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Effectiveness of Accommodation in the Assessment of Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract

This study has investigated the impact of accommodation on test performance as well as achievement scores of Iranian EFL learners at the intermediate level. Initially, 60 female EFL learners of a language school took a version of PET following the standard procedure of the test with no accommodation. Ten days later, the same 60 learners took the second version of PET with some forms of accommodation including: extended time, setting alteration, test illustration, and response presentation. In the second phase, the 60 participants were divided into two 30-member groups of experimental and control and their equality was checked in terms of language proficiency. The experimental group, in addition to its regular lesson plan, underwent accommodated formative assessment. Consequently, as they finished each session, they took quizzes in the next session and received feedback on their progress in terms of four skills. The accommodation activities used during instruction included extended time, setting, presentation and response. The intervention in the control group was the same except for its accommodation. At the end, both groups sat for the achievement test of the language school to exhibit any possible impact of accommodation on their general achievement. On the whole, accommodation was found to be positively effective on the assessment of Iranian female intermediate learners as it contributed to better understanding of the test, reducing test anxiety, and finally an overall better performance on the achievement test.

Key words: Accommodation; Formative assessment; Preliminary English Test (PET)

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INTRODUCTION

Considering diverse learning and academic needs of learners and helping them to have a sense of achievement are the main challenges of teachers and educators. Generally, test takers should be familiar with the language and meaning of the instructions in every test of language proficiency. Manipulations in the language of the test improve students' scores especially those who have a lower level of English proficiency. Some researchers recommend the implementation of accommodation to make a realistic assessment of the in-depth knowledge of English Language Learners (ELL) (Rivera & Stansfield, 1998). The psychologist Jean Piaget, in his works on children's cognitive development, used the term accommodation with the idea that individuals should accommodate to new and different environments while teaching and assessment are happening. Therefore, as Campbell (2006) stated, accommodation is the process of accommodating cognitive structures to accept new environment, eliminate disabilities, and enhance efficiency.

According to Fairbairn (2007), test accommodation is a way of reducing or removing learners' problems in testing contexts. There are four traditional categories of accommodations such as changing the timing, the setting, the presentation, and the response (Rivera et al., 2006). It is worth to mention that the learning needs of ELLs while

implementing and evaluating accommodations in both teaching and testing situations are of great importance.

Given the fact that there is no research conducted on the accommodation and its contribution to assessment in Iran, this research sought to examine the potential impact of accommodation on Iranian English learners' achievement. To be more precise, the first aim of the present study was to investigate the impact of accommodation in testing conditions on the performance of Iranian EFL learners in a general proficiency test like PET. This study also aimed to discover how accommodation in formative tests, as a teaching technique, could enhance learning and lead to the betterment of the achievement scores of Iranian ELLS at the intermediate level. To this end, the following research questions were formulated:

Q1: Does accommodation during test session have any impact on the performance of Iranian EFL learners in PET?

Q2: Does accommodation in formative assessment have any impact on the language learning and hence the achievement scores of Iranian EFL learners at the intermediate level?

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Assessment

Assessment has a vital role in all educational systems and learners and teachers' inevitable involvement in developing assessment methods and tools is obvious to every researcher especially in the field of English language teaching and testing. There are two categories of classroom assessment: formative assessment and summative one.

Formative assessment was originally defined by Scriven in 1967 to clarify the impact of evaluation on the progressive improvement of the curriculum planning. It involves a process of uninterrupted assessment and evaluation from the very start in all stages and level of language learning procedure rather than the final assessment of the learners' achievement. In reality, teachers collect the necessary information for learning and teaching adjustments and conduct this type of assessment in ongoing classroom practices (Ferris, 1995).

Isavi (2012) named the most frequent forms of formative assessment which can be used during instruction as the follows: reviewing homework exercises and reflection journals during the term, forming planned and spontaneous question and answer sessions, organizing conferences between the teacher and student at different time intervals, doing class activities and discussions to improve students' cooperation and peer assessment, and getting feedback from the students about the classroom instruction and their self/ peer evaluation.

In contrast to formative assessment, teachers conduct summative assessment as a final evaluation of an instructional program to make decisions about what

students have mastered and have not mastered. Summative assessment could be equal with high stake standardized tests of TOEFL or IELTS outside the classroom context. Final examination and term papers, projects and portfolios at the end of the term are some examples of summative assessment.

1.2 Accommodation

Attaining a reasonable degree of English language proficiency is a necessary component of being successful at academic contexts. Therefore, poor performance on tests and not providing correct answers are the result of low level of proficiency and achievement and sometimes it does not represent test takers' real knowledge and skills. Drawing a contrast between content knowledge and language knowledge of the learners is a challenging task to undertake. In the literature, promising accommodation is making some changes to decrease the complex language of the test. The goal of an accommodation is to make an assessment more accessible for English language learners. According to Abedi et al. (2004), by implementing appropriate accommodations, a part of measurement error which origins from the linguistic difficulty of exams could be reduced significantly.

According to Abedi (2013), five major conditions should be taken into consideration in selecting accommodations for English language learners: its effectiveness in making an assessment easier to get for the learners, its validity in order to not altering the focal construct, its differential impact related to sensitivity to learners' background characteristics and their academic purposes, its relevance to be appropriate for the learners, and finally its feasibility to be implemented in the assessment setting.

As a result, any kinds of modification which are made to the test itself or the testing conditions with the purpose of aiding the learners to reveal their language proficiency is referred to accommodation. It consists of the alteration in presenting test forms and materials, implementing the setting and scheduling, and responding channels like writing or dictating answers. However, it should be considered that implementing accommodation by simplifying language of the test regardless of altering the task itself is a challenging task to carry out, as long as it would not affect the reliability and validity of tests.

According to Lazarin (2006), the accommodation strategies that are widely used are allocating more time, considering test takers' reasonable and plausible suggestions in test administrations such as small groups or individual administrations, reading test instruction more slowly and loudly, permitting learners to use bilingual dictionaries during exam time, and providing oral directions in the test takers' mother tongue. Rivera et al. (2006) believe that these accommodations provide the opportunity for the test-taker to represent their English proficiency and mastery more competently.

Furthermore, Rivera et al. (2006) argue that those kinds of accommodation that affect test-takers' ability to correctly focusing and analyzing the content of the test either by using native or target language are included in direct linguistic category. On the other hand, indirect linguistic accommodations are those techniques which focus on the non-linguistic features such as scheduling or test environment.

Christensen et al. (2012) in their manual explained five steps in implementing accommodation in large-scale instruction and assessment. Which are as follows: expecting English language learners to achieve the necessary academic content knowledge, learning the required accommodations for instruction and assessment, selecting accommodations for instructing and assessing individual students' achievement according to their communicative needs, administering accommodations during instruction and assessment, and finally evaluating and improving accommodation use.

1.3 Related Studies

Recently, researchers and educators have studied some of the most common types of accommodations by measuring their effect sizes and they come up with descriptive as well as practical recommendations to implement in intact classrooms. Abedi, Courtney, & Leon (2003) believed that customized dictionaries had a little benefit for English learners. Besides, they stated that dictionaries had almost no effect on fourth graders' scores and did not have significant effect on eighth graders' scores.

A study which was conducted by Francis et al. (2006) showed that simplified language as an accommodation had different impacts on ELLs depending on their level of proficiency, content area of the test, and finally the type of assessment. Similarly, Abedi et al. (2000) concluded that linguistic alteration and simplification of test items made the test easier, but it did not provide an advantage for ELLs. On the one hand, Shepard, et al. (1998) worked on reading aloud accommodation and they found that this accommodation could be constructive to some learners; on the other hand, Castellon-Wellington (2000) found that there was not any significant difference between implementing accommodation and implementing no accommodation.

Giusto (2015) investigated the impact of partial read-aloud accommodation on the reading comprehension scores of third grade poor decoder students and the results revealed that there was a significant relationship between test condition and student classification. The partial read-aloud with pacing conditions has positive effects on reading comprehension scores of poor decoders; however, the average readers did not benefit from this method.

Cohen et al. (2017) studied the validity of pop-up English glossary accommodation by using computers for seventh grade English language learners. It was found that students had a better performance when using the pop-up glossary accommodation assessment.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (2016) mandated that proper and suitable accommodations should be provided during the assessments of language arts, mathematics, and science to provide assistance to the students until they achieved a complete mastery of English proficiency. This council added that it was of great importance to verify which accommodations were mandatory to provide influential and valid assessment system that accurately reflected learners' knowledge and their proficiency level.

Abedi (2009) analyzed the impact of the computerized testing accommodation on fourth grade English learners and non English learners. The computer-based testing included a set of accommodation features such as presenting a single item at a time, using customized dictionary, showing a pop-up glossary, giving extra time, and creating small and novel settings. Results indicated that in both grades, the learners who used computerized testing including the pop-up glossary obtained a significantly higher score than those taking a non-accommodated test; although he stated that the combination of these accommodations led to higher score achievements.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Design

In this research, accommodation was the independent and test performance was the dependent variable of both phases. In the descriptive phase, with a casual-comparative design, the researchers investigated the impact of testing conditions accommodation on the performance of candidates in a general proficiency test, while in the quasi-experimental phase, the impact of accommodated formative tests was examined on the learning of the participants as reflected in their final exam scores.

2.2 Participants

Sixty female intermediate students studying in six intact classes at one Language Institute were selected for the purposes of this study. The age of these students ranged from 15 to 20 years old. Most of the students were studying English for the purposes of higher education or finding better jobs. A few of them had immigration purposes. They all spoke Persian as their first language and none of them had lived in a foreign country.

2.3 Instrumentations

2.3.1 PET (Preliminary English Test)

This test consists of 35 reading and 7 writing questions (90 minutes), 25 listening questions (30 minutes), and 4 speaking questions (10 minutes). All sections of the test are at the intermediate level. According to the booklet of PET, approximately 340 hours of English language instruction are needed before taking the test. At the outset of the study, a first version of PET was administered to the

60 participants. Then another version of PET was given to the selected sixty participants with accommodation, the results of which were compared with their scores on the first administration of PET to investigate the effect of accommodation during test administration.

2.3.2 Achievement Test

The final exam of the language school was used as the posttest to compare the mean achievement scores of the group with accommodation with that of the group without accommodation throughout the course. There were 40 items on the test (20 reading questions, 10 writing, and 10 listening). In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the test, the following procedures were taken.

2.3.2.1 Establishing the Validity of the Achievement Test

The validity of the achievement test was established through the employment of a differential experiment procedure. According to this procedure in order to show the construct validity of a measurement instrument, the instrument could be employed to assess the ability it claims on two different groups whose ability sounds obviously different in what the test promises to measure. If the differences between the performances of the two groups prove to be significantly different, it could be concluded that the measurement instrument is assessing what it is supposed to measure and hence it is valid. Based on the aforesaid procedure, the test was administered to two different groups of learners which were pre-intermediate students and upper-intermediate students. The scores obtained by the groups were analyzed using an independent samples T-test. To this end, 30 pre-intermediate and 30 upper-intermediate learners were chosen randomly from the same institute and the achievement test was administered to them. The results of analysis indicated that the upper-intermediate learners significantly outperformed the pre-intermediate learners and hence the test proved to be valid.

2.3.2.2 Establishing the Reliability of the Achievement Test

Test-retest procedures were drawn on to assure the reliability of the test. To this end, the test was run twice on the same upper-intermediate participants (for the validity procedure part) with a time interval of 15 days and Pearson correlation coefficient was used, the results of which showed an acceptable reliability index of 0.96.

2.4 Procedure

Initially, 6 intermediate classes comprising a total of 60 female EFL learners were selected randomly from among 15 available classes at a language institute in. Then, the selected participants were asked to take the first version of PET. In the administration of the first version, there was no accommodation. In other words, there was no manipulation of the test and the learners were required to take it according to the relevant instructions and within the standard set time. They had to follow the standard procedure specific to PET.

As for the first phase of the study, the second version of PET was administered to the 60 participants who had taken PET without accommodation at the outset. However, in this second administration, they were provided with some forms of accommodation including:

- extended time (10 minutes was added to each section)
- setting (the students could choose the place of their chair)
- presentation (the questions were read aloud at slower pace and the instructor helped learners with the instructions)
- Response (Test takers were provided with a booklet to write down the answers).

Then, the learners' performance on PET without accommodation at the beginning of the study and their performance on PET with accommodation were compared to examine if there was a statistically significant difference in their average performance under two different testing conditions.

As for the second phase of the study, the 60 participants were divided into two 30-member groups in 6 separate classes. To this end, each group comprised three 10 member classes. One group was selected as an experimental group and another group as a control group.

The experimental group was taught "Speak Now" plus accommodated formative assessment. Consequently, as they finished each session, they took quizzes in the next session and received feedback on their progress. The skills covered during instruction were listening, reading, writing and speaking. The accommodation activities used during instruction included the following:

Extended Time: Unlike the control group in which the learners were required to finish taking the test within the time set by PET instructions, the learners in experimental group were provided with extra time (30 minutes) to address all the items.

Setting: Test takers in the experimental group were given the chance to select the location of their chair for taking the exam. They were also allowed to relax and have a short break after answering each set of questions.

Presentation: Test items were read aloud in English and the directions were simplified or paraphrased. The teacher made sure that the learners comprehended the directions. If they couldn't comprehend the directions, the directions were translated into their mother tongue.

Response: Test takers were provided with a booklet to write down the answers.

The control group received the conventional instruction. That is, the teacher used communicative method and the learners were taught the same book taught in the other group, namely "Speak Now". However, no accommodation was implemented in this group. The focus was on the same skills (writing, reading, listening and speaking) though.

Finally, both groups sat for the achievement test of the language school to examine if there would be any difference between the performances of the two groups on the test.

2.5 Data Analysis

In addition to descriptive statistics, to provide the answer to the first question a paired T-test was employed. To investigate the second research question, an independent T-test was used to find if there was any difference between the two groups in terms of their performance on the achievement test.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Data Collected

The data gathered in this study consists of the following sets:

- Upper-intermediate students' achievement test scores for validation purposes
- Pre- intermediate students' achievement test scores for validation purposes
- Upper- intermediate achievement re-test scores for reliability purposes
- Participants' PET scores before accommodation
- Participants PET scores after accommodation
- Participants' achievement test scores after the treatment

3.1.1 Upper-Intermediate Students' Achievement Test Scores for Validation Purposes

Since in this study the effect of accommodation on assessment was measured based on participants' achievement test scores, it was necessary to ensure the validity of this test. To this end, the test was administered to two groups of learners that is upper-intermediate and pre-intermediate. Table 1 demonstrates the frequency statistics of the upper-intermediate learners' scores on the achievement test.

Table 1
Frequency Statistics of the Upper-Intermediate Learners' Scores on the Achievement Test

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	26.00	1	1.1	3.3
	27.00	2	2.2	6.7
	28.00	4	4.4	13.3
	29.00	2	2.2	6.7
	30.00	2	2.2	6.7
	31.00	1	1.1	3.3
	32.00	7	7.8	23.3
	34.00	2	2.2	6.7
	35.00	5	5.6	16.7
	36.00	3	3.3	10.0
	38.00	1	1.1	3.3
	Total	30	33.3	100.0
	Missing System	60	66.7	
Total	90	100.0		

3.1.2 Pre- intermediate Students' Achievement Test Scores for Validation Purposes

As mentioned in the previous section, to validate the achievement test in this study the test was also given to a group of pre-intermediate learners. Table 2 illustrates the frequency statistics of the pre-intermediate learners' scores on the achievement test.

Table 2
Frequency Statistics of the Pre-intermediate Learners' Scores on the Achievement Test

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	12.00	6	6.7	20.0
	13.00	1	1.1	3.3
	14.00	10	11.1	33.3
	15.00	4	4.4	13.3
	16.00	1	1.1	3.3
	17.00	4	4.4	13.3
	18.00	1	1.1	3.3
	19.00	1	1.1	3.3
	21.00	1	1.1	3.3
	22.00	1	1.1	3.3
	Total	30	33.3	100.0
	Missing System	60	66.7	
	Total	90	100.0	

3.1.3 Upper- Intermediate Re-test Achievement Test scores for Reliability Purposes

To assure the reliability index of the achievement test, this test was administered to the upper-intermediate learners once more after a 15 day interval from the first administration of the test to the same participants. Table 3 depicts the frequency statistics of the upper-intermediate learners' scores on the achievement re-test.

Table 3
Frequency Statistics of the Upper-Intermediate Learners' Scores on the Achievement Re-test

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	26.00	1	1.1	3.3
	28.00	4	4.4	13.3
	29.00	3	3.3	10.0
	30.00	1	1.1	3.3
	31.00	3	3.3	10.0
	32.00	4	4.4	13.3
	33.00	3	3.3	10.0
	34.00	1	1.1	3.3
	35.00	2	2.2	6.7
	36.00	5	5.6	16.7
	37.00	2	2.2	6.7
	39.00	1	1.1	3.3
	Total	30	33.3	100.0
Missing System	60	66.7		
Total	90	100.0		

3.1.4 Participants' PET Scores Before Accommodation

To test the first research question of the study, the participants' PET scores without accommodation were required. To do so, the initial scores of PET given to the participants of the study at the outset were drawn on. Table 4 shows the frequency statistics of the participants' PET scores on PET without accommodation.

Table 4
Frequency Statistics of the Participants' PET Scores on PET Without Accommodation

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
	34.00	5	8.3	8.3
	36.00	7	11.7	20.0
	38.00	11	18.3	38.3
Valid	40.00	17	28.3	66.7
	42.00	15	25.0	91.7
	44.00	5	8.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

3.1.5 Participants' PET Scores with Accommodation

In order to test the first research question of the study as the effect of accommodation on PET scores of the participants, the scores of PET with accommodation were also required. Table 5 illustrates frequency statistics of these scores.

Table 5
Frequency Statistics of Participants' PET Scores With Accommodation

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
	36.00	6	10.0	10.0
	38.00	10	16.7	26.7
	40.00	16	26.7	53.3
	42.00	15	25.0	78.3
Valid	44.00	5	8.3	86.7
	45.00	3	5.0	91.7
	46.00	3	5.0	96.7
	48.00	2	3.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

3.1.6 Participants' Achievement Test Scores After the Treatment

After assuring the homogeneity of the participants in terms of overall language proficiency, the sixty selected participants were divided into a control and experimental group and the latter received treatment i.e. accommodation. Having finished the treatment, the researchers gave the participants the achievement test of the language school to investigate the impact of accommodation on the achievement test scores. Tables 6 and 7 demonstrate the frequency statistics of experimental and control group' scores on the achievement test, respectively.

Table 6
Frequency Statistics of the Experimental Group Achievement Test

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
	16.00	2	3.3	6.7
	18.00	2	3.3	13.3
	19.00	1	1.7	16.7
	21.00	1	1.7	20.0
	23.00	1	1.7	23.3
Valid	24.00	3	5.0	33.3
	25.00	5	8.3	50.0
	26.00	1	1.7	53.3
	27.00	2	3.3	60.0
	28.00	9	15.0	90.0
	29.00	3	5.0	100.0
Total	30	50.0	100.0	
Missing System	30	50.0		
Total	60	100.0		

Table 7
Frequency Statistics of the Control Group Achievement Test Scores

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	14.00	1	1.7	3.3
	15.00	1	1.7	6.7
	16.00	3	5.0	16.7
	17.00	1	1.7	20.0
	18.00	4	6.7	33.3
	19.00	2	3.3	40.0
	21.00	4	6.7	53.3
Valid	22.00	1	1.7	56.7
	23.00	2	3.3	63.3
	24.00	3	5.0	73.3
	25.00	5	8.3	90.0
	26.00	1	1.7	93.3
	27.00	1	1.7	96.7
	28.00	1	1.7	100.0
Total	30	50.0	100.0	
Missing System	30	50.0		
Total	60	100.0		

3.2 Data Analysis

In an attempt to confirm the homogeneity of the participants after assigning the 60 selected subjects to a control and experimental group independent samples T-test was run between the PET scores of the two groups. Tables 8 and 9 show the descriptive statistics and independent samples T-test results of this analysis.

Table 8
Descriptive Statistics of PET Scores

	PET groups control experimental	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
PET Control Experimental	Control Group PET	30	39.5667	1.50134	.27411
	Experimental Group PET	30	39.4667	.50742	.09264

The effect size calculated for this test was (Cohen’s d: 0.08) which is a small effect size. According to Kenny (1987), for Cohen’s d an effect size of 0.2 to 0.3 might be

a “small” effect, around 0.5 a “medium” effect and 0.8 to infinity, a “large” effect. (Cohen’s d might be larger than one).

Table 9
Results of Independent Samples T-Test for PET

		Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed	
Levene’s Test	F	9.117		
	Sig.	.054		
t-test for Equality of Means	t	.346	.346	
	df	58	35.540	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.731	.732	
	Mean Difference	.10000	.10000	
	Std. Error Difference	.28934	.28934	
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	-.47917	-.48707
		Upper	.67917	.68707

As it can be seen in Table 9 the significance level is 0.731 which is higher than the confidence level of 0.05 leading to the conclusion that there is not any significant difference between the overall proficiency of the participants in the control and experimental groups prior to the treatment.

Since in this study the achievement test of the language school was used at the end of the treatment, it

was necessary to establish its validity and reliability. To do so, the achievement test was given to two groups of participants belonging to two different proficiency levels i.e. pre-intermediate and upper-intermediate learners.

The scores of these two groups were compared using independent samples T-test. Table 10 displays the respective results of this test.

Table 10
Results of Independent Samples T-Test for Pre-intermediate and Upper-Intermediate Learners’ Scores

		Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed	
Levene’s Test	F	42.417		
	Sig.	.060		
t-test for Equality of Means	t	-18.482	-18.482	
	df	58	35.266	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.003	
	Mean Difference	-16.70000	-16.70000	
	Std. Error Difference	.90357	.90357	
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	-18.50869	-18.53385
		Upper	-14.89131	-14.86615

The effect size calculated for this test was (Cohen’s d: 4.7) which indicates a big effect size.

As it could be seen in Table 10, the significance level is 0.003 which is lower than the confidence level of 0.05 leading to the conclusion that the means of the two groups on the test was significantly different. Therefore, it could be inferred that the test measured the intended construct for which it had been developed hence the validity of the test is established.

To assure the reliability of the achievement test, test-retest procedures were adopted. To accomplish this, the same achievement test was administered to the same group of upper- intermediate learners who had taken the test for validity purposes after a 15 day interval. Afterwards, Pearson correlation coefficient formula was run in an attempt to establish the reliability of the test. Table 11 displays the respective results.

Table 11
Results of Correlation Coefficient Between the Scores of the Upper – Intermediate Learners

		First administration of achievement test
Second Administration of Achievement Test	Pearson Correlation	.961**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	30

Correlation is significant at 0.01**

As the table indicates the reliability index is 0.961** at the confidence level of 0.01 which shows that the test enjoys a satisfactory level of reliability index. To test the null hypothesis for the descriptive phase of the current study, the mean scores of PET with and without accommodation were compared. To this end, Paired samples T-test was run. Tables 12, 13 and 14 demonstrate the paired samples correlations, descriptive statistics and paired samples t-test results of PET with and without accommodation, respectively.

Table 12
Paired Samples Correlations

Pair 1	PET With and Without Accommodation	N	Correlation	Sig.
1		60	.707	.000

Table 13
Descriptive Statistics of Participants' PET Scores

PET With and Without Accommodation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PET Without Accommodation	60	39.5000	2.79527	.36087
PET With Accommodation	60	40.9167	3.01573	.38933

Table 15
Results of Independent Samples T-Test for Comparing Achievement Test Scores

		Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed	
Levene's Test	F	.232		
	Sig.	.632		
	t	-3.699	-3.699	
	df	58	57.991	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
t-test for Equality of Means	Mean Difference	-3.76667	-3.76667	
	Std. Error Difference	1.01832	1.01832	
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	-5.80505	-5.80506
		Upper	-1.72828	-1.72827

Table 16
Descriptive Statistics of Achievement Test Scores

Experimental and Control	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control Group	30	21.1333	3.91930	.71556
Experimental Group	30	24.9000	3.96841	.72453

Table 14
Results of Paired Samples T-Test for Participants' PET Scores

		Pair PET +/-Accommodation	
Paired Differences	Mean	-1.41667	
	Std. Deviation	2.23449	
	Std. Error Mean	.28847	
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	-1.99390
		Upper	-.83944
	t	-4.911	
	df	59	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

The effect size calculated for this test was (Cohen's d: 0.48) which illustrates a medium effect size.

As Tables 14 illustrates the significance level is 0.000 which is lower than the confidence level of 0.05. Therefore, it could be concluded that the means of the scores belonging to PET with and without accommodation are significantly different. Consulting Table 13, it can be seen that the mean of the participants' PET scores with accommodation is higher than the time PET was carried out without accommodation. Therefore, accommodation has had a significant impact on the participants' performance on this test.

In order to address the second objective of the current study in a quantitative experimental mode treatment was administered to the experimental group. At the end of the study participants' scores on the achievement test of the language school were compared to investigate the possible impact of treatment. To do so, independent samples T-test was employed. Tables 15 and 16 display the descriptive statistics and independent samples t-test results of achievement test scores of the experimental and control group.

The effect size calculated for this test was (Cohen's d : 0.95) which indicates a big effect size.

As indicated by Table 15 the significance level is 0.000 which is lower than the confidence level of 0.05. Therefore, it could be concluded that the means of the scores belonging to the experimental and control group are significantly different. As Table 4.16 displays the mean of the experimental group is higher than that of the control group. Therefore, it could be concluded that the treatment employed in this study has had a significant impact on the participants' performance on the achievement test.

4. DISCUSSION

The current study was in line with many studies which investigated the effect of accommodation on assessment. Research showed that some effective changes in the language of test including linguistically modified items could serve as an effective accommodation tool for the learners.

One possible explanation regarding the effectiveness of accommodation types in this study could be lowering the test anxiety level of the participants. Test anxiety was an important factor which caused negative impacts on the performance of the test takers. Apparently, the types of accommodation in this study have most probably contributed to the reduction of test anxiety and consequently led to the better performance of the participants. In fact, in the group with accommodation it was noticed that learners felt more comfortable while taking the test. This was especially evident when the learners were given extended time. Conversely, in an instance in the group without accommodation, several participants asked for more time to complete the test.

Another possible explanation for the findings relevant to the presentation type of accommodation employed in this study lay in the fact that when test takers knew what they were supposed to do, they would probably function better on the test. As it was noticed, in the group without accommodation, learners repeatedly asked questions as what they were supposed to do to answer some questions.

As for the extended-time type of accommodation adopted in this study, research findings revealed that extended time was an effective type of accommodation from which learners could benefit. The findings were in-line with Rivera et al. (2006) who believed that this type of accommodation which gives more time to learners to respond to the test items is regarded as one of the widely used accommodations for various groups of learners.

As another type of accommodation, teachers translated the tests into their native languages. However, tests may become a constructive or a destructive data gathering tool when translated into another language. Moreover, translation of some phrases which contained cultural connotations was a hard task to accomplish. According to Abedi et al., (2000), translation as an accommodation

tool will be ineffective when there is not any associations between the language used to teach and the language used to test.

In the present study, test takers in the experimental group were given the chance to select the location of their chair for taking the exam. They were also allowed to relax and have a short break after answering each set of questions. As noticed by the researcher in the experimental group learners reacted quite positively towards these changes and believed that it helped them performed much better on the given tasks.

In the experimental group test takers were also provided with a booklet to write down their answers. The positive effect of this type of accommodation was evident in the control group in which some of the learners repeatedly complained about the lack of enough space on the exam papers and the resultant confusion as where to put their answers.

One important idea that should always be taken to account is the validity of the test. Although test accommodation is a beneficial implementation to reduce the barriers and difficulties of the test taking process, it should not affect the test validity in a negative manner. "However, an effective accommodation may not necessarily provide valid assessment outcomes if the accommodation alters the focal construct" (Abedi & Ewers, 2013, p. 14).

5. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the results gained in this study the following implications can be arrived at:

- Test developers can design tests which have the elements of accommodation incorporated in the test items. For instance simplifying the instruction sentences as much as possible is one option which can be adopted.
- Based on the findings of the present study language teachers may decide to provide learners with some forms of assessment while administering the tests.
- Teacher educators can draw on the results gained here when discussing the issue of accommodation with teacher trainees.
- Given the significant effect of accommodation on assessment in this study, the findings can be used as a platform for making modifications to the test formats so that they will be more appropriate for EFL learners.
- Teacher trainers may devise and plan courses through which teacher trainees become familiar with how to provide students with accommodation on assessment.
- Students should receive explanations about the benefits of accommodation. This can be done and supported by referring to the results of the current investigation.
- The results of this research can make both students and teachers aware of the fact that accommodation is useful and they should try to use accommodation to their advantage.

In addition, curriculum developers, by including materials focusing on accommodation and its usefulness can expedite the process of language learning and consequently improve the assessment process.

6. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following suggestions for further studies can be made:

- The participants of the present study were all female learners within the age range of 15 to 20 and at the intermediate level of proficiency. Other studies could be conducted with other age groups and proficiency levels.
- This study used only four types of accommodation. Other investigations could be carried out exploring the impact of other types of accommodation on the assessment of EFL learners.
- Personality factors have been found to affect the performance of EFL learners in language learning. Some studies can be done to examine the possible interaction of personality factors with assessment types.
- The present investigation focused on PET. Other studies can be conducted to probe the effect of accommodation on other standardized tests.
- A mixed-method study can be carried out to investigate the perceptions of the learners towards accommodation.
- Studies can be conducted investigating the factors which contribute a change in test taking. To this end, psychological factors like test anxiety can be studied more closely.
- Comparative investigations can be done exploring the possible effectiveness of different types of accommodation on assessment.
- Comparative investigations can also be done probing the effectiveness of accommodation in a longer span of time.
- Cognitive strategies used by learners in tests with and without accommodation can also be explored in other studies.
- The effects of accommodation on different language skills can also be comparatively investigated.

CONCLUSION

The present investigation aimed to explore the effect of test accommodation on test performance as well as general achievement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The scores of the participants on two occasions i.e. PET with and without accommodation were compared running a paired samples t-test. The results indicated that the participants' PET scores mean when they received accommodation was significantly higher than the time when there was no accommodation. To explore the second

research question and to check if accommodation in formative assessment has any impacts on the language learning and hence the achievement scores of Iranian EFL learners at the intermediate level, the achievement test scores of the experimental and control groups were compared running an independent samples t-test. The results revealed that there was a significant difference between the scores of the control and experimental group with the latter outperforming the former. In sum, accommodation is regarded as an important contributor to the efficiency of class activities and provision of valid assessment outcomes and assistance for the learners

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