the repeated practice, candidates formed this habit which have long-term effect on their study. This notion was based on the concept called behaviorism. Behaviorism emphasizes the importance of the outcomes of those performances and contends that responses that are followed by reinforcement are more likely to recur in the future [12]. Candidates need to practice for so many times in order to reinforce their strategy. In this case, the practice of the test help students gains the technique which they can use in their future study and handle with similar situation. The result shows that the skills she gained in the practice of listening and oral speaking test assist for accomplishing with CET4, CET6, and IELTS listening and speaking test. The traditional exam-oriented test has been criticized a lot as it would not have long lasting effect for the students. However, the skill provide assistance for participant to complete the higher-level exam. It showed the sustainability of listening and oral speaking test.

5 Conclusion

In China, people always criticize the Exam-oriented educational mode. However, Chinese educational bureau also did some action to change the situation and improve the educational quality. This research tried to examine the listening and oral speaking test in high school, which was under exam-oriented educational mode, would have positive effect on learner's listening and speaking skill acquisition. Furthermore, this study tried to figure out that this listening and oral speaking test in Guangzhou high school entrance examination would generate some positive effect on learner's future study. In this study, the interviewee showed her strongly positive attitude toward setting listening and oral speaking test in Guangzhou high school entrance examination. According to the content in the interview, the listening and oral speaking test cultivated the students how to improve their pronunciation and intonation while speaking, and practice their pre-listening skill so that the students were able to extract the information from the recording accurately. When the student practiced for the test, she has formed some exam techniques, like extracting the information, summarizing the information, and paying attention the intonation and pause while speaking. These skills have long-lasting effect, which affect their performance in College English test and IELTS test. The setting of the listening and oral speaking test affect student's future study.

The exam pattern and the intellectual assistance of listening and oral speaking test helped student to acquire listening and speaking test. The new test in English discipline provide opportunity for students to speak out. In the first part, the system has strict standard in assessing intonation and pronunciation. The students need to pay attention to this problem. The written form of question can help students take note and extract the information from the recording. Moreover, students will form some good habit toward these two skills based on the behaviorism theory. Student need to practice for the exam over and over again, it helps them acquire the skill to conduct the test.

There still some limitations in my research. Some region in China also set up listening and oral speaking test in high school entrance examination. This research merely focused on Guangzhou but no other regions in China. Different student from different regions might have different challenge when they conduct the test. Therefore, the future study can examine other regions in China in order to examine whether listening and oral speaking test is suitable to put forward in other regions in China. In addition, the future study can try to study whether listening and oral speaking test have same effect on student in other regions. Another recommendation of the research in this area is that researcher can take some time to evaluate learners' motivation toward listening and oral speaking test. It would make the outcome of the research more valid.

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