The effect of cultural materials on listening comprehension among Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners: In reference to gender

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Abstract: This study examined the impact of using cultural materials on listening comprehension among male and female Iranian EFL learners. To this end, 96 upper-intermediate male (n = 48) and female (n = 48) EFL learners out of 130, were chosen through administering an Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). The participants of each gender were randomly assigned into four equal groups; group A (Target Culture = TC), group B (International Target Culture = ITC), group C (Source Culture = SC) and group D (Culture-Free = CF). Then, a listening comprehension pre-test was administered to assess the participants’ listening comprehension at the beginning of the course. After the pre-test, the researcher practiced the treatment on the experimental groups. Each group received listening comprehension materials that reflected a particular culture. During the treatment, some audio files related to American and English culture (for group A), culture of different foreign countries such as Japan, Australia and France (for group B), Persian culture (group C), and
culture free materials (for group D), were chosen. Finally, a post-test of listening comprehension was employed after the treatment to gather sufficient data. Two-way ANOVA was run to analyze the data among all groups’ pre and post-tests regarding the male and female participants. The findings proposed that the participants performed differently on the post-test showing that culturally oriented language materials enhance the Iranian EFL learners’ listening comprehension. Furthermore, the results indicated that the male learners did better than female ones on the posttest.

Subjects: Applied Linguistics; English Language; Language Teaching & Learning

Keywords: listening comprehension; culture; cultural materials; target culture; source culture

1. Introduction
Foreign language listening comprehension is an unpredictable, intricate, and urgent process in the improvement of foreign language competence; yet, the credibility of listening in language learning has just been perceived approximately recently (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Rost, 2002). Since the role of listening comprehension in language learning was either ignored or underestimated, it deserved little research and academic consideration previously. In any case, at present, a few researchers have committed some opportunities to listening and trust it to be an imperative expertise in educating and learning (Bakhtiarvand & Adinevand, 2011; Hayati, 2009). For example, Nunan (1998) believed that “listening is the fundamental expertise in language learning. Without listening aptitude, students will never figure out how to convey and communicate adequately. Truth to be told, more than half of the time that students spend working in a foreign language will be given to listening” (p. 1).

In any case, a cautious perception of school English teaching practice has discovered that the teaching listening skills is still the feeble connection in the language educating process (Pourhossein Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Despite students having aced the essential components of English language structure and vocabulary, their listening perception is frequently feeble. Through researches done on English teaching at different universities, it has been perceived that while students’ incorporated abilities in reading, writing and translating, have been enhancing, their listening and speaking capacities have been decreased (Hamouda, 2013). The key factor that has been perceived in the rudimentary researches is students’ restricted listening understanding.

One part of language processing broadly held as supporting and upgrading comprehension is that of mental schemata. Research in reading underpins the idea that actuating earlier learning or information of the world and applying this information to new input extraordinarily simplifies processing and comprehension (Graves & Cook, 1980). Listening, like reading, is an active process that entails construction of meaning beyond simple decoding. Actuation of what is thought about the world plainly helps processing the aural code.

Having a decent listening comprehension expertise has dependably been the major worry of EFL students, as well as their educators who aim to teach English in the real setting particularly for communicative purposes (Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016). From the specific moment that EFL students begin learning English as a foreign language in school, what goes to their minds after listening to the native speaker’s speech is to grasp all the discourse which is heard.

More particularly, language conveys knowledge and cultural data and it mirrors the significant and specific thoughts of individuals. Therefore, culture is inculcated in even the most straightforward demonstration of language (Hao, 2000; Kramsch, 1993a); it is indistinguishable almost in
which we experience our lives and the manner in which we utilize language. In such a manner, Kramsch (1993) continued that each time we talk we accomplish a cultural demonstration. Consequently, there is currently, an accentuation in modern language educating on cultural information as a foundation for language learning. A vital necessity, at that point, for learning spoken English, is the procurement of cultural information. In this manner, if students' pronunciation, sentence structure, vocabulary, and cultural information are to succeed, they should be grounded in a sound learning of the general society in which the language is based.

As Cook (2003) believed: The effective elucidation of language (spoken or written) in context relies on how much the members share traditions and strategies, including those identified with paralanguage. “Such traditions and strategies, together with the qualities and convictions behind them, are components of cultural background information” (p. 52). The essential connection of language and culture has prompted various discussions on the role and effect of English language instructing in general and of English language programs in Iran specifically. Going from English linguistic imperialism and cultural intrusion to cultural lack of bias, the interpretations of the condition of culture in ELT in Iran is still disputable (Bakhtiarvand & Adinevand, 2011). As indicated by Aliakbari (2004), specifically, two extraordinary assessments of ELT emerge in the agenda. From one viewpoint, English culture as a school subject is viewed as representing of western culture for the Iranian students. On the other hand, there are voices hypothesizing that English culture as it is directly educated in Iran is nothing but a portrayal of the Persian or Islamic belief system. This uncertain debate provoked numerous ongoing examinations concerning the cultural content of ELT in Iran.

Considering the gender variable which is in focus in this study, it is valuable to mention that gender has been viewed as a vital excitant factor that assumes a peculiar role and impacts foreign language learning. There are a few contrasts between the language of boys and that of girls, and no instruction or social molding can entirely delete these distinctions (Zoghi, Kazemi, & Kalani, 2013). Pursuant to the gender role hypothesis, common gender generalizations are culturally shared desires for gender expedient demeanors. Females and males learn the proper demeanors and propensities from the family and by and large culture they grow up with, thus non-physical gender distinctions are a result of socialization (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002). From the biological perspective, females and males additionally differ in a general sense as far as psychological capacity and learning style. These distinctions are gotten both from essential physiological contrasts, for example, contrasts in the improvement of mind, and from contrasts in more elevated amount cortical capacities (Keefe, 1982). Boys and girls have to some degree diverse examples of lateralization, with males being more left-hemisphere of the globe prevailing than females (Banich, 1997). Regardless of what gender contrasts are basically culturally or naturally specified, instructive research in the last several decades have demonstrated that the gender differences obviously impact students’ scholastic advantages, needs, and accomplishments (Collins, Kenway & McLeod, 2000; Swiatek & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2000). However, diverse instructive areas have distinctive allegations to the gender matter. The scholars of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) claim that female students indicate conceivable prevalence in their second language learning process (Boyle, 1987; Burstall, 1975; Ehrlich, 2001). Therefore, whether EFL students learning English listening with cultural materials will attain or reciprocate the listening expediency due to their gender difference has become a significant issue of this study.

1.1. Research hypotheses
The purpose of the present study was to reveal the effect of cultural familiarity on the Iranian EFL students’ listening comprehension. The result, therefore, shed lights on the following null hypotheses:

**H01.** Cultural Materials with the target language (English and American) culture orientation do not have any significant influence on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners.
H02. Cultural Materials with international culture orientation do not have any significant influence on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners.

H03. Cultural Materials with Persian culture orientation do not have any significant influence on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners.

H04. Culture-free materials do not have any significant influence on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners.

H05. There are not any significant differences between Iranian male and female EFL learners’ learning listening comprehension through Cultural Materials.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Listening comprehension

Listening comprehension is a standout amongst the most imperative skills in the process of foreign language learning since one has to completely appreciate what he hears and after that give a proper reaction to it. Listening is the most critical and most incessant ability which we use in our everyday lives. Notwithstanding, with regards to teaching language skills it is not considered as imperative as other abilities. Instructors do not ordinarily give careful consideration to listening skill since training listening ability is mostly troublesome and exhorting (Chastain, 1998). Moreover, listening is one of the four language macro-skills (the others are reading, speaking and writing). But it is momentous to comprehend that in factual life there is no such thing as just “listening”. Indeed, there are several different types of listening, which are called sub-skills. Here are three listening sub-skills which are mostly applied in the language classroom:

- Listening for gist. This is when the learners listen to something to get a general thought of what it’s about, of what’s being said. They do not want or need to see each word. Example: listening to a summary of the day’s news on the radio.
- Listening for specific information. This is the point at which the students listen to something since they need to find a specific snippet of data. The students know ahead of time what they are planning to discover. The students can disregard other data which does not intrigue them. Example: listening to a weather report to find out about the weather in a specific part of the country.
- Listening in detail. This is the point at which the students listen, they listen carefully, focusing on every one of the words and endeavoring to comprehend as much information as possible. Example: a member of a group listening to a statement from a teacher.

More specifically, when students listen to the English language, they face a lot of listening difficulties. Perception challenges in listening ability sometimes happen due to learners’ inadequate background information. Additionally, learners are not typically ready to recognize well-known vocabulary in associated discourse or in the given context. The issue turns out to be more terrible when the unique circumstances and cultures are not familiar.

2.2. Culture and language learning

Tylor (1871) characterized culture as “an arrangement of shared convictions, values, traditions, practices and ancient rarities that the individuals from a general public use to adapt to. Their reality and with each other, and that are transmitted from age to age through learning”; “Culture comprises of all the common results of human culture” (Robertson, 1981, p. 67). This implies not only such obvious things as urban communities, associations, and schools but also non-material things, for example, thoughts, traditions, family designs, languages. To rearrange, culture alludes to the whole lifestyle of a general public, “the ways of a people.” Moreover, the linguist Robert Lado characterized the objective of learning a foreign language as “the capacity to utilize it,
understanding its implications and meanings as far as the objective language and culture, and the capacity to comprehend the discourse and composing of locals of the objective culture as far as their incredible thoughts and conquests” (Lado, 1964, p. 25). In a more extensive sense, culture can be characterized as the two sides of a coin, as Kramsch (1995) specified that there are two definitions from the sides of humanities and sociology. The primary side alludes to the manner in which a social group speaks to itself as well as other people through its material preparations, masterpieces, writing, social organizations, or antiquities of regular daily existence, and the instruments for their propagation and safeguarding through history. What's more, the second side alludes to “ground of significance”, i.e. the demeanors and convictions, mindsets, behaving and remembering shared by individuals from that community (Nostrand, 1989, p. 51). To this point, culture instructing is by all accounts the duty of antiquarians or social researchers. However, to some degree, culture turns into the obligation of language instructors, as culture shows itself is through language. The presence of culture is recorded by language either in prints or spoken and culture itself has language as its segment among different parts. Thus, language mirrors oneself and other culture, alongside the perspectives of good qualities, ideas of good and awful, good and bad, delightful and revolting. Since language and culture are not two distinctive teaching subjects, foreign language learning is in the meantime cultural learning. Kramsch (1993b) underlined that culture in language learning is always in the background in classrooms when language students are searching for a good communicative ability and exhorting their capacity to comprehend their general surroundings. Generally, learning a foreign language includes learning diverse parts of the way of life in which the language is utilized and sometimes additionally how different societies are spoken to in that specific culture since language portrays culture of its own and different societies as well (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Cortazzi and Jin (1999) introduced three cultures: source culture, target culture, and international target culture and argue that all three should be entailed in EFL textbooks. That is, culture learning does not mean just the consciousness of target culture but rather additionally the attention to source culture and worldwide societies, and they all have noteworthy jobs for intercultural correspondence. Three examples in English course books reflecting cultures propounded by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) are Source Culture, Target Culture, and International Target Culture. These three classes of culture propose that EFL materials can stack cultural data from different cultures. EFL materials that contain source culture implies that they present language students' own culture, for example, course books created at national dimension. This kind of materials is gone for empowering students to discuss their own way of life to foreign visitors as opposed to setting up the students experience other culture. Second, EFL materials that contain target culture implies that they present the way of life of the United Kingdom or the United States. Third, EFL materials which contain international target culture implies that they include the way of life of English-talking nations where English is their international language, for example, some African nations, some Asian nations, European nations, and such.

To sum up, the English instructing definitely includes the culture educating of the target language. Regarding the mentioned points, it appears that individuals consent to one crucial commence: Culture is not just indistinguishably identified with language, but additionally assumes a critical role throughout the procedure of language instructing and learning. The question is not whether or not to teach culture, but, rather, what sort of instructing can advance learners' comprehension of the idea of the language, correspondence, and human relations. Tucker and Lambert (1973) expressed that the capacity to convey completely in a second language relies upon the level of non-ethnocentrism of the student. The effective student must build up “an attention to and affectability toward the qualities and customs of the general population whose language is being considered” (p. 246). Therefore, it can be concluded that understanding of the “culture” in which the target language is spoken for students of a foreign language is of vital importance.

It is crucially important to mention that foreign language comprehension is an intricate phenomenon exacerbated by the fact that numerous kinds of procedures and components should be represented and clarified. The background knowledge that the learner brings to the process is one of those numerous elements. Therefore, in English teaching, we should not only pass on
knowledge and educate learners’ competence of using language but also promote teaching relative cultural background knowledge.

The Background knowledge is the dynamic or detached information that one already has about a subject. The role which background learning plays in perception has been characterized in “Schema Theory”. The notion of schema was first presented in the 1920s by British analyst Frederic Bartlett. In any case, it was noted during the 1970s in light of the new experiences in both psychological brain research and subjective science (Mahmoudi & Mahmoudi, 2017). Zhou (2002) stated that Bartlett’s conceptualization of schema was that it is background knowledge and background data. The thought got well-known following 50 years in light of the fact that during the 1920s cognitive psychology and cognitive science were not recognized much (Bilokcuoglu, 2014).

Bilokcuoglu (2014) believed that listening is a functioning, specific, and interpretive process controlled by an audience through sound-related hints so what the speaker is attempting to express is recuperated. Listening is dynamic receiving, which means developing, and reacting to verbal and non-verbal messages (Bilokcuoglu, 2014). Due to the fact that this ability is not considered so critical, Nunan (1997) guaranteed that listening is the “Cinderella skill”. Previously, listening skill was considered as an uninvolved skill, but now everybody realizes that listening comprehension is the result of collaboration between audience members’ semantic information or language capability and background knowledge from one perspective and the substance of the content on the other. The two previous ones put the best down and the last one the base up procedures in real life.

Steinburg (2007), emphasizing that listening is not simply hearing, has classified listening as pursues: sensing and attending, understanding and interpreting, remembering, and responding. Listening ability, which was considered as a latent skill previously, is considered as a functioning skill now (Mai, Ngoc, & Thao, 2014). Listening comprehension is a functioning procedure and it occurs between the audience members existing background information and the listening material; along these lines, for impeccable appreciation, the learners have to improve background knowledge (Bilokcuoglu, 2014). Listening ability is to a great degree complex critical thinking action in which background knowledge assumes a noteworthy role (Brown, 2000). Fruitful listening will happen, when audience members can connect the new listening texts with earlier learning in their brain (Bilokcuoglu, 2014). If learners do not have related knowledge about various points in their brain, they will not understand the new listening passage well (Bilokcuoglu, 2014; Meinhof, 1998). Having inadequate background knowledge prompts misconception, so instructors should assist learners with building up new background information and help them initiate their current background learning (Bilokcuoglu, 2014).

2.3. Gender and language learning

Gender is an issue with critical hypothetical and academic supposition in L2 learning. A decent number of concentrates found that gender can significantly affect how learners learn a language. A substantial number of researches dealt with subjects about gender, including language learning capacity, inspiration, instructor observations, learning styles and methodologies, classroom communication, teaching materials, testing, and pedagogies. Numerous examinations that inspected gender as a variable in the utilization of language learning Strategies (LLS) reported that noteworthy gender differences quite often are the equivalent, and they indicate more prominent utilization of LLS by females (see for example, Green & Oxford, 1995; Noguchi, 1991). Politzer (1983) reported that females utilized social LS considerably more than males. Ehrman and Oxford (1990), utilizing the LLSL with the two learners and teachers at the US Foreign Institute reached the resolution that contrasted with males, females revealed altogether more prominent utilization of LLS in four territories of general investigation systems, useful practice methodologies, strategies for communicating meaning, and self-administration procedures.

In foreign language learning, females have an advantage over males; they appear to be more effective as indicated by numerous past investigations. Regarding language skills, Farhady (1982) found that female subjects essentially outperformed male subjects on a listening comprehension
test in his study of 800 college learners who were obliged to take a placement test. Moreover, girls usually begin speaking sooner than boys; they utilize longer sentences. Their verbalization and syntax are more right. Subsequently, they have a more extravagant vocabulary. Additionally, they are better at spelling and reading and tests in which they need to produce words according to a specific principle (e.g. words that begin with a specific letter). Besides, females have more affirmative propensity to reading and higher reading progression than males. It created the impression that learners who had more positive reading propensity and whose self-concepts were higher were more prosperous on reading errands.

2.4. Empirical studies
Few experimental studies have discovered the potential connection between earlier information and listening comprehension (Pourhossein Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). In order to specify the impact of religion-particular background information on the listening comprehension of ESL students, Markham and Latham (1987) utilized entries passages portraying ceremonies of Islam and Christianity. The information demonstrated that religious foundation impacts listening comprehension. The subjects in this investigation reviewed more data and gave more elaborations and less contortions for the section that identified with their own religion.

Sadighi and Zare (2002), in their examination, investigated the impact of background knowledge on listening comprehension. Two TOEFL planning classes distributed to EFL students participated in the examination. The experimental group received some treatment in the form of topic familiarity, and their background knowledge was activated. At that point, a 50-item TOEFL test of listening comprehension was regulated to both experimental and control groups. A statistical analysis of the outcomes gives some confirmation in support of the impact of background knowledge on listening comprehension.

In another study, Bakhtiarvand and Adinevand (2011) checked the impact of cultural knowledge on enhancing Iranian EFL learners’ listening comprehension. To satisfy this objective, 120 pre-intermediate EFL students were picked in view of their scores on a listening comprehension test and were randomly allocated to four groups. Each group was presented to a specific condition as follows: TC (Target Culture), ITC (International Target Culture), SC (Source Culture), and CF (Culture-Free). Finally, to see if any progressions happened with respect to their listening comprehension, a post-test was performed to the four groups. The results demonstrated that familiarity with culturally oriented language promotes the Iranian EFL students’ listening comprehension.

The gap between the current study with Bakhtiarvand and Adinevand’ (2011) study is that the present study included more participants and the role of gender was also checked.

Basavand and Sadeghi (2014) scrutinized the effect of cultural knowledge on developing Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. Ninety of intermediate language learners were chosen based on their scores on a test and randomly assigned to three groups. Every group was exposed to a particular condition as follows: AC (American culture), PC (Persian culture) and CF (culture free). Before any treatment sessions, the same pre-test was performed. After 8 weeks (24 hours) of treatment session with a professional teacher, to check whether or not any changes materialized, three groups took a post-test. The finding of post-test demonstrated that the performance of groups was various, particular group (AC) which was outstandingly diverse from the pre-test. This revealed that the more participants were subjected to familiarity to cultural knowledge of the language, the more they enhanced their listening comprehension.

Recently, Mahmoudi (2017) tried to find out the probable relationship between listeners’ cultural schemata and its activation and their performance in EFL listening comprehension. The respondents of this research were two groups of 37 Muslim Iranian learners. Firstly, the learners were
partitioned into two groups of high and low capability. At that point, they were presented to two audio files, one about mosques and the other about cathedrals. In one of the classes the recording about the cathedrals was played initially, yet in the other, the request was switched. The gathered information was inputted into the SPSS program. The null hypothesis of the examination was whether listening to a culturally unfamiliar topic (cathedrals) can activate low-level learners’ schema of the culturally familiar topic (mosques). The theory of the investigation was acknowledged suggesting that a new content, regardless of whether it is theoretically comparable, cannot activate a culturally recognizable schema in the low-level learners.

In the present study, expanding on this line of research, we tried to explore the effect of cultural materials on listening comprehension. In other words, having reviewed prior studies on the relationship between familiarity with culture and listening comprehension, this study was carried out in an EFL context, Iran, focusing on both male and female genders.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

For the present study, 96 upper-intermediate male (n = 48) and female (n = 48) EFL learners out of 130, learning English at different private language institutes in Ahvaz were selected based on their scores on an Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). The participants of each gender were then randomly assigned into four equal experimental groups; group A (Target Culture = TC), group B (International Target Culture = ITC), group C (Source Culture = SC) and group C (Culture-Free = CF). Each group contained 12 participants. Therefore, in general, this study had eight groups. Their age range was 15–28. The selected participants were all the same regarding their educational background, age, and sex. Before the researchers apply the treatment, they got sure that all the participants have not yet traveled abroad and they have not been in a target culture. Besides, all Iranian learners learn the English language in EFL context, not ESL context. Based on these assumptions, all participants were regarded equal in familiarity with the target culture. It should be noted that the participants volunteered to take part in the study, and oral consent was obtained from them.

3.2. Instruments and materials

The following instruments were used in the study:

The first instrument which was utilized in the present study to homogenize the participants was a placement test. This test was the OQPT which was answered by all the participants of the current study. It helped the researcher to choose the upper-intermediate students. This test consisted of 60 items which was developed by Oxford University Press and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. The test has been validated in 20 countries by more than 6,000 students and its reliability has reached 0.90 (Geranpayeh, 2003). This test has 60 multiple-choice items and based on it the learners whose scores are 0–10 are beginners; the learners whose scores are 11–17 are considered as breakthrough; the learners whose scores are 18–29 are elementary; those learners whose scores are 30–39 are pre-intermediate; the students whose scores are 40–47 are intermediate; the learners whose scores are 48–54 are considered as the upper-intermediate learners and those whose scores are 55–60 are advanced learners. Based on the results of this test, 96 upper-intermediate students were selected as the target population of the current study.

Second, a listening comprehension pre-test containing 30 multiple-choice items was extracted from Test of English as a Foreign Language (Sharpe, 2001). As the listening skill has many subskills, it is crucially important to mention that the main focus of the pre-test was on “listening for details”. The reliability of the test was .798 based on KR-21 method. Furthermore, the validity of the test was checked by a panel of five experts.
Third, there were materials selected from Internet reliable sites (such as bbc.com and cnn.com) and other authentic sources such as New Interchange Series (Richards, 2005) and American English File series (Oxenden, Latham-Koenig, & Seligson, 2011). In order to account for the influence of culture on listening comprehension, four types of materials reflecting different cultures were proposed: English and American culture, international target culture, Persian culture and culture-free.

Fourth, at the end of the study, the researchers administered four different post-tests of listening comprehension for determining the efficiency of the treatment. It should be noted that each group took the posttest of materials which they were taught during the treatment. In other words, the items of each post-test were based on the materials which the researchers taught to them. The posttest included 30 multiple-choice items which focused on listening for details. The validity of the posttest was confirmed by those who validated the pretest. Moreover, calculating the reliability of the posttest through KR-21 method showed as (r = .828).

3.3. Data collection procedure
In order to elicit relevant data from the respondents, the researcher administered the Oxford Quick Placement Test to realize the participants’ homogeneity level. Calculating the scores, 96 participants who scored between 48 and 54 in the proficiency test were selected as upper-intermediate language learners. Later, based on systematic random sampling, the participants of each gender were divided into four equal groups: group A (Target Culture = TC), group B (International Target Culture = ITC), group C (Source Culture = SC) and group D (Culture-Free = CF). Then, the listening comprehension pre-test was administered to assess the participants’ listening comprehension at the beginning of the course. After the pre-test, the researcher practiced the treatment on the groups. During the treatment, each group practiced with listening comprehension materials that reflected a particular culture. The materials were mostly about specific cultural issues, for example, Sofreye Haft Sin (an arrangement of seven symbolic items whose names start with the letter sin in the Persian alphabet (Campo, 2009). It is traditionally displayed at Nowruz, the Iranian New Year’s day, which is celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox, marking the beginning of spring on the Northern Hemisphere (Cathedral, Christmas festival, Nowruz Festival (refers to the traditional Iranian festival of spring which starts at the exact moment of the vernal equinox, commencing the start of the spring. It is considered as the start of the New Year among Iranians. The name originates from Avestan meaning “new day/daylight”. Noruz is celebrated March 20/21 each year, at the time the sun enters Aries and Spring begins) (Stausberg, Vevaina, & Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, 2015), Chaharshanbe Suri (an Iranian festival celebrated on the eve of the last Wednesday before Nowruz (the Iranian New Year’s day (Fu, 2013)), Valentine’s Day, Mosque (a place of worship for Muslims),Sizdah Be-dar (an Iranian festival held annually on the thirteenth day of Farvardin (the first month of the Iranian calendar, during which people spend time picnicking outdoors. It marks the end of the Nowruz holidays in Iran (Shahbazi, 2012)), Wisteria festival, Sanja Matsuri, Canberra Balloon Festival, Bastille Day, etc. The treatment sessions were held by experienced teachers throughout the semester—9 weeks (36 hours). Finally, all groups took a listening comprehension test as posttest which included sample listening comprehension materials as mentioned earlier in this paper. The scores of the four groups in each gender were compared with one another to see the potential effect of treatment on students’ listening comprehension in each group.

3.4. Data analysis
Data collected through the pre and post-tests were analyzed through SPSS software, version 25. For normality, Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K-S) test was used. Then, statistical tools like paired samples t-test and two-way ANOVA were run to measure the effectiveness of the treatment—cultural materials on listening comprehension of the participants—and finally, the detailed results were illustrated through different tables and charts.
4. Results and discussion

4.1. Normality test
The research questions of this study were concerned with the effects of cultural materials on listening comprehension performance of language learners. In order to analyze the data to test the research questions, the statistical procedures have been carried out using a statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 25. First, the scores of the pre-test and post-test were analyzed to ensure the assumptions of normality. The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test are presented below. Assuming zero shows the normality of the variables dispersion, if the significance level is under 0.05, then the null hypothesis will be rejected and the result of the dispersion normality is not acceptable.

According to Table 1, the distribution of all scores on pre and post-tests is normal. Indeed, all Sig. values in Table 1 are above .05 (P > .05); therefore, the normality assumption was met. This made it feasible for us to run the two-way ANOVA test, the results of which are given below.

4.2. Two-way ANOVA for pretests
Table 2 illustrates the descriptive statistics of all groups on the pre-tests. As it is shown in the table, all groups had almost an equal performance on the pre-tests. Their mean score is a testimony for our claim. To further check if the difference between the mean scores of pretests is of statistical significant, a two-way ANOVA was conducted; the result is presented in Table 3.

A two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of cultural materials and gender on listening comprehension. Subjects were two genders (Male and Female), each containing four subgroups of the target culture, international target culture, source culture, and culture free. The interaction effect between cultural materials types and gender was not statistically significant, p = .840. There was not a statistically significant difference between all groups, p = .150 > .05. Also, no significant difference for gender was observed, p = .489. In effect, all male and female groups performed rather the same on the pre-test. Figure 1 shows the graph based on the results from Table 2.

| Table 1. One-sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test results |
|-----------------------------------------------------|
| **Kolmogorov–Smirnov**                               |
| Statistic    | df   | Sig.  |
|----------------|------|-------|
| Male. TC. Pretest | .107 | 12    | .200* |
| Male. TC. Posttest | .289 | 12    | .077  |
| Male. ITC. Pretest | .140 | 12    | .200* |
| Male. ITC. Posttest | .230 | 12    | .080  |
| Male. SC. Pretest | .225 | 12    | .095  |
| Male. SC. Posttest | .250 | 12    | .067  |
| Male. CF. Pretest | .208 | 12    | .161  |
| Male. CF. Posttest | .138 | 12    | .200* |
| Female. TC. Pretest | .167 | 12    | .200* |
| Female. TC. Posttest | .261 | 12    | .063  |
| Female. ITC. Pretest | .177 | 12    | .200* |
| Female. ITC. Posttest | .193 | 12    | .200* |
| Female. SC. Pretest | .188 | 12    | .200* |
| Female. SC. Posttest | .262 | 12    | .072  |
| Female. CF. Pretest | .188 | 12    | .200* |
| Female. CF Posttest | .189 | 12    | .200* |

* This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction
Since the lines of the profile plot (below) each follow the same basic pattern with no substantial crossings, we conclude that there are probably no significant interaction effects.

4.3. Two-way ANOVA for posttest

Table 4 illustrates the mean scores gained by each male and female group in the post-test. As it is observed, all groups improved in the posttest except the culture free group which had less improvement. Therefore, it can be concluded that the participants who listened to the culturally oriented materials scored higher than the Culture-Free group. This significant improvement in the post-test was attributed to knowledge of cultural materials that the participants acquired from the treatment lessons.

Since the present study tried to examine listening comprehension through cultural materials, the performance of the participants of each group was taken into consideration. Therefore, Two-way
ANOVA test was used to determine whether the Sig. was significant at .05 level. The results of the two-way ANOVA test are presented in Table 5.

A two-way analysis of variance was conducted on the influence of two independent variables (cultural materials types, gender) on listening comprehension. Our dependent variable, listening comprehension, was normally distributed for the groups formed by the combination of the cultural materials types and gender as assessed by the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. There was homogeneity of variance between groups as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of error variances. Cultural materials included four levels (target culture, international target culture, source culture, and culture free.) and gender consisted of two levels (male, female). All effects were statistically significant at the .05 significance level. The main effect for group

![Figure 1. Mean differences for pretest in all male and female groups.](image-url)

| Groups               | Gender | Mean    | Std. Deviation | N  |
|----------------------|--------|---------|----------------|----|
|                      | Male   | 23.3333 | 3.08466        | 12 |
|                      | Female | 20.7500 | 1.05529        | 12 |
|                      | Total  | 22.0417 | 2.61233        | 24 |
| International Target | Male   | 18.4167 | 1.78164        | 12 |
| Culture             | Female | 15.9167 | 1.24011        | 12 |
|                      | Total  | 17.1667 | 1.97080        | 24 |
| Source Culture      | Male   | 18.0000 | .95346         | 12 |
|                      | Female | 15.8750 | 1.22706        | 12 |
|                      | Total  | 16.9375 | 1.52738        | 24 |
| Culture Free        | Male   | 7.7083  | 1.52938        | 12 |
|                      | Female | 8.0417  | 1.09665        | 12 |
|                      | Total  | 7.8750  | 1.31256        | 24 |
|                      | Male   | 16.8646 | 6.06327        | 48 |
|                      | Female | 15.1458 | 4.73776        | 48 |
|                      | Total  | 16.0052 | 5.48083        | 96 |
type yielded an F ratio of $F(3, 88) = 314.803, p < .05$, indicating a significant difference between Target Culture ($M = 22.0417, SD = 2.61233$), International Target Culture ($M = 17.1667, SD = 1.97080$), Source Culture ($M = 16.9375, SD = 1.52738$), and Culture Free ($M = 7.8750, SD = 1.31256$). The main effect for gender yielded an F ratio of $F(1, 88) = 26.632, p < .05$, indicating that the effect for gender was also significant, female ($M = 15.1458, SD = 4.73776$) and male ($M = 16.8646, SD = 6.06327$). The Interaction effect between group type and gender was also statistically significant ($F(3,88) = 4.308, p = .006$), partial eta squared = 0.128. Figure 2 provides a schematic representation of the mean percentages for the four groups in the post-test.

To clarify which group outperformed other groups in the post-test, the post-hoc Scheffe test was conducted to compare the specific mean effectiveness among the groups. Data are illustrated in Table 6.

Post-hoc comparison using Scheffe test indicated that the mean score of Target Culture group ($M = 22.0417$) was significantly different from International Target Culture group ($M = 17.1667$), Source Culture group ($M = 16.9375$), and Culture Free group ($M = 7.8750$). There was not, however, a significant difference between International Target Culture group and Source Culture group ($P = .971 > .05$).

**Table 5. Two-way ANOVA (post-test)**

| Source Type  | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F       | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|--------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|---------|------|---------------------|
| Corrected Model | 2619.477a              | 7  | 374.211     | 140.566 | .000 | .918                |
| Intercept    | 24592.003               | 1  | 24592.003   | 9237.583| .000 | .991                |
| Groups       | 2514.174                | 3  | 838.058     | 314.803 | .000 | .915                |
| Gender       | 70.898                  | 1  | 70.898      | 26.632  | .000 | .232                |
| Groups * Gender | 34.404               | 3  | 11.468      | 4.308   | .007 | .128                |
| Error        | 234.271                 | 88 | 2.662       |         |      |                     |
| Total        | 27445.750               | 96 |             |         |      |                     |
| Corrected Total | 2853.747              | 95 |             |         |      |                     |

a. R Squared = .918 (Adjusted R Squared = .911)
In the table, a paired samples t-test is used to compare the pre and post-tests of the all groups. As shown, since Sig (.000) is less than 0.05, the difference between the pre-test and post-test of all groups is significant except pair 4 and pair 8 which do not show a significant difference, p = .146 and p = .238, respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded both male and female groups (except Male and Female Culture Free groups) improved significantly in their posttest in comparison with their pretests.

4.4. Testing the null hypotheses
Tables 2 and 4 illustrate the mean scores gained by each group in the pre-test and post-test, respectively. As is observed, the participants who listened to the culturally oriented materials scored higher than the culture free groups.

H01. Cultural Materials with the target language (English and American) culture orientation do not have any significant influence on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners.

Regarding group A (Target Culture group) performance, there was a significant difference between the participants’ mean scores in the pre-test (M = 6.4583) and the post-test (M = 22.0417). In order to make sure that the difference in the mean scores was statistically significant, the statistical paired t-test was administered. Based on Table 7, since the Sig. is less than 0.05, (pair 1 and pair 5), the difference between the pretest and posttest of target culture group in both genders was significant. This shows that the participants in TC group performed better in the test, and this better performance seems to be the result of their familiarity with the culturally oriented materials which was fulfilled during the instruction period of the study. So, the participants in group A could improve their listening comprehension during the semester through having greater exposure to target culture texts as one kind of specific culturally oriented language listening materials. Therefore, the first null hypothesis of the study was safely rejected.
|   | Paired Differences |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   | Mean               | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | Lower | Upper | t  | df |
| ---|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------|-------|----|----|
| Pair 1 | M.TC.POST—M.TC.PRE | 16.91667 | 4.23102 | 1.22139 | 14.22841 | 19.60493 | 13.850 | 11 | .000 |
| Pair 2 | M.ITC.POST—M.ITC.PRE | 12.12500 | 1.84791 | .53345 | 10.95089 | 13.29911 | 22.730 | 11 | .000 |
| Pair 3 | M.SC.POST—M.SC.PRE | 11.41667 | 1.94040 | .56015 | 10.18380 | 12.64954 | 20.382 | 11 | .000 |
| Pair 4 | M.CF.POST—M.CF.PRE | 5.0000 | 1.10782 | .31980 | −.20388 | 1.20388 | 1.563 | 11 | .146 |
| Pair 5 | F. TC.POST—F.TC.PRE | 14.25000 | 1.60255 | .46262 | 13.23179 | 15.26821 | 30.803 | 11 | .000 |
| Pair 6 | F. ITC.POST—F.ITC.PRE | 9.70833 | 1.51445 | .43718 | 8.74610 | 10.67057 | 22.207 | 11 | .000 |
| Pair 7 | F. SC.POST—F.SC.PRE | 8.50000 | 1.41421 | .40825 | 7.60145 | 9.39855 | 20.821 | 11 | .000 |
| Pair 8 | F. CF.POST—F.CF.PRE | .62500 | 1.73369 | .50047 | −.47653 | 1.72653 | 1.249 | 11 | .238 |
H02. Cultural Materials with international culture orientation do not have any significant influence on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners.

Regarding the performance of group two (ITC), there was a significant difference between the participants’ mean scores in the pretest (M = 6.2500) and the posttest (M = 17.1667). In order to make sure that the difference in the mean scores was statistically significant, the statistical t-test was administered. The t-observed was calculated as 22.730 (for male) and 22.207 (for female) for a degree of freedom of 11 which was higher than the t-critical of 2.7876. The results, therefore, confirmed that group two (ITC) of the participants performed differently in the two tests. In other words, as Table 7 indicates (pair 2 and pair 6), the difference between the mean scores in pretest and posttest is statistically significant (P < 0.05). Therefore, the second null hypothesis of the study was also safely rejected.

H03. Cultural Materials with Persian culture orientation do not have any significant influence on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners.

With regard to Group C performance, there was a significant difference between the mean scores in the pretest (M = 6.9792) and the posttest (M = 16.9375). To make sure that the difference in the mean scores was significant, the statistical t-test was run. The t-observed was calculated (as 20.382 for male and 20.821 for female) for degree of freedom of (11) which was higher than the t critical of (2.7876). The results, therefore, show that Group C participants performed differently in the two tests. In other words, as Table 7 show (pair 3 and pair 7), the difference between the means of the scores of the Group C is significant (P < 0.05). This shows that the subjects in the SC group performed better in the posttest and it seems to be the result of the treatment (familiarizing them with the culturally oriented materials). Thus, the third null hypothesis of the study was also rejected.

H04. Culture-free materials do not have any significant influence on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners.

There is not any significant difference between Group D mean scores in the pretest (M = 7.3125) and the posttest (M = 7.8750). To make sure that the difference in the mean scores was insignificant, the t-test was administered. The Sig. (p = .146 for male and p = .238 for female) is higher than 0.05, therefore, the difference between the pretest and posttest of culture free groups in both genders was not significant. The results show that Group D participants performed almost the same in the two tests. In other words, as Table 7 shows (pair 4 and pair 8), the difference between the means of the scores of the Group D is not significant (P > 0.05). The participants in Group D could not improve their listening comprehension during the classes by exposure to culture free texts as one kind of specific language listening materials. Therefore, the forth null hypothesis of the study was accepted. In other words, the t-value revealed that the four groups performed differently on the posttest which was indicative of the fact that greater cultural familiarity with language listening materials promotes the Iranian EFL learners’ listening comprehension.

H05. There is not any significant difference between Iranian male and female EFL learners’ learning listening comprehension through Cultural Materials?

To examine this hypothesis, we needed to compare male students’ listening mean scores on pretests and posttest. Based on Table 5, the main effect for gender showed an F ratio of F (1, 88) = 26.632, p < .05, indicating that the effect for gender was significant, female (M = 15.1458, SD = 4.73776) and male (M = 16.8646, SD = 6.06327). As the mean of male participants was higher than females’ ones, therefore, it can be concluded that the male participants performed better than the females. Ultimately, the last hypothesis is rejected.
One main reason for the obtained results could be that the background knowledge about the culture of listening audio files enable TC, ITC, and SC groups to activate their appropriate schemata more efficiently than the CF listeners. In other words, the participants of the TC, ITC, and SC groups could activate their schemata regarding the content of the audio files more successfully compared to the CF group because the culture-specific textual and contextual cues which reflected the culture in the audio files were explained in the background knowledge audio files received by TC, ITC, and SC and consequently resulted in better comprehension of the listening files.

Another support for the results of the study comes from Stanovich’s (1980) interactive-compensatory model. It is likely that those groups who listened to the audio files related to cultural materials could compensate for their possible vocabulary and correct pronunciation deficiencies by drawing on their background knowledge in order to infer the meaning of the unknown words or phrases; as a result, their comprehension of the listening audio files was enhanced and they could remember more propositional units in written recall protocols, compared to the culture free groups who were at a disadvantage because they listen to the files which took for granted the cultural assumptions of native speakers of English. This argument is supported by empirical research of Pulido (2004, 2007) who indicated that listeners’ background knowledge, and more specifically, their cultural background knowledge, can facilitate lexical inferencing during reading.

The fundamental justification behind the better performance of male participants in listening comprehension may be due to their enthusiasm in understanding different kinds of culture. Although both genders in my study were eager to listen and learn various cultural issues, male participants performed better. Moreover, it seems that Iranian male Students have more tendency to get familiar with different cultures in order to find a job in those countries or cultures, go there for education and travel there to visit different places and landscapes (Pourafkari, 2007). The researcher believes that the better performance of males is a kind of surprise because various studies have shown that boys are less motivated than girls and have fewer positive attitudes toward school (Cox, 2000; Francis, 2000; Warrington, Younger, & Williams, 2000), although the difference is not always that big (Blatchford, 1996; Keys & Fernandes, 1993). In general, it is recorded that girls invest more energy in doing homework, display less irritating conduct in the classroom and play truant less frequently. Girls have higher desires and expectations for themselves and are more aspiring about proceeding with their examinations. Males take it simpler, work less hard and are occupied more rapidly (Barber, 1996; Warrington et al., 2000). Clearly, these sorts of clarifications present the expressed contrasts in accomplishment as something biopsychological, subsequently an individual is given. Naturally, girls would be more persevering, while boys would require greater support. Boys would be more inclined to risky behavior, with as a result more virtuoso but, similarly, more failures (Barber, 1996).

According to Barker and Watson (2000), men and women typically employ different listening styles. Men are more likely to be action-oriented listeners, which means they focus on listening to information pertinent to the task at hand. Action-oriented listeners have little patience for speakers who ramble off topic or include unnecessary details. Women are more likely to be people-oriented listeners. They connect with the emotional message and undertones of a conversation and are more concerned with the occurrence of the conversation than with the pertinent information discussed.

The difference in listening habits of men and women is more than just perceptual. A study by Dr. Michael Phillips, a neuro-audiologist at the Indiana University School of Medicine, found gender differences in the brain activity of men and women. Brain imaging scans showed that the left brain hemisphere of men in the study was activated while listening, while both hemispheres were activated in women. This data suggests that there is a physical difference in listening between men and women.
Despite all the research about gender differences in listening, little to no evidence suggests that members of one gender are better listeners than members of the other. Men and women can listen equally well. Listening ability appears to be more due to individual differences and circumstances than due to gender.

As the findings indicated that male students had a higher listening comprehension than female students, they are contrary to the finding of Dang (2010) who found no significant relationship between the students’ listening comprehension performance and gender. Moreover, the findings of this study contradicted Sankarakumar, Chandrakanthi, and Malathy (2012) who found a significant difference in the performance of male and female students in reading comprehension tests as female performed better than male. It also does not confirm Jie and Fenglan (2003) that found female performed better than male in listening comprehension.

Generally speaking, the t-value uncovered that the four groups performed differently on the post-test which was indicative of the fact that greater cultural familiarity with language listening materials enhances the Iranian EFL students’ listening comprehension. The consequences of the study, however, negate that of Long (1990) in that she watched no significant difference between the familiar and unfamiliar passages for the recognition measure, however the English outlines uncovered a higher extent of right units for the commonplace topic. In the meantime, the results of the study contradict the perceptual phase of Bacon’s (1992) study in which she discovered little utilization of propel coordinators amid this stage.

According to Sasaki, Yoshinori, and Gakuin (1991), two general perspectives existed in connection to culture and material planning in ELT. Advocates of the first view have faith in teaching English without culture or culturally sterile instructing. Allocating no part to culture in teaching English as a second or foreign language, they dismiss the immediate consideration of culture in the school educational modules. In Iran, this thought has brought about the ejection of culture from the state-school educational programs in light of the fact that: 1) Persian culture is a blend of national and Islamic societies. National culture depends on old traditions and customs which individuals take after amid the history, and Islamic culture is begun from religious convictions and principles which people try to obey in their everyday life. 2) The dominant Western culture will be a threat to our local culture. 3) Teaching Western culture may result in cultural conflict. 4) If a teacher teaches and underscores English culture in EFL classes, s/he may be labeled negatively as a Western-oriented or politically motivated teacher.

On the other hand, supporters of the second view have faith in the incorporation of culture in the educational programs, since they believe language and culture are not distinguishable and all language is deciphered in connection to the way of life and, in this way, teaching language independent of culture is incomprehensible. They believe that language and culture are interwoven to the point that concentrating on one independent of the other is extremely troublesome. This very idea was somehow affirmed in the present study. That is, the outcomes showed that cultural acquaintance of the content significantly affects listening comprehension. Listeners are expected to accomplish the writer’s proposed meaning by mixing existing data with what they listen (Bacon, 1992; Chastain, 1998; Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Long, 1990; Markham & Latham, 1987; Mueller, 1980; Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994).

The acquaintance of the terms identified with the traditions and customs in the short-term memory helped the schema activation of the listeners (Alptekin, 1981; Schank & Abelson, 1977). The audience members who listen to the culturally oriented likewise did not need to manage new terms in it and this brought about better understanding since they could process new contribution to their short-term memory. As indicated by Anderson and Lynch (2000), fruitful appreciation in listening happens when the listener has schematic knowledge, information of the unique situation and systemic knowledge. In the treatment sessions, the learners had the chance to manage key
vocabulary items that were displayed in the same context as they would hear in the content. This is abiding with past studies (Gatbonton & Segalowits, 1988; Sadighi & Zare, 2002).

Providing the students with background knowledge and additionally systemic knowledge as supported by Anderson and Lynch (2000), furnishes students with the important data to encourage appreciation of a new theme. The purpose for this may be that building background knowledge and topic familiarity about the cultural setting of listening texts could lead the members in groups A, B, and C to enhance their listening comprehension to a considerable degree amid this study.

The results of the present study are in line with Bakhtiarvand and Adinevand (2011) who examined the influence of cultural knowledge on promoting Iranian EFL learners’ listening comprehension. The findings of their study revealed that the participants behaved differently on the post-test demonstrating that familiarity with culturally oriented language material improves the Iranian EFL learners’ listening proficiency.

The outcomes of the present study challenges and rejects Chambers’ view (1997) that perception as a significant segment of aural capability is gained and rises normally and cannot be enhanced through training or exposure to language listening materials, for example, those of culturally oriented listening texts. As indicated by Chambers, the automatic advancement of listening comprehension grows normally amid any language learning circumstance. In other words, Chambers accentuates the point that other dialect skills and sub-skills can be enhanced through training and exposure aside from listening comprehension.

In light of the outcomes obtained, it appears that the Iranian EFL course books do not sufficiently get students ready for an intercultural communication because of the fact that they center mainly and broadly on language forms, need assorted social issues, and do not enhance students’ consciousness of the target language culture. If culture and language are indistinguishable, at that point we have to attempt to teach culture in some sort of precise path as we endeavor to do with different parts of the language, for example, grammar and vocabulary. The findings show that the Iranian EFL course books do not prepare students to adapt to the worldwide society. Furthermore, the goal of foreign language teaching does not appear to develop the fundamental competence for mutual communication, utilizing and understanding every day English because of the fact that, in Iran, instructing techniques are not coordinated, as it ought to be, toward the target language culture.

5. Conclusion

As expressed at the beginning of this paper, culture and language are relentlessly connected and accordingly cannot be isolated. Various authors (Byram, 1997; Harumi, 2002; Kramsch 1993c) have featured the inconceivability of teaching English without educating culture. Savignon and Sysoyev (2002) underlining the need of teaching culture for EFL students suggested that if it was not English but any other language in the world, then it would be possible to teach the culture with the language; but that is not the same for English as it is a global language. The language of Bulgaria belongs to Bulgarian, the language of Dutch belongs to the Netherlands, but the language of English does not belong to Britain anymore. Regardless of whether culture is deliberately or unwittingly part of the educators’ instructive points, the transmission of culture is unavoidable. The substance of what we educate will dependably be somehow connected to culture, as Tseng (2002) called attention to “each exercise is tied in with something and that something is culture” (p. 20).

Having background knowledge is a fundamental characteristic of any sorts of listening materials, so language learners wanting to enhance their listening comprehension should have more prominent exposure to two sorts of listening materials: target culture materials and international target culture materials. Through having greater exposure to particular culturally oriented materials, for instance, English culture materials, language learners can develop their listening comprehension. Background knowledge, cultural familiarity, and linguistic complexity are vital linguistic and meta-linguistic characteristics for the improvement of listening comprehension. Accordingly, having
exposure to language materials in which these three features are highly observed can boost listening comprehension improvement. Vocabulary recycling is another component with respect to promoting any listening materials which is generally supposed to help language learners develop their lexicon over time. Furthermore, according to Abu Rabia (1998), language learners could acquire the knowledge, structures, strategies, and vocabulary items they can utilize in everyday situations through having exposure to culturally oriented materials. The vocabulary items utilized in culturally oriented texts are fundamental to the type of conversations that language learners are likely to encounter in a social situation.

This study endeavored to manifest the effect of cultural familiarity on promoting upper-intermediate language learners’ listening comprehension skill. Similar to other studies, this research has its own particular limitations. In order to make the research move manageable, some limitations were made. In so doing, age was not considered as the intervening variables in the study. Moreover, the second limitation is related to the fact that the participants of the present study were coming from one particular area of the country. Various language teachers throughout the country may have their own methodology in language teaching and consequently language learners may receive relatively different instructions. Thus, it looks reasonable to deduce that a big nationwide research project is required to approve the findings of such a study.

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Appendix. OQPT

Name: _______  
Date: _______ 

Version 1

This test is divided into two parts:

Part One (Questions 1–40)—All students.

Part Two (Questions 41–60)—Do not start this part unless told to do so by your test supervisor.

Time: 60 min
Appendix: OQPT

Version 1

This test is divided into two parts:

Part One (Questions 1 – 40) – All students.

Part Two (Questions 41 – 60) – Do not start this part unless told to do so by your test supervisor.

Time: 60 minutes

Part 1

Questions 1 – 5

• Where can you see these notices?

• For questions 1 to 5, mark one letter A, B or C on your Answer Sheet.

1. Please leave your room key at Reception.
   A. in a shop
   B. in a hotel
   C. in a taxi

2. Foreign money changed here
   A. in a library
   B. in a bank
   C. in a police station

3. AFTERNOON SHOW BEGINS AT 2PM
   A. outside a theatre
   B. outside a supermarket
   C. outside a restaurant

4. CLOSED FOR HOLIDAYS Lessons start again on the 8th January
   A. at a travel agent’s
   B. at a music school
   C. at a restaurant

5. Price per night: £10 a tent £5 a person
   A. at a cinema
   B. in a hotel
   C. on a camp-site

Questions 6 – 10

• In this section you must choose the word which best fits each space in the text below.

• For questions 6 to 10, mark one letter A, B or C on your Answer Sheet.

Scotland

Scotland is the north part of the island of Great Britain. The Atlantic Ocean is on the west and the North Sea on the east. Some people (6) .......... Scotland speak a different language called Gaelic. There are (7) .............. five million people in Scotland, and Edinburgh is (8) ............... most famous city. Scotland has many mountains; the highest one is called ‘Ben Nevis’. In the south of Scotland, there are a lot of sheep. A long time ago, there (9) ............... many forests, but now there are only a (10) ............... Scotland is only a small country, but it is quite beautiful.

6. A. on         B. in         C. at
   7. A. about     B. between    C. among
   8. A. his       B. yours      C. its
   9. A. is        B. were      C. was
   10. A. few      B. little     C. lot
Questions 11 – 20

• In this section you must choose the word which best fits each space in the texts.

• For questions 11 to 20, mark one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.

Alice Guy Blaché

Alice Guy Blaché was the first female film director. She first became involved in cinema whilst working for the Gaumont Film Company in the late 1890s. This was a period of great change in the cinema and Alice was the first to use many new inventions, (11) ............... sound and colour. In 1907 Alice (12) .................. to New York where she started her own film company. She was (13) ................. successful, but, when Hollywood became the centre of the film world, the best days of the independent New York film companies were (14) .................. . When Alice died in 1968, hardly anybody (15) .................. her name.

11 A bringing B including C containing D supporting
12 A moved B ran C entered D transported
13 A next B once C immediately D recently
14 A after B down C behind D over
15 A remembered B realised C reminded D repeated

UFOs – do they exist?

UFO is short for ‘unidentified flying object’. UFOs are popularly known as flying saucers, (16) .................. that is often the (17) .................. they are reported to be. The (18) .................. “flying saucers” were seen in 1947 by an American pilot, but experts who studied his claim decided it had been a trick of the light. Even people experienced at watching the sky, (19) .................. as pilots, report seeing UFOs. In 1978 a pilot reported a collection of UFOs off the coast of New Zealand. A television (20) .................. went up with the pilot and filmed the UFOs. Scientists studying this phenomenon later discovered that in this case they were simply lights on boats out fishing.

16 A because B therefore C although D so
17 A look B shape C size D type
18 A last B next C first D oldest
19 A like B that C so D such
20 A cameraman B director C actor D announcer

Questions 21 – 40

• In this section you must choose the word or phrase which best completes each sentence.

• For questions 21 to 40, mark one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.

21 The teacher encouraged her students ................. to an English pen-friend.
A should write B write C wrote D to write
22 They spent a lot of time ................. at the pictures in the museum.
A looking B for looking C to look D to looking
23 Shirley enjoys science lessons, but all her experiments seem to ................. wrong.
A turn B come C end D go
24 ................. from Michael, all the group arrived on time.
A Except B Other C Besides D Apart
25 She ................. her neighbor’s children for the broken window.
   A accused       B complained    C blamed    D denied

26 As I had missed the history lesson, my friend went ................. the homework with me.
   A by           B after         C over       D on

27 Whether she’s a good actress or not is a ................. of opinion.
   A matter       B subject       C point     D case

28 The decorated roof of the ancient palace was ................. up by four thin columns.
   A built        B carried       C held       D supported

29 Would it ................. you if we came on Thursday?
   A agree        B suit          C like       D fit

30 This form ................. be handed in until the end of the week.
   A doesn’t need  B doesn’t have  C needn’t    D hasn’t got

31 If you make a mistake when you are writing, just ................. it out with your pen.
   A cross        B clear         C do         D wipe

32 Although our opinions on many things ................. , we’re good friends.
   A differ       B oppose        C disagree   D divide

33 This product must be eaten ................. two days of purchase.
   A by           B before        C within     D under

34 The newspaper report contained ................. important information.
   A many         B another       C an         D a lot of

35 Have you considered ................. to London?
   A move         B to move       C to be moving D moving

36 It can be a good idea for people who lead an active life to increase their ................. of vitamins.
   A upturn       B input         C upkeep     D intake

37 I thought there was a ................. of jealousy in his reaction to my good fortune.
   A piece        B part          C shadow    D touch

38 Why didn’t you ................. that you were feeling ill?
   A advise       B mention       C remark     D tell

39 James was not sure exactly where his best interests ................. .
   A stood        B rested        C lay        D centred

40 He’s still getting ................. the shock of losing his job.
   A across       B by            C over       D through
Part 2

Do not start this part unless told to do so by your test supervisor.

Questions 41 – 50

In this section you must choose the word or phrase which best fits each space in the texts.

For questions 41 to 50, mark one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.

The tallest buildings – SKYSCRAPERS

Nowadays, skyscrapers can be found in most major cities of the world. A building which was many (41) high was first called a skyscraper in the United States at the end of the 19th century, and New York has perhaps the (42) skyscraper of them all, the Empire State Building. The (43) beneath the streets of New York is rock, (44) enough to take the heaviest load without sinking, and is therefore well-suited to bearing the (45) of tall buildings.

41 A stages  B steps  C storeys  D levels
42 A first-rate  B top-class  C well-built  D best-known
43 A dirt  B field  C ground  D soil
44 A hard  B stiff  C forceful  D powerful
45 A weight  B height  C size  D scale

SCRABBLE

Scrabble is the world’s most popular word game. For its origins, we have to go back to the 1930s in the USA, when Alfred Butts, an architect, found himself out of (46). He decided that there was a (47) for a board game based on words and (48) to design one. Eventually he made a (49) from it, in spite of the fact that his original (50) was only three cents a game.

46 A earning  B work  C income  D job
47 A market  B purchase  C commerce  D sale
48 A took up  B set out  C made for  D got round
49 A wealth  B fund  C cash  D fortune
50 A receipt  B benefit  C profit  D allowance

Questions 51 – 60

In this section you must choose the word or phrase which best completes each sentence.

For questions 51 to 60, mark one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.

51 Roger’s manager ( ) to make him stay late if he hadn’t finished the work.
A insisted  B warned  C threatened  D announced

52 By the time he has finished his week’s work, John has hardly ( ) energy left for the weekend.
A any  B much  C no  D same

53 As the game ( ) to a close, disappointed spectators started to leave.
A led  B neared  C approached  D drew

54 I don’t remember ( ) the front door when I left home this morning.
A to lock  B locking  C locked  D to have locked

55 I ( ) to other people borrowing my books: they always forget to return them.
A disagree  B avoid  C dislike  D object
Andrew’s attempts to get into the swimming team have not ................. with much success.
A associated  B concluded  C joined  D met

Although Harry had obviously read the newspaper article carefully, he didn’t seem to have ................. the main point.
A grasped  B clutched  C clasped  D gripped

A lot of the views put forward in the documentary were open to ................. .
A enquiry  B query  C question  D wonder

The new college ................. for the needs of students with a variety of learning backgrounds.
A deals  B supplies  C furnishes  D caters

I find the times of English meals very strange – I’m not used ................. dinner at 6pm.
A to have  B to having  C having  D have