

The Impact of Language Modality on Iranian EFL Test-takers' Performances on the IELTS Tests

Naghmeh Fathi

Department of English Language, Faculty of Humanities, Dezful Branch Islamic Azad University, Dezful, Iran

Abstract

Basically, language, as an exchange of information between two or more people, includes interpersonal communication which is defined as what one uses with both spoken and written words as the basis to form and maintain personal relationships with others. To learn a language entirely, one should practice the language through four language skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing which are related in complementary ways. The present study aimed at investigating the impact of language modality on Iranian EFL test-takers' performances on the IELTS tests. Accordingly, through a one-way ANOVA test, it was realized that language modality affected significantly Iranian EFL test takers' pragmatic performance on the IELTS tests. Specifically, Iranian EFL test-takers were affected by reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills respectively. Furthermore, by a MANOVA test, it was observed language modality influenced significantly the Iranian EFL test takers' pragmatic performance at different proficiency levels, and these test takers at upper-intermediate level were more influenced by language modality than any other levels. In addition, through an independent sample t-test, language modality was reported to be more effective on Iranian EFL test-takers' performances on the IELTS tests in the major courses. These findings shed light on what teachers are expected to perform inside and outside the classrooms to involve the students in the four language skills based on the integrated-skill approach.

Key words: Language modality, Pragmatic performance, IELTS test, Integrated-skill approach, Receptive and productive modes

INTRODUCTION

Human language is considered as any particular system of human communication which is spoken by most people in a particular country (Richards & Schmidt, 1992). It is used to constitute relationships through the things we say and the things we show by saying them (Duck & Usera, 2014). Such an exchange of information between two or more people is called interpersonal communication which is, according to Heil (2010), defined as what one uses with both spoken and written words as the basis to form and maintain personal relationships with others. In fact, all human beings require at least one language to resolve their needs in a given society, and when a person decides to learn a foreign language, he or she needs to learn different characteristics of the target

language (Voxea, 2015). Indeed, knowing these skills is vital to communicate with people in that language. In effect, a learner should learn the main four skills which are in two forms: receptive (listening, reading) and productive (speaking, writing) forms (Powers, 2010). These skills are well-known as Language Modalities or Language Channels (Ward, 2015). Moreover, there is a close relationship among types of Language Modality (listening, speaking, reading, and writing); that is, they should be integrated for learners to grasp what their partners communicate. Each language modality, in turn, can help to improve the other language modalities.

Bachman and Palmer (1982) believed that the language ability is mastered through the four types of language modality and some other components such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Traditionally, these four types were divided into two groups: channel and mode. Channel itself is divided into audio channel and visual channel, and also mode is, in turn, divided into productive and receptive modes. In such cases, listening and speaking are as audio channel and reading and writing are as visual channel. If the four language skills or modalities are divided

Access this article online



www.ijss-sn.com

Month of Submission : 05-2017
Month of Peer Review : 06-2017
Month of Acceptance : 07-2017
Month of Publishing : 08-2017

Corresponding Author: Naghmeh Fathi, Department of English Language, Faculty of Humanities, Dezful Branch Islamic Azad University, Dezful, Iran. E-mail: nghfathi@gmail.com

in terms of channel and mode, all of languages include the following two groups: audio channel and productive mode are involved in speaking skill, whereas visual channel and receptive mode are, in turn, involved in reading skill.

Accordingly, the four types of language modality (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and their components (vocabulary, syntax, pronunciation, spelling, and meaning) should be woven well to create the integrated approach (Oxford, 2001). This integration known as integrated-skill approach leads to optimal ESL/EFL communication when the skills are interwoven during instruction. Therefore, two approaches have been frequently reported to language: skills components approach as well as integrative approach. The former believes that one should practice the language through four language channels (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) (Topgul, 2015), while the latter chooses an integrative-skill approach and holds that a language has to be approached integratively (Hinkel, 2006). If this weaving together does not happen, the strand consists only of discrete, segregated skills—that does not touch, support, or interact with each other. This is known as the segregated-skill (Sbai, 2016). Cantoni-Harvey (1987) believed that in the segregated-skill approach, the mastery of discrete language skills or sub-skills, such as listening comprehension, phonics, speaking, or punctuation, are often seen as the key to successful learning, and there is typically a separation of language learning from content learning.

According to Oxford (1990), in segregated skill instruction courses, language learning is separate from content learning, which does not guarantee adequate preparation for later success in academic communication, career-related language use, or even everyday interaction in the language. Contrary to this approach, the integrated skills approach deals with linking the language skills for the purpose of real communication. In an instructional approach that favors integrated skills, the skills are interlocked, exactly as they are in everyday life, and practiced with any given skill reinforces other skills (Sbai, 2016). According to Al-Jawi (2011), language skills are divided into receptive and productive skills. The receptive ones include listening and reading while the productive ones are speaking and writing. Likewise, language skills can be divided into aural skills which deal with listening and speaking ability and graphic skills which focus on reading and writing. Based on Powers (2010), the four skills are related in complementary ways; that is, both listening and reading are receptive modalities — modes of understanding. Speaking and writing are productive modalities. Thus, the four basic skills are related to each other by virtue of both the mode of communication (oral or written) and the direction of communication (either receiving or producing messages).

Statement of the Problem

Iranian EFL learners do not have a good fluency in the English language, although they study English more than half a decade when they enter the university. Maybe the learned materials were not that much constructive to develop a satisfactory level of language performance. It is possible that the language input has not been given through an accurate channel. Most EFL learners have a preliminary knowledge, but they cannot write well. Sometimes it happens that Iranian learners have the ideas to express, but they do not know how to put it in English; how they should start and also where they should finish it. In reading, they read a text, and find out the point, but they may forget soon. Listening comprehension does not have a better status. These problems are very common among Iranian learners. In fact, their performance depends on the type of input they receive.

The majority of Iranians, like many other EFL learners, have their hindrances in emitting their utterances, and they perform variously through different language skills. Many teaching methods have undergone many changes, and methodologists have devised different techniques to tackle this problem. None of these methods has yet managed to solve the problem perfectly. Therefore, this research aims to study the effect of language modality on the type of Iranian EFL learners' performances with regard to different proficiency levels.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the task comes from the fact that language has always been manifested differently through different language channels. According to Krashen's (1987) *i+1* input hypothesis which indicates new input must be kept minimum to contribute to learners' understanding the material. As Iranian EFL learners find it problematic to express their minds orally or even textually, this has made the researcher conduct an experiment on the language modality to see if these channels would affect the performances of Iranian EFL test-takers in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing channels.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions formulated for the purposes of this study are as follow:

1. Does the type of the language modality affect significantly Iranian EFL test takers' pragmatic performance on the IELTS tests?
2. Does the language modality type affect Iranian EFL test takers' pragmatic performance variously at different proficiency levels?
3. Does the language modality act significantly with pragmatic performances on the IELTS tests in major-non-major courses among Iranian EFL test-takers?

Based on the above research questions, the following null hypotheses are formulated:

H01: The type of language modality does not significantly affect Iranian EFL test-takers' pragmatic performances on the IELTS tests.

H02: The language modality type does not affect Iranian EFL test-takers' pragmatic performance variously at different proficiency levels.

H03: Language modality has no effect significantly on Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic performance on the IELTS tests in major-non-major courses.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Background

Semiotics, according to Caesar (1999), is the study of meaning-making, sign processes, and meaningful communication including the study of signs and sign processes (semiosis), indication, designation, likeness, analogy, metaphor, symbolism, signification, and communication. A modality, to him, applies to a special way to encode the information for presentation to human, i.e. to the type of sign (Caesar, 1999). In the school-age child, language extends across the four major types of modality. Research shows that these four types of modality are all considered as the components of language because of shared processing and production areas of the brain; however, each type of modality also has unique skills associated with it (Berninger & Abbott, 2010). Koutsoftas (2013) points out "the four types of language modality share neural processing areas in the brain. These processing resources of the brain are common to or shared by all four types of language modality.

By the same token, Mindell (1983, p. 23) identified some channels that are called "process channels." Process is "the total flow of what are happening, the conscious and also the unconscious. Process also means the constant change of signals in their many channels" (Mindell, 1988). According to Dennehy (1989), communication happens through two channels, visual, and auditory. The visual communication channel such as reading skill includes sight, dreams, color, and visions. Another communication channel is the auditory channel in which sound, music, language, grammar, and tone of voice are included.

Models of communication

Models of communication are regarded as conceptual models used to explain the human communication process the first of which came in 1949. Accordingly,

communication was defined as the process of sending and receiving messages or transferring information from a sender to a receiver (Craig, 1999).

Shannon and weaver model

Shannon and Weaver's model was designed to reflect the functioning of radio and telephone technologies. Their initial model included three primary parts: sender, channel, and receiver. Furthermore, the sender was considered as the part of a telephone a person spoke into, the channel was the telephone itself, and the receiver was the part of the phone where one could hear the other person (Shannon and Weaver, 1949). Shannon and Weaver model was also called the transmission model within which a message is sent as a spoken language from a sender or an encoder to a receiver or a decoder.

SMCR model

Attempts were made to introduce a model called the Sender Message Channel Receiver (SMCR) Model of Communication comprising transparent components updated later by some other researchers.

Schramm model

Schramm (1954) pinpointed that various factors including message, source, form, channel, destination, and receiver make communication. Furthermore, the gist of the message is to be clarified. That is, some acts which pertain to personal experiences, recommendations, commands, and asking questions, and depend on the abilities of the group members should be included in the definition of communication.

Barnlund model

Barnlund (2008) created a transactional model of communication aiming at establishing the mutual interrelationship between the sender and the receiver of a message. Such a constructionist perspective emphasizes the interpretation of the message.

Constructionist model

Lanham (2003) defined constructionist model as the process of communication which cannot be separated from the social and historical context. This model was contrary to the CBS model which focused on transmission, and highlighted that clarity and sincerity are the only purposes to communication. It is to be mentioned that communication stems from human behaviors and the social structures.

Linear model

It is to be stated that this model is comprised of the sender who encodes a message, and channels it to the receiver in the presence of noise. In fact, this model specializes no

feedback, response or noise pertaining to a continuous exchange of information.

Interactive/convergence model

There are two linear models which are included in the interactive/convergence model. First, a message is channeled to the receiver, and then the receiver is regarded as the sender who channels a message to the original sender. Similarly, such a model profits by feedback which manifests that communication is necessarily a reciprocal process.

The constitutive meta-model

The Constitutive Meta-model emphasizes the assumptions which support particular theories, models, and approaches. Craig (1999) suggested that there are different traditions to understand the communication as a whole. By focusing on the similarities and differences between them, Craig (1999) believed that different traditions including rhetorical, semiotic, phenomenological, cybernetic, socio-psychological, socio-cultural, and critical cause individuals to interact with one another in dialogues.

Empirical Background

In the second half of the twentieth century, a new way was presented to teach second or foreign languages. By separating of the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing, respectively) in teaching English language, researchers created the particular way to teach English in a systematic patterns. (Mitchell & Vidal, 2001).

Academic Linguistic Skills

According to Scarcella (2003), teaching English takes place into two novel directions, for special and academic purposes. Academic purposes were involved for college students and children's teachers of immigrants. With regard to Howatt and Widdowson (2004, pp. 299-300), it was emphasized that all skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) should be taught, yet teaching the speaking skill in the real-situation contexts should be regarded as prime importance.

Teaching Language Skills through CLT

It is to be stated that there is a noticeable gap between the structural separation of the four skills, pattern practice, error avoidance, native-speaker imitation in second and foreign language production and teaching language as a means of communication. Accordingly, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) seems to enable learners to interact meaningfully both inside and outside the classroom through asking for information, seeking transparency, resorting to circumlocution, and negotiating meaning via all linguistic and non-linguistic means at one's disposal. Likewise, Canale and Swain (1980) developed a three-component framework of language competence that

learners needed to achieve: communicative competence, grammatical competence, and sociolinguistic competence.

Methodological Bases for Integrating the Four Language Skills

In the early 1970s, the teaching of language skills was reported to be incapable of dealing with isolable, and discrete structural elements (Corder, 1971) due to the fact that using language skills in isolation could be hardly ever observed; e.g., in a conversation, speaking and listening comprehension were quite significant. Further, Widdowson (1978) created a way which integrated the language skills to develop learners' proficiency levels. He believed that discourse and social contexts were the important parts in a language that could not take place discretely. In fact, Widdowson's (1978) emphasized learning skills on the basis of integration and discourse as well as developing receptive and productive skills (p. 144).

Current Perspectives on Integration of Skills

As English is being utilized as a lingua franca, the learning objectives are the same in the world and emphasize the integrated and flexible instruction. The main objective seems to acquire the social, vocational, educational, or professional opportunities. In contemporary language curricula, each skill is related to one or two skills or more components, and in teaching one skill, the learners can learn other techniques and principles, e.g., teaching writing can be connected to reading and grammar. Concerning Richards and Rodgers (2001), integrated language instruction can be found infinitely in a variety of models including content-based, task-based, text-based, discourse-based, project-based, network-based, technology-based, corpus-based, interaction-based, literature-based, literacy-based, community-based, competency-based, or standards-based. With regard to both fluency and accuracy of language, teaching and learning of the integrated language should be developed. Based on Howatt and Widdowson (2004), naturalistic and integrated language learning meets the communicative needs that people would have as tourists in simple service transactions and casual conversational exchanges.

Koutsoftas (2013, pp. 4-8) pointed out "The four modalities of language share neural processing areas (i.e., in the brain). These processing resources of the brain are common to or shared by all four modalities of language. Pearson and Fielding (1991) correlated listening modality with the reading one. Indeed, these modalities contribute to input processing equally. In "Theory and practice in language studies" article, Bozorgian (2012) emphasized the IELTS test to find out the relationship between listening and other language skills. Finally, the results were satisfactory, and showed a close correlation to exist between them.

Integration of Culture as the Fifth Skill in the EFL classroom

Given that communicative competence is the goal of most EFL language classrooms, EFL instruction needs to attend to all of its components: organization, pragmatic, strategic, and even psychomotor strategies (Bachman, 1990). In accordance with Brown (2000), communicative goals are attained by focusing on fluency, language use, authentic language, and contexts in the real world. Based on Damen (1997), learning a new language coincides with learning a new culture, and when the teachers learn a language, it means that they are learning the cultural systems, thinking, feeling, and acting of that language. The EFL teachers should make an open environment for the students to learn cultural aspects of the language.

METHOD

To actualize this study, the researcher described the participants participating in the current study, and stipulates how they were selected from among the two genders, male, and female, who comprised both major and non-major students, and based on their proficiency levels (pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate), they were homogenized in terms of a Quick Placement Test (QPT, 2001). Afterwards, the researcher described the instruments and materials which were utilized to collect the required data in such a way that a Quick Placement Test (QPT, 2001) was initially administered by the researcher to homogenize the participants in terms of their levels of proficiency. Further, language modalities were evaluated on the basis of International English Language Testing System (IELTS) of British Council, and the content of the tests at each level was in terms of language modality.

Participants

The participants of this study were comprised of 150 Iranian EFL students who were selected from 200 EFL students studying at Islamic Azad University, Dezful Branch, as well as the talented high school students (grade 9-12). From among them, 75 major participants who studied translation studies at the B. A. level included 25 Upper-intermediate students, 25 Intermediate, and 25 Pre-intermediate learners, and also 75 non-major participants including 25 Upper-intermediate, 25 Intermediate, and 25 Pre-intermediate students who studied accounting, computer engineering, and law at Islamic Azad University, Dezful Branch, and some of them were selected from DezfulDanesh language institute, Taak and Ostadan language institute, and Farzanegan talented senior high school, wherein most learners had the minimum familiarity with English; hence, the participants of each proficiency level (pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate) were homogenized,

in terms of a Quick Placement Test (QPT, 2001). The tests taken by participants were comprised of IELTS tests of British Council at each three levels based on the mentioned Quick Placement Test. That is, those whose scores fell between 18 and 29 were considered as pre-intermediate, between 30 and 39 were regarded as intermediate, and between 40 and 47 were recognized as upper-intermediate test-takers (Cambridge English IELTS, 2015).

Instrumentation

In this research, language modalities and their effects on Iranian EFL test-takers' performances on the IELTS tests were taken into account. To do it, the researcher administered a Quick Placement Test (QPT, 2001) initially to homogenize the participants in terms of their levels of proficiency as stated above. Then, language modalities were evaluated on the basis of International English Language Testing System (IELTS) of British Council. The related tests for the listening skill included filling the gaps, multiple choices, matching; three tasks including interview (warm-up), speech (cue card), and discussion had to do with the speaking skill (IELTS Mentor, 2016), three passages followed by true/false, multiple choices, matching, and filling the gaps exercises were selected for the reading skill (Cambridge English IELTS, 2015), and the writing skill included two tasks including writing based on the presented graphs which was supposed to be done in 20 minutes, and based on the presented topic which was to be performed in 40 minutes (Cambridge English IELTS, 2015). Moreover, the content of the tests at each level was in terms of language modality. With regard to the assessment of the speaking skill, however, all participants' voices were recorded to be analyzed by both native and non-native speakers.

Procedure

It is to be noted that 150 participants among whom 75 students including 25 Upper-intermediate, 25 Intermediate, and 25 Pre-intermediate candidates majored in translation studies at Islamic Azad University, Dezful branch, and 75 non-major participants comprising 25 Upper-intermediate, 25 Intermediate, and 25 Pre-intermediate students who studied accounting, computer engineering, and law at Islamic Azad University, Dezful Branch, and some of them were selected from DezfulDanesh language institute, Taak and Ostadan language institutes, and Farzanegan talented senior high school participated in the current experiment. It is to be mentioned that most of these learners were at least familiar with English; therefore, their proficiency levels (pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate) were homogenized on the basis of a Quick Placement Test (QPT, 2001). To homogenize the sample used in this study in terms of the proficiency level, the researcher administered a Quick Placement Test (QPT,

2001) including 60 items. To determine the reliability of this questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha was used, but at first, it was distributed among 30 participants, and the estimated alpha came out to be 0.825. Since it was greater than 0.7, it was realized that the research question could be continued on a large scale, and it could be predicted that the results were likely to be desirable. Furthermore, the researcher was expected to tap the question if language modality affects significantly Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic performance on the IELTS tests in major and non-major students.

Language modality is a channel to express and receive one's thoughts. Accordingly, the researcher measured to investigate which modality affects Iranian EFL test-takers' performances on IELTS tests, and which channel shows better performances. The researcher used counterbalancing to neutralize the effect of research design. The researcher intended to examine the IELTS (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) tests in the same context to measure the effect of modalities, and also to express written or spoken form of English language. Two designs were used to examine the IELTS tests on the basis of counterbalancing. Indeed, this was done to neutralize the effect of precedence of one skill before the other one. Regarding the first design, the participants were divided into two groups, for example A & B: group A was assigned to examine the listening skill, and group B was determined to examine the writing skill and vice versa. Again group A was supposed to examine the speaking skill while group B was expected to examine the reading skill, and then vice versa. With regard to the second design, the participants at each level were divided into four groups, each skill for each group. In other words, after fulfilling each skill, the test-takers answered the next skill, in turn. So the means of the two designs were calculated and compared together. Concerning the listening skill, all listening sections at all levels including filling the gaps, multiple choices, and matching, were played with a high quality of voice. For the speaking skill, all participants' voices were recorded in three parts on the basis of standard IELTS tests including interview, cue cards, and discussion. Time allotment in reading and writing skills test accords to IELTS standards. In accordance with the reading skill, there were three passages with various questions which included true-false questions, multiple choices, matching, and filling the gaps adopted from the Cambridge English IELTS website. Regarding the writing skill, it was comprised of two general parts including 150 and 250 words respectively. The former part was expected to be performed during 20 minutes, and the latter was to be done during 40 minutes. It is to be noted that writing 150 words in the academic type is referred to as report writing, and based on the general type, writing 250 words has to do with letter writing which is manifested in the form of a composition.

In order to rate the speaking skill in each group, the researcher utilized IELTS speaking band descriptors including fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation which are expected to be rated from band 0 (for those who do not attend) to 9 (for the native speakers or those who have no deficiencies in the mentioned criteria), yet due to the presence of all participants and having no native candidates, and thanks to considering the scores out of 20, the band for each criterion was minimized from 1 to 5 where 1 stands for being incapable of communicating appropriately, and 5 shows the capability of communicating well as a near-native participant. Similarly, the participants' writing skill was rated by IELTS band descriptors including task achievement, coherence, cohesion, lexical resource, grammatical range, and accuracy which are supposed to be rated from band 0 (for those who do not attend) to 9 (for the native participants or those who have no deficiencies in the mentioned criteria); however, due to the attendance of all participants and having no native candidates, and due to considering the scores out of 20, the band for each criterion was minimized from 1 to 5 where 1 stands for being incapable of writing appropriately, and 5 shows the capability of writing well as a near-native participant. It is to be noted that each participant, major or non-major, participated in the reading comprehension, writing, speaking, and listening comprehension exams. Finally, attempt was made to keep content constant at each proficiency level to control language modality. To neutralize the effect of modalities, groups were counter-balanced. The collected data were rated on the basis of native and non-native English speakers' discernment.

RESULTS

Based on what was stated earlier, 150 major and non-major students who could be at the researcher's disposal easily took the QPT, and in terms of the obtained scores, respectively on the basis of the QPT criteria. According to the QPT criteria, from those candidates sitting for the QPT test, fifty students whose scores had fallen between 18 and 29 at the pre-intermediate level, fifty students' scores between 30 and 39 at the intermediate level, and fifty students' scores between 40 and 47 at upper-intermediate level were selected. At each level, twenty five students in the major courses and twenty five students in the non-major were chosen.

Concerning the results presented in Table 1, a One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was utilized to compare the normal distribution of the data collected from this study. Taking the obtained results in this table, the acquired value for the research variables was not significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 2 indicates that F value in Levene's Tables are not significant ($p > 0.05$), so this test shows the equality of error variances; therefore, the pertinent null hypothesis is not rejected statistically at $p < 0.05$. This means that there is no significant difference between the variances of the four groups of language skills. The inference made here is that the variances are homogeneous; hence, the researcher is allowed to continue the data analysis and implement the ANOVA test.

Table 3 reveals the results of one-way ANOVA test on the mean scores of the language skills on the Iranian EFL test takers' pragmatic performance on IELTS test. In practice, the mean difference of the scores pertaining to the language skills on the Iranian EFL test takers' pragmatic performance on IELTS test was significant ($F = 268.903$ and $p = 0.001$). This implies that the type of language modality significantly affects Iranian EFL test-takers' pragmatic performances on the IELTS tests.

Table 1: One-sample Kolmogorov-smirnov test

Group	One-sample Kolmogorov-smirnov test					
	N	Major		N	Non- major	
		Z	Sig		Z	Sig
Intermedi-ate						
Reading	25	0.986	0.285	25	0.756	0.617
Writing	25	1.146	0.145	25	0.931	0.352
Speaking	25	1.299	0.068	25	0.855	0.458
Listening	25	0.978	0.294	25	1.177	0.125
Upper-Intermediate						
Reading	25	1.316	0.062	25	0.955	0.321
Writing	25	0.855	0.458	25	0.866	0.441
Speaking	25	1.037	0.232	25	1.32	0.060
Listening	25	0.951	0.326	25	0.961	0.314
Pre-Intermedi-ate						
Reading	25	1.087	0.188	25	0.945	0.334
Writing	25	0.795	0.552	25	1.055	0.216
Speaking	25	0.840	0.481	25	1.31	0.062
Listening	25	0.816	0.519	25	1.243	0.091

** $P < 0.01$ * $P < 0.05$

Table 2: Levene's test of equality of error variances

Test Variable	Levene's test of equality of error variances			
	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Language skills	2.72	3	596	0.11

** $P < 0.01$ * $P < 0.05$

Table 3: One-way ANOVA

	Type III Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Eta2	Observed power
Between-subjects effects group	4562.807	3	1520.936	268.903**	0.001	0.575	1.000
Error	3371.027	596	5.656				
Total	7933.833	599					

** $P < 0.01$ * $P < 0.05$

According to Table 4, as the significance level of the comparison between reading and writing is significant at $p < 0.05$, the priority of reading to writing, speaking, and speaking can be observed by considering the mean differences of the related scores. In order to consider the ranking of the four language skills based on their priority, a Duncan test is utilized.

Based on Table 5, the means of the four language skills are ranked as follow: reading is regarded as the first priority, writing is the second, speaking is the third, and listening is the last priority.

Table 6 represents that F-value in Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances which shows the equality of error variances in all variables is not significant ($p > 0.05$); therefore, the pertinent null hypothesis is not nullified statistically at $p < 0.05$. The inference made here is that the variances are homogeneous; hence, the researcher is permitted to continue the data analysis and implement the MANOVA test.

It is to be noted that the Wilks' Lambda test manifests a significant difference among the scores of the four groups of language skills at $p < 0.05$ with the value of 0.208 and $F = 42.855$. Afterwards, to explore the mean scores of the four language skills at different proficiency levels, a one-way ANOVA test in the Context of MANOVA was used (Table 8).

With regard to Table 8, it can be realized that reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills as a type of language modality significantly affects Iranian EFL test-takers' pragmatic performances on the IELTS tests. Then, to compare the mean score of the reading skill at each level with those of three other skills, a Tukey HSD test was used. The results are presented in Table 9.

According to Table 9, the priority of the upper-intermediate level to the intermediate and the pre-intermediate levels, and also the priority of the intermediate level to the pre-intermediate level seem crystal clear in each of the mentioned skills.

Table 10 represents that the means of the three proficiency levels, with regard to all main four skills, are ranked as follow: upper-intermediate is regarded as the first priority,

Table 4: Tukey HSD test

	Mean difference (I-J)	Standard error	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
				Upper bound	Lower bound
Tukey HSD					
Reading					
Writing	1.8533(*)	0.27462	0.001	1.1458	2.5608
Speaking	5.1400(*)	0.27462	0.001	4.4325	5.8475
Listening	7.0733(*)	0.27462	0.001	6.3658	7.7808
Writing					
Reading	-1.8533(*)	0.27462	0.001	-2.5608	-1.1458
Speaking	3.2867(*)	0.27462	0.001	2.5792	3.9942
Listening	5.2200(*)	0.27462	0.001	4.5125	5.9275
Speaking					
Reading	-5.1400(*)	0.27462	0.001	-5.8475	-4.4325
Writing	-3.2867(*)	0.27462	0.001	-3.9942	-2.5792
Listening	1.9333(*)	0.27462	0.001	1.2258	2.6408
Listening					
Reading	-7.0733(*)	0.27462	0.001	-7.7808	-6.3658
Writing	-5.2200(*)	0.27462	0.001	-5.9275	-4.5125
Speaking	-1.9333(*)	0.27462	0.001	-2.6408	-1.2258

* The mean difference is significant at $P < 0.05$

Table 5: Duncan test

	N	Subset			
		1	2	3	4
Language skills					
Listening	150	7.1600			
Speaking	150		9.0933		
Writing	150			12.3800	
Reading	150				14.2333

Table 6: Levene's test of equality of error variances

Test Variable	Levene's test of equality of error variances			
	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Listening	1.255	2	147	0.288
Speaking	1.395	2	147	0.251
Writing	1.936	2	147	0.135
Reading	0.066	2	147	0.936

** $P < 0.01$ * $P < 0.05$

intermediate is the second, and pre-intermediate is the third priority.

Table 11 indicates that F value in Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances which shows the equality of error variances in all variables is not significant at $p < 0.05$; therefore, the pertinent null hypothesis is not rejected statistically at $p < 0.05$. This means that there is no significant difference between the variances of the four groups of language skills. Accordingly, it can be realized that the variances are homogeneous; hence, the researcher is allowed to continue the data analysis and implement the independent samples t-test.

With regard to the impact of the reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills as language modalities on the major and

non-major courses, there are significant differences in the major and non-major courses with the confidence interval of 95% between the mean scores of each of the mentioned skills that are to the benefit of the major courses.

Concerning Table 13, the significance level of this independent samples t-test is higher than the error at $p < 0.05$, H_0 is not rejected, and this test is not significant. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a slight difference between the mean scores of the two raters. This minute difference is not significant. In other words, both of the two raters had almost the same viewpoints with regard to the four language skills.

DISCUSSION

The present study delved into the effect of language modality on Iranian EFL test-takers' performances on the IELTS tests. Based on the obtained results, language modality was proved to be effective on Iranian test takers' performances on the IELTS tests. This achievement seems to be in line with what Brinton et al (1989) emphasized in accordance with the involvement of EFL/ESL students in all language skills as the types of language modality (Bachman & Palmer, 1982). It is to be noted that there are different factors which help a learner to learn reading and writing efficiently. With regard to the reading skill, Phuong (2016) introduced some factors as the secrets for one's success in the reading test. First, reading requires a great deal of vocabulary, yet it does not mean that the learners should know every word. Rather, they should only know the keywords that can change completely the answers. This factor was observed among the Iranian EFL learners whose ability in realizing the keywords was noticeable.

Table 7: MANOVA test

Test	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Eta ²	Observed power
Pillai's Trace	1.025	38.090**	8.000	290.000	0.001	0.512	1.000
Wilks' Lambda	0.208	42.855**	8.000	288.000	0.001	0.543	1.000
Hotelling's Trace	2.679	47.889**	8.000	286.000	0.001	0.573	1.000
Roy's Largest Root	2.162	78.357**	4.000	145.000	0.001	0.684	1.000

P<0.01, P<0.05*

Table 8: The results of One-way ANOVA test in the context of MANOVA on the scores of the four language skills at different proficiency levels

	Type III sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Eta ²	Observed power
Reading							
Between-subjects effects group	792.573	2	396.287	139.277**	0.001	0.655	1.000
Error	418.260	147	2.845				
Total	1210.833	149					
Writing							
Between-subjects effects group	433.440	2	216.720	64.765**	0.001	0.468	1.000
Error	491.900	147	3.346				
Total	925.340	149					
Speaking							
Between-subjects effects group	359.453	2	179.727	83.809**	0.001	0.533	1.000
Error	315.240	147	2.144				
Total	674.693	149					
Listening							
Between-subjects effects group	317.920	2	158.960	96.463**	0.001	0.568	1.000
Error	242.240	147	1.648				
Total	560.160	149					

P<0.01, **P<0.05

Paying a particular attention to the grammar structure is considered as the second most important factor taking a successful reading test. If the learners do not know what the text refers to, they will lose the main idea. In addition, Porter (2016) emphasized pre-reading strategies including brainstorming, group discussion, concept, or mind mapping, pre-questions, visual aids, advanced organizers, overviews, vocabulary previews, structural organizers, a purpose for reading, author consideration, KWL (What do I Know? What do I Want to learn? What did I Learn?), which seem crucial before going through with the reading skill. Hence, the Iranian EFL students must have benefited from one or more than one of the above facets due to their remarkable efficiency in the reading test.

Furthermore, one is recommended to take heed of pre-writing strategies including outlining, brainstorming, clustering, looping, free writing, and asking the six journalists' questions before dealing with the writing phase (KU Writing Center, 2016). In fact, the Iranian EFL learners' ability in outperforming the reading and writing skills respectively seem to be in line with Brown's (1994) perspective on the interrelationship of skills, especially the reading-writing connection. Moreover, it approves the Hinkel's (2006) viewpoint that teaching reading is typically connected to instruction on writing and vocabulary, teaching writing can be easily tied to reading, grammar, and

speaking skills readily lend themselves to teaching listening, pronunciation, and cross-cultural pragmatics.

Likewise, the Iranian EFL test-takers' deficiency in the speaking and listening skills can refer to Vernier et al's (2008) perspective on integrating listening and speaking; that is, shortcomings in the listening skill will lead to those in the speaking skill and vice versa. According to the reason why the major students obtained better results than the non-major group, it may be due to the lack or paucity of the mentioned facets with regard to each skill; that is, the major students benefit from a more academic atmosphere wherein all courses are taught in English, and students will learn each aspect of English in a specific course, while in the non-major courses, at most there is only one English course wherein all angles of English are taught, and each aspect is discussed or communicated briefly. That's why the major students act more successfully while getting along with each skill.

According to the impact of different types of language modality on the Iranian EFL learners' proficiency levels, the upper-intermediate students were shown to be more capable of performing the four skills than the intermediate and pre-intermediate learners, and the intermediate students were proved to have more ability to perform the four skills than the pre-intermediate learners. This

Table 9: Tukey HSD test

	Mean difference (I-J)	Standard error	Sig.	95% interval confidence	
				Upper bound	Lower bound
Reading					
Upper					
Inter	1.62(*)	0.337	0.000	0.82	2.42
Pre	5.48(*)	0.337	0.000	4.68	6.28
Inter					
Upper	-1.62(*)	0.337	0.000	-2.42	-0.82
Pre	3.86(*)	0.337	0.000	3.06	4.66
Pre					
Upper	-5.48(*)	0.337	0.000	-6.28	-4.68
Inter	-3.86(*)	0.337	0.000	-4.66	-3.06
Upper					
Inter	2.76(*)	0.366	0.000	1.89	3.63
Pre	4.08(*)	0.366	0.000	3.21	4.95
Writing					
Inter					
Upper	-2.76(*)	0.366	0.000	-3.63	-1.89
Pre	1.32(*)	0.366	0.000	0.45	2.19
Pre					
Upper	-4.08(*)	0.366	0.000	-4.95	-3.21
Inter	-1.32(*)	0.366	0.000	-2.19	-0.45
Upper					
Inter	2.74(*)	0.293	0.000	2.05	3.43
Pre	3.64(*)	0.293	0.000	2.95	4.33
Speaking					
Inter					
Upper	-2.74(*)	0.293	0.000	-3.43	-2.05
Pre	0.90(*)	0.293	0.000	0.21	1.59
Pre					
Upper	-3.64(*)	0.293	0.000	-4.33	-2.95
Inter	-0.90(*)	0.293	0.000	-1.59	-0.21
Upper					
Inter	1.96(*)	0.257	0.000	1.35	2.57
Pre	3.56(*)	0.257	0.000	2.95	4.17
Listening					
Inter					
Upper	-1.96(*)	0.257	0.000	-2.57	-1.35
Pre	1.60(*)	0.257	0.000	0.99	2.21
Pre					
Upper	-3.56(*)	0.257	0.000	-4.17	-2.95
Inter	-1.60(*)	0.257	0.000	-2.21	-0.99

Table 10: Duncan test for ranking the four skills at different levels

	N	Subset		
		1	2	3
Reading				
Pre	50	11.12		
Inter	50		14.98	
Upper	50			16.60
Writing				
Pre	50	10.58		
Inter	50		11.90	
Upper	50			14.66
Speaking				
Pre	50	7.58		
Inter	50		8.48	
Upper	50			11.22
Listening				
Pre	50	5.44		
Inter	50		7.04	
Upper	50			9.00

Table 11: Levene's test of equality of error variances

Test Variable	Levene's test of equality of error variances	
	F	Sig.
Listening	1.044	0.309
Speaking	2.383	0.125
Writing	2.117	0.148
Reading	1.828	0.178

**P<0.01*P<0.05

obtained result seems logical due to the extent of the proficiency knowledge that the students possess in each level. Generally speaking, all language skills are expected to be taught and learned integratively, despite the priority of one or two skills such as reading and writing to other skills (McVanner, 2014). If these four skills are separated from one another, a language is taught; however, if they

Table 12: Independent samples T-test

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean differences	Df	T	Sig. (2-tailed)	Results
Reading								
Major	75	15.45	2.446	2.44	148	5.784**	0.001	Rejected H ₀
Non-major	75	13.01	2.714					
Writing								
Major	75	13.65	1.997	2.55	148	7.264**	0.001	Rejected H ₀
Non-major	75	11.11	2.287					
Speaking								
Major	75	10.05	1.895	1.92	148	6.176**	0.001	Rejected H ₀
Non-major	75	8.13	1.913					
Listening								
Major	75	7.75	1.987	1.17	148	3.876**	0.001	Rejected H ₀
Non-major	75	6.57	1.710					

**P<0.01*P<0.05

Table 13: The results of the independent sample T-test for investigating the mean differences of the four language skills between the two raters for determining validity

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean differences	Df	T	Sig. (2-tailed)	Results
Reading								
One	150	14.23	2.851	-0.22	298	-0.707	0.480	Verified H ₀
Two	150	14.45	2.532					
Writing								
One	150	12.38	2.492	-0.19	298	-0.683	0.495	Verified H ₀
Two	150	12.57	2.412					
Speaking								
One	150	9.09	2.128	-0.26	298	-1.048	0.295	Verified H ₀
Two	150	9.35	2.168					
Listening								
One	150	7.16	1.939	-0.33	298	-1.475	0.141	Verified H ₀
Two	150	7.49	1.976					

**P<0.01*P<0.05

are integrated with each other, authentic communication is taught (Oxford, 2001).

CONCLUSIONS

The impact of language modality on Iranian EFL test-takers' performances on the IELTS tests led to fruitful achievements. As the findings indicate, language modality affects significantly Iranian EFL test takers' pragmatic performance on the IELTS tests. Specifically, Iranian EFL test-takers are affected by the reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills respectively. Furthermore, language modality influences significantly the Iranian EFL test takers' pragmatic performance at different proficiency levels, and the test takers at upper-intermediate proficiency level are more influenced by language modality than any other levels. Accordingly, it may be concluded that reading, writing, speaking, and listening, respectively, as the types of language modality have more impact on the upper-intermediate major Iranian EFL test takers' pragmatic performance.

In this respect, teachers are recommended to beware of the importance of language modality and its effect

on the EFL test takers' pragmatic performance through interaction and encouraging them to improve each type of language modality, especially those skills which seem more problematic, speaking, and listening due to the fact that all skills are to be taught integratively. Moreover, the teachers are suggested to extend the students' learning beyond the classroom and encourage them to utilize technology including social networks outside the classroom in order to enhance their abilities in learning different skills (Nunan & Richards, 2015).

It is to be noted that the EFL language learners will profit by the results of this study through what the teacher was recommended to implement in the classroom including the quality of classroom life that is based on collegiality, and different types of rapport between the teacher and students, and students themselves (Allwright, 2006).

The findings of the present study make the material developers beware of the importance of developing a suitable curriculum for the whole period of learning, and to design the syllabi which regard the related needs analysis, and learners' analysis including their levels, needs, goals,

and the type of the course, major or non-major; that is, the syllabus for the major students who have the required background is expected to be designed in a different way from that of the non-major students who have little or no academic background.

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How to cite this article: Fathi N. The Impact of Language Modality on Iranian EFL Test-takers' Performances on the IELTS Tests. *Int J Sci Stud* 2017;5(3):135-146.

Source of Support: Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.