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Investigating the Impact of the Degree of Contextualization on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Reading and Listening Tests Performance

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Abstract

The present study was an attempt to examine the effect of the degree of contextualization on reading and listening comprehension tests. In other words, it was intended to check the performance of the learners providing with high contextualized input compared to those who received low contextualized input. In doing so, 36 intermediate learners from an English Language Institute, participated in this study. Following that, two kinds of reading comprehension tests, more contextualized and less contextualized, and two kinds of listening comprehension tests, more contextualized and less contextualized, were designed. The data collected from the participants were analyzed by using t-test analysis. Findings revealed that there was a significant difference between the mean score of more contextualized input and less contextualized input in both reading and listening comprehension tests. However, the results of the present study showed that contextualization seemed not to have any significant effect on the reading and listening. It was concluded that both learners' proficiency level and degree of contextualization should be considered when designing listening and reading comprehension tests.

Keywords: contextualization, listening comprehension, reading comprehension

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1. Introduction

Testing is one of the most controversial areas related to any kind of teaching and at the same time something that is necessary as a sort of completion of the teaching and learning process. It is believed that test performance is affected by the characteristics of the methods used to elicit test performance. Bachman (1990) defined characteristics of test methods as restricted or controlled versions of contextual features that determine the nature of the language performance that is expected for a given test or test task. One of these characteristics of the test methods which can affect learners' test performances is, regarding to the nature of language input, propositional content of the input. According to Bachman (1990), propositional content can be described with reference to the characteristics of information in the context and in the discourse. This study narrowed its focus down to one of the characteristics of propositional content which is degree of contextualization.

Contextualization, as one of the characteristics of language, determines the comprehensibility of input, whether it is in aural or visual channel. According to Bachman (1990), in listening tests, this characteristic will affect the degree to which the test taker comprehends the input of the test, while in reading test, it determines the readability of the input text. In order to signal the significance of contextualization, Cummins (1983), as he called it 'context-embeddedness', claimed that this is one characteristic that differentiates typical non-academic interactive language use from academic language use. From the Cummins' point of view, context-embedded language use is the one which is supported by a wide range of meaningful linguistics, paralinguistic, and situational cues in the context. Bachman (1990, p. 131) also explained it as "language use that occurs in a context rich with familiar or known information which is relevant to the information expressed in the discourse".

One of these characteristics is the degree to which the test is contextualized. In other words, the main issue of this study is about the lack of contextualized input which is ignored by teachers or test designer in developing the tests. Due to the ignorance happens on the part of the test developers, test takers are not able to interpret and respond to the propositional content of the discourse. Because of the negative effects it may have on learners' tests performance, conducting more researches on such a serious problem seems necessary. Consequently, the present study is an attempt to shed more light on the issue and may have implications for teachers to take into consideration this issue in their tests.

The primary aim of this study is to recognize the effect of the degree of contextualization of tests on test takers' performance. Moreover, the study

intends to examine the effects of this feature of test method on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' tests performance. The finding of this study helps EFL test developers or test designers to further their understanding of the importance of the contextualized input of the tests. Ministry of Education may also need the results of the present study in order to inform the test designers or test developers to take into account the amount of the context in the input of their tests.

In this regard, the following research questions to be answered in this study are as follows:

1. Is there any significant difference between the learners' scores on more contextualized and less-contextualized reading comprehension tests?
2. Is there any significant difference between the learners' scores on more contextualized and less-contextualized listening comprehension tests?
3. Is there any significant difference between mean scores of reading comprehension groups and mean scores of listening comprehension groups?

2. Literature Review

Language cannot be acquired through decontextualized practice as many studies emphasized. In a comparative study, Zoghi and Mirzaei (2014) investigated the effect of using two types of vocabulary contextualization; textual and visual, in teaching vocabulary. The participants were seventy learners in pre-intermediate level of L2 proficiency ranging in age from 14 to 30. On the basis of a Cambridge Placement Test of Vocabulary, they were selected and divided into two groups of 35, namely group 1 and group 2. The lexical items were taught to group 1 and group 2 through showing videos and written texts respectively. Results of *t*-test showed that the learners who learned the vocabulary items through visual contextualization manifested more vocabulary acquisition than those who received vocabulary instruction through reading written texts. It can be concluded that visual contextualization can aid language learners more in vocabulary acquisition than textual contextualization.

Öztürk (2012) investigated the effect of context on the performances of students in achievement vocabulary tests. Two different tests, discrete and contextualized, having the same target vocabulary items were designed by the researcher and were administered to 123 elementary students at Afyon Kocatepe University English preparatory program. The data were analyzed through descriptive statistics. The results revealed that students performed better in the contextualized test, and there is a significant difference between the performances of students.

Moreover, Webb (2008) investigated the effect of context on inferring the meanings of target words in vocabulary tests. Fifty Japanese university students encountered 10 target words in three sets of 10 short contexts that were rated on the amount of information available to infer the meanings of target words. Then, another vocabulary test measured recall of form, recognition of form, recall of meaning and recognition of meaning. Based on the results, the group that read the texts containing more contextual clues had significantly higher scores on both tests of meaning which indicated that the quality of context rather than the number of encounters may have greater effect on in inferring the meaning of unknown words and gaining knowledge of meaning.

Qian (2008) conducted a study on the predictive power of discrete and contextualized vocabulary items on assessing the reading performance. According to results of this research, in assessing reading performance, discrete-point vocabulary items and fully contextualized vocabulary items provide a similar amount of prediction. However, in the context of considering educational impact, the article argues in favor of the continued adoption of the fully contextualized vocabulary item format because it will more likely induce beneficial backwash effects than the discrete-point vocabulary item format. It is also stated that the contextualized format also has the advantage of bringing vocabulary testing closer to real-life communicative application of the English language and therefore has more positive implications for the language classroom.

As such, the present study was aimed to extend our knowledge to examine the effectiveness of contextualization on learners' listening and reading comprehension to see whether this characteristic of the nature of language input makes any difference in their listening and reading performance.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

In order to conduct the study, 36 intermediate learners from Sina English Language Institute, Pasargad, Iran, participated in this study. The sample consisted of only female learners because they were available samples. Then, they were divided into two groups of 18 intermediate learners considered as group A and group B. Moreover, they aged between 13 to 18 years old.

3.2. Instruments

In order to find answers to aforementioned questions, the researcher adopted two kinds of reading comprehension tests, one with high contextualized input and the other with a less-contextualized one; and also two kinds of listening

comprehension tests, one in which the input is highly contextualized and another consisted of low contextualized input.

3.2.1 Reading Comprehension Tests

To delve into the students' reading comprehension performances, the researcher used a reading comprehension text extracted from Select Readings written by Lee and Gundersen (2011). This book is designed for intermediate learners. The researcher utilized this extracted reading in two ways in order to design the reading tasks. First, a contextualized task composed of different contextual clues was used in the input of the task. These contextual clues included a definition of unfamiliar words, an example which follows a new word, the relationship of the subject and object of an unfamiliar verb, contrasting words as well as words in a series and also cause and effect relationship. Moreover, two pictures were included in the task in order to make the input more contextualized. These were all applied in the text, and in the last five questions of contextualized reading comprehension test, by lengthening the questions' stem, the researcher also tried to make the input more contextualized and/or actually more comprehensible for learners. The second was a less-contextualized task in which the reading comprehension underwent many changes. The researcher almost removed all aforementioned contextualized clues from the text. To get the context from the input and to make the text less-contextualized, researcher also eliminated the pictures from the reading comprehension text.

3.2.2 Listening Comprehension Tests

To search thoroughly for information about students' listening comprehension performances, the researcher utilized a listening comprehension test which was extracted from IELTS listening tests with its recoding file designing for intermediate learners.

For contextualized listening comprehension task, the researcher applied a few changes in the input of the test. Actually, in addition to the information in the test itself, the researcher used contextual clues in the input of the test in order to make the test more contextualized, such as using more information or explanation, using example, and using pictures in the answer sheet. However, the changes in less-contextualized task were much more than the aforementioned changes in the contextualized task. In other words, all contextual clues were removed from the answer sheet. Moreover, the recording file also underwent changes including removing the explanations, extra information, and examples.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The sample consisted of two groups of 18 intermediate learners. Being at intermediate level, the learners were selected in a way that it was supposed that their listening and reading skills had already been developed and they had achieved the threshold levels of listening and reading comprehension in comparison to elementary levels. First, group A received contextualized reading comprehension task and group B received less-contextualized reading comprehension task. Then, they were instructed how to complete the task and were asked question if they needed help. Then, the students were asked to answer listening test based on the directions. But this time, group A received less-contextualized listening task and group B received contextualized listening comprehension task. Moreover, they listened to the audio or recording file and answer the corresponding questions. After that, they were told to read the questions before listening to conversation. They were informed that they would hear the conversation only once, and they would be provided with an example at the beginning of the conversation. The data collected from the participants was analyzed using SPSS. First, group statistics were calculated, then, the mean scores for both tests were analyzed by means of *t*-test to see whether there was a significant difference between the performances of the participants on two tests.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results of Reading Comprehension Test

The first research hypothesis addressed reading comprehension that there is a significant difference between the learners' scores on more contextualized and less-contextualized reading comprehension tests. To reject or retain this hypothesis, group statistics was first obtained for each group and their reading comprehension attainments. Thereafter, the independent sample t-test was implemented to analyze and compare the mean scores between the two groups.

Table 1 depicts the results of group statistics for more contextualized and less-contextualized groups and their reading comprehension performances. The analysis of data revealed that the mean score of contextualized reading comprehension was M=28.78 and the mean scores of less-contextualized reading was M=15.11 (the total score was 30). Table 1 also revealed the standard deviation of each group which was SD= 1.39 for contextualized group and SD=2.49 for less-contextualized group. It can be stated that Iranian intermediate learners showed a better performance when they received more contextualized input.

Table 1
Group Statistics of More and Less Contextualized Reading Input

	Reading Task	*N*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*Std. Error*
Scores of Reading Test	Contextualized Reading Task	18	28.78	1.396	.329
	Less-Contextualized Reading Task	18	15.11	2.494	.588

To assess the significance of the difference between groups, the researcher also employed independent samples *t*-test. The results are presented in Table 2 Results of *t*-test highlighted that there was a statistically significant difference in scores for more contextualized reading comprehension group and scores for less-contextualized reading group [t (34) = 20.28, p< 0.05].

Table 2
Independent Samples T-Test between More and Less Contextualized Reading Input

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t-test for Equality of Means*		
		F	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*
Scores of Reading Test	Equal variances assumed	8.060	.008	20.286	34	.000

Then, in order to know how big the difference between the means of two groups was, the researcher calculated the effect size or the strength of association which showed the relative magnitude of the difference. The following formula was utilized to calculate the means difference.

$$Eta \text{ squared} = (t\text{^}2)/(t\text{^}2 + df)$$

Then, by putting the values in the formula, the obtained effect size was (0.92).

4.1.2 Results of Listening Comprehension Test

The second research hypothesis of the study proposed that there was a significant difference between scores of highly contextualized input and its low counterparts with regard to learners' listening comprehension. As stated before, firstly, group statistics were obtained for each group and, then, independent samples t-test was run in order to reject or retain the second research hypothesis.

Table 3 shows the group statistics for two groups of listening comprehension performances. It revealed that the mean scores of highly contextualized listening input was M=28.89 while the mean scores of less-contextualized was M=10. Table 3 also shows the standard deviation or each group which respectively was SD=1.41 and SD= 2.05.

Thus, it can be claimed that learners' receiving more contextualized input performed better than their counterparts in less-contextualized input. Moreover, to find the statistical difference between the means, an independent samples *t*-test was run.

Table 3
Group Statistics of More and Less Contextualized Listening Input

	Listening Task	*N*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*Std. Error Mean*
Scores of Listening Test	Contextualized Listening Task	18	28.89	1.410	.332
	Less-Contextualized Listening Task	18	10.00	2.058	.485

Table 4
Independent Samples T-Test between More and Less Contextualized Listening Input

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t-test for Equality of Means*		
		F	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*
Scores of Listening Test	Equal variances assumed	.906	.348	32.127	34	.000

Table 4 revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between scores of more contextualized listening comprehension group and scores of less-contextualized group ($t(34) = 32.12$, $p<0.05$).

Then, in order to know how big the difference between the means of two groups was, the researcher calculated the effect size or the strength of association which showed the relative magnitude of the difference. The calculated effect size was great (0.96).

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Research Question One

The first research question delved into the statistical significance difference between the level of contextualization of the test input and learners' reading comprehension performances. Based on data analysis of group statistics and *t*-

test, the mean score of more contextualized group is M=28.78 and the mean score of less-contextualized group was M=15.11 and P<0.05 (See Table 1 & Table 2).

Moreover, for interpreting the effect size and finding how big the difference between the means of two groups was, the researcher used the guidelines given by Cohen (1988). The calculated effect size was 0.92 indicating that contextualization has a very large effect on learners' reading performance. In other words, 92 percent of the variance in the learners' reading performances could be explained by the variance in the degree of contextualization. It means learners could perform better in a condition when they are received more input in reading comprehension test.

Furthermore, contextual clues used in the text determine the comprehensibility of the test input. According to Bachman (1990), contextualization in reading comprehension test determines the readability of the text and/or makes the text easier to read, to understand, and to comprehend.

The present findings confirm the previous study done by Öztürk (2012), who tried to find the effect of context on students' vocabulary performances. *T*-test showed that the significant value for the performances in two tests is p< 0.05, which means there is a statistically significant difference between the participants' vocabulary performances in two tests of discrete-point items and contextualized items. Indeed, this contextualization helped students grasp the meaning of the text and created a meaningful way for the learners in making responses to the questions.

Contextualization also increases the face validity of the test. Face validity is the suitability of the content of a test or item(s) for an intended purpose as perceived by test takers, users, and/or the general public. Henning (1991) found that the presumed advantages of the contextualization is in the likelihood that it enhances face validity, in as much as contextualized tasks more nearly approximate natural language use and a more natural environment for encountering lexical item is thereby presented.

As stated before, contextualized reading input leads learners to a better performance on reading comprehension test and has a very large effect on the learners' scores. However, presenting the reading comprehension text and target questions in a less-contextualized way which provided no or less clues to the learners for grasping the meaning leads them to perform poorer. Therefore, this violates the validity of the test, and test fairness as one of the important aspects of test validity will not be observed anymore. For example, if the placement test is designed in a way that a learner is provided with a more contextualized input, that learner will advance to a higher level of language learning. However, if the learner is provided with less contextualized test input, he/she will go down to a lower level of language learning. Therefore, test designers should take into

consideration the importance of the degree to which the reading comprehension test input is contextualized. Thus, the first hypothesis of the study denoting that there is a significant difference between two groups is retained.

4.2.2 Research Question Two

The second question of the study probed the probable effect of the level of contextualization of the test input on learners' listening performances. The *t*-test table disclosed that there was a significant difference between two groups ($p<0.05$) and learners showed a better performance in contextualized listening task (see Table 4).

Moreover, to see how big the difference between the means of two groups was, the researcher calculated the effect size. The obtained effect size was 0.96 which showed that contextualization could have a very large effect on learners' listening performance. In other words, 96 percent of the variance in the learners' listening performances could be explained by the variance in the degree of contextualization.

Based on the results, contextualizing listening comprehension test leads to ease of interpretation of that test. In other words, it gives the listener more chance to interpret the test easily, and according to Bachman (1990), it will affect the degree to which the listener comprehends the input of the test. Moreover, contextualization helps students gain the way of constructing meaning which changes depending on the context in which meaning occurs through different activity types such as listening.

Contextualization, as one of the test method facet, serves as a communicative purpose in the test and contextual clues which are used could help to create a more powerful authentic atmosphere in the test task. Bachman (1990) contends that "the closer the correspondence between the characteristics of the test method and the essential features of language use contexts, the more authentic the test task will be for test takers" (p. 112).

Furthermore, contextualization leads to the ease of inferring the meaning. An inference is the ability to connect what is in the text with what is in the mind to create an educated guess (Beers, 2003). Actually, making inferences from words that are read or spoken is a key comprehension skill, and students may miss vital information if they fail to make appropriate inferences. Indeed, by using more contextual clues in the text, teachers give the test takers more chance to draw the meaning, and they become capable and confident in comprehending the subtle meanings in texts.

The present findings confirm the previous study done by Webb (2008), who investigated the effect of context on inferring the meanings of target words in vocabulary tests. He reported that the group that read the texts containing more contextual clues had significantly higher scores on both tests of meaning

which indicated that the quality of context rather than the number of encounters may have greater effect on inferring the meaning of unknown words and gaining knowledge of meaning.

Furthermore, just like reading comprehension tests, contextualization could enhance the face validity of listening comprehension test. Harris (1968) claimed that the importance of the face validity should not be underestimated because "if the content of a test appears irrelevant, ill-suited, or inappropriate, knowledgeable administrators will hesitate to adopt the test and examinees will lack the proper motivation". Moreover, Hughes (2003) indicated that a test which does not have face validity may not be accepted by candidates, teachers, education authorities or employers and candidates do not perform on it in a way that they truly reflect their ability.

Actually, by contextualizing the listening comprehension and using more contextual clues in the test input, the researcher can help the learner to catch the meaning of the task, and leads them to perform better. Indeed, contextualization can have a very large effect on the listening comprehension test. However, if the listening input is presented in a less-contextualized way and provides the learners with no or less contextual clues, the performances of the learners may be poor and, as stated before, this can violate the validity of the test, and test may not be fair. Consequently, the validity of any test must be interpreted with care since the score on the test is not just an indication of the test taker's ability that is purported to be measured. Thus, in order to increase the validity of the test, we must try to minimize the effect of test method facets.

It can be stated that learners provided with more contextual clues can answer listening comprehension task better. Therefore, by taking the results of Table 5.4 into account, the second research hypothesis is retained as well.

4.2.3 Research Question Three

In order to answer the last research question, regarding the differential effect of context on reading comprehension and listening comprehension tests, the third research hypothesis of the study proposed that there was a significant difference between mean scores of reading comprehension groups and mean scores of listening comprehension groups. Based on Tables 1 and 3, the learners' mean scores of more contextualized reading test and less-contextualized reading test were respectively 28.78 and 15.11 and the learners' mean scores of more contextualized listening performances and less-contextualized listening were respectively 28.89 and 10.

However, in order to see if there was any difference, the researcher compared the mean scores of groups of two skills. In doing so, the calculated effect size of the two skills was compared. The results showed that the effect size of reading comprehension test was ES=0.92, and the effect size of listening

comprehension test was ES=0.96 which indicated that there was not a significant difference. In other words, a likely explanation for the lack of the difference between the mean scores of the reading comprehension test and listening comprehension test would be that the degree of contextualization or contextual clues employed in the input were overused in a way that input did not pose much difficulty for participants understanding or interpreting it.

Although there is an overall high correlation between reading and listening comprehension abilities, it has recently been shown that listening involves a set of skills in its own right (Long, 1989). As Flowerdew (1994) points out, the distinctive features of listening comprehension can be grouped under two main headings: *real-time processing* and *phonological and lexico-grammatical features*.

First, one of the major differences is that listening comprehension involves real-time processing. "Listening text exists in time rather space" (Flowerdew, 1994, p. 10), so that listeners must comprehend the message as it is uttered. Listening involves "attention to a continuous stream of speech which is not under the timing control of the listeners" (McDonough, 1995, p. 34). In reading, on the other hand, readers have considerable control over the texts and they can dwell on parts of the text, skip over other parts, backtrack, etc. (Buck, 1991).

A second important difference between listening and reading comprehension is that the listener must phonologically recognize unit boundaries that would be marked visually in a written text. Readers can see word boundaries and sentence boundaries, because they are clearly marked by spaces and periods. On the other hand, word and phrase boundaries are not so clearly marked in spoken language. Listeners themselves must punctuate a flow of speech by recognizing irregular pausing, false starts, hesitations, stress, and intonation patterns. In addition to the phonological features, spoken text has its own particular lexico-grammatical features which require the application of particular sets of knowledge on the part of listeners.

Furthermore, Thompson (1995) says that we should consider the special effect that the aural medium has on listening comprehension. For one thing, listeners, unlike readers, must comprehend the text as they listen to it, retain information in memory, integrate it with what follows, and continually adjust their understanding of what they hear in the light of prior knowledge and incoming information. This processing imposes a heavy cognitive load on listeners which causes them to lose concentration rather quickly. Therefore, it is expected that listening test needs more contextual clues than reading test.

However, the results of the present study show that contextualization has not any differential effect on the reading and listening, and the third research hypothesis of the study is rejected. Thus, in order to find any significant

difference between mean scores, the tests with a lower degree of contextualization should be designed.

5. Conclusion and Implications

Contextualization is one of the most important factors in developing or designing tests which needs to be taken into account, especially in the EFL context or English input-poor countries. As a test method facet with regard to the nature of the input of the test, contextualization will affect the extent to which the test taker is able to interpret and respond to propositional content of the discourse. Furthermore, it develops the comprehensibility and the readability of the test and also makes the text or input more understandable, more interpretable, and more recognizable. Moreover, contextualization helps test takers infer the meaning from the text easily and leads them to create a meaningful way in making responses to questions. Thus, the more contextualized the input is, the more likely the test taker will be able to respond to its propositional content.

An implication of these findings is that the degree of contextualization should be taken into account by the test designers or test developers. In other words, contextualization as a test method facet has a crucial effect on the performance of the test takers, and test developers or designers should take care of the degree or amount to which listening and reading comprehension test inputs are contextualized in order to maximize the validity of the test. According to Bachman (1990), if we are to interpret test scores as indicators of language abilities, and not of how well an individual can take multiple-choice tests, for example, we clearly need to minimize the effects of test method.

It is recommended that further research be undertaken by considering some crucial factors. First, as not being able to find any differential effect between listening comprehension test and reading comprehension test regarding the degree of contextualization, the researcher suggests designing tests with a lower degree of contextualization. It is also suggested to design a study using both genders and also to see if there is any significant difference between the performance of male and female learners in contextualized tasks. Furthermore, in order to generalize the idea, research on a larger sample size and also learners with different level of English language proficiency should be done.

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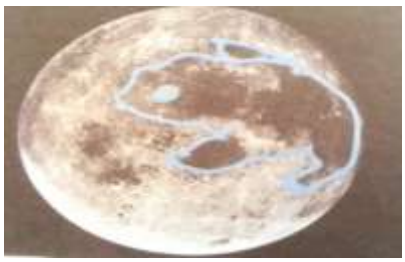
Appendix A. Contextualized Reading Task

The man in the moon has company

Have you ever looked at the moon? Really looked? You might be surprised at how much you can see. The moon is the only world beyond the Earth whose landscape is laid out for view with naked eye. If your eyesight is normal (or well-corrected by glasses), you can make out a great many features on the moon's face—plains, mountainous regions, and the marks of meteorite impacts. The most obvious markings are dark gray patches. These are flat plains of lava, but 17th century astronomers using the newly invented telescope assumed they were water. They named each spots as if it were a sea, mare in Latin.

The accompanying diagram identifies the largest "seas". Mare tranquillitatis, the Sea of Tranquility, is famous as the site where Neil Armstrong first set foot in 1969. To its upper left is Mare Serenitatis, the Sea of Serenity, and Mare Imbrium, the Sea of Rains. All three are roughly circular, the result of lava's flooding gigantic craters left by meteorite impacts when the moon was young. To their left is the larger, more formless Oceanus Procellarum, the Ocean of Storms, with Mare Humorum (Sea of Moisture) and Mare Numbium (Sea of Clouds) below it. The large bright areas are mountainous, cratered terrain made of lighter colored rock. Tiny bright patches in Oceanus Procellarum are splashes of bright-colored rock kicked up by the formation of individual craters.



With little imagination, the gray seas suggest a face, the familiar man in the moon with his lopsided smile and weepy eyes. We are born with a brain that tries to find meaning everywhere, even in the most random, meaningless patterns- and human faces are what we are programmed to recognize most readily of all. So most people have no trouble seeing the man in the moon, with his enigmatic, clownish grin.

Other culture have seen other shapes in this celestial Rorschach test. A surprisingly wide variety of people saw a rabbit in the moon. According to the

Aztecs, the moon was pure white until one of their gods flung a rabbit against it. In India, the story goes that a rabbit leaped into a fire to sacrifice himself to feed a starving beggar. The beggar turned out to be the god Indura in disguise. He put the rabbit on the moon so all could remember its act of generosity. In ancient China, the rabbit was carried there by the moon goddess Heng O, who was fleeing her angry husband. The Chinese also saw a toad in the moon. Others have seen an old man carrying sticks, a beetle, and a woman reading a book.

The ancient Greeks weren't satisfied with this sort of fantasy. Some wanted to know what the spots actually were. One idea was that they were reflections of the Earth's continents and seas. But others showed that this was not possible. Pluto of Chaeronea, a Romanized Greek who lived from about 46 to 120 CE, wrote a book titled On the Face the Disk of the Moon. He reported a wide variety of opinions about the moon and gave arguments for and against each. He refuted some of those theories, such as the one that the markings were the illusions in the eye of the beholder. Instead he suggested, rightly, that the light and dark areas are composed of different materials. He demonstrated that the moon's phase prove it to be solid, opaque sphere with a rough surface lit by sunlight, an object very much like the Earth. Extending this analogy, he declared that the moon was covered with mountains and valleys. This very correct idea may have been suggested by the small irregularities that can be seen in the moon's straight edge near its quarter phases. They are indeed shadows cast by lunar mountains.

General Questions (understanding the text)

1. Which statement best identifies the main idea of the article?

a). it's important to learn about moon.

b). people from different cultures have imagined different things on the face of the moon

c). it's possible to learn a lot about moon without a telescope

d). the Ancient Greeks knew a lot about the moon.

2. Which of these statements is not true about the Sea of Tranquility?

a). it's where the first person on the moon landed.

b). it's filled with water.

c). it was formed when a meteorite hit the moon.

d). it's one of the largest "seas" on the moon.

3. You can infer from the article that Pluto of Chaeronea…….

a). was a very rich man.

b). wasn't interested in the opinions of others.

c). was an independent thinker.

d). had traveled widely.

4. The author's purpose in writing this article was most likely to…….

a). explain the importance of the telescopes
b). convince people that we don't know much about the moon
c). show how people from different cultures see different things
d). encourage people to really look at the moon

5. According to the article, the telescope was invented …..

a). by the ancient Greeks b). in the first century c). in the 1600s d). in the 18th century

Specific Questions

1. You can see a lot in the moon with the naked eye. It means…..

a). by using telescope, everything in the moon is clear for the Man
b). with normal eyesight, you can make out many features on the face of the moon
c). telescope helped ancient Greeks to see the seas on the moon.

2. Pluto suggested that the light and dark areas of the moon are composed of different materials. It means…

a). light and dark areas of the moon created different materials
b). Pluto had a different view toward the moon
c). different materials combined together to form light and dark areas

3. Astronomers weren't sure what it was, but they assumed it was water. It means….

a). they thought it should be water
b). they denied the existence of water in the moon
c). they absolutely believe in existing of water

4. The moon's rough, mountainous surface led people to see different things. It means…..

a). the moon is easily seen by people
b). the moon was covered with mountains
c). the surface of the moon is full of water

5. According to passage, which Sea is at the top when we look at the moon?

a). Sea of Tranquility b). Sea of Rains c). Sea of Serenity

Some Other Questions (guess the meaning of the underlined words)

1. The Chinese also saw a toad in the moon. Others have seen an old man carrying sticks, a beetle, and a woman reading a book. The ancient Greeks weren't satisfied with this sort of **fantasy.**

a). Realism b). Truth c). Imagination d). Fact

2. If your eyesight is normal (or well-corrected by glasses), you can make out a great many **features** on the moon's face—plains, mountainous regions, and the marks of meteorite impacts.

a).Whole b). Characteristics c). Charity d). Evidences

3. We are born with a brain that tries to find meaning everywhere, even in the most **random,** meaningless patterns- and human faces are what we are programmed to recognize most readily of all.

a).Systematic b). Unplanned c). Deliberate d). Unrelated

4. In ancient China, the rabbit was carried there by the moon goddess Heng O, who was **fleeing** her angry husband.

a). Arriving b). Continuing c). Facing d). Running away

5. He reported a wide variety of opinions about the moon and gave arguments for and against each. He **refuted** some of those theories, such as the one that the markings were the illusions in the eye of the beholder. Instead he suggested, rightly, that the light and dark areas are composed of different materials.

a). Rebutted b). Agreed c). Approved d). Allowed

Appendix B. Less-Contextualized Reading Task

The man in the moon has company

Have you ever looked at the moon? Really looked? You might be surprised at how much you can see. The moon is the only world beyond the Earth whose landscape is laid out for view with naked eye. If your eyesight is normal (or well-corrected by glasses), you can make out a great many features on the moon's face—plains, mountainous regions, and the marks of meteorite impacts. The most obvious markings are dark gray patches. These are flat plains of lava, but 17^{th} century astronomers using the newly invented telescope assumed they were water. They named each spots as if it were a sea, mare in Latin.

Mare tranquillitatis, the Sea of Tranquility, is famous as the site where Neil Armstrong first set foot in 1969. To its upper left is Mare Serenitatis, the Sea of Serenity, and Mare Imbrium, the Sea of Rains. All three are roughly circular, the result of lava's flooding gigantic craters left by meteorite impacts when the moon was young. To their left is the larger, more formless Oceanus Procellarum, the Ocean of Storms, with Mare Humorum (Sea of Moisture) and Mare Numbium (Sea of Clouds) below it. The large bright areas are mountainous, cratered terrain made of lighter colored rock. Tiny bright patches in Oceanus Procellarum are splashes of bright-colored rock kicked up by the formation of individual craters.

With little imagination, the gray seas suggest a face, the familiar man in the moon with his lopsided smile and weepy eyes. We are born with a brain that tries to find meaning everywhere, even in the most random and human faces are what we are programmed to recognize most readily of all. So most people have no trouble seeing the man in the moon, with his enigmatic, clownish grin.

Other culture have seen other shapes in this celestial Rorschach test. A surprisingly wide variety of people saw a rabbit in the moon. According to the Aztecs, the moon was pure white until one of their gods flung a rabbit against it. In India, the story goes that a rabbit leaped into a fire to sacrifice himself to feed a starving beggar. The beggar turned out to be the god Indura in disguise. He put the rabbit on the moon so all could remember its act of generosity. In ancient China, the rabbit was carried there by the moon goddess Heng O, who was fleeing her angry husband.

The ancient Greeks weren't satisfied with this sort of fantasy. Some wanted to know what the spots actually were. One idea was that they were reflections of the Earth's continents and seas. But others showed that this was not possible. Pluto of Chaeronea, a Romanized Greek who lived from about 46 to 120 CE, wrote a book titled On the Face the Disk of the Moon. He refuted some of those theories, such as the one that the markings were the illusions in the eye of the beholder. Instead he suggested, rightly, that the light and dark areas are composed of different materials.

He demonstrated that the moon's phase prove it to be solid, opaque sphere with a rough surface lit by sunlight, an object very much like the Earth. This very correct idea may have been suggested by the small irregularities that can be seen in the moon's straight edge near its quarter phases. They are indeed shadows cast by lunar mountains.

General Questions (understanding the text)

1. Which statement best identifies the main idea of the article?

a). it's important to learn about moon.

b). people from different cultures have imagined different things on the face of the moon

c). it's possible to learn a lot about moon without a telescope

d). the Ancient Greeks knew a lot about the moon.

2. Which of these statements is not true about the Sea of Tranquility?

a). it's where the first person on the moon landed.

b). it's filled with water.

c). it was formed when a meteorite hit the moon.

d). it's one of the largest "seas" on the moon.

3. You can infer from the article that Pluto of Chaeronea…….

a). was a very rich man.

b). wasn't interested in the opinions of others.
c). was an independent thinker.
d). had traveled widely.

4. The author's purpose in writing this article was most likely to…….

a). explain the importance of the telescopes
b). convince people that we don't know much about the moon
c). show how people from different cultures see different things
d). encourage people to really look at the moon

5. According to the article, the telescope was invented …..

a). by the ancient Greeks b). in the first century c). in the 1600s d). in the 18^{th} century

Specific Questions

1. You can see a lot in the moon with the naked eye. It means…..

a). by using telescope, everything in the moon is clear for the Man
b). with normal eyesight, you can make out many features on the face of the moon
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a). they thought it should be water
b). they denied the existence of water in the moon
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4. The moon's rough surface led people to see different things. It means…..

a). the moon is easily seen by people
b). the moon was covered with mountains
c). the surface of the moon is full of water

5. According to passage, which Sea is at the top when we look at the moon?

a). Sea of Tranquility b). Sea of Rains c). Sea of Serenity.

Some Other Questions (guess the meaning of the underlined words)

1. The ancient Greeks weren't satisfied with this sort of **<u>fantasy</u>.**

a). Realism b). Truth c). Imagination d). Fact

2. If your eyesight is normal (or well-corrected by glasses), you can make out a great many **<u>features</u>** on the moon's face.

a).Whole b). Characteristics c). Charity d). Evidences

3. We are born with a brain that tries to find meaning everywhere, even in the most **random,** and human faces are what we are programmed to recognize most readily of all.

a).Systematic b). Unplanned c). Deliberate d). Unrelated

4. In ancient China, the rabbit was carried there by the moon goddess Heng O, who was **fleeing** her angry husband.

a). Arriving b). Continuing c). Facing d). Running away

5. He **refuted** some of those theories, such as the one that the markings were the illusions in the eye of the beholder.

a). Rebutted b). Agreed c). Approved d). Allowed

Appendix C. Contextualized Listening Task

Write NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER for each answer.

You will hear a telephone conversation between a customer and an agent at a company which ships large boxes overseas.

PACKHAM'S SHIPPING AGENCY – customer quotation form

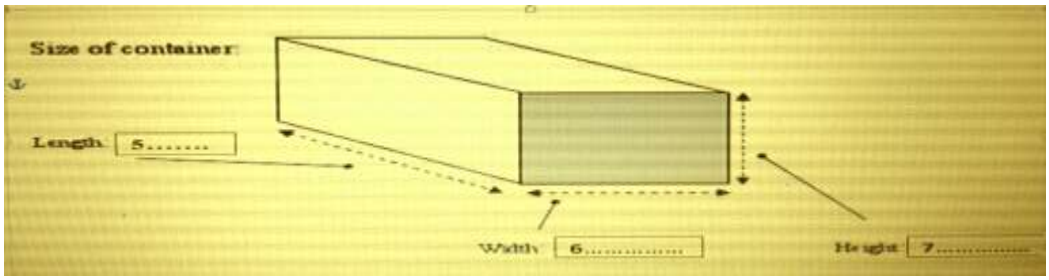
Example

Country of destination: Kenya…..

Name: Jacob **1** ……..

Address to be collected from: **2** …… College, Downlands Rd

Town: Bristol Postcode*:* **3** ……..



Contents: clothes **7**…… **8** …… Total estimated value: **9** £……

(A customer has been arranging with a shipping agent to send a large box overseas. This is the last part of the conversation.)

Choose the correct letter, A, B or C.

10- Type of insurance chosen

A- Economy **B-** Standard **C-** Premium

11- Customer wants goods delivered to

A- Port **B-** home **C-** depot

Two friends, Rachel and Paul, are discussing studying with the Open University. Rachel has already done a course at the university, but Paul has not. The extract relating to these questions comes from the last part of the recording.

*Complete the sentences below. Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** for each answer.*

Studying with the Open University demanded a great deal of

12 …….

Studying and working at the same time improved Rachel's **13**……skills.

It was helpful that the course was structured in

14 …….

She enjoyed meeting other students at

15 …….

Appendix D. Less-Contextualized Listening Task

Complete the form below. Write NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER for each answer.

PACKHAM'S SHIPPING AGENCY – customer quotation form

Name: Jacob

1 ……..……..

Address to be collected from:

2 …… College, Downlands Rd

Town: Bristol

Postcode*:***3** ……....

Length**: 4**……..…..

Width**: 5** …….

Height**: 6**…….

Contents: clothes **7**……

8……..…

Total estimated value:

9 £……..……

Choose the correct letter, A, B or C.

10- Type of insurance chosen

A- Economy **B-** Standard **C-** Premium

11- Customer wants goods delivered to

A- Port **B-** home **C-** depot

Write NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER for each answer.

Studying with the Open University demanded a great deal of **12** …….…….

Studying and working at the same time improved Rachel's **13**……skills.

It was helpful that the course was structured in **14** …….

She enjoyed meeting other students at **15** ……..…….