

THE INFLUENCE OF TOPIC ON LANGUAGE LEARNERS' ORAL PERFORMANCE

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[This paper reports on a study in which the impact of topic knowledge on language learners' oral performance was investigated. The study addresses two major questions. The first question investigates if familiarity with the topic of expertise will make a significant difference to learners' oral performance. The second question concerns how far certain specific aspects of the language are likely to be influenced by topic of expertise.]

Data were elicited from twenty intermediate level language learners of English at the Centre of Applied Language Studies, University of Reading. The learners were interviewed on their topic of expertise and a general topic. Performances across topics were assessed in terms of grammatical complexity, fluency and lexical range. This study tests the prediction that the learners will show enhanced oral performance on their topic of expertise.

The quantitative analysis of the data indicates that the learners produce better oral performance on their topic of expertise, in terms of grammatical complexity, faster speech rate and wider lexical range. In addition, a subjective assessment made by three experienced raters lends further support to the results. The overall results seem to imply that the availability of topic knowledge has an influence on learners' language output. The findings from this study have practical implications for language teaching/ learning and oral assessment.

Artikel ini membicarakan hasil kajian terhadap pengetahuan pelajar tentang sesuatu topik dan kesannya terhadap kebolehan lisan mereka. Kajian ini mengutarakan dua persoalan. Pertama, adakah kebiasaan atau pengetahuan tentang topik tertentu akan menghasilkan perbezaan yang besar terhadap kebolehan pelajar? Kedua, sejauh manakah aspek tertentu dalam sesuatu bahasa dapat dipengaruhi oleh pengetahuan atau kemahiran tentang topik-topik bidang?

Data yang digunakan dalam kajian ini diperolehi daripada dua puluh pelajar bahasa Inggeris tahap pertengahan di Centre of Applied Language Studies, University of Reading. Pelajar-pelajar ini ditanyakan