

The effect of preview questions on the listening comprehension of toefl examinees...



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Literature Review

Background of the Review

Communication is one factor in human relations that could not be removed from existing within the community of humans. This is primarily because of the fact that it is something that keeps the relationship of people from all over the world intact in creating one particular community. Communication is indeed one of the oldest procedures of humans in connecting with each other. Within the ancient years, people utilized sounds to be able to connect to each other. Later on, the sounds developed into words, words into phrases and now, people are already capable of expressing themselves through speaking different languages. This fact leads to the proof that one of the most important needs of people is to communicate. It is the particular factor that separates humans from other creations, since they are able to connect to others through the use of words, or body language, they have the means by which they are able to express their innermost thoughts through communicating their minds to others.

Larry Alan Nadig further describes communication in the following manner:

“ Expressing our wants, feelings, thoughts and opinions clearly and effectively is only half of the communication process needed for interpersonal effectiveness. The other half is listening and understanding what others communicate to us. When a person decides to communicate with another person, he/she does so to fulfill a need. The person wants something, feels discomfort, and/or has feelings or thoughts about something. In deciding to communicate, the person selects the method or <https://assignbuster.com/the-effect-of-preview-questions-on-the-listening-comprehension-of-toefl-examinees-essay-sample/>

code which he/she believes will effectively deliver the message to the other person. The code used to send the message can be either verbal or nonverbal. When the other person receives the coded message, they go through the process of decoding or interpreting it into understanding and meaning. Effective communication exists between two people when the receiver interprets and understands the sender's message in the same way the sender intended it." (TEL, 2001, Internet)

However, through the years, the development of the artistic and strategic way of using communication as a link towards other people has been continuously improving. Now, at the brink of globalization, more and more people are having the capability of connecting to others of different races from their own through communication, yet they are lacking the skills of doing so. How then are humans supposed to face this particular challenge of social progress? The book of Rudolph and Kathleen Verderber discusses of the four major ways by which the human society could gain the right skills to communicate.

The Four keys of Successful Communication [A Summary of Chapters 1-4]

According to the Verderber[s], successful speech communication with others could only be attained through constant practice. This practice through does not only involve one's own effort of attaining the skills of rightful speech. In a concise discussion within the four chapters of their book, Kathleen and Rudolph gave the four basic steps by which people could gain good and considerably practical communication skills.

(1) *Foundations of Communication, the first 100 pages*

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This section includes some topics such as verbal and nonverbal communication, plus the perception of self and others. The said topic primarily focus on the ability of the person to use all the possible ways to be able to connect with others in the society, making a certain stress on the fact that people do need to communicate with others because it is innate in them to do so. Using this as the main foundation of learning the skills for speech is certainly a fine start for someone wanting to gain the rightful knowledge needed to converse with others.

(2) Interpersonal Communication, the next 110 pages

This part of the book includes several topics ranging from listening and job interviews to communicating in relationships. Most likely, the focus of this part is to show the reader how communication skills are practically applied in real life. The aim of the authors is primarily to encourage the readers to believe the fact that they cannot do away with the fact that communication is a regular part of human living and they could not do away with it.

(3) Group Communication, ranging at only 20 pages

This particular section tells the reader how to participate in groups as well as to how to apply leadership within groups through the use of fine communicating skills on the part of the one creating the conversation.

(4) Public Speaking, the last 160 pages

The Final chapter discusses on how to pick a topic, research it, adapting to an audience. It also gives a clear description on the differences between informative vs. persuasive speaking. This part mainly focuses on the <https://assignbuster.com/the-effect-of-preview-questions-on-the-listening-comprehension-of-toefl-examinees-essay-sample/>

capability of the readers to develop their skills in expressing themselves in front of a crowd as they hold their attention through the discussions that they are addressing to them.

Through the discussion of the four major chapters of the book *Communicate!*, it could be noted that the authors of the book wanted to stress on the importance of an individual's ability in expressing himself whether personally or publicly. The constant recognition of the fact that people are indeed capable and are responsible of communicating themselves with others have particularly made this reading material a must read. It could not be denied that through the discussions that the authors presented, the importance of listening is given ample focus. The authors even noted: "Listening is one part of communication that cannot be denied of attention; there is certainly a non-existent communication if the art of listening is not applied by the parties that are having a particular conversation." (Verderber, 25)

This then defines the fact that listening is an important part of conversation. A person who is able to listen at most of the conversations that he engages with is the one who is actually able to make communication work for the best possible reasons. Every person who is able to hold a conversation is most likely the one who is able to listen well. Constant attention to one's practice of listening is very important, as this would actually increase the capability of a person in knowing the most important informations that he needs to be able to live life in a much more effective way. Learning from other's experiences, other's opinions, other's way of thinking and other points of

consideration could only be done through one's capability of actually listening to what others have to say.

The Long Lost Art of Listening

With the many people there are in the society, only a few are able to master the art of effective listening. It could not be denied that this practice of human relationship had long been forgotten by several civilizations of the human population. More and more people are much concerned on the moments that they are given the chance to speak out their own minds.

There are lesser numbers of the human population who are caring enough to listen to what others particularly have to say. This is the reason why many are having a hard time retaining what they have particularly conversed about with others simply because of the fact that half of the time that they spent within the said conversation, they only cared about what they are going to say next.

As a result, those who are less able to make use of their listening skills find themselves less benefiting from the conversations that they are usually involved with. This is especially true among students both young and old. This is especially true when referring to the span of time that the students are particularly able to spend in listening to their teachers' instructions during class. It has been noted by psychologists that the listening span of most students depends on the interest that they have upon the subjects that are presented to them. Once the students obtain a regressive state of interest upon a certain subject, the concentration of their attention towards the said lesson also decreases, making them less able to utilize their skills of

listening. Through the actual illustration that is presented herein, it could be observed that people are only capable of utilizing their skills of listening if they are able to focus on the subjects that they are particularly presented with.

This collection of ideas then presents us with the fact that there are elemental reasons that actually outlines the cause of the lost of interest of many people upon paying attention to the things that they hear or even caring to understand the things that they are told about. These elements could be enumerated as follows:

- Interest

As mentioned earlier, it is very important that a person is able to gain interest on whatever the presented topic is. It could be mentioned that “interest” upon the topic is the primary motivation of the listener to become lured to actually hearing what is needed to be heard with regards the discussion that is presented to him.

- Time to Focus

Without time and the availability of the person to actually focus on what is being said, the application of good listening is not really that easy to attain. This is the reason why the time availability or the length of time that the listener could actually give for the one discussing a certain topic, or for the one trying to start a conversation.

- Willingness to Listen

Even though there is time as well as interest on the part of the listener, without the willingness to actually listen and benefit from what was heard, successful listening is not that much possible to be expected.

With the discussion of the said elements, it could then be noted that the skill of listening is indeed not an easy attitude towards conversation to attain. It requires one's determination to actually acquire the needed requirements to be a good listener. One must also be able to attain the right motivation towards acquiring the skill based upon the benefits that listening could certainly give the ones receiving the messages. What are the said motivational factors that could lead to the listener's gaining interest as well as determination in gaining the right attitude towards understanding and acquiring the skills of right listening?

People who are good listeners are known to have great benefits in terms of learning much vital informations from the discussions that they actually hear from the ones that they converse with. These informations serve as major factors of growth that they utilize for themselves to attain a considerable state of maturity based from the experiences of other people that they have been able to talk with. Aside from the informations that were passed on to them through their conversations, the values that they have learned from the said talks do give them the enhanced capabilities of handling longer conversations in the future. True, those who are able to listen well are the ones who turn out to be the ones who are able to benefit higher from the practice of effective conversation. Knowing that listening indeed benefits the listener, it is then important to understand how this practice of effective communication could be attained.

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Establishing the Capabilities of Individuals in

Becoming Good Listeners

Listening as mentioned in clarification in the previous paragraphs is indeed a serious factor in conversation that needs to be given attention with. To some, listening may not be a problem, however, with some, there is a huge problem that concerns listening that makes the process of conversation hindered from becoming successful. This is especially true, when the situation involves conversant who have different mother tongues.

Considering this, the situation of ESL or people who are utilizing the English language as a secondary language could be noted as a perfect example for the justification of the said issue. There are actually two different classes of ESL students or ESL communities. The first class includes those that are born in countries that actually use the English Language as a second language. These countries particularly require the teaching of the English Language within their educational curriculum arrangements. Aside from this, their major business corporations as well as other employments require that the applicants have the capability of using the English language within a certain standard that they have to attain before actually being able to be hired. Among the countries that are included in this particular class are India, Philippines, Pakistan, and others, which are primarily used by the United States and other English countries as out-source of the companies that they are trying to establish outside of their own countries.

On the other hand, the second-class ESL community includes those that are born in countries that are completely alienated away from using the English

language. These are countries that are highly traditional that are trying to adhere to their cultural heritage with which they avoid using other foreign language in place of their original languages. This particular situation then makes learning the English language indeed an expensive goal for the citizen of the said countries.

As it could be noted based from the classification of the two classes of ESL communities as posted above, there are certain advantages that the first class have against the other as they are more directly engaged in utilizing the English language in actual practice. Being able to get familiar with the foreign language in an environment that accepts it as a second language makes an individual more capable of listening and primarily understanding what is being said by others through the use of the said foreign language. On the other hand, being born in a country that uses only the mother tongue as the major medium for conversation, makes the utilization of a foreign language indeed a huge challenge.

How is this particular statement possible? People who are less familiar with a certain language would not be able to attain the gist of the skills of listening eventually. It takes time for a person to actually adapt to the systems used by the natives using a foreign language for speech. The English language in particular consists of many words that have multiple meanings in them depending on how they were used by the person speaking. This then shall indeed cause problems to those listening who are not even at least familiar with the words and terminologies used in the said language.

Listening per se, is a term that consists of three elements that makes it an important factor in the system of human communication. The said elements are presented as follows:

(a)Hearing

The first element is to actually have the ability to hear. Simply hearing the words utilizes the capability of the person to make effective use of his hearing sense. Doing so would encode in his mind the message that is being sent to him by the speaker.

(b)Understanding

Decoding the message is the process by which understanding the speaker's idea comes in the conversation process. It is through this process that the listener could identify the key informations that are sent to him by the speaker and is thus able to distinguish the sense of the message and how it is supposed to affect the said listener.

(c)Judging

This phase of listening is the stage where the listener intends to interpret the message that has been decoded earlier. This stage shall actually make the conversation more sensible than simply being heard by the listener or by being spoken by the speaker. This is where the listener shall decide on how he or she is supposed to respond on the message that has been sent to him.

To explain the general process of hearing that is presented in the discussion above, the following presentation shall support the information presented:

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3. Judging:

The Interpretation of the message and the decision of response happens in the brain; this is where the listener begins to interact with the speaker.

2.

Understanding: This happens as the message passes the veins towards the brain with which the decoding of

the message
occurs.

1. Hearing:

This
particularly
happens on
the ear
towards the
inner parts of
it; the sound
wave sent by
the speaker
is received
through the
ear of the
one listening
to the
message.

Diagram 1: The Process of Listening

True, listening without actually understanding is simply hearing the message. As it could be seen in the diagram, the whole process of listening does not involve the ear alone, instead it involves the ability of the human brain to give justice to what is being discussed by a speaker to the listener during a particular conversation. Going back to the issue on being an ESL
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student or civilian who aims to adapt to the process of conversation that the native English speakers make use of in speech, the process of listening indeed becomes a serious challenge. This is especially true in the case of those who were born in countries that ignore the use of the English language as a second tongue [the second class of ESL communities]. How then are ESL societies able to cope up with the process of communication that they are suppose to handle when dealing with native English speakers?

Helping ESL Communities Cope Up with the English Societies

Globalization, along with the development of the Internet systems encouraged the merging of the east and the west. The continuous increase of the rate of the human population who are ESL or even the non-English speakers migrating in the United States could not be denied as a growing “trend” in the society. Because of the large opportunities of employment as well as education in the said country, people from around the world intend to leave their own original places to either find work or to settle down within the territories of the United States of America. On the other hand, there are those who simply aim to be globally connected because of other motives such as business expansion or other things as such. However, because of the fact that English is the globally-acclaimed language and it is the universal tongue, people of the said situations are then required to become proficient enough in using the language.

TO prove the above claims, the results of the survey performed by the National Institute of Literacy in America entitled “ English as a Second Language Literacy Facts” shall be presented herein:

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The Census 2000 Supplementary Survey found the following:

- 5% of the population aged 5-17 spoke Spanish at home, of which:
 - 4% reported being able to speak English “ very well” or “ well,”
and
 - 6% “ not well” or “ not at all.”
- 9% of the population aged 5-17 spoke an Indo-European language other than Spanish at home, of which:
 - 8% reported being able to speak English “ very well” or “ well,”
and
 - 2% “ not well” or “ not at all.”
- 3% of the population aged 5-17 spoke an Asian/Pacific Islander language at home, of which:
 - 6% reported being able to speak English “ very well” or “ well,”
and
 - 4% “ not well” or “ not at all.”
- 0% of the population aged 18-64 spoke Spanish at home, of which:
 - 8% reported being able to speak English “ very well” or “ well,”
and
 - 2% “ not well” or “ not at all.”
- 7% of the population aged 18-64 spoke an Indo-European language other than Spanish at home, of which:
 - 4% reported being able to speak English “ very well” or “ well,”
and
 - 6% “ not well” or “ not at all.”

- 0% of the population aged 18-64 spoke an Asian/Pacific Islander language at home, of which:
 - 6% reported being able to speak English “ very well” or “ well,” and
 - 4% “ not well” or “ not at all.”

(Source of Information: NIL, 2007, Internet)

From the results presented herein, there are significantly numbers of the society’s members that make use of English as a second language trying to imply the actual grammar system of the Native American English.

This is the primary reason why in Asia, particularly in the Philippines and in India, several English institutions were established to be able to host several individuals who are aiming to learn the basics of the English language. It is from this particular learning that they are expecting to become highly capable of using the English language both in listening and in speech. This is especially pertaining to their engagements during several important conversations that they are supposed to hold with their business partners or even their employers abroad.

Those who plan to migrate to the United States or even just visit the country for the sake of studying are then required to take tests that would measure their capabilities of using the English language in practical practice. The said exams include the TOEFL examinations, which is given to student-visa applicants from all over the world. They are required to pass a certain average that they need to accomplish to be able to garner a specific status that would make it easier for them to enter schools or other educational

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institutions in the United States. Almost all the universities in the said country also require students to pass the TOEFL exams as a part of their entrance demands from the students.

In English institutions outside America, students are prepared to take the TOEFL exams. They are given pre-test activities that are aimed to hone their skills in actually using the English language and distinguishing the different elements that makes it up. This pre-examination practices are then done to prepare the students for the actual process of testing that they should expect once the TOEFL answer sheets are handed to them. The said examination is divided into four major sections.

1. Reading-This section concerns the ability of the examinees to understand the primary information sent out by the author of a particular written work. Once the reading time-limit is done, the examinees are to answer several questions regarding the passage or story that they were primarily required to read. The answers are posted in multiple choice which would give the examinee a chance to think of what the passage really implies.
2. Listening-This particular part proceeds with the time that is allotted for the examinees to listen to the different conversations or recorded classroom discussions that they actually need to understand since the audio would only be played once. After the conversations or the discussions are over, the questions need to be answered accordingly as to how the examinee actually understood what has been primarily played beforehand.

3. Speaking-This section of the exam is orally taken whereas the examinees are supposed to answer several questions verbally. They are expected to give meaningful discussions or speech with regards a particular topic that they were required to answer.
4. Writing- this is the part where the examinees are expected to write down their ideas in paper with regards a certain topic. The point of this section is to see how an ESL applicant could present his or her ideas in a concise but meaningful writing within a limited time of writing the ideas down.

Focusing on the listening exam, the ESL students are amply given time to listen to certain discussions that were recorded in audio. They are supposed to listen while actually understanding what they are hearing. This is supposed to give them the idea of what the message of the audio was that would later on be asked of them when they answer the questions that follow the listening limit. This is where the preview exams in listening would help the ESL applicants for examination. Preview exams are designed to give the examinees a taste of what they are supposed too expect from the actual examination process. The students are then made to listen to several passages as well as conversations in English, which are practically arranged from easy categories towards the difficult categories. These particular listening practices are utilized to hone the hearing capabilities of the ESL applicants on the basic principles of speech and response procedures of the American English Language. The gradual increasing process of the level of English language that is presented within the discussions that are pre-heard by the ESL examinees are designed to gradually increase their capability in

understanding the terminologies used in practical conversation by the native speakers of the language.

The aim of the preview exams in the listening section is to familiarize the examinees with the sounds and the common process of word-usage that the native speakers use as heard from the audio presentations. Allowing the ESL examinees have an experience of the exam procedures even before the actual testing then gives them a chance to enhance their capabilities of understanding the language that they hear while they hear it. Doing so would save them the worries that they would forget the gist of what they hear when they are already supposed to answer the questions intended for the said conversations. The utilization of this system certainly brings advantage to the examinees. Its design of making them hear practical conversations and speech presentations that are recorded in an actual basis would not only help the examinees in the actual testing procedures, instead, it would also assist them in becoming highly capable of handling their own conversations with the foreign nationals who speak the English language.

To prove the effectiveness of the said process, it has been noted through a survey that at most 68% of those who have undergone the preview examination practice in listening actually passed the TOEFL examinations (Gear, 2006, 34). Basing from this particular statistical report, it could be noted that the preview exams indeed have an impact on the capability of ESL TOEFL examinees to pass the listening testing sections. The familiarity that they have gained from practice indeed constructed in them the skill that they need to understand what they hear directly as they hear the passages, the conversations and the discussions presented to them.

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Other Ways of Assistance

Aside from the preview exams, ESL examinees are encouraged to listen to radio stations or television news programs that are presented in the English language. This practice would as well help them in becoming familiarized with the systems of using the language in casual talk. Through this, ESL examinees are also expected to become more capable of adhering to the speaking procedures of the English community. True, understanding the English language in an ESL perspective may not be that easy to attain.

Although some may say that it is easy to identify the different terms and their meanings in the language, there are still some circumstances that the words do not mean as they are regularly used. There are certain occasions that the same words are used to present different meanings making the discussions more complicated than they are actually expected to appear.

Being able to identify this particular complication in the English language requires one to acquire a fine skill in listening. As said earlier, effective listening includes in depth understanding of the message that had been heard. The deepest and the most hidden elements within the passages as they are used by the conversant need to be decoded by the listener in a reasonable way that the message becomes sensible for discussion. True, becoming an investigative listener is not that easy to attain particularly for ESL communities. However, with ample practice and patient application of what they have learned from the institutions that they attended, the ESL examinees are in the right track of being able to pass the TOEFL exams.

Summary of the Review

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From the review of the literature that has been presented in this chapter, it could be noted that the art of listening has been clearly discussed. The process of listening has been learned as one particular factor in conversation that needs to be given close attention by the ones who are listening to the messages being sent by the speakers. Listening, however, is not an easy task in communication to complete. The effectiveness of listening does not only rely on the capability of the listener to hear what is being said, but it largely depends on the capability of the listener to understand and interpret what is being said. Considering the different factors that contribute to the ability of the listener to understand the message that is sent within the conversation process, it is indeed necessary for one to not only have the interest in the topic being talked about but also have the time and the want of actually listening to what is being said by the speaker.

From this review, it has also been proven that preview exams indeed have an impact on the capability of ESL examinees in passing the TOEFL exams because of the listening practice that it imposes on them. The familiarity that they gain from the practice exams are indeed helpful in aiding them in becoming competent English speakers as well as listeners, able to make the different interpretations of the message as they become more acquainted with the practical use of the language in actual conversations and casual discussions of several topics. Aside from the practice or preview exams, there were also other forms of practice listening procedures that were duly suggested herein. It could then be noted that through the said suggested measures of practice, ESL examinees could also acquire the skill they need to be able to understand and retain the meaning of what they hear as the

conversation continues to develop. Through the said practices, the ESL examinees are not only equipped with the listening skill that they need to pass the exam but they are also given the chance to use the said skills in actual conversations with other fellow ESL users or even with the native speakers as well.

Gaining these particular vital informations shall then equip the researcher with ample basis of the conclusion that is to be made at the end of this particular study.

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