Annual Conference of the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment
May 2010

Testing Listening: Exploring a “Third Way”

General Instructions
There are four parts in this test, with special instructions for each part.
Mark all your answers in your test booklet. If you do not know the answer, you may guess. Try to answer as many questions as possible.
Part 1
In this part of the test, you will hear a conversation between two people. After you have heard the conversation, you will be asked some questions about it. Choose the best answer to each question from the choices printed in the test booklet.

Then, you will hear a second conversation on the same topic. Use the second conversation to check the answers you chose the first time.

You may take notes in your booklet as you listen. Please listen carefully.

1. What has the man been doing?
   a. reading the water meter
   b. cleaning an apartment
   c. helping people move
   d. looking for an apartment

2. What is described as a cave?
   a. the neighborhood the man visited
   b. an apartment the man saw earlier
   c. the subway the man took
   d. the stack of boxes

3. What is not included in the monthly rent?
   a. electricity
   b. trash collection
   c. gas
   d. water

4. What will happen to the apartment?
   a. It will be cleaned.
   b. It will be sold.
   c. The walls will be painted.
   d. New carpet will be installed.

You will now hear a conversation between two friends. Use this conversation to check the answers you chose the first time.
5. What are the speakers talking about?
   a. an old home
   b. a special hotel
   c. an activity in Chicago
   d. the history of Chicago

6. What is the main focus of the tour?
   a. popular sites in Chicago
   b. several older buildings
   c. a new style of architecture
   d. the effects of a fire

7. Why do the speakers mention Chicago’s Great Fire?
   a. to describe when the population of Chicago grew
   b. to explain the history of downtown Chicago
   c. to emphasize two different architectural periods
   d. to show when the first buildings were erected

8. What will the people do on the tour?
   a. visit homes of a certain style
   b. meet some local architects
   c. see a building under construction
   d. stop at the city’s tallest building

You will now hear a tour guide talk about the same topic. Use this talk to check the answers you chose the first time. Also answer question number 9.

9. What does the tour guide mean when she says:
   a. The roofs come in several different styles.
   b. The roofs are very distinctive.
   c. The roofs are inexpensive to maintain.
   d. The roofs are very colorful.
Part 3
In this part of the test, you will hear a researcher making a presentation. After you have heard the presentation, you will be asked some questions about it. Choose the best answer to each question from the choices printed in the test booklet.

Then, you will hear a conversation on the same topic. Use the conversation to check the answers you chose the first time.

You may take notes in your booklet as you listen. Please listen carefully.

10. What was the research study about?
   a. how often teenagers use a computer
   b. where teenagers buy their CDs
   c. what kind of music teenagers like
   d. how teenagers use the Internet

11. How was the information for the study collected?
   a. email questionnaires
   b. telephone surveys
   c. live interviews
   d. website forms

12. What does the researcher say about teenage girls who spend a lot of time online?
   a. They often use the Internet to buy their music.
   b. They spend lots of money on music magazines.
   c. They like buying music at the store.
   d. They attend a lot of live concerts.

13. What kind of people tend to be music influencers?
   a. teens who watch a lot of music videos
   b. teenage boys who spend a lot of money on music
   c. teenage boys who download music from the Internet
   d. teenage girls who often listen to music

14. What does the researcher mean when he says: 🎵
   a. Those who like many types of music have little time to listen to each type.
   b. Those who listen to many types of music often buy more music.
   c. Those who buy a lot of music have very specific musical tastes.
   d. Those who often listen to music can be too busy to buy music.

You will now hear two people discussing the presentation. Use this conversation to check the answers you chose the first time.
Part 4
In this part of the test, you will hear a radio program. After you have heard the program, you will be asked some questions about it. Choose the best answer to each question from the choices printed in the test booklet.

Then, you will hear a presentation on the same topic. Use the presentation to check the answers you chose the first time.

You may take notes in your booklet as you listen. Please listen carefully.

15. What was the radio program mainly about?
   a. the results of a scientific study
   b. the effects of aging on the brain
   c. the problems associated with the older brain
   d. the changes that occur in middle-age

16. Who would be considered middle aged?
   a. a teenaged boy
   b. a 20-year old woman
   c. a 35-year old mother
   d. a 67-year old grandfather

17. How does an older person differ from a younger person?
   a. An older person uses more of the brain.
   b. An older person has a larger brain.
   c. An older person’s brain functions slower.
   d. An older person’s brain is lazier.

18. How can one prevent forgetfulness?
   a. by getting good nutrition
   b. by writing down important information
   c. by establishing strong routines
   d. by trying new things

19. What is the result of a disorienting dilemma?
   a. The brain is overstimulated.
   b. The brain is confused.
   c. The brain is exercised.
   d. The brain is relaxed.

20. Why do the speakers mention musical instruments?
   a. to compare the ability of younger and older musicians
   b. to give an example of a skill that can keep the brain healthy
   c. to describe the relationship between music and brain
   d. to explain that it is harder for older people to learn new skills

You will now hear a student making a class presentation on the same topic. Use this presentation to check the answers you chose the first time.
Issues Arising

Construct
- Does this format test the same construct as traditional listening tests?
- Does this format better represent the listening construct, as it allows for a check/recheck of understanding?
- How does this format alter the examinee’s test-taking processes?
- What is the effect of presenting the same information in different words by speakers in different roles?
- What impact does stimulus order have on examinee comprehension: a more complex presentation followed by a less complex presentation, which would serve as a clarifier; or a less complex stimuli presented initially as a schema builder?
- Items may test a different subskill depending on the stimulus (i.e., what might be an inference or main idea in one stimulus might be an explicit detail in another). What are the ramifications for defining what an item tests?
- Are examinees at varying levels of proficiency differently affected by this format?

Development

Stimuli
- Can test developers consistently discover authentic and interesting contexts for the reformulations that avoid telling-retelling as the default?
- Traditionally, items are presented in the same order as the tested information is presented in the stimulus. However, if the reformulation is authentic, the information may not follow in the same order. Does this mean that out-of-order items cannot be used or that the order of information must be forced to match in both stimuli?

Items
- Some item types are stimulus-specific:
  - What is the main idea?
  - What is the speaker's purpose?
  - What will happen next?
  - Why does the speaker say: 

  How can these subskills be tested within this format?
- What new item types can be created that function well across multiple stimuli?
- Should test developers craft items that tap different skills depending on the stimulus?

Practicality
- Is it necessary to repeat items stems following the second stimulus?
- Crafting two stimuli requires additional test development time to support the same number of items. What is the impact on test-development costs?
Validation Questions

1. Does the reformulation format better capture real-world listening?
   a. Does it result in a broader sample of the listening construct?
   b. Does it provide opportunities to test listening skills not captured by the listening-once and listening-twice formats?

2. How does the reformulation format impact upon examinees’ test-taking processes?
   a. How are the processes engaged different from those engaged by the listening-once format?
   b. How are the processes engaged different from those engaged by the listening-twice format?

3. Does the reformulation format affect the difficulty of the items?

4. Are examinees at different language proficiency levels differentially affected by the new format?

Looking Ahead

The project team has identified the following tasks for the coming months:

1. Full review and analysis of the beta version.
2. Pilot data collection in a selection of test centers.
3. Small-scale verbal protocol data collection in local test centers.
4. Revisions to beta version and preparation for larger-scale piloting.

We are interested in your views and would like to hear from you.

If you have comments to share, if you would like to be involved in future stages of this project, or if you would like us to send you information as it becomes available, please write to us at:

ELI-listening@umich.edu