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Identifying the Effectiveness of Pre-Listening Activities for Students of Chinese Mandarin

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Identifying the Effectiveness of Pre-listening Activities for
Students of Chinese Mandarin

Brandon Allen

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Identifying the Effectiveness of Pre-listening Activities for Students of Chinese Mandarin

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Listening has proved to be a difficult skill to teach in the language classroom. Research has shown that pre-listening activities, or those activities done with students prior to listening, can have an effect on listening comprehension outcomes. This research addressed the effectiveness of two types of pre-listening activities: top-down and bottom-up. Volunteers from intermediate level courses taught at Brigham Young University were divided into two treatment groups and a control group. The treatment groups followed a mixed models design by each going through a top-down and bottom-up pre-listening activity, followed by listening to a passage in Mandarin Chinese and taking a multiple-choice test. The bottom-up activity chosen for this research was a vocabulary preview activity, with an advance organizer being chosen for the top-down activity. Results showed both treatment groups significantly outperformed the control group for both the top-down and bottom-up activities ($p=0.0123$ and $p=0.0181$ respectively). No significant difference existed in scores between top-down and bottom-up activities ($p=0.9456$). It was determined that both the vocabulary activity and the advance organizer helped to increase the listening comprehension of intermediate level students of Mandarin Chinese.

Keywords: listening comprehension, pre-listening activities, top-down, bottom-up, second language acquisition, mixed models design, Chinese Mandarin

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction	8
Background & Significance	8
Research Questions & Hypothesis.....	10
Overview of the Study	10
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature.....	12
Introduction.....	12
Factors Affecting Listening Comprehension	12
Top-down Processing.....	14
Bottom-up Processing.....	17
Bottom-up Versus Top-Down.....	18
Conclusion	21

Chapter 3: Methodology	23
Introduction.....	23
Overview of Procedures.....	23
Subjects	24
Selection & Construction of Materials	25
Listening passages.	25
Bottom-up activity.	25
Top-down activity.....	26
Listening Comprehension Tests.....	27
Administration of Materials.....	27
Pre-activity administration.....	27
Bottom-up activity.	27
Top-down activity.....	28
Procedures.....	29
Confidentiality	30
Pilot Test.....	30
Chapter 4: Results.....	31
Introduction.....	31
Results of Final Study.....	32
Test of fixed effects.	32

Least squares means.....	32
Differences in means.....	33
Mixed models analysis of variance (ANOVA).....	34
Tukey-Kramer post-hoc analysis.	34
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations.....	36
Overview.....	36
Discussion of Results.....	36
Group discussion activity (top-down).....	37
Vocabulary activity (bottom-up).....	39
Implications.....	40
Limitations	42
Suggestions for Future Research	43
Conclusion	46
References.....	48
Appendix A.....	51
Appendix B.....	54

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Test of Fixed Effects.....	32
Table 2	Least Squares Means.....	33
Table 3	Differences of Means.....	34
Table 4	Mixed Models Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)	34
Table 5	Tukey-Kramer Post-hoc Analysis.....	35

Chapter 1: Introduction

Learning a language can be a difficult task, matched perhaps, however, by the equally challenging task of teaching a foreign language. Research on the most effective ways to conduct in-class instruction has been underway for some time, resulting in many different methodologies, such as grammar-translation, audiolingualism, and the direct method to name only a few. Often times, these methodologies have a tendency to place one of the four skills, reading, listening, speaking, or writing, in a place of higher importance. Because certain skills have been placed above others, some skills have received little attention by second language researchers. Listening is one of these skills that have been neglected.

Background & Significance

Snow and Perkins (1979) state that listening comprehension has been “superficially-treated.” They conclude that this situation has resulted in very few materials being published for classroom use. They go on to say that this lack of materials may be due to the lack of understanding of the complexity of listening skills as well as to the assumption that listening skills are readily assimilated.

While research has been done to demonstrate the important role that listening has on foreign language acquisition, very little has been done on ways to improve listening activities in the classroom. Connecting research on listening comprehension to second language acquisition, Dunkel (1991) stated that “listening research should be fostered to advance the state of SLA theory building, and to expand the knowledge base about the process of L2 comprehension and the effective methods of teaching L2 listening comprehension to beginning, intermediate, and advanced-level learners.”

It is evident, therefore, that working to enhance students' listening comprehension in the classroom should be receiving more attention than it is getting. This research focuses on one aspect of classroom instruction, which contributes to increasing listening comprehension: pre-listening activities.

Pre-listening activities refer to those activities conducted before listening actually takes place. These activities are meant to prepare the listener for what they are about to hear. They are also meant to promote the type of processing used while listening. Pre-listening activities and strategies are generally categorized as being one of two types: top-down or bottom-up. Top-down processing, also referred to as global processing, involves strategies which include integrating information, recognizing structure, using background knowledge, and anticipating content (Brantmeier, 2003). These strategies promote comprehension of the passage as a whole, helping the learner to gather the main ideas and purposes of the passage (Berne, 1995). Bottom-up processing, otherwise known as local processing, involves strategies which include ignoring specific unknown words, translating a word or a phrase, paraphrasing, and breaking sentences into parts. These strategies promote comprehension of individual bits of information, with the listener focusing their attention on individual elements of the passage. Research has been done on the effectiveness of both processes, with results supporting the effectiveness of both top-down and bottom-up processes and activities (Berne, 1995; Taglieber, Johnson, & Yarbrough, 1988; Tsui & Fullilove, 1998).

With the comparatively small amount of research which has been done in the field of listening comprehension, listening activities are often replications of reading activities. Lund (1991) states that many people assume that principles of reading comprehension can be imported

directly to listening. While some principles may transfer well, there are obvious differences in the two skills which, therefore, require research specific to listening.

The research undertaken in this project was conducted using a language not typically found in the American classroom: Mandarin Chinese. Just as principles of reading comprehension cannot be directly transferred to listening, however, neither can research done in most languages be transferred directly to Chinese. Because Indo-European languages have dominated American classrooms for many years, most of the research conducted has used those languages. Chinese is a non-Indo-European language, and is linguistically unrelated and culturally distant. Because Chinese is still relatively new to the American classroom, Chinese learning paradigms tend to be present, such as emphasizing reading and writing, with less attention given to speaking or listening (Christensen & Warnick, 2006a).

Research Questions & Hypothesis

To further examine the effectiveness of pre-activity type, I proposed the following research question: What is the effect of pre-listening activity type on the listening comprehension of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) students as measured by a listening comprehension test? It was hypothesized that no significant difference would be found among activity types, though it was anticipated that both activities would significantly outperform the control group.

Overview of the Study

A group of students from courses taught at Brigham Young University participated in a series of activities. Students from three sections of Chinese 201, a second year, first semester course, were placed in one of three groups. The three groups made up two treatment groups and one control group. The two treatment groups participated in a bottom-up or top-down pre-activity treatment, listened to a passage, and took a multiple-choice test. This process was

repeated with a different topic, with the group who received the top-down activity receiving a bottom-up activity (and vice-versa) following a mixed models design employing both a repeated measures and an independent group comparison. This design allows for the performance of a single individual on different measures, instead of comparing the performance between two different people on different measures. They then listened to a passage, and took another multiple-choice test. The control group followed the same process as the treatment groups, but received no pre-activity. The tests consisted of multiple choice questions based on passage content. The passage and test used for each group were the same, and all passages and tests used were evaluated by two Chinese teachers at BYU as a quality control measure.

All listening passages were selected at the intermediate level according to ACTFL guidelines. Analysis of scores was done using a mixed models analysis of variance to include a Tukey-Kramer post-hoc analysis.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The acquisition of a second or foreign language is a journey embarked upon by many, but relatively few people attain a high level of proficiency. For decades, teachers have attempted to effectively teach languages to the population using various methodologies and techniques. With all of the variables in play, such as students' aptitude levels, motivations, preferred learning styles, and relatedness of the L1 to the L2 to name only a few, it is difficult for educators to determine how to conduct classroom-instructed language learning. The advent of audiolingualism in the 1950s drew the focus of language learning to oral communication and listening skills. Reading and writing strategies were overlooked as they took a back seat to the other language skills. While reading strategies were deemphasized, reading comprehension research boomed, though classroom application was limited. It was assumed that constructs of reading could be directly imported to listening (Lund, 1991). Ways to conduct listening exercises in the classroom were, therefore, ignored (Kyoko, 2005). A relatively small amount of classroom listening materials was published. Snow & Perkins (1979) believe a lack of understanding of the complexity of listening skills as well as the assumption that listening skills are readily assimilated have led to the shortage of listening materials.

Factors Affecting Listening Comprehension

As time went on, researchers began to see the need for increased research in the area of listening comprehension, as well as an increase in materials available for classroom use. Rubin (1994) provided a review of listening comprehension research in second language acquisition and identified five characteristics which she believes have the greatest effect on listening. They are: 1) text characteristics (variation in a listening passage or associated visual support), 2)

interlocutor characteristics (variation in the speaker's personal characteristics), 3) task characteristics (variation in the purpose for listening and associated responses), 4) listener characteristics (variation in the listener's personal characteristics), and 5) process characteristics (variation in the listener's cognitive activities and in the nature of the interaction between speaker and listener). With regard to process characteristics, process refers to how known or unknown information is identified and interpreted. The author cites three types of processes which are the focus of current research: top-down processing, bottom-up processing and parallel processing.

These processes are also noted by Graham and Macaro (2008) while discussing theories of how information is processed while listening. The first theory discussed is one from J.R. Anderson (1995), who proposed that listening follows a linear process composed of three stages. The first stage begins with perceptual processing where phonemes are taken from the stream of speech and stored in immediate memory. The next phase of parsing involves forming mental representations from the words and phrases from linguistic knowledge existing in long-term memory. During the third stage, or utilization stage, all of the information gained in the previous two stages is then compared to the background knowledge known to the listener. The authors state that while this theory is helpful by providing insight into the processes that are involved in listening, the fact that it is a linear process brings up some problems. Graham and Macaro propose a more recursive model, suggesting that listeners operate within multiple phases at once. This model would agree with the idea of parallel processing, or the mixed usage of both top-down and bottom-up processing. When bottom-up processing does not induce comprehension, the listener switches to top-down processing, and vice-versa, trying to make sense of the

incoming information. More detail is given on both of these processes below, along with how they affect listening comprehension and supporting research.

While these processes are being discussed, however, the point of this research is to address the effectiveness of activities conducted before listening takes place. Berne (1995) stated that while an increasing emphasis has been placed on conducting pre-listening activities, no empirical research can be found which addresses the comparative effectiveness of different types of pre-listening activities. Pre-activities can generally be categorized as attempting to enhance or promote a particular type of processing. My intention here was to see whether particular types of pre-listening activities have an effect on the listener's ability to accurately process incoming information.

Top-down Processing

Top-down processing, also referred to as global processing, involves strategies which include integrating information, recognizing structure, using background knowledge, and anticipating content (Brantmeier, 2003). These strategies promote comprehension of the passage as a whole, gathering the main ideas and purposes of the passage (Berne, 1995). A person's background knowledge has a large impact on comprehension. The amount of knowledge a person has about a particular topic is crucial to how they will ultimately interpret the passage (Langer, 1984). Lomangino (1986) reported that only a small part of the information necessary for comprehension comes from passage content. Most of the information is already stored between the ears. This prior knowledge about a specific topic will help a listener to come up with and confirm hypotheses about passage content. This type of approach helps students to be able to bypass vocabulary deficiencies by not relying on every word in the passage for overall meaning (Pearson-Casanave, 1984).

Anticipating content is another skill which helps to prepare students for comprehension (Long, 1989). This concept is relevant whether discussing L1 or L2 usage. Often times while watching television, one will see quick news previews between programs that try to entice watchers to tune in to the news later. They give only a small amount of information to grab the interest of viewers. These teasers are meant to entice viewers to tune in later, however, one cannot help but sit and ask questions and make assumptions to try and fill in the missing pieces of information until the actual story is broadcast in full. These types of previews are natural events that can also be applied to L2 listening comprehension. Discussing the general topic with students beforehand allows them to ask questions about and make assumptions about passage content. One almost never sits down to watch a television program or movie without at least a small amount of knowledge about overall content, yet sometimes teachers expect their students to listen to foreign language passages with little or no introduction to the topic they are about to listen to. When basic information about a topic is not given before listening takes place, anticipating content becomes much more difficult. Giving some basic information about the topic provides some context for the students to build on and helps them to anticipate content.

One study which examined the effectiveness of a top-down pre-activity was done by Herron (1994). In this study, an advance organizer was used as a pre-activity. An advance organizer, in simple terms, is the introduction of concepts, such as context and background information relevant to the passage which is introduced before actual listening takes place. This use of context and background information assists comprehension by limiting the number of possible interpretations of the passage. Thirty-eight second-semester students in two sections of a college French class were used as subjects. The same teacher taught both sections of the class. *French in Action*, a video series which provides students with an opportunity to hear authentic

French speech as they observe native speakers interacting in cultural situations, was being used as course material. Ten lessons were selected and randomly assigned to one of two categories. The first category was used as the control category, with no advance organizer used before viewing took place. The second category was used as the treatment category, with the teacher reading aloud six sentences written in French. These sentences outlined major scenes from the new lesson which was about to be viewed. The teacher alternated use of the advance organizer between sections. If one section received the advance organizer before viewing, the other section did not. In the end, each section received the treatment five times and the control five times. A test was given after each lesson which consisted of the teacher reading questions to the students in English with responses being written by the students in English. Students were not provided with a copy of the questions. When mean scores of tests were compared, students in the treatment group outscored students in the control group on all ten lessons. When mean scores of all quizzes were compared, a significant difference between groups was found ($p < .05$ two-tailed). The results suggest that comprehension was enhanced by providing an advance organizer prior to the language activity.

Another study conducted by Schmidt-Rinehart (1994) sought to measure the effects of topic familiarity on listening comprehension. This study is different from other studies, because the familiarity with the topic, or topic background information, was not gained in a pre-activity given directly before listening. Familiar listening passages were chosen based on topics studied in the students' Spanish language textbook used earlier that semester. Passages which were believed to be unfamiliar to the students, but believed to be equal in difficulty, were also used. Students listened to passages on topics with which they were familiar and unfamiliar and were graded using an immediate recall. Mean scores were compared and a significant difference was

found ($p < .001$). This study supports the claim that background information, whether gained weeks or minutes prior to passage introduction, has a positive effect on passage comprehension.

Bottom-up Processing

While many researchers and teachers advocate a more global approach, there is research to support the effectiveness of bottom-up processes, otherwise known as local processing. Tsui and Fullilove (1998) suggest that it is not top-down processing skills that are lacking, but bottom-up. Local strategies include translating a word or a phrase, paraphrasing, and breaking sentence items into parts (Brantmeier, 2003). Jung (2003) states that bottom-up processing allows the listener to gain meaning from input and change their pre-existing knowledge to match the new input. In the majority of second language textbooks you will find vocabulary lists which accompany each lesson. These vocabulary items are generally words geared at building students' vocabulary and preparing them for that particular lesson's passage. If the text does not provide a vocabulary list, the teacher will usually listen to the passage and make a list of the words that they believe to be most useful in understanding the text. This emphasis on providing vocabulary relevant to the passage is due to research showing that vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skills go hand-in-hand (Lomangino, 1986).

Research done by Tsui & Fullilove (1998) supports the importance of bottom-up skills. In their study, scores from the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) for English language skills were analyzed. While this research does not address the issue of pre-activities, it is important to this study overall by showing the importance of bottom-up processing skills. All 177 items from the listening portion of the test were analyzed based on two criteria points: question type (whether question was global or local), and schema type (whether the passage was matching or non-matching). Schema type refers to whether the initial incoming

linguistic input is congruent with the subsequent input. In other words, does the meaning of information heard at the beginning of the passage change by new information given towards the end of the passage. The researchers hypothesized that the non-matching schema type passages would yield higher mean criterion scores than matching schema type by more skilled listeners. They believed this would be due to the idea that bottom-up skills are needed to properly analyze non-matching type passages and that only skilled listeners had these bottom-up type skills. Mean scores were analyzed of the 20,000 test participants. It was found that a significant difference existed between means of matching and non-matching schema type of skilled listeners, with skilled listeners out-scoring less skilled listeners on non-matching schema type. The data suggests that bottom-up processing skills help a listener to understand passages, which contain changing information.

Bottom-up Versus Top-Down

Due to the lack of research conducted with pre-listening activities, a few studies will be addressed here that have to do with reading comprehension, as well as one study that does use listening as the focus. As noted above, reading comprehension research cannot be directly correlated with listening comprehension. They are separate skills, and therefore require separate research (Lund, 1991). It would be incorrect to say, however, that information cannot be gleaned from such research. Studies in reading comprehension have sparked and given way to ideas of applying such research to listening (Berne, 1995).

Taglieber, Johnson, and Yarbrough (1988) conducted a study which examined the effectiveness of two different types of top-down activities and one type of bottom-up activity. The researchers predicted that both top-down activities would achieve higher scores than subjects who did the bottom-up activity, as well as those subjects who did no pre-reading activity

at all. They also predicted that the bottom-up activity would produce higher scores than no activity at all. In their study, they used 40 sixth-semester Brazilian college students studying English as a second language. The first top-down activity used involved the viewing of pictures which were related to the content of the passage the subjects would be reading. Students studied three pictures while an experimenter prompted discussion about the pictures. First, they described the content of the pictures, then tried to tie the pictures together through commonality, and lastly made hypotheses about passage content before actually reading the passage. The second top-down activity used was a questioning activity. Subjects were given a very short oral summary of the passage and asked to write questions that may be answered by the passage. Subjects wrote questions in both English and Portuguese which were all written on the board so the subjects could see them while they read the passage. Both activities prompted students to retrieve background information and anticipate content. The bottom-up activity used was a vocabulary preview activity. Eight words were chosen from the text and presented in meaningful, but unrelated sentences. Students read the sentences and tried to guess the meaning of the new words, but did not try to guess how these new words might tie into the text they were about to read. The experiment found both of the top-down activities to produce significantly higher test scores than both students completing the vocabulary preview and the control group, with the subjects completing the vocabulary preview activity also having higher scores than the control group. Reasons given by the researchers for lower performance by the bottom-up activity were not having students try and predict how the words correlated with the passage, and not having the sentences the words were in be related to the topic.

In a different study by Stahl (1983), the effectiveness of the pre-activity was found to be dependent on one's proficiency level. He used similar activities as the above experiment, but

allowed the control group to read the passage and take the test two different times. At the beginning level, the global activity (picture viewing) proved to be much more effective than the local (vocabulary preview) and the repetition activities. At the intermediate level however, both the global and local activities were significantly more effective than the repetition activity. At the advanced level, none of the activities were significantly better, though the repetition activity appeared to be more effective than the other two.

Berne (1995) provides an example which includes both a top-down and bottom-up pre-listening activity. Sixty-two learners of Spanish, all of which were native speakers of English, enrolled in one of four sections of a third semester course at a university in the United States were included in this research. Participants were randomly divided into three groups: a group receiving a top-down pre-activity, a group receiving a bottom-up activity, and a control group receiving a filler activity. The top-down activity consisted of subjects previewing the questions and possible answers to the comprehension test they would take after listening to a videotaped lecture. The bottom-up activity consisted of subjects previewing 10 vocabulary words deemed important to understanding the lecture. These words were given in the same context which they would be presented in during the listening activity. The filler activity consisted of students writing out the numbers 1 through 50 in Spanish simply to pass the time, while the others went through their pre-listening activities. Because of logistical constraints, these activities could not be conducted out loud. All of the students being tested were in the same room. This was a limitation of the study because it varied from the way pre-listening activities are normally conducted in the classroom. Normally, similar activities are conducted, but the teacher allows for discussion and sharing of information among students. Conducting the experiment this way, however, helped to reduce the possibility that differences among groups were a result of

differences in instructor or procedure. Participants were given three minutes to complete the pre-listening activity, after which the video-taped lecture was watched. A multiple-choice test was then given, and the process of watching the lecture and taking the test was repeated. Results showed that a significant difference between mean scores was found between subjects completing the question preview activity (top-down) and the filler activity. A significant difference in means was not found between subjects completing the vocabulary activity (bottom-up) and the filler activity. In fact, after the first time listening, subjects who had the bottom-up activity scored lower than those who had the filler activity. It was theorized that the vocabulary presentation may have been more of a distraction to the subjects by causing them to focus on the vocabulary while listening. After the second listening, however, participants who received the bottom-up activity scored significantly higher than those receiving the filler activity. This supports the notion that top-down activities are more effective at increasing listening comprehension. It also showed that repeated exposure to a passage will increase comprehension regardless of the type of pre-listening treatment received.

Conclusion

Although Berne's (1995) research did not show a significant difference between mean scores for those completing the bottom-up activity and those completing the filler activity, it does show that both types of activities are better than no pre-listening activity at all. It does appear, however, that more preference tends to be given to top-down activities. My research study sought to answer the following question: What is the effect of pre-listening activity type on Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) listening comprehension as measured by a multiple-choice listening comprehension test? The research discussed above shows that there is usefulness in employing pre-listening activities. It also highlights variables which must be factored into related

research such as pre-activity type, schema type, and question type. Regardless of which type of pre-activity is more effective, it is apparent that both types of processes are important to every listener.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The question of whether instructed second language acquisition is effective has been a topic of discussion for some time now. Doughty (2003) discusses both sides of the argument. Critics of L2 classroom instruction state that the classroom cannot provide the necessary environment to facilitate L2 acquisition. They argue that language learning is a natural process, and that controlling students' verbal behavior in the classroom is difficult to achieve. Doughty also cites the positive aspects of instructed SLA, the explosion of research on the subject, and the need for further research. Indeed, further research must be done. Often, the classroom is the only place where most foreign languages can be learned. In most cases, students simply do not have the resources to acquire a foreign language by other means. By improving our classroom instruction, we can more efficiently teach our students and help them to achieve their language learning goals. The question this research addresses is as follows: What is the effect of pre-listening activity type on Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) listening comprehension as measured by a multiple-choice listening comprehension test? This chapter discusses the research methodology and procedures used to answer this question.

Overview of Procedures

This research seeks to measure the effectiveness which pre-listening activities have on CFL listening comprehension. CFL students at Brigham Young University (BYU) were used as subjects. These students were divided into three groups consisting of two treatment groups and one control group. The treatment groups received two pre-listening treatments designed to help stimulate and promote the usage of either a bottom-up (local) or top-down (global) strategy while listening. The control group received no treatment. The subjects then listened to a short story in

Chinese and answered multiple-choice questions in English in order to gauge listening comprehension of the passage. After the tests were graded, mean scores were compared to determine if differences existed between groups.

Subjects

The subjects used for this study were solicited from among CFL students at BYU. Although other research has suggested that effectiveness of pre-listening activity varies based upon proficiency level, students taking Chinese 201 during the 2011 winter semester were used (Stahl, 1983). According to data provided by BYU's Chinese department, students taking Chinese 201 must be at the intermediate-low level or higher on the ACTFL scale to enroll in this course. Time constraints and scheduling conflicts will not make it feasible to include all levels of students. Therefore, the results of this study are limited to intermediate level students. Students from three sections of Chinese 201 were solicited, with a total of 38 students volunteering to participate, with nine students having served Mandarin speaking missions in Taiwan or other places, and three students having one semester of study abroad in Mainland China.

To help control for validity, subjects were randomly dispersed among the two treatment groups and control group to the greatest possible degree following a stratified random design. Stratified random means that students were first divided up according to specific characteristics, such as the class section they belonged to, time spent studying the target language abroad, and gender. Each group was then divided-up equally to ensure an even mixture of subjects from each category went to each experimental group. Although these different characteristics are being controlled for, they will not be considered variables themselves because of the small sample sizes.

Selection & Construction of Materials

The selection of listening passages and pre-listening activities is crucial to this research. There are any number of activities that could be conducted before listening takes place in a classroom, as well as ways in which these activities are administered.

Listening passages. The listening passages used in this experiment were two intermediate level dialogues in Chinese Mandarin adapted from passages used in a prior second semester curriculum at the Defense Language Institute (DLI). These dialogues were selected to provide new passages not yet listened to by students attending courses at BYU. The passages were chosen based on topics covered in the first year of the BYU Chinese curriculum. Both passages were examined for content, grammar, and vocabulary in order to choose a topic which was familiar to the subjects and which would match the level of the subjects' language abilities. Dialogue one was two minutes and thirty seconds and covered the topic of buying shoes. It included three speakers: a shopper, the shopper's friend, and the shoe salesman. Dialogue two was three minutes and fifteen seconds and covered the topic of renting a house. It included two speakers: the person renting a house, and the landlord. Both dialogues were recorded by native speakers of Chinese. The dialogues were evaluated by two native-teachers of Chinese at BYU for level of difficulty and comparability.

Bottom-up activity. The activity chosen for the bottom-up group was a vocabulary preview activity. This is a very typical classroom activity which many teachers use before introducing a listening passage. A list of 10 vocabulary words was selected from the dialogue used for the listening test. These words were taught to and previewed by the subjects. They were chosen based on several criteria. The first was how critical the word was, not only to understanding certain points in the passage, but also for answering the comprehension questions

at the end. A sheet of paper was given to each subject containing the vocabulary word in Chinese characters, the pinyin equivalent, the English translation of the word as it pertains to the passage which they would be listening to, and a sample sentence showing the context the word would be found in. It was not the exact sentence used in the passage; however, it did use the word in the same context. The words were reviewed by two native-teachers in the Chinese department at BYU to determine appropriateness of the vocabulary and the importance of the vocabulary to both understanding the passage and being able to answer the comprehension questions at the end.

Top-down activity. While there are many different types of top-down activities, the one chosen for this research has gained in popularity and is used often in the language classroom: the advance organizer. The purpose of an advance organizer is expressed in its name: to organize a person's thoughts and ideas about a particular subject in advance to, or before, doing something. In this case, a teacher led discussion took place to allow subjects to discuss the overall topic of the story before actually listening to it. Because teachers are instructed to speak the target language at all times in the classroom, the discussion was held in the target language, though teachers were instructed not to allow a breakdown in comprehension. If subjects did not understand the teacher, the teacher was allowed to use English. Likewise, if the subjects did not know how to respond in the target language, they responded in English, with the teacher repeating the response in Chinese. The purpose was not to have subjects memorize information, but simply to get their minds thinking about the topic and any associations or experiences they may have with it.

Listening comprehension tests. The listening comprehension tests developed for this study followed the typical multiple-choice format. Subjects are familiar with this testing format and require very few instructions. One test was developed for each dialogue, making a total of two tests. Each test had 10 multiple-choice questions, with a total of four possible choices for each question. Subjects were instructed to circle the answer that they felt was correct.

Administration of Materials

Pre-activity administration. During administration of the pre-listening activities, it was important that the conditions which the subjects found themselves in were as similar to the classroom environment as possible. Since this research is addressing pre-listening activities which can be conducted and adopted in the classroom, it would make sense to conduct them in a manner that is easily replicable in a normal classroom setting. It will also help the subjects to feel more at ease and reduce intervening variables such as anxiety and nervousness if they are in an environment in which they feel comfortable. The pre-activities were directed by teaching assistants from the Chinese department. Each teacher is a native speaker of the Chinese language and went through three 30-minute training sessions to receive instructions on how to conduct the activities and administer the tests. Due to the oral nature of the administration of the pre-activities, the three groups were separated while going through this procedure. The activities were conducted during the subjects' normal class time and in their normal classrooms.

Bottom-up activity. For the bottom-up activity, subjects received a vocabulary handout to reference throughout the activity. The teacher used the same handout the students received to go through each word and its meaning. Although Chinese characters were provided on the handout, the focus of the activity was on the sound of the vocabulary words and how to use them correctly

in a sentence. Characters were only included in the vocabulary sheet in case subjects were familiar with characters contained in the new words on the vocabulary list. For example, on the passage two vocabulary list, the word 冰箱 *bīngxiāng* ‘refrigerator’ contains the characters 冰 *bīng* ‘ice’ and 箱 *xiāng* ‘box’ forming the word refrigerator. Subjects may have been familiar with the character 冰 *bīng* ‘ice’, but not 箱 *xiāng* ‘box’, thus allowing the subject to more easily assimilate the new word through collocation. Also, many Chinese words carry multiple meanings depending on the context surrounding the word. The teacher only discussed the meaning of the word as it pertained to the context of the story the subjects would be listening to in order to prevent overload or confusion. The teacher explained what the word means, how it is used, provided sample sentences, and answered any of the questions the subjects had about how to use the word. Subject discussion was encouraged just as it is in a classroom setting. The teacher was given 10 minutes to complete this exercise, which allowed one minute per word.

Top-down activity. The top-down pre-listening activity was conducted in a similar fashion. The teacher was given 10 minutes to lead a discussion with the subjects about the topic as a whole. Subjects were prompted to share any background knowledge or experience they may have about the subject. For example, listening passage two was a dialogue involving a man looking to rent a house. Subjects were to discuss their experiences in renting a house, allowing for past experiences to surface. In case subjects were reluctant to share information or discuss the topic, the teacher was provided with a list prepared with background information and questions to ask about the topic. The information and questions were designed to provide the subjects with information to stimulate their own background knowledge or schema about the subject.

Procedures

Each subject was given a packet upon arrival with strict instructions not to turn any page until instructed by the teacher. All materials and tests needed for the process were contained in the packet. This was done to save the teacher's time in passing out the various materials and tests. Each group had 50 minutes to complete all of the activities. For passage one, treatment group one had 10 minutes to complete the vocabulary preview activity. Upon completion of the vocabulary preview activity, subjects were allowed to refer to the vocabulary sheet during the first playing of the passage. After the passage completed playing the first time, subjects were instructed to turn the page to the multiple-choice test and answer the questions while they listened to the passage the second time. 10 minutes were given for the playing of the passage twice and taking the test. The teacher then used 10 minutes to administer the group discussion activity for passage two. Upon completion of the group discussion, subjects were instructed to turn the page to preview the test questions while listening to the passage the first time. Subjects were then instructed to answer the questions while listening to the passage the second time. The same procedures were done for treatment group two; however, instead of receiving the vocabulary activity for passage one, they were given the group-discussion activity and the vocabulary activity in place of the group-discussion activity for passage two, following a cross-over design. This was done to allow both groups to receive both types of activities and saved time by not having to conduct a pre-test to establish equality among groups. The control group listened to both passages twice and took the same tests as the treatment groups but received no pre-listening activity. After the second test was complete, subjects answered questions about their past language experience, to include missionary service, study-abroad experience, and languages spoken in the home.

Confidentiality

Because all data was collected in one meeting, there was no need to have subjects provide their name or any other biographical information to link them to the test packet. Numbers were written at the top of each packet to allow interested subjects to find out how well they did by referencing their number to a listing of test scores.

Pilot Test

A pilot test was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the instruments. Students who completed Chinese 201 the previous semester were invited to participate. Nine students who had just completed Chinese 201 the previous semester and were now taking Chinese 202 participated in the pilot test. Subjects were not given any pre-listening activity before listening to each passage and taking the test. After listening to each passage twice, subjects answered the multiple-choice questions. Item analysis of each item was done to check for poorly written or easy questions by using the item facility (IF) score to determine whether it needed to be revised or removed completely. Based on the results, three questions on test 1 were revised and one question on test 2 was revised.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of various pre-listening activities on the listening comprehension of students studying Chinese Mandarin at the beginning to intermediate level. Pre-listening activities, as defined in this study, refer to those activities conducted by teachers with their students in order to better prepare them to listen to a passage in a foreign language. There are many types of pre-listening activities, though relatively few studies have been done to prove their effectiveness. This research employed two types of pre-listening activities which are currently being employed in many language classrooms: bottom-up and top-down. The bottom-up activity allowed teachers to review key vocabulary items and their usage that would be heard in the dialogue they would be listening to. Subjects were encouraged to ask questions about the vocabulary, and were provided with sample sentences of the vocabulary in the context they would hear them in. The top-down activity provided the subjects with an opportunity to discuss as a group the experiences they have had with the topic they would be listening to. For example, the first dialogue was about a man going to purchase a pair of shoes. The teacher asked the subjects questions about their experiences with shopping. This solicited background information from the subjects, which is considered by some researchers to be beneficial to the listener. This study included two treatment groups which were given both types of pre-listening treatments before listening to a passage and taking a multiple-choice test, following a cross-over design, and a control group which received no pre-activity before taking the tests. This chapter reports the results of this study.

Results of Final Study

A total of 38 subjects participated in the final study, with 13 subjects in treatment group one, 13 subjects in treatment group two, and 12 subjects in the control group. Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) was used to run a mixed models analysis of variance (ANOVA). This type of analysis allowed for the consideration of both random and fixed effects, with the random effects being the subjects and the fixed effects being the pre-listening activities and the multiple-choice tests. For this study, an alpha level of .05 was used to determine statistical significance.

Test of fixed effects. Table 1 below shows the interaction of fixed effects.

Table 1

Test of Fixed Effects

Effect	Num DF	Den DF	F Value	Pr > F
test	1	35	4.28	0.0461
activity	2	35	4.55	0.0176
test*activity	2	35	0.12	0.8894

As also shown in Table 1, no interaction exists between the tests and activities.

Least squares means. Table 2 below provides the results of the least squares means for tests and activities.

Table 2

Least Squares Means

Effect	Test	Activity	Estimate	Standard Error	DF	t Value	Pr > t
test	Test 1		5.1981	0.3694	36	14.07	<.0001
test	Test 2		5.8297	0.3694	36	15.78	<.0001
activity		Group Discussion	6.3077	0.4464	36	14.13	<.0001
activity		None	4.0417	0.6006	36	6.73	<.0001
activity		Vocabulary	6.1923	0.4464	36	13.87	<.0001

Differences in means. Table 3 shows the differences in means between tests and activity type. The difference in means between the two treatment activities is very small, only 0.1154, with the mean score for the group discussion activity being only slightly higher than the vocabulary activity. The differences in means between both types of activities and the control group which received no activity, however, are quite large, with the mean score for the group discussion activity being 2.266 points higher than the control group and the mean score for the vocabulary activity being 2.1506 points higher than the control group. This shows that both treatment groups had significantly higher mean scores than the control group.

Table 3

Differences of Means

Effect	Test	Activity	Test	Activity	Estimate	Standard Error	DF
test	Test 1		Test 2		-0.6316	0.2992	36
activity		Group Discussion		None	2.2660	0.7483	36
activity		Group Discussion		Vocabulary	0.1154	0.3618	36
activity		None		Vocabulary	-2.1506	0.7483	36

Mixed models analysis of variance (ANOVA). By looking at the levels of significance in table 4, we can see that a significant difference in mean scores does exist between activities ($p=0.0157$). While this does show a significant difference exists, it does not show us where that significance lies. Table 5 shows the results from a Tukey-Kramer post-hoc analysis.

Table 4

Mixed Models Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Effect	Num DF	Den DF	F Value	Pr > F
test	1	36	4.45	0.0418
activity	2	36	4.68	0.0157

Tukey-Kramer post-hoc analysis. As can be seen from table 5 below, subjects who received the group discussion pre-activity scored significantly better than subjects who received no pre-activity ($p=0.0123$). Subjects who received the vocabulary pre-activity also scored significantly better than subjects who received no pre-activity ($p=0.0181$). A significant difference did not exist, however, between subjects who received the group discussion pre-activity versus those who received the vocabulary pre-activity.

Table 5

Tukey-Kramer Post-hoc Analysis

Effect	Test	Activity	Test	Activity	Adj P
activity		Group Discussion		None	0.0123
activity		Group Discussion		Vocabulary	0.9456
activity		None		Vocabulary	0.0181

The data analysis of this study shows that statistical significance does exist between groups who received either the group discussion or vocabulary activity and those who received no activity. However, no statistical significance was found between the group activity and the vocabulary activity. The meaning of this significance will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Overview

Listening comprehension is an important piece of the overall language proficiency puzzle. The ability to understand what is being said both linguistically and culturally is a difficult and daunting task for any second or foreign language learner. Teaching listening skills is perhaps one of the most challenging tasks set before language instructors. It is near impossible for teachers to observe the listening process of their students.

Pre-listening activities, or the activities conducted with students before listening practice takes place, are believed to help students prepare for the listening process. These activities are meant to help students understand the passage by providing them with information meant to stimulate listening comprehension. These pre-listening activities are generally categorized into top-down and bottom-up. Top-down activities are meant to help students identify the overall structure of the passage, solicit background information, and help students to anticipate content. Bottom-up activities cover areas such as grammar structure, vocabulary, and sentence detail. There is some debate among researchers as to which type of activity produces higher listening comprehension outcomes.

This chapter discusses in further detail the results reported in chapter 4, along with a discussion of implications which can be made from the findings, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

Discussion of Results

The following research question was proposed for this study: What is the effect of pre-listening activity type on the listening comprehension of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) students as measured by a listening comprehension test? From the data gathered in this research

experiment, activity type did not have a significant effect on listening comprehension outcomes. Subjects who received either the group discussion activity (top-down) or the vocabulary activity (bottom-up), however, were able to understand the passage significantly better than subjects who had no pre-activity. In the following sections, both activities will be discussed, as well as possible reasons why subjects receiving these activities achieved higher levels of listening comprehension versus subjects who received no activity.

Group discussion activity (top-down). The group discussion pre-activity was chosen based on research done in second-language acquisition showing the importance of connections individuals make between their everyday experiences and language acquisition. Gass (2003) proposes that language development is stimulated by the interactions a learner has with the language and their environment, whether an L1 or L2. She goes on to discuss the need for “positive evidence”, or models of language which the person is exposed to either through spoken or written means. In early L1 acquisition, regardless of language or dialect, children acquire habits of speech and response. L2 input is needed to help create new habits pertinent to the L2. Ellis (2003), Bybee (2006) and Smith (1975) also support this idea, by stating that language acquisition is based on a person’s lifetime analysis and experiences of language input which change slightly each time new input is received. Each person uses and develops language based on the world around them. As we receive input, patterns begin to develop which shape the way we see the world around us and thus have an impact on when, where, and how we use language. Smith also explains that in order for learning to take place, the learner needs something in their cognitive structure to tie the new information to, or something to build upon. In order for something new to be learned, it must be connected to something already in existence in their cognitive structure. I believe that in order for this connection to be made, meaningful learning

must take place. Ausubel (1978) explains that in order for meaningful learning to take place, a person must be able to connect or relate the new information to something already existing in their cognitive structure.

The group discussion activity provided the students an opportunity to discuss a topic they were familiar with in a language which they were not familiar with the specific vocabulary and grammar needed for comprehension. The discussion provided an indirect way for students to hear vocabulary and grammar from the teacher pertinent to the topic they would be listening to. The teacher did not present a list of information, but simply solicited the students' background knowledge and past experiences with the topic. This helped to prepare the minds of the students to make the necessary connections while listening to understand the passage at a significantly higher rate than the students who did not have any pre-activity. If the subjects were to listen to a passage on the topic of nuclear fusion, would it be a problem of not knowing the vocabulary specific to the topic, or simply not being familiar with the topic?

The group discussion also helped students to prepare to guess and anticipate content. Each student was able to draw on their past experiences with the subject to make better guesses or anticipations about what they would be listening to. Christensen & Warnick (2006b) referred to this knowledge as scripts. When a person goes to a store to buy a pair of shoes, their experience is going to be similar to that person's past experiences buying shoes with many of the same questions being asked and much of the vocabulary and grammar being the same. By discussing student experiences, it allows these so called "scripts" to be remembered, which can therefore allow students to better anticipate content, even though they may not be familiar with vocabulary specific to the topic being listened to.

On the other hand, the subjects in the control group did not have an opportunity to prepare their minds before listening took place. They had no way of anticipating content or using background knowledge to piece information together. I believe this is the reason they listened with a lower rate of comprehension. When a listener cannot anticipate what they will be listening to, it takes them some time to figure out what is going on. By that time, the passage is close to being over and critical information may have been missed. They didn't even get a chance to use or apply background knowledge to what they were listening to. It is crucial that students get a chance to do this before listening takes place.

Vocabulary activity (bottom-up). The vocabulary activity was chosen because of its popularity in the classroom, and the research showing its importance. Sometimes, vocabulary is given a bad name by researchers and can be considered to be unimportant depending on the opinion of the teacher or researcher. I believe the argument lies mainly in how vocabulary is presented to students and its role in the classroom. Vocabulary can be taught directly or indirectly. The vocabulary activity in this research was a direct way of teaching vocabulary, with the focus of the activity being vocabulary review. The group discussion activity could be considered indirect teaching of vocabulary, with students indirectly reviewing and previewing vocabulary through the course of the group discussion.

Berne (1995) concluded that the vocabulary activity used in her study produced significantly lower listening comprehension outcomes in comparison with her top-down pre-listening activity. While her collection techniques were limited due to logistical reasons, I believe the vocabulary activity was not given its full potential and therefore produced subjects' lower mean scores. Bernes' subjects reviewed a list of vocabulary important to comprehending the passage to be listened to and were provided with in-context examples of how that vocabulary

was used. However, they were not allowed the luxury of consulting with a teacher if questions arose on a specific words usage. My research provided the same information on the vocabulary words chosen, but also allowed students the opportunity to ask a teacher questions. One student's experiences with a specific vocabulary word may have been sufficient to gain a good understanding of the word and its usage in specific situations, whereas another student may not have been able to link that word to something meaningful in their cognitive structure. Having an opportunity to clarify with a teacher on how that word is used correctly may have been crucial to the subject's understanding of that word, and how it is used properly.

Conducting the vocabulary activity in a meaningful way is important to its effectiveness. Vocabulary is an important part of learning a new language, with how that vocabulary is presented being even more important. The meaningful presentation and explanation of how vocabulary is properly used specific to a given situation was the focus of the activity, not just previewing dictionary definitions of words. This knowledge allowed the subjects who received the vocabulary activity to outperform the subjects who received no pre-activity on the listening comprehension test. If a vocabulary activity is conducted properly, it can have a secondary benefit of soliciting a student's background knowledge and help them to better anticipate content. The focus is still on vocabulary and how it is used, but as with the top-down activity leading to an indirect vocabulary review, the bottom-up activity indirectly solicited background knowledge. It could, therefore, be implied that a mixture of the two types of activities would be the proper approach.

Implications

The results from this research have implications for teachers and students of foreign languages, as well as textbook and material developers. First and foremost, it is vital that

teachers take the time to prepare their students to receive new language input. Giving students ample time to listen to authentic and natural speech in the new language is important. As can be shown from this research, the activities leading up to the listening can make a difference in the levels of comprehension. Most textbooks provide various types of pre-listening activities. Teachers must utilize and adapt these activities for their students. When activities are not provided, activities should be developed. Textbook developers should also be sure to provide different types of activities to be completed by students before listening takes place.

The amount of time individual students devote to preparing for class can also make a big difference in how well students perform in class. While the activities in this research were conducted immediately before listening took place, I believe the study and preparation done before class can play a major factor in the classroom performance of students. The type of homework students receive could help to better prepare students for the in-class activities conducted by the teacher, thereby enabling the students to ask better questions and gain reinforcement.

Regardless of whether the preparation is taking place in the classroom or at home by the student, this research shows that the total time spent toward improving listening skills may have an effect on comprehension. Both treatment groups spent a total of 50 minutes going through the treatments and taking the tests. The control group spent less than 20 minutes taking the tests. While the results did not show a difference in listening outcomes based on the type of activity used, the results do show that having some sort of activity is better than no activity at all. Regardless of the type of activity used, both treatment groups spent more than twice as much time listening to and using the language than the control group. Perhaps it is not the type of activity that is important, but the amount of time students are engaged with the language. This

research may have implications for both the types of activities teachers and textbook developers use, as well as the importance of providing time for students to work with the language. Schools across the country and around the world differ in the amount of time students spend in the classroom and in the amount and type of homework assigned. Depending on the situation, the classroom may be the only time students have to use the language with the teacher and their fellow classmates. Instead of worrying about whether grammar, vocabulary, or background knowledge is more important as teachers and researchers, we may need to focus on simply providing classroom activities and homework assignments that keep the interest and attention of our students. This will in turn increase the total amount of time the students are spending with the language.

Limitations

The greatest limitation for this study was the number of participants. While a significant difference was found statistically between subjects receiving some type of activity compared to subjects receiving no activity, a greater number of subjects may have produced significance between activity types. Logistical issues prevented the solicitation of students from other universities. The amount of time available with subjects was also limited to 50 minutes, which only allowed for the presentation of two different activities. Providing a larger number of activities may have increased reliability of data and possibly shown certain activities to be more effective than others.

With other research showing that the proficiency level of students may also play a factor in effectiveness of pre-listening activity type, only students from Chinese 201 were solicited for this study. In addition, BYU has a unique set of students. Many have served missions for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and have learned a foreign language in the target

country. Many missionaries returning from Chinese-speaking missions continue their study of Chinese by taking courses at BYU. Many of these returned missionaries learned to speak and understand the spoken language quite well. However, most have had little practice with reading and writing characters. Since the proficiency levels of these students are so varied with regards to the four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), BYU has developed special class sections for these learners in order to focus on the areas where they need the most help. Because this research is focusing on listening comprehension, many of these returned missionaries' listening comprehension skills may be above the intermediate level. Also, students who lived in mainland China or Taiwan for other reasons may also have accelerated listening abilities that needed to be controlled for during data analysis. While they were allowed to participate, their scores were not considered in the data analysis. It was not possible to include a separate analysis on these participant's scores due to the small number of such participants. A questionnaire was used to determine the amount of foreign travel by subjects. If it is true that the level of effectiveness of the pre-listening activity is dependent on the level of proficiency of the student, then students whose listening proficiency level is higher than the majority of the participants may render the results inaccurate.

Suggestions for Future Research

In the future, similar research studies may choose to conduct the top-down activities in the subjects' native language. As stated earlier in this chapter, subjects who received the top-down treatment had the added benefit of an indirect vocabulary review. This could be controlled for by conducting the top-down activity in the subjects' native language. If the benefit of the group discussion activity resides solely in the sharing of background knowledge and helping subjects to anticipate content, then the group discussion does not need to be done in the target

language. Teachers at BYU are instructed to use the target language in the classroom as much as possible. For this research, the top-down and bottom-up activities were conducted in the target language to keep classroom conditions as similar as possible to make the students feel comfortable.

Future studies may also want to increase the number of passages to three instead of two. This would allow for all three groups of subjects to receive a top-down and bottom-up activity, as well as act as the control group. This would increase the power of the statistical analysis by allowing each subject to go through each type of scenario. It would also increase the number of subjects in each scoring category, but would not require an actual increase in subjects.

This research was done using subjects at or above the intermediate-low level according to ACTFL standards for students of Chinese Mandarin. The results can therefore only be extended to that specific proficiency level and language. Future research may involve subjects of varying proficiency levels, as well as different languages to see if the effectiveness of the activity changes based on the subject's proficiency level or language used. Beginning level students tend to focus on the minute details of the language, and may benefit more from bottom-up activities which focus on vocabulary and grammar. Intermediate level students have a better foundation of the language, and may benefit more from activities that focus on understanding the passage as a whole. It would also be beneficial to see if results changed based on the category of language used. Chinese and English are non-cognate languages, meaning that they share very few cognates with each other. Future studies may use other non-cognate languages, as well as cognate languages to see if effectiveness of activity type would change based on the number of cognates shared between languages.

Only two different activities were employed in this research. There are many other activities falling under the top-down and bottom-up categories that could be used. It is possible that certain activities would not produce increased levels of listening comprehension and could therefore be discontinued in the classroom. Also, having a treatment group who receives both a top-down and bottom-up activity or a mixed activity, and comparing them to a treatment group who receives only one type of activity could show whether a combination of activities increases comprehension even further. Adjusting the amount of information given to subjects during the activity may also affect the comprehension outcomes. Currently, most language proficiency tests do provide a very brief introduction to the listener in the native language before the passage is listened to. For example, stating where the conversation they are about to listen to took place, or if the passage was taken from an interview on the news. Further research may show how much and what type of information would have an effect on listening comprehension outcomes.

This research may also have implications for the importance of catering to the specific learning styles of our students. Pre-listening activities can be developed to meet the needs of different types of students. While the data gathered for this research did not show a significant difference in comprehension levels for specific activity types, different results may have been achieved if the subjects would have been separated by learning style. Effectiveness of pre-activity type based on a subject's learning style could be gauged by presenting the activities differently, such as using handouts, visual displays with pictures, or video clips to name a few.

A subject's language aptitude may affect the effectiveness of activity type as well. If all subjects were tested for language aptitude level before going through the pre-listening treatments, aptitude level could be added as a variable. Subjects with lower language aptitudes may benefit more from bottom-up activities due to the need for foundational skills, such as

vocabulary building and grammar structure. Subjects with higher aptitude levels may benefit more from top-down activities due to the subject's faster processing skills and increased acquisition abilities.

Another factor not considered in this research is the effect of subjects being able to see the dialogue actually taking place. When a conversation, dialogue, or news clip is listened to, information may be missed that was being communicated through body language, facial expressions, or footage in the case of a news broadcast. These elements can provide important information to the listener and could possibly enhance a listener's comprehension. Future research may have subjects who listen to a passage without video, and subjects who listen with video showing the scene, body language, or other imagery. Having students listen to a foreign language blindly is not very realistic compared to most situations in everyday life. Showing students real-life dialogues through video or skits could enhance a student's listening comprehension levels.

Conclusion

With all that has been said and written about second or foreign language listening comprehension activities for students, one of the most important things to remember is the comprehension part. Some may say that providing students with pre-listening activities is allowing the students to cheat in a way. If students are taking the time to listen to the language but do not understand what they are listening to, exactly how much is it benefiting them? Exposure to the language may be important in order for an individual's proficiency in that language to increase. But is it simply exposure, or comprehensible exposure that is beneficial? I believe the more a student comprehends while listening, the more it benefits them. If this is true,

then providing pre-listening activities that increase a student's ability to comprehend the passage is not cheating, but good teaching.

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Appendix A

Consent Forms

Pilot Test

Identifying the Effectiveness of Pre-listening Activities for Students of Chinese Mandarin

Introduction

This research study is being conducted by Brandon Allen at Brigham Young University to determine the effectiveness of various pre-listening activities. You were invited to participate because you are currently taking a Chinese 202 class.

Procedures

Students will listen to a passage in Chinese and take a multiple-choice test. This will be done twice, each time lasting approximately 10 minutes for a total of 20 minutes.

Risks/Discomforts

There are minimal risks in this study.

Benefits

The results of the study will be direct recommendations for BYU's Chinese study program. It could conceivably benefit Chinese learners, BYU, and Chinese language acquisition researchers by showing which types of classroom activities benefit students the most with regards to listening comprehension.

Confidentiality

All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data will be kept in a storage cabinet and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, the data will be destroyed.

Participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in the study without jeopardy to your class status, grade or standing with the university.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Brandon Allen, at (831) 869-9674, theallenfamily2005@yahoo.com

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the BYU IRB Administrator at (801) 422-1461, A-285 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, irb@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Identifying the Effectiveness of Pre-listening Activities for Students of Chinese Mandarin

Introduction

This research study is being conducted by Brandon Allen at Brigham Young University to determine the effectiveness of various pre-listening activities. You were invited to participate because you are currently taking a Chinese 201 class.

Procedures

Students will be randomly assigned to one of three groups. Two of the groups will participate in an activity with a Teacher's Assistant (TA). All three groups will listen to a passage in Chinese and take a multiple-choice test. This will be done twice, each time lasting approximately 25 minutes for a total of 50 minutes.

Risks/Discomforts

There are minimal risks in this study.

Benefits

The results of the study will be direct recommendations for BYU's Chinese study program. It could conceivably benefit Chinese learners, BYU, and Chinese language acquisition researchers by showing which types of classroom activities benefit students the most with regards to listening comprehension.

Confidentiality

All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data will be kept in a storage cabinet and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, the data will be destroyed.

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I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix B

Materials

Instructions for Treatment Group #1

12:00-12:05 Introduction

- Thank the students for coming. Tell the students they will be given a packet and are not to turn any pages until instructed to.
- Hand out a packet to each student. Each packet will contain everything the student will need. The first page will be the vocabulary worksheet.

12:05-12:15 Administer vocabulary activity

- Go over vocabulary with students, provide examples.
- There are 10 vocabulary words. You have 10 minutes. That gives you 1 minute per word. Go quickly!

12:15-12:25 Play passage and have students take test

- Have the students stay on the vocabulary page. Play the passage once. The students may look at their vocabulary sheet for reference while they listen.
- **After the passage is done playing, have the students turn the page.**
- This will be the test. As soon as everyone has turned the page, play the passage again and have the students answer the questions while listening the second time.
- **After they are done with the test, have them turn the page.** This will be a blank page.

12:25-12:35 Administer question activity

- Administer the question activity by discussing things the students may need to say if they were renting an apartment or house in China.
- Refer to the example sheet if needed, but try to get the students to think and talk about experiences they have had when looking for a house or apartment, even if they have to say it in English and you repeat it back to them in Chinese.

12:35-12:50 Play passage and have students take test

- **After the question activity is over, have the students turn the page.**
- Play the passage and allow the students to look at the test questions while listening. Instruct them not to answer any questions yet.

- After the passage is done playing, play the passage again and have students answer the questions. **When the students are finished, instruct them to turn the page and answer the questions on the next page.**

Instructions for Treatment Group #2

12:00-12:05 Introduction

- Thank the students for coming. Tell the students they will be given a packet and are not to turn any pages until instructed to.
- Hand out a packet to each student. Each packet will contain everything the student will need. The first page will be a blank page.

12:05-12:15 Administer question activity

- Administer the question activity by discussing things the students may need to say if they were going shopping for shoes in China
- Refer to the example sheet if needed, but try to get the students to think and talk about experiences they have had when shopping for shoes or clothes, even if they have to say it in English and you repeat it back to them in Chinese.

12:15-12:25 Play passage #1 and have students take test

- **After the question activity is over, have the students turn the page.**
- Play the passage and allow the students to look at the test questions while listening. Instruct them not to answer any questions yet.
- After the passage is done playing, play the passage again and have students answer the questions.

12:25-12:35 Administer vocabulary activity

- **When the students are done with the first test, have them turn the page.**
- Go over vocabulary with students, provide examples.
- There are 10 vocabulary words. You have 10 minutes. That gives you 1 minute per word. Go quickly!

12:35-12:50 Play passage #2 and have students take test

- Have the students stay on the vocabulary page. Play the passage once. The students may look at their vocabulary sheet for reference while they listen.
- **After the passage is done playing, have the students turn the page.**
- This will be the test. As soon as everyone has turned the page, play the passage again and have the students answer the questions while listening the second time. **When the students are finished, instruct them to turn the page and answer the questions on the next page**

Instructions for Treatment Group #3

- Hand out a packet to each student.
- The first page will be blank. Play passage #1. After the passage is done playing, have students turn the page. The next page will be the test. After everyone has turned to the test, play the passage again and have students answer the questions while listening the second time.
- After completing the test, have students turn the page. The next page will be blank again.
- Play passage #2. After the passage is done playing, have students turn the page. The next page will be the test. After everyone has turned to the test, play the passage again and have students answer the questions while listening the second time.
- Collect packets and do review with the students.

Passage 1 Vocabulary

1) 工夫(功夫)- gōngfu- time (duration)

Example:

今天我很忙, 可是明天我有工夫.

jīntiān wǒ hěn máng, kěshì míngtiān wǒ yǒu gōngfu.

Today I am very busy, but tomorrow I have time.

2) 打算- dǎsuan- plan; intend

Example:

今天晚上, 你打算作什么?

jīntiān wǎnshàng, nǐ dǎsuan zuò shénme?

What are your plans for tonight?

3) 布- bù- cloth

Example:

你喜欢布鞋吗?

nǐ xǐhuan bùxié ma?

Do you like cloth shoes?

4) 量量- liàngliang- to measure

Example:

请您量量我的大小.

qǐng nín liàngliang wǒ de dàxiǎo.

Will you please measure my size?

5) 长短(長短)- chángduǎn- length

Example:

这件裙子的长短是多少?

zhè jiàn qúnzi de chángduǎn shì duōshao?

How long is this skirt?

6) 宽窄(寬窄)- kuānzhǎi- width; breadth

Example:

这双鞋的宽窄怎么样?

zhè shuāng xié de kuānzhǎi zěnmeyàng?

How is the width of this pair of shoes?

7) 质量(質量)- zhìliàng- quality

Example:

这件衣服的质量很高.

zhè jiàn yīfu de zhìliàng hěn gāo.

This is high quality clothing.

8) 样子(樣子)- yàngzi- appearance; look; manner

Example:

那辆汽车的样子, 我不喜欢.

nèi liàng qìchē de yàngzi, wǒ bù xǐhuan.

I don't like how that car looks.

9) 结实(結實)- jiēshi- strong; durable; solid

Example:

这双鞋特别结实.

zhè shuāng xié tèbié jiēshi.

These shoes are very durable.

10) 包上- bāoshàng- to wrap up; to package

Example:

请您把我的东西包上吧?

qǐng nín bǎ wǒ de dōngxi bāoshàng ba?

Can you wrap up my things please?

Passage 1 Group Discussion: Possible Questions

How many of you have ever gone clothes or shoe shopping?

Everyone wears shoes. What are some things you need to think about when going shoe shopping?

What kind of shoes do you want? Material (water proof, leather, cloth), color, brand, athletic, running, dress, etc.

What will you use them for? Work outside in the dirt, work inside, go to church, wear in the rain, snow, hot weather, etc.

What size do you wear?

How much do they cost?

Can you find them cheaper at another store? Are they on sale?

Test 1

Instructions: Please circle the answer that you feel is most correct.

1. What did Mr. Ma ask Mr. Li?
 - a. Does he have time to go somewhere?
 - b. Has he been shopping lately?
 - c. Will he go have dinner that night with him?
 - d. Will he go on a walk with him?
2. Where do they decide to meet?
 - a. At the restaurant
 - b. At Mr. Ma's house
 - c. At the bus stop
 - d. At Mr. Li's house
3. What type of shoe does Mr. Ma want?
 - a. Athletic
 - b. Cloth
 - c. Leather
 - d. Dress
4. What color shoes does Mr. Ma want?
 - a. Red
 - b. Yellow
 - c. White
 - d. Blue
5. What is wrong with the first pair of shoes?
 - a. The shoes are too big for his feet
 - b. They are too expensive
 - c. He doesn't like the color
 - d. He doesn't like the way they look
6. What is wrong with the second pair of shoes?
 - a. The color is too light
 - b. They are too big for his feet
 - c. They are not pretty enough
 - d. They don't match his wardrobe
7. How does the store clerk respond to Mr. Ma's reaction about the price? She tells him.....
 - a. The shoes are the best in town
 - b. The price is no higher than other stores
 - c. They are made of high quality leather
 - d. They will match the price of any other store
8. What does Mr. Ma tell the store clerk to do with the shoes?
 - a. Put them back
 - b. Wrap them up
 - c. Get a different size
 - d. Get a different color
9. What else does Mr. Ma buy?
 - a. A box
 - b. A bag
 - c. Socks
 - d. Shoe cleaner
10. How much change does Mr. Ma get back?
 - a. \$3.06
 - b. \$3.09
 - c. \$3.60
 - d. \$3.90

Passage 1

马先生想去买鞋, 他到李先生的屋子来问李先生.

马先生: 有年, 我想请您跟我去买一点儿东西. 你有工夫吗?

李先生: 您打算什么时候去?

马先生: 三点半行不行?

李先生: 您等我看, 现在是一点半. 行, 三点半您到我这儿来, 我跟您一块儿去.

售货员: 您来了, 请坐请坐.

李先生: 这位先生要买一双鞋.

售货员: 是要皮的, 还是要布的?

马先生: 皮的, 要黄的.

售货员: 您穿多大号的?

马先生: 大概是三十八号, 我记不清楚了. 请你量量吧?

售货员: 您试试这双, 先看看大小合适不合适.

马先生: 长短差不多, 宽窄好像差一点儿. 我的脚太宽. 这个样子我也不喜欢.

售货员: 没问题. 还有别的样子的. 您看, 这双怎么样? 质量真好.

马先生: 这双不错. 就是颜色儿浅一点儿. 有深颜色儿的没有?

售货员: 抱歉, 没有了. 浅颜色的漂亮. 您这个漂亮人应该穿漂亮鞋.

马先生: 浅颜色容易脏. 有年, 你看这双怎么样?

李先生: 这双样子不错.

马先生: 多少钱?

售货员: 二十六块八.

马先生: 嗨, 怎么这么贵呀!

售货员: 东西好. 我们这儿的鞋特别结实. 您知道, 买东西是贵的不贵, 贱的不贱, 再说价钱也不比别的商店高.

马先生: 好, 我就买这双吧. 麻烦您给我包上吧?

售货员: 我们有盒子给您装起来吧. 我们有好袜子. 您买两双好不好? 一块五毛五一双. 真便宜.

马先生: 我看看. 好. 给我拿半达吧. 都装在那个盒子里. 装的下装不下?

售货员: 装的下. 您还要用点儿什么?

马先生: 不要什么了. 过两天再说吧. 这是四十块钱.

售货员: 谢谢您. 找给您三块九毛钱.

Passage 1 Translation

Mr. Ma wants to go buy shoes. He goes to Mr. Li's room and asks him:

Mr. Ma: Younian (Mr. Li's first name), I want to ask you to go with me to buy a couple of things.

Do you have time?

Mr. Li: What time are you planning on going?

Mr. Ma: Is 3:30 ok?

Mr. Li: Let me see, right now it's 1:30. Sure, come back at 3:30 and I will go with you.

(At the shoe store)

Shopkeeper: Welcome, please have a seat.

Mr. Li: This man wants to buy a pair of shoes.

Shopkeeper: Do you want leather ones, or cloth ones?

Mr. Ma: Leather ones, and I want them to be yellow.

Shopkeeper: What size do you wear?

Mr. Ma: Should be 38, but I can't remember clearly. Can you please measure me?

Shopkeeper: Try this pair. First see if the size is right.

Mr. Ma: The length is about right, but the width seems a bit small. My foot is too wide. I also don't like the style.

Shopkeeper: No problem. We have other styles. Try these ones. What do you think of this pair? They are very good quality.

Mr. Ma: This pair isn't bad, only the color is a little light. Do you have them in a darker color?

Shopkeeper: I'm sorry, we don't. The light color is attractive. An attractive person like yourself should be wearing attractive shoes.

Mr. Ma: But light colored shoes get dirty easily. What do you think about this pair Younian?

Mr. Li: This pair is not bad.

Mr. Ma: How much are they?

Shopkeeper: \$28.80.

Mr. Ma: Wow, they are really expensive!

Shopkeeper: But they are nice. The shoes we have here are extremely durable. You know, whether they are expensive or cheap, the price is no higher than other stores.

Mr. Ma: Ok, I'll buy this pair. Could I trouble you to wrap them for me?

Shopkeeper: I can wrap them in a box for you. We also have nice socks here. Do you want a couple of pairs? One pair is \$1.55, real cheap.

Mr. Ma: Let me see. Ok. Give me half a dozen. Wrap it all up in that box. Will it all fit?

Shopkeeper: It will fit. Do you need anything else?

Mr. Ma: I don't need anything else. I'll see in a couple of days. Here's \$40.

Shopkeeper: Thanks. Here is \$3.90.

Passage 2 Vocabulary

1) 广告(廣告)- guǎnggào- advertisement

Example:

今天早上的报纸有很多广告。

jīntiān zǎoshang de bàozhǐ yǒu hěn duō guǎnggào.

This morning's newspaper had a lot of advertisements.

2) 电灯(電燈)- diàndēng- lighting

Example:

图书馆里的电灯很亮。

túshūguǎn lǐ de diàndēng hěn liàng.

The lighting in the library is very bright.

3) 自来水(自來水)- zìláishuǐ- running water; tap water

Example:

现在, 多半的房子都有自来水。

xiànzài, duōbàn de fángzi dōu yǒu zìláishuǐ.

Almost all homes nowadays have running water.

4) 地板- dìbǎn- floorboard; floor

Example:

我房子地板总是很冷。

wǒ fángzi lǐ de dìbǎn zǒngshì hěn lěng.

The floors in my house are always cold.

5) 炉子(爐子)- lúzi- stove; oven; furnace

Example:

我的厨房现在没有炉子。

wǒ de chúfáng xiànzài méiyǒu lúzi.

I currently don't have a stove in my kitchen.

6) 冰箱- bīngxiāng- refrigerator; freezer

Example:

这个冰箱不够冷。

zhè ge bīngxiāng búgòu lěng.

This refrigerator is not cold enough.

7) 管- guǎn- manage; take care of; handle

Example:

你不需要管这个。我自己可以管。

nǐ bùxūyào guǎn zhè ge.

You don't need to take care this. I can do it.

8) 决定(決定)- juéding- decide; resolve; make up one's mind

Example:

你决定了没有?

nǐ juéding le méiyǒu?

Have you decided yet?

9) 位- wèi- polite measure word for people

Example:

这位先生想买一件衬衫。

zhè wèi xiānsheng xiǎng mǎi yī jiàn chènshān.

This gentleman would like to buy a shirt.

10) 留- liú- keep; hold onto; reserve

Example-

我还没决定买这个东西。请给我留几天, 好不好?

wǒ hái méi juéding mǎi zhè ge dōngxi. qǐng gěi wǒ liú jǐtiān, hǎobùhǎo?

I haven't decided whether I want to buy this. Please hold it for me for a few days, ok

Passage 2 Group Discussion: Possible Questions

Where do you start? Where do you look? Newspaper, online, etc.

What are some questions you should ask the landlord about the house?

How many rooms?

Is it furnished?

What appliances does it have?

Hot water, water problems?

Electricity problems?

Does it have phone, internet, cable hookups?

Are utilities included in the rent?

How much is the rent? When is it due?

Do I need to fill out an application? Leave a deposit?

Test 2

Instructions: Please circle the answer that you feel is most correct.

1. Mr. Ma is going to Taiwan because he....
 - a. is going on a business trip
 - b. was excepted into a university
 - c. received a letter allowing him to go
 - d. is going to visit a friend
2. Why does he want to find a house to rent?
 - a. The place he is currently living is too expensive
 - b. He doesn't want to trouble the people he is living with now
 - c. He wants to live closer to work
 - d. His family is coming to live with him and needs a bigger place
3. How does Mr. Ma find out about the house for rent?
 - a. A friend
 - b. An agency
 - c. A "For Rent" sign
 - d. The newspaper
4. Which amenity does the landlord NOT mention when describing the apartment?
 - a. Running water
 - b. Lighting
 - c. TV
 - d. Telephone
5. What appliance does Mr. Ma ask about in the kitchen?
 - a. A stove
 - b. A refrigerator
 - c. A microwave
 - d. A dishwasher
6. How is the rent paid?
 - a. Weekly
 - b. Monthly
 - c. Each semester
 - d. 6 months at a time
7. What is included in the rent?
 - a. Water
 - b. Electricity
 - c. All of the above
 - d. None of the above
8. Why does the landlord recommend not waiting to make a decision?
 - a. After next week the rent will go up
 - b. The house is in a popular area
 - c. If he signs today, the first month's rent is half off
 - d. Several people have already been to see the house
9. The landlord agrees to hold the house because Mr. Ma.....
 - a. promises to make a decision in 3 days
 - b. needs time to get money from a bank in the U.S.
 - c. leaves a deposit
 - d. is a good friend of the landlords
10. When does Mr. Ma need to make a decision? On the....
 - a. 26th
 - b. 27th
 - c. 29th
 - d. 30th

Passage 2

马先生接到一封从美国来的信, 让马先生到台湾去住一年. 马先生到了台湾, 先住在他的一位中国朋友王先生家. 他想在王家不能住那么久. 所以他得找房子搬出去. 有一天他在报上看见一个广告有一所房子出租. 他就去见房东.

马先生: 我在报上看见您登的广告. 您要出租的是什么样儿的房子?

房东: 我有一所五间的房子出租, 客厅, 饭厅, 卧室, 厨房, 卫生间, 一样儿一间. 电灯, 电话, 自来水都有.

马先生: 您带我去看看, 可以吗?

房东: 可以. 您等我锁上门我们一块儿去.

马先生: 在哪儿啊?

房东: 不远, 就在那边儿. 三十五号. 好, 我们走吧.

房东: 您请进来. 您看, 这是客厅, 墙, 地板, 都很干净.

马先生: 很好. 饭厅在那边儿吧?

房东: 您请过来. 这间是饭厅. 从这个门可以到厨房去.

马先生: 厨房里有炉子吗?

房东: 有. 您来看看. 地方很大.

马先生: 好极了. 卧室在那儿?

房东: 这间是卧室. 您看这间屋子有三个窗户, 很亮. 卫生间就在里头. 脸盆, 澡盆都是新换的. 水管子也是新收拾的. 热水也很方便.

马先生: 灯开关在那儿?

房东: 开关在这儿.

马先生: 房租是按月算, 是按礼拜算?

房东: 按月算, 美金一百六十九块.

马先生: 水, 电, 都在里头吗?

房东: 水, 电, 我们不管.

马先生: 好. 等我回去想想. 过一两天我再来跟您谈吧.

房东: 您最好是早一点儿决定. 今天早上已经有几位来看过了.

马先生: 那么, 我先给您一点儿定钱. 您给我留几天, 行不行?

房东: 您打算给多少定钱呢?

马先生: 五十块美金, 好不好?

房东: 好. 就那么办吧. 从明天算起. 今天是二十六号, 明天是二十七, 后天是二十八, 大后天

二十九. 我给您留到二十九号的晚上. 希望您三十号以前告诉我您要不要.

马先生: 好, 一定. 这儿是定钱, 美金五十块.

房东: 我给您写一个收条儿.

Passage 2 Translation

Mr. Ma received a letter from America allowing him to go to Taiwan for a year. After Mr. Ma arrived in Taiwan, he lived with a Chinese friend named Mr. Wang. He didn't want to live with Mr. Wang for too long, so he needs to find a house to move to. One day, he sees an advertisement in the newspaper for a house to rent. So, he goes to see the landlord.

Mr. Ma: I saw your ad in the newspaper. What kind of house do you have for rent?

Landlord: I have a five room house for rent. It has a living room, dining room, bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom. It has electricity, phone, and running water.

Mr. Ma: Can you take me to go look at it?

Landlord: Sure, you wait for me to lock the door and we can go together.

Mr. Ma: Where is it?

Landlord: Not far, just on the other side. Number 35. Ok, lets go.

Landlord: Please come in. This is the living room. The walls and floorboards are all very clean.

Mr. Ma: Very nice. Where is the dining room?

Landlord: Please come over here. This is the dining room. You can get to the kitchen from this door.

Mr. Ma: Does the kitchen have a stove in it?

Landlord: Yes. Come take a look. There is a lot of space.

Mr. Ma: Excellent. Where is the bedroom?

Landlord: This is the bedroom. This room has three windows, it's very bright. The bathroom is in here. There is a sink and a bathtub, both newly installed. The water pipes are also newly done. There is lots of hot water.

Mr. Ma: Where is the light switch?

Landlord: The light switch is here.

Mr. Ma: Is the rent paid monthly or weekly?

Landlord: Monthly, \$189 US dollars.

Mr. Ma: Are water and electricity included?

Landlord: We do not take care of water and electricity.

Mr. Ma: Ok. I'm going to have to think about it. I will come back in a day or two to talk.

Landlord: It would be best to decide earlier. I already had a couple of people come this morning to look.

Mr. Ma: Then I will give you a small deposit. Can you hold it for me a couple of days?

Landlord: How much will you give me?

Mr. Ma: \$50, alright?

Landlord: Ok. I can do that. We'll start tomorrow. Today is the 26th, tomorrow is the 27th, the day after that is the 28th, and the day after that is the 29th. I will hold it until the evening of the 29th. I hope you can tell me if you want it before the 30th.

Mr. Ma: Ok, I definitely will. Here is the deposit, \$50 US dollars.

Landlord: I will write you a receipt.