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**“Factors that influence the development of listening
comprehension with LEI students”**

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Degree of**

LICENCIATURA EN LENGUAS MODERNAS

BY

ROCIO GARCIA RENDON

AND

ALFREDO CRUZ VEGA

THESIS DIRECTOR:

PH. D BENJAMIN GUTIÉRREZ GUTIÉRREZ



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**“FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING
COMPREHENSION WITH LEI STUDENTS”**

This Thesis has been read by the members of the Thesis Committee of

Rocío García Rendón

And

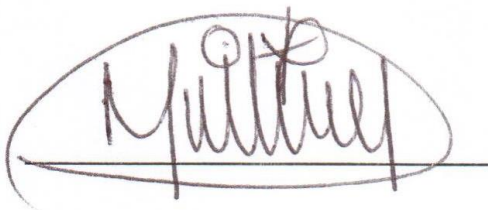
Alfredo Cruz Vega

And considered worthy of approval in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of

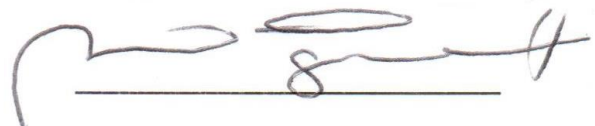
LICENCIATURA EN LENGUAS MODERNAS



Ph.D. Benjamin Gutierrez Gutierrez
Thesis director



M.A. Maribel Guzmán Mijangos
Committee Member



M.A. José Isabel Guerra Coix
Committee Member

Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla

Puebla

Erika my Soul mate thanks for all your advices and the time we spend together...

Thanks for helping me to keep my feet on the ground

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Abstract

The main objective of this research project is to find out the factors that affect the listening comprehension in LEI (Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés) students when they are learning English as a foreign language.

This research is supported by several authors who mention the importance of developing good listening comprehension to have better speaking skills to produce the English language.

Listening is defined as “a process of receiving what the speaker actually says (receptive orientation); constructing and representing meaning (constructive orientation); negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding (collaborative orientation); and, creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy (transformative orientation)” (Rost, 2002, p.5).

During the research project it will be describe the main listening stages like the use of pre-listening activities, while listening activities and post- listening activities that are included in the questionnaire that was applied to get the results in the figures that described it.

CHAPTER I: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is an organization that works on languages and multilingualism issues. It takes many forms, building capable research and analysis, raising awareness, supporting projects, developing networks, and disseminating information (UNESCO, 2011). The function of this organization has a lot of important activities that cover the purpose of this research project. In fact, as these activities are interdisciplinary in nature, they are spread throughout five programmers' areas, each one addressing particular aspects of language.

The activities of the Education Sector promote inclusion in education and quality learning enhancement, It means supporting bilingual education, especially the use of mother-tongues at all levels of the education system, informal and non-formal settings, paying special attention to policy advice, teacher training, the development of textbooks, learning materials and collecting and disseminating good practice in bilingual and multilingual education and literacy (UNESCO, 2011).

In spite of the present difficulties with the basic education, a higher system is being developed and the modernization of education will be able to confront them, this level is playing a priority role respect to the intermediate and higher education levels, at least in the order of discourse of those in charge of national education policy which are nothing more than the reflection of the clear opportunity implicit of lesser risk. Taking into account the background of economic integration, higher education reform has emphasized the role of this in technological development and the education and training of human resources.

Taking everything into consideration, it is necessary to mention that learning a second language implies the development of the four skills, which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. It has been shown that some skills are easier for some students while some others are more difficult but at least in the case of the Facultad de Lenguas of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, there

has been a very notable dislike in developing the listening skill. Most of the target language students do not like to practice the listening activities then, when they practice them they feel frustrated, since, they consider they are unable to understand many aspects in a conversation; of course it is more frequently to find these obstacles in basic and intermediate level where listening issues are defined.

Based on the previous information it is required to know what difficulties are to develop listening skills.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to find out the factors that affect the listening comprehension in LEI students when they are learning English as a foreign language at the “Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés because It has been observed that in most of the target language classes, for LEI students, (Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés) the comprehension of listening activities has been the hardest and the most complex task; that is why students can not develop the listening skill since the beginning.

This difficulty is much more evident in LEI students who are the students that will be the center of this research, after talking with some students who were studying at the LEI, it was realized that for most of them the listening skill was the most challenging, while they were learning English as a foreign language, nowadays students show a low proficiency in listening activities such as recorded material, speakers in a specific listening task and comprehending songs in many language classrooms, today the listening activities have become the most suffering and confusing not only in every day classes but also in exams; it causes panic among

students and makes them feel less confident about what it is going to happen in the class or in the exam.

It can be inferred that the difficulty in listening comprehension is caused by series of problems and deficiencies coming from the learners background, where they have been exposed to repetitive situations such as: low quality equipment , lack of exposure to the target language, lack of suitable listening materials, lack of strategies to confront the listening practice, as well as the lack of training to listen recorded texts, and in general serious deficiencies before and while facing the listening practice.

1.3.1 Specific objectives

1. Identify the main difficulties for students in listening activities.
2. Determine the causes that affect the listening skill development.

1.4 Research questions

Why is listening skill difficult to develop for some students?

What are the factors that affect student's English listening comprehension?

1.5 Hypothesis

Students at LEI face some problems when they are listening because of the lack of listening comprehension needed to understand the spoken language.

1.6 Significance of the study

This document will be significant because it will provide students some factors that affect their listening comprehension.

Also it will provide some suggestions to implement at listening activities to get better results, that professors can adapt to create new listening activities taking into account these difficulties and suggestions; in this way they will be able to teach and help new students to consider the listening skill as equal as speaking or writing, to make students conscious about how they could overcome these difficulties.

1.7 Limitations

This research had limitations: first limitation was the implementation of the questionnaire, just one group of students, that implies the lack of comparison between groups in the same target language, the numbers of students analyzed were 26 from one group in intermediate level of English, who could be seen as a small and homogeneous unit, but at the end of the research it was considered to have a bigger sample with different groups in order to obtain more significant results in further research.

Second limitation was the use of only one questionnaire in the research project, and it reduced the opportunity to compare the results with different points of view and students necessities.

1.8 Methodology

The focus of this research is a quantitative study, to develop the results of this project a survey research was adapted and used, this means that a questionnaire was needed for collecting data, the questionnaire was designed for obtaining the participants' perceptions whether listening comprehension topics were applied in the target language classroom and this research has a reach according to Sampieri (2006). It is descriptive because it will be explore new variables and show general findings according to the instrument applied to the participants.

1.9 Definition of terms

Listening text: A "listening text" is a specific spoken task, e.g. a recording from the text book course or live speech, that provide practice both in getting the idea of spoken text or capturing specific information contained in it. (The National Capital Language Resource Center, Washington, DC 2004)

Listening skill: In language teaching, the term "listening skill" is often used to mean listening comprehension skills. In other words, listening skill refer to the skills that listeners should apply to get meaning from a message. (Cook V, 1996)

Second Language Learning and Language Teaching. London: (Arnold, p. 228)

Interactional talk: Speech whose primary purpose is social, to establish or maintain friendly relations between interlocutors. (Wilson M, 2003).

Discovery Listening Improving Perceptual Processing. *ELT Journal*, pp. 57/4)

Comprehensible input: Language including elements above a learner's current L2 level, but which they understand by using additional contextual or schematic information. (Miller L, 2003). *Developing Listening Skills with Authentic Materials*. *ESL Magazine*).

1.10 Background of the problem

English language has become one of the most important languages around the world; consequently, it is spoken in most parts in the world. This fact brings the need to learn the language. However, there are some aspects that make the learning difficult; that is why during the last years many researchers have tried to find out the main factors in listening, speaking, reading and writing that affect students in learning a second language.

For instance, as it was mentioned before one of the most important skills of the research is listening comprehension, because it is well known that listening skill plays an essential role in second-language instruction for some reasons. First, listening offers understandable input for the learner which is necessary for any learning to take place. Second, listeners require interaction with speakers to achieve understanding. Third, listening exercises facilitate that learners draw their attention to new forms (vocabulary, grammar, interaction patterns) in the language (Cabrera, 2008). Thus listening comprehension supplies the right conditions for language acquisition and development of other language skills (Krashen, 1995).

In recent years, the need to find out the factors that affect the listening skill while learning a second language has obtained a widely dominant place in the educational field (Perez, 2008). Consequently, it is essential to show that there are some factors or difficulties that affect the listening comprehension in students that are learning a second language.

Many researchers have categorized those factors in different divisions, (Thomas E, 1982) explains in his book “Listening Techniques for Improving Communication Skills” the factors that keep us from listening. These factors are known as external distractions and internal distractions and how they intervene in listening comprehension.

In other study followed by (Rivera, 1997), it is emphasized that the opportunity to know or to find out the difficulties that students have in listening comprehension is a key to overcome and make students aware of the importance of listening development.

Specifically, it can be deduced that some LEI students can present some problems in their listening skill during their major (Cabrera, 2008). For example, in their listening exams, performing listening activities, or listening a native speaker, etc. Therefore, it is considered really important to know the difficulties or factors that affect listening comprehension in learners when they are learning a foreign language.

In the following chapter the methodology that support and give general and specific information will be described based on different researches performed by different authors who are specialized in the area.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter gives a general overview about language skills; however, it focuses more on the listening comprehension. In other words, it mentions two definitions of listening and its nature and purpose; it also explains the differences between listening and hearing; it shows the importance of listening comprehension and the kinds of listening. And as listening is for us one of the most important skills within the process of teaching, this chapter gives a short summary of teaching listening and the importance of teaching listening. Besides it presents and classifies some factors that affect listening comprehension. Finally, this chapter shows some methods to have an effective listening skill to produce oral communication also the main listening stages pre-listening, while listening and post listening that will be described according to some authors.

2.1 Language skills

In language teaching, language skills refer to the mode or manner in which language is used. When a language is being learned, there are four skills that are needed for a complete communication. The same happens when the native language is learned, usually the child learn to listen first, then to speak, then to read, and finally to write. These are called the four "language skills"(Castro 2008). Speaking and writing are the productive skills, while reading and listening are the receptive skills. Listening and reading are considered receptive skills since they are the means through which learners obtain and process language input. On the other hand, speaking and writing are considered productive skills because some "product" is expected. That is, they are the means through which learners produce language and the productive skill's aim is communication.

The first receptive skill is listening, which is the ability to identify and comprehend what others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and recognizing his vocabulary, and to be

able to grasp his meaning (Harmer, 2001, p14). The second receptive skill is reading which has been considered as a “passive” skill, but nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, reading is an active information seeking process in which readers relate information in the text to what they already know (Rubin and Thompson, 1994).

Regarding the productive skills, researchers consider that they include speaking and writing. Speaking is a productive language skill that consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning (Rubin and Thompson, 1994). Meanwhile, writing is the productive skill in the written model. It is also more complicated than it seems at first, and often seems to be the hardest of the skills, even for native speakers of a language, since it involves not just a graphic representation of speech, but the development and presentation of thoughts in a structured way (Rubin and Thompson, 1994).

From this four main skills, one of the most important is listening which is defined as “a process of receiving what the speaker actually says (receptive orientation); constructing and representing meaning (constructive orientation); negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding (collaborative orientation); and, creating meaning through involvement, imagination and emphatic (transformative orientation)” (Rost, 2002, p.5).

Anderson and Lynch (1988,p.18) defines listening as a process in which listeners must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpret stress and intonation, understand intention and retain and interpret this within the immediate as well as the larger socio-cultural context of the utterance among others.

2.1.1 Listening skill.

In order to be able to understand the meaning of the listening skill, it is vital to express some points of view. One contribution given by (Rost, 2002, p.7) suggests that the listening skill is the most needed language element. It is usually combined with other language skills as writing, speaking and reading. Listening is not just a part of a language but a vital skill in the language learning process.

Similarly, Anderson and (Lynch, 1988, p.3-4) argued that the listening skill is as necessary as the speaking skill. People cannot interact mutually if both skills are apart. Listening, in many cases is a mutual skill. Comparing both points of view analyzed before, it is clear that the listening skill is as important as the rest of the language skills. As seen, the listening skill is an important mean in learning a language; it helps students to develop the rest of the language skills.

2.1.2 Nature and purpose of listening

The nature and purpose of listening will be the main concern in the following section. For instance, (Rost, 2002, pp. 54, 55) mentioned that in communicative theory, listening is addressed as a piece of transactional development, in which the people involved are constantly “sending” and “receiving” information. In this theory, listening is not viewed as a mean of comprehension; instead it is used in order to establish interaction among two or more people.

In contrast, Doff (1988, p.13) underlined that listening is a complex process that includes a complete responses from the listener, using not only verbal communication, but also of body language such as gestures, sings, mimic, and so forth. In the previous definitions about the nature of listening it involves using some communicative non-verbal strategies, In short the nature and purpose of listening has as a main goal to establish communication using the communicative elements according to the purpose of the interaction and if it is necessary to use some non-verbal strategies.

2.2 A differentiation between listening and hearing.

Most of the times, people face the confusion about the terms listening and hearing. Apparently, it is thought that these two terms mean the same. Nevertheless, it is necessary to clarify these terms in order to understand better the importance that listening has in language learning. (Rost, 2002, p.7) claims “listening is a process involving a continuum of active processes, which are under the control of the listener and passive processes, which are not”. In other words, listening requires concentration to process meaning from spoken language.

In contrast, “hearing is the primary physiological system that allows for reception and conversion of sound waves that surround the listener” Rost, (2002, p.7). To be precise, hearing is simply the act of perceiving sounds through ear. For this reason it is important to define comprehension which takes place in the listening skill.

(Hasan, 2000) concludes that listening is a complex process which requires the selection of meaningful input and the interpretation of it in order to understand the text.

2.3 Listening comprehension

Comprehension is regarded as an ability to understand the meaning or importance of something. According to (Rost, 2002,p.59) “Comprehension is often to be the first-order goal of the listening skill, the highest priority of the listener, and sometimes the sole purpose of listening. Comprehension is the process of relating language to concepts in one’s memory and to references in the real world. Comprehension is the sense of understanding what the language used refers to in one’s experience or in the outside world. Complete comprehension then refers to the listener having a clear concept in memory for every referent used by speaker”.

Defining listening comprehension is kind of complicated but really important to understand the need of listening comprehension in learning a language. For some people listening comprehension just means to understand what is being communicated but Anderson and Lynch (1993,p.7), defines listening as “the ability to recall and understand information which is presented orally.” The information might be presented by reading or listening tape scrip, a film or video, etc.

While for (Rost, 1990) Listening comprehension is the ability to follow, process, and understand spoken language. When someone tells you a story about their trip to the doctor, you are using your listening comprehension to follow along. If, in the midst of their story, they suddenly add, “Red-eyed tree frogs make good pets,” it is your listening comprehension skills that catch the disjointedness of the comment. (p.63)

From there it can be concluded that listening comprehension is the process of understanding speech. It can be expressed in two different levels which are lower level and advanced level. The first one deals with explicit information of the spoken language for example, basic vocabulary and simple syntax. In contrast, the second one has to do with implicit information of spoken language for example, complex vocabulary such as idioms, phrasal verbs, and so on; and complex syntax.

2.3.1 Importance of listening comprehension

Listening comprehension is a very important skill for a number of reasons. According to Penny (1984, p.25) there are some main reasons for what listening comprehension is very important:

- First, being able to recall and understand information is an important pre-reading skill. In order to be a strong reader later on, a child must be able to recall information when it is presented orally.

- Second, children who have strong listening comprehension skills also tend to be good listeners overall. As adults we often spend too much of our time talking and not enough time listening. Listening is a skill that a child will use throughout his/her entire life. Developing strong listening comprehension skills early on will help each child become a better listener for life.
- Third, strong listening comprehension skills also promote thinking and problem-solving skills.

When listening to a story, the children begin to develop their own thoughts and ideas about the situations presented in the story.

2.4 Kinds of listening

In learning a language there are different kinds of listening. According with (Cabrera and Perez 2008, p.25) “there are four types of listening, starting with basic discrimination of sounds and ending in deep communication.”

Cabrera and Perez argued that “Discriminative listening is the most basic type of listening, whereby the difference between difference sounds is identified” (p.31). It refers that if someone cannot identify differences then this person cannot understand exactly what someone meant. These authors classify listening as follows:

- Active listening, refers to listening in a way that demonstrates interest and encourages continued speaking.
- Comprehension listening, it focuses in listening to understand. Seeking meaning (but little more).
- Dialogic listening, tries to find the meaning through conversational exchange, asking for clarity and testing understanding
- Evaluative listening, or *critical listening*, we make judgments about what the other person is saying.
- Relationship listening, sometimes the most important factor in listening is in order to develop or sustain a relationship. This is why lovers talk for hours

and attend closely to what each other has to say when the same words from someone else would seem to be rather boring.

2.5 Teaching listening

Despite listening is a crucial aspect in language learning, some time ago, it merited little research. Nonetheless, the significance of listening in language learning has been recognized lately.

Surveys, researchers and case studies have showed different forms about how listening must be taught. Moreover, researchers affirm that listening to a foreign language requires two essential aspects:

- a) Students have to be taught and given guidance about how to listen to English.
- b) Students have to be given plenty of listening practice.

In addition, (Underwood, 1989), states that teachers' objectives must consist of:

Exposing students to a range of listening experiences

That is, teacher has to use different kinds of listening texts which include diversity of language.

Making listening purposeful for the students

This can be done by presenting real tasks to students. That is real material will help students to relate the topics to what they are seeing in the class to the things that happen his/her daily life.

Helping students understand what listening entails and how they might approach it.

Teacher must explain the process of listening and to show some ways (strategies) to develop the listening skill.

Build up students' confidence in their own listening ability

In other words, teacher should offer activities which can be done well by the students. Furthermore, she adds that students are going to become more

proficient in listening to English if they use strategies that are used in their mother tongue when listening; they raise their cultural knowledge of the foreign language they are learning; and they admit that sometimes little interpretation of what they listen to is often enough for understanding. For example, a boy is going to listen to a biology speech so he uses the information that is already stored in his mind (old information) to relate some words or sentences from the speech (new information) in order to achieve an understanding.

2.5.1 The importance of teaching listening

At this point of the project, it was tried to point out the importance of the listening skill within the teaching context; likewise, we try to enlighten some fundamental aspects that support the idea that the listening comprehension practice should be stressed at early stages of learning.

In a world where language interaction among people has become a need to survive, English has become the first language among human beings. Gomez (1999, p.8) says that “nowadays oral interaction is the focus of interest for most learners. These days a primary goal of study and practice in most language classrooms is the training of proficient speakers, including listening just as a supporting skill”. About this fact Penny (1984, p.31) has pointed out that, teaching only the productive aspects of communications is like teaching half the process. In order for true communication to take place, there must be a sender and a receiver who comprehends the message and proficient communicators must be able to play both roles.

However , the need of including listening as active part of language teaching, there exists today a little interest in improving the comprehension of listening texts. For most teachers it seems that the fact of having the students in the classroom, it is in itself as listening comprehension practice, so nowadays in

many language classrooms the practice of listening for achieving a specific objective has frequently been laid aside as a time consuming alternative or solely to make the teachers feel that listening is an active skill in the classroom.

Today it is undeniable that listening plays more than ever a very active role in the communication process, and the interaction is essential in any language classroom. Brown (1977, p. 78) sustains that “With so much of our lives spent in conversation with others, listening and speaking are the two that most often co-occur”.

At first sight it would seem that both listening and speaking are exactly the two halves of communication, and that both play the same role in importance. Nevertheless, there exist evidences that enlighten listening as the most important skill during learning English as a target language. Studies by Nunan and Miller (1979,p.62) have shown that of the time adults spend in communications activities 45 per cent is devoted to listening, only 30 per cent to speaking, 16 per cent to reading and mere 9 per cent to writing.

About the importance of listening Rubin and (Thompson, 1994 p.164) argue that “listening is the foundation skill for all language development”. On the other hand Harmer (2001, p.28) has pointed out that “listening has been classified as the first (chronologically) and most important skill. Language educators as (Byrnes, Krashen and Terrel, 1986) feel that comprehension logically precedes production”. Studies by James A. (1986,p.39, cited in Rivera, 1997,p.20) have shown that “when learners are encouraged to listening skills early in the language learning experience, they are able to progress in listening at a faster pace than in speaking”. In other words, the amount, level and kind of input at beginner stage, may define the course of learning in several areas of language, and not only in the listening itself.

2.5.2 Teaching listening strategies

In the classroom for listening comprehension, the following teaching strategies can be recommended:

- Before listening to a passage, ask students what they know about the topic in order to remind them of their prior knowledge. A teacher may also preview difficult vocabulary and ideas prior to listening.
- Following the listening, ask students about the general points of the passage.
- If details are to be recalled, allow students to take notes.
- Use natural language for listening passages. It is better to use short pieces of real language at the beginning levels than artificial teacher-made language.
- Use a variety of different listening activities such as one way and two-way, and informational and emotional. (Brown, 1992; Mendelsohn, 1994; Rust, 1990)

2.5.3 Pre-listening Activities

According to some research papers, Schema theory provides strong evidence for the effectiveness of pre-listening activities which includes the outline for listening to the text and teaching cultural key concepts. Listening teacher may select certain words, difficult grammatical structures and expressions to be explained through the discussion about the topic, and may also ask students to predict the content or what speakers are going to say, based on the information they have already got.

Pre-listening activities usually have two primary goals: (a) to help to activate students' prior knowledge, build up their expectations for the coming information; and (b) to provide the necessary context for the specific listening task. The teacher could follow with a listening comprehension activity, such as two people having a conversation about their daily life. Students must answer true or false questions based on the previous listening activity. An example of a controlled practice activity

could be a drill activity that models the same structure or vocabulary (Karakas, 2002).

2.5.4 While-listening Activities

Also it is mentioned that listeners who participate actively in the listening experience are more likely to construct clear and accurate meaning as they interpret the speaker's verbal message and nonverbal cues. During the listening experience students verify and revise their predictions. They make interpretations and judgments based on what they heard, teacher may ask students to note down key words to work out the main points of the text. Students answer comprehension questions while listening to the text and select specific information to complete the table provided with the text.

While-listening activities usually have some of the following purposes: to focus students' comprehension of the speaker's language and ideas; to focus students' attention on such things as the speaker's organizational patterns; to encourage students' critical reactions and personal responses to the speaker's ideas and use of language.

An open-ended activity could follow, that allows students to have the freedom to practice listening comprehension in the class about their daily life and asking for further information. Listening comprehension should begin with what students already know so that they can build on their existing knowledge and skills with activities designed on the same principle. A variation on the —filling in the missing word listening activity could be to use the same listening materials, but to set a pair work activity where student A and student B have the same worksheet where some information items are missing (Karakas, 2002).

2.5.5 Post-listening Activities

Finally, to produce the language it is important to finish the listening process with Post-listening activities that are important because they extend students' listening skill. Post-listening activities are most effective when done immediately after the listening experience. Well-planned post-listening activities offer students opportunities to connect what they have heard to their own ideas and experiences, and encourage interpretive and critical listening and reflective thinking. As well, post-listening activities provide opportunities for teachers to assess and check students' comprehension, and clarify their understandings; to extend comprehension beyond the literal level to the interpretive and critical levels.

Different comprehension questions can be assigned for students to discuss after listening, students then swap information to complete the —whole class chart, correlating what each student has heard to arrive at the big picture. If there are any questions that remain unanswered during the first or second listening, and after the information swap activity, the whole class can listen to the tape again. The students will then try to find the answer to the questions that have not been previously understood, rather than the teacher providing the answers straight away (Karakas, 2002).

2.6 A Classifications of the factors that affect listening comprehension.

It is known that within the process of learning a foreign language, there is a variety of factors that affect listening comprehension. These factors have been classified in different ways. For instance, Thomas and Anastasi (1982) classified them into external distractions and internal distractions. External distractions are the ones that go beyond the control of people for instance, noise, bad conditions of the material such as CDs, tape records, audio phones, etc. On the contrary, internal distractions are the ones that can be managed by people. For instance,

lack of vocabulary, fatigue, sometimes students have lots of worries, pressure, there is no use of visual environmental clues, and so on.

On the other hand some experts classify the factors that affect listening comprehension into linguistic factors such as pronunciation, vocabulary, pattern drills, etc. and non-linguistic ones such as psychological factors, cultural and background knowledge, etc.

It is crucial to mention that Penny,(1984) classified the factors that affect listening into five categories: Characteristic of listening material, characteristic of speaker, characteristic of learner, characteristic of task and characteristic of process.

And Rubin and Thompson, (1994) put forward a framework of five factors restricting listening, that is, language, speaker, task, listener, and process.

According to Michael Rost (1990, p.54), there are receptive disorders that are found among psychologically disturbed patients. Receptive disorders are often classified according to cause:

- Physical. It may refer to the lack of healthy hearing and speaking apparatus.
- Social. It may be due to restricted intake which may appear as a lack of sensitivity to the social context and the rules of conversation.
- Cognitive. It may refer to the development disruption which may appear as an inability to establish and maintain discourse topics and to identify and establish discourse referents.
- Linguistic. It may be due to restricted intake which may appear as a lack of linguistic forms to enable communication.

In language learning. (Rost, 1990), labels global understanding problems, such as the listener cannot identify exactly where in the speaker's text the understanding problem originates and attributes the problem to the text as a

whole. Types of referential problems listeners are likely to encounter unfamiliarity with specialized jargon, lexical fuzziness, multiple co-reference, possibilities, and unlikely reference.

2.7 Factors that affect listening comprehension.

Underwood, (1989) states that there are many problems that can be faced by foreign learners, within the listening comprehension process. Those problems are:

a) *lack of control over the speed at which speakers speak* which is one of the main problems that a student has to face when he or she is learning a foreign language, due to he or she can not understand fast speech and as result he/she will have trouble to catch the actual sounds of the foreign language;

b) *not being able to get things repeated* in which many learners find it is necessary to hear the spoken text more than once in order to understand and comprehend the message.

c) *the listener's limited vocabulary* which represents a great difficulty for the learner because on the other hand, the speaker uses complex vocabulary to the listener, the listener gets confused, and on the other hand the listener usually tries to understand every word to get the main idea, but he/she fails in his/her listening comprehension doing that.

d) *failure to recognize the "signals"*, which refers that sometimes it is very complicated for many learners to identify the utterances or expressions that the speaker uses to indicate a situation. If a learner does not recognize a signal as a different intonation that the speaker uses to introduce an idea of the spoken text, certainly the listener fails.

e) *problems of interpretation* which is really difficult for the listener to comprehend what the speaker is saying when for he/she it is unknown the context because he/she cannot make a relationship of what he/she is hearing and his/her background knowledge.

f) *inability to concentrate* in which external factors such as poor quality recording, noises in the classroom and out of the classroom are considered great troubles to comprehend the spoken language, since learners get tired when they can not concentrate in the listening task because of the noises, which make learners fail.

g) *established learning habits* in which it is frustrating for many learners that they do not understand every word from the spoken text; that is why, it is necessary that teachers give them guidance to be selective ignoring information that is not essential to get the main idea.

Other understanding problems that have been identified are: understanding problems triggered by mishearing a single lexical element (word or phrase), understanding problems triggered by complex utterances, elliptical utterances (in which an item is omitted because it is assumed to be understood), unfamiliar content in utterance, and difficulty in assessing the point (or speaker's intent) of an utterance. These problems can be cumulative in any interaction, leading to misunderstandings and breakdowns in communication. Diaz, (1999, p.21)

For instance, Lafi Toumi, (2001) points out that psychological factors are those that are not connected with non-mental factors, in other words they do not interfere in cognitive processes. According to him, psychological factors involve: student's concerns, consideration, learning feelings, thoughts and determination. The psychological factors function in encouraging and being in charge of learning effectiveness. That is, for example if an exam is applied to two students that have the same listening level they will obtain different results since they have different

emotional states. Furthermore, Lafi Toumi remarks that cultural attitude of the learner influences on how learners carry out their leaning.

Another important investigation is the fact that cultural background knowledge and thinking are factors that learners can face when learning a foreign language. According to Doff, (1988, p.23), language is rather like a mirror that reflects the national culture of its speakers. The American linguist (Sampieri, 1921, cited in Cabrera and Perez, (2008, p.28), maintains that, "Language cannot exist without culture... Culture can be explained as what the society thinks and does and the language is the expression of the ideas of the society. " Consequently, the relationship between language and culture is inseparable; language is the carrier of culture and the capsule that holds a way of thinking.

Language carries knowledge and cultural information and it reflects the substantial and particular ways of thinking of that people. Thus culture is embedded in even the simplest act of languages Doff, (1988, p. 25), it is an inseparable part of the way in which we live our lives and the way we use language..."the effective listener was the one who was able to draw on knowledge of the world, on personal experiences and by asking questions of themselves." (Castro, 2008).

Therefore, the learner who does not possess background knowledge of any English speaking countries is unable to understand idioms or languages, Anglophone modes of thinking as expressed in English language. Gomez (1999, p.18) maintains that every time we speak we perform a cultural act. Besides, some researchers consider the role of schematic knowledge as one of the factors that affect comprehension. Brown, (1977); for example, described schemata as "organized background knowledge which leads us to expect or predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse" (p.28) the listener's stereotypical knowledge based on prior experiences predisposes him or her to construct expectations in terms of seven areas: speaker, listener, place, time, genre, topic, and co-text. Brown, (

1977), contend that the listener uses two basic principles to relate the new information to his or her previous experience: the principle of analogy, i.e. things will as they were before and the principles of minimal change, i.e. things are as possible to how they were before.

Yan Miao, (2006) claims that linguistic knowledge heavily affects listening comprehension, namely, pronunciation and intonation; sentence pattern and drills; and vocabulary (quantity and familiarity; terms...). One of her findings is the fact that some phenomena in pronunciation have set great barriers to students, such as stress, linking weak form and so on. For example, long and complicated sentences, subjunctive mood as well as place and person names often make students fail to understand some content of materials. There is another factor that is quite related with the above, the factor is grammar knowledge.

According to Rubin and Thompson, (1994) grammar knowledge affects listening comprehension. In other words, language knowledge is the base of learning English. They said that is probable that English listening comprehension will be hampered by students' lack of knowledge of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Also they insist that when student' pronunciation knowledge is inadequate their capacity to discriminate will be weak and will affect listening comprehension.

Moreover, Anderson & Lynch, (2000), state that one of the reasons why the listener fails to process incoming speech is that the speech contains words or phrases that the listener can hear adequately but is unable to understand because of serious problems with the syntax or semantics of the language. This is a common problem faced by students as the topics that they have to listen to may often contain new or unfamiliar words.

Also, there is a great amount of information related to this issue; it was decided only to include the preceding information since some readers are scarcely beginning to immerse in this subject.

For all the above described, it can be concluded that listening skill is a critical element in the process of learning English as a foreign language. Moreover, it is known that when students have not developed this skill successfully, it is probable that the other skills will be affected as well the lack of vocabulary to express meaningful ideas.

2.8 Methods to have an effective listening.

“Although thinking, feeling, and doing go hand in hand, the thinking (or cognitive) domain of learning is perhaps the best place to begin. After all, effective listening takes effort—it requires maximum thinking power” Rost, (1990, p. 189). According to the author here are six suggestions:

1. *Understand the complexities of listening* . Most of us take good listening for granted. Therefore, we don't work very hard at improving. Knowing that the process involves more than just receiving messages will help you focus on not just receiving, but the other components as well. Think about the complexities of listening, and work to understand them.
2. *Prepare to Listen*. Preparation consists of three phases—long-term, mid-term, and short-term. We said earlier that becoming an effective listener is a lifetime endeavor; in other words, expanding your listening ability will be an ongoing task. But there are two things you can do to improve your listening skills for the long term: (a) practice listening to difficult material and (b) build your vocabulary.
3. *Adjust to the situation*. No listening situation is exactly the same as another. The time, the speaker, the message—all change. But many other variables also affect listening, though less obviously so: physiological variables such as rest, hunger, comfort, endurance; psychological variables such as

emotional stability, rapport with the speaker, knowledge of the subject; and physical factors such as size and color of the room.

4. *Focus on ideas or key points.* At times, you may understand the process, you may have prepared well, and you may be able to adjust to the situation—yet you fail as a listener. This failure results because you didn't listen to the right things.

5. *Capitalize on the speed differential.* Thought can operate much faster than speech. An average person may speak two or three words a second—120 to 180 words a minute. In bursts of enthusiasm, we may even speak a little faster. Most public speakers speak somewhat slower, especially to large audiences. Yet most listeners can process up to 500 words per minute, depending on the nature and difficulty of the material.

6. *Organize material for learning.* Obviously, speakers can enhance listening through careful organization and presentation of ideas. And if questions are appropriate, you can seek clarification of any points you fail to understand.

As many experts confirmed with the literature review to developing listening skill it is a hard work but if students have the suitable tools it is easier to develop to finally produce the language ,that is why it is necessary to describe the every step that was used to develop the main purpose of the research.

As it was seen in chapter II the language skill place and importan role in communication.

In order to have a complete communication there are four skill which are needed, these are called the four language skill; reading, writing listening and speaking so the main concern of this research was listening comprehension therefore the importance of describing the kinds of listening as well as how it may be taught.

In chapter III the methodology that was used in this research will be discussed, the means for collecting the information, the participants and the sample.

One important aspect for this research is also the instrument and how it was adapted, the general question, and the sections which are included.

Finally the limitations of the plan are discussed and how they affected the result of the research.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The main interest in this chapter was to describe the methodology that was used during this research, as well as the procedure and the subjects that were included for the present study, since the objective of the study was to identify the main factors that affected listening comprehension. The methodology of this research involved collecting information by means of questionnaires. Also a written questionnaire was administrated to subjects in order to determine their main needs regarding the English language.

3.1 Participants

The study was carried out in Facultad de Lenguas de la Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla; this faculty is located in Puebla City. The participants of our research were males and females and they belonged to intermediate level in section 001. They were 26 students. Their ages were from 18 to 21 years old. Most of them were single and belonged to the low-media social status.

3.1.2 Sample

The participants were just from one group and they accepted to answering the questionnaire and also it was reviewed that they were according to research's needs. They were studying English as a foreign language, they were in intermediate level and most of them had difficulties in listening comprehension.

3.2 Method of collecting data.

Data was collected by quantitative procedure, this research methodology involves collecting information by means of written questionnaire to subjects in order to know and gather the results counting the answers, the feelings of the subjects neither their believes or opinions were not taken into account .

3.2.1 Research instrument

The instrument of this project was a questionnaire adopted from (Cabrera Bonilla & Perez Ramirez, 2008) and it was adapted to make it available to the research. The questionnaire is written in English. The purpose of this questionnaire was to know the main factors that affect the listening comprehension in LEI students. It includes general questions which provide the gender, the age, and the term. Moreover, the questionnaire contains 30 items which belong to different sections that are included in the questionnaire. The first section (appendix 1 from question 1 to question 4) involves 4 questions related to the strategies used by the students during the classes, the second section (appendix 1 from question 5 to question 8) has 4 questions describing the form and the content of the speech, the third section (appendix 1 from question 9 to question 15) contains 7 questions related to tasks and activities that students performed during classes. The fourth section (appendix 1 from question 16 to question 22) includes 7 questions based mostly on the speaker. Finally, the fifth section (appendix 1 from question 23 to question 31) takes into account 9 questions which are related to the listener's attitudes.

3.3 Data gathering procedures

Once the researchers had the photocopies of the questionnaire they asked for permission to a professor to apply the questionnaire to their students in a target language class. It is important to mention that there were at least 4 teachers in an intermediate level class so section 001 was chosen. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 26 students during class time. Researchers asked them to identify precisely the factors that affected their listening comprehension by responding to items arranged according to a five-point scale (always, very frequently, sometimes, seldom, never). Oral instructions and explanations were given to the respondents by the researchers themselves to avoid any misunderstanding and as it was necessary researchers translated some of the questions in order to make the situation clear and be able to get real answers. The data from the students' questionnaires was codified quantitatively, since the responses of the students were analyzed using the media. That is, 5 was assigned to "always", 4 to "very frequently", 3 to "sometimes", 2 to "seldom", and 1 to "never". The media of the items was presented by graphs.

3.4 Limitations of the implementation plan.

Some of the limitations that probably the researchers had, was that their schedule was very different, so time interfered in our plans. Also researchers had classes at morning and the subjects had classes at morning too, so it was a limitation to apply the questionnaire. Another limitation was that the teacher had to change their schedule to miss one class or not teaching the class in the day when we were going to apply the questionnaire.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The main purpose of this chapter is to describe graphs and the students' responses by the data collection and the analysis. Besides, the main purpose of this gathering is to answer the research questions which are included in chapter one. The research questions are mainly focused on students' perceptions as well the factors that affect listening comprehension. There are three figures which show the strategies used by students, the form and the content of the speech, the tasks and activities that students perform during classes and the speaker and listener attitudes during the pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening. Each graphic mentions the factors that affected the listening comprehension divided by pre-listening which refers to the first 10 statements of the Appendix A, While-listening which refers to the 11 to 20 statement of the students' questionnaire and the Post-listening which shows the results at least 10 statements of the Appendix A, and it also gives a short explanation about them.

It was observed in the results that some of the most important perceptions that students have use as strategies used during listening tasks and the factors that affect their listening skill. The interviewees said that the strategies they mostly use are pre-activities, taking notes, and experience and background knowledge. On the other hand, interviewees perceive that the factors that affect their listening skills are unfamiliar words, difficult grammatical structures, long spoken texts, issues that are not from their area, activities in pair or group work, activities that require other than a short answer, predicting activities. When the speaker speaks too fast, words that are not pronounced clearly, speech with varied accents, nervousness and worry, poor quality tape recorder, lack of background knowledge, poor classroom conditions, lack of visual clues, lack of tape scripts before listening tasks and interest speech for students.

4.1 Factors that affect students' listening comprehension.

The graphs show the mean of the result. That is, the graph use a scale; each color represent the answer: dark blue represents "Always", orange represents "Very frequently", green corresponds to "Sometimes", purple represents "Seldom" and blue corresponds to "Never". The numbers that appear on the left side shows the number of students that chose that answer.

4.2 Pre-listening.

In this section the use of effective pre-listening activities improves the quality of listening comprehension. That is why it is important to know the importance of pre-listening activities to use them in class and how can you use them to improve the listening comprehension in students.

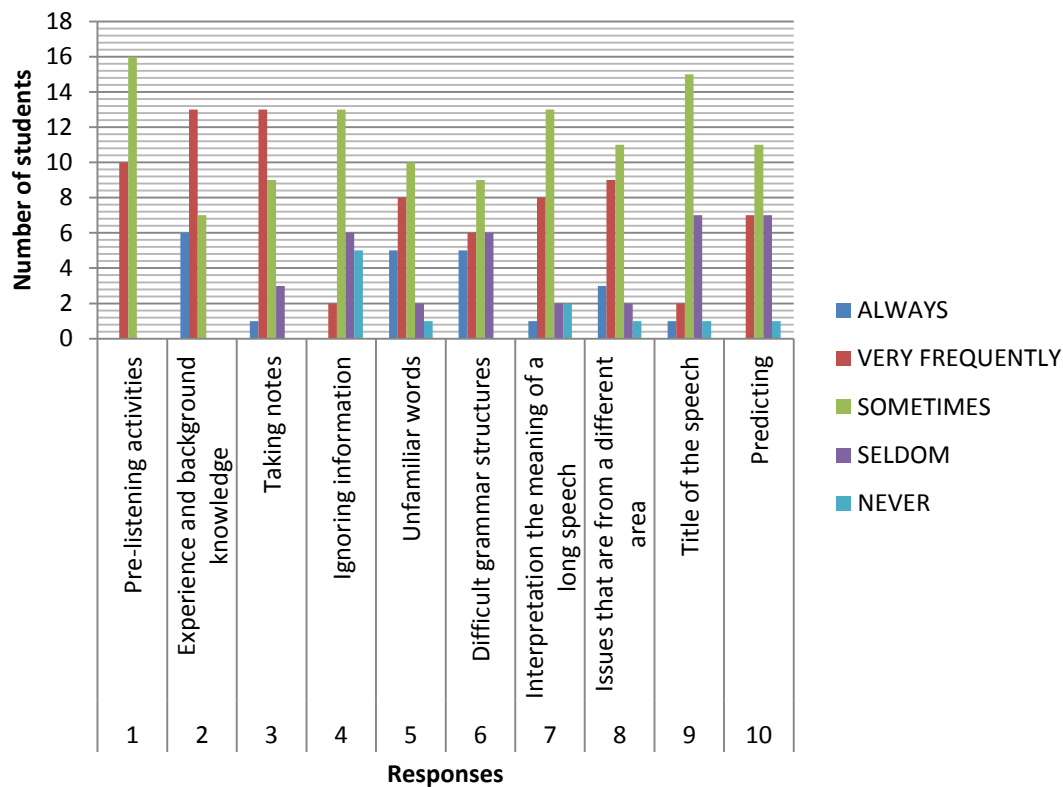
As Wang and Sui, (1971) stated "In listening class, listening materials should be used as useful sources of cultural knowledge whereas they are often taken as a test to complete some spot dictation, true or false questions. The background or cultural knowledge is often ignored. While we know cultural background knowledge is an important consideration, it plays a significant role in ELT. Language is part of culture and language is impacted and shaped greatly by culture. Pre-listening activities can offer a chance to incorporate it into our teaching".

So, the following graph shows that students find partly affective and necessary the utility of pre-listening strategies. That is, students use sometimes pre-listening activities to set up the context where the speech will take part. Furthermore, the interviewees use sometimes their experience and background knowledge of the topic as a strategy to comprehend the speech. They think that by using their experience and background knowledge it will help to connect the

information already stored with the new information of the speech. Besides, the graph demonstrates that students very frequently take notes about what they listen to. In other words, they believe that taking notes is a useful tool to remember the information of the speech.

The following graphs demonstrate the most important results and information obtained from the multiple-choice questionnaire answered by the 26 LEI students.

Figure 4.2 Pre-listening



On the contrary, ignoring information is not considered as a strategy to achieve a better listening comprehension since students sometimes ignore

irrelevant information. That is, students tend to understand every word they listen to; they probably do that since they think that every word is essential and that it has to be understood to obtain an overall comprehension of the speech.

Also, the graph shows that unfamiliar words in the pre-listening comprehension sometimes interfere with the listening comprehension of the students, so it is important to mention that teachers must try to check the main vocabulary and give it to the students in the pre-listening activity.

The difficult grammar structures, the interpretation of the meaning of a long speech, and issues that are from a different area sometimes affect the listening comprehension, it is because most of the times teacher do not pay attention to the level of the listening.

The graphic also shows that just with the title of the listening is difficult for students to predict what the listening will be about and to predict what will come next, so it is important to help students to know as much details as possible in the pre-listening activity.

4.3 While-listening

There are several interesting tasks and activities which encourage students to develop their listening comprehension skill though they encounter certain troubles in doing such tasks and activities.

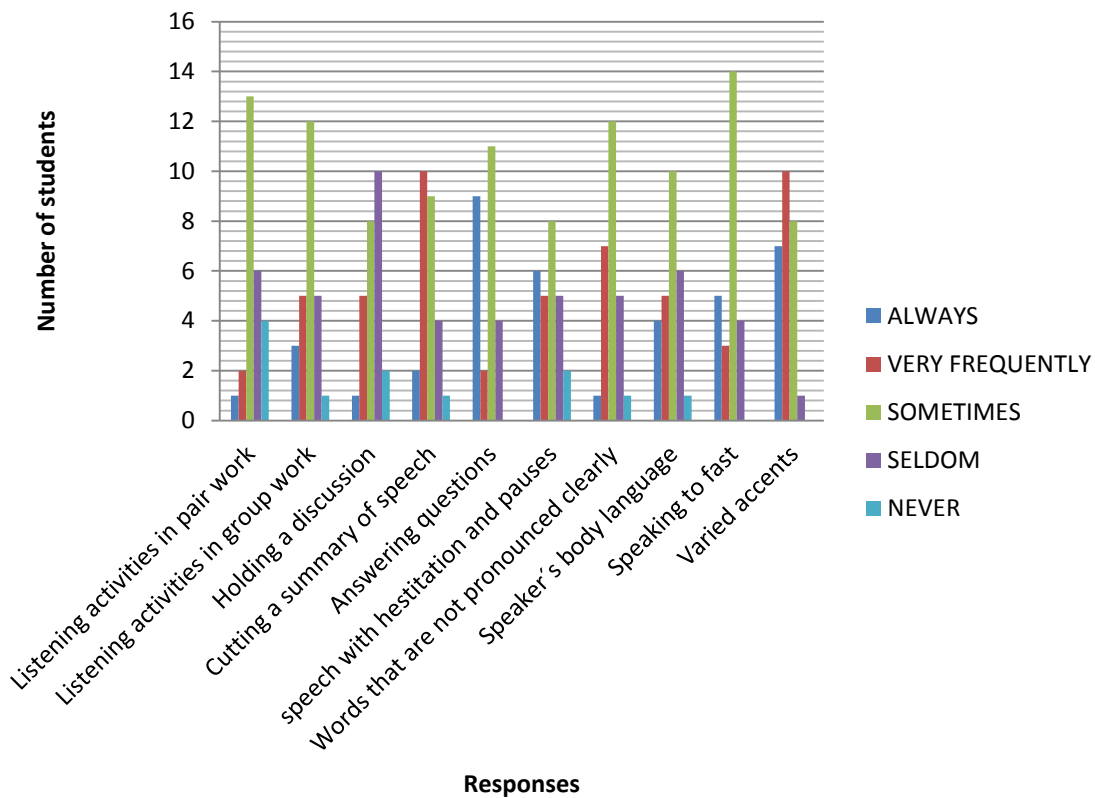
The following graph (4.2) shows that the most significant factor that affects students' listening comprehension is when the speaker is speaking too fast and when they have to answer some questions about the listening.

Finally, look at the paragraph to confirm the information:

The graph demonstrates that students sometimes find difficult to make activities in group and pair work. The reason could be because of the differences in vocabulary and English level, and also because of the lack of working together; most of the students are used to working alone. Furthermore, sometimes students consider difficult cutting a summary of speech, understanding a speech with hesitation and pauses, speaking too fast and varied accents. This may be attributed to students' limited knowledge of vocabulary and pronunciation; students who are not familiar with languages cues, clichés and collocations will find it difficult to predict a missing word or phrase. It is believed that one of the main sources of listening comprehension problems deal with the speaker, particularly, hesitations and pauses, pronunciation, voice heard on an audio-tape recorder without seeing to speaker, the speed of the speech, varied accents and so on.

So, the listening phase is very important and teachers should try to avoid all the problems that students have at this time, also it is obvious that most of the times it does not depend on the teacher but in the listening they select.

Figure 4.3 While-listening

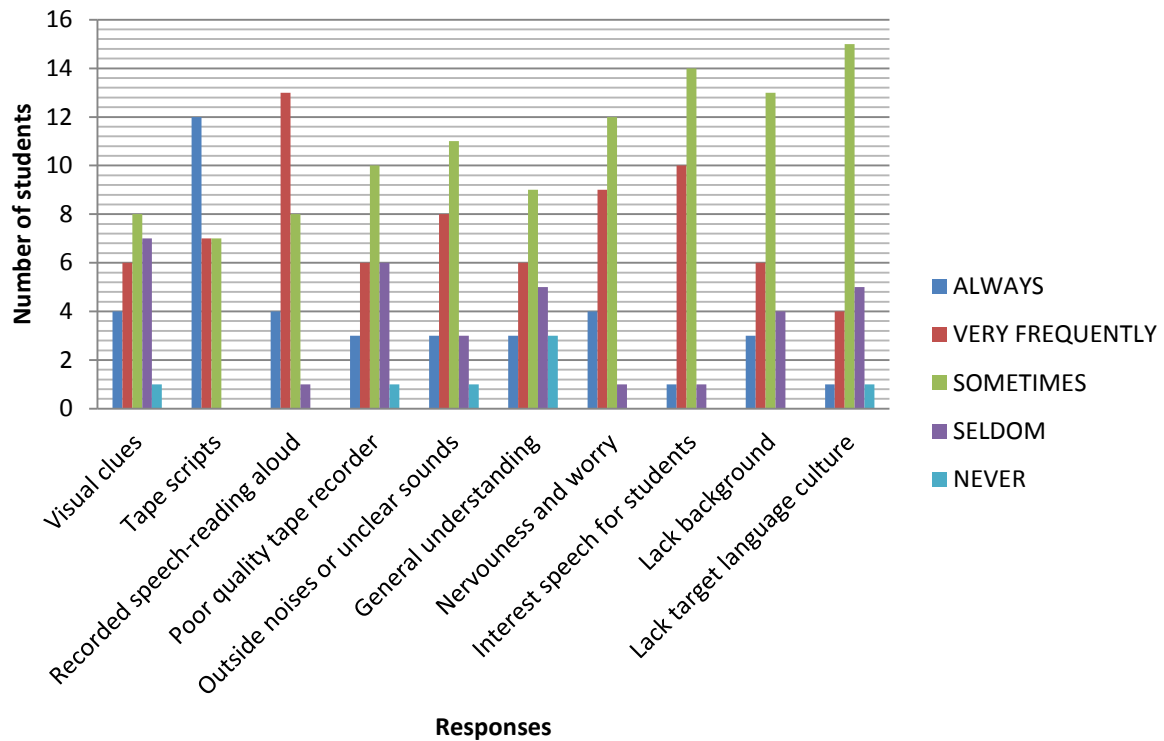


4.4 Post-listening

The last phase that is very important in listening comprehension too is the post-listening. As (Canning, 2004) said “In the post listening activity students need to evaluate the results of decisions made during a listening task. The teacher can encourage self-evaluation and reflection by asking students to assess the effectiveness of strategies used”.

So, to confirm this information look at figure below.

4.4 Post-listening



As it is shown in the graph most of the students prefer working with visual clues, tape scripts and recorder speech reading. The reason could be that most of the students learn much better by looking at something that's why most of the time the visual clues help them to understand better the speech. Also the missing of the tape scripts cause difficulties in students to comprehend the listening.

Also this graphic shows that sometimes the main factors that affect the listening comprehension are the outside noises or unclear sounds, nervousness and worry, lack background, lack target language culture and also the interest speech for students.

So, as it can be seen most of these factors are very predictable and teachers can be something to fix or avoid most of them, for example in the case of outside noises teachers should be sure that the door and the windows are close in order to heard less the noises that are outside, also the lack background and lack target language culture, teachers can explain the topic and the meaning on each country, or give a reading about the culture in that country in order that the learner could feel more confident about the topic. And the last point, the interest speech for students, it is clear that teachers must choose interesting topics for students, the ones that really catch their attention in order to make it more significant.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we will present the context as well as the conclusions of this research project and its significance. Moreover, we will give some recommendations based on what we found, taking into account the pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening strategies, the limitations of the study, and some directions for further research.

The principal aim of this research project was to analyze the factors that affected listening comprehension for the students. This aim was accomplished through a questioner that we applied to one group of second semester of LEI at the Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla the group was composed by males and females and they belonged to intermediate level, 26 students in total. They were studying in the English teaching area.

5.2 Conclusion

The results we found when we were analyzing the data shows interesting aspects and their significance is very important as well. The research question was actually answered through the instrument designed for this research. We found that the students need to practice their listening comprehension doing many exercises because sometimes they do not understand the activity or the instruction very well, that is , that the students fail the exam or do the exercise in an incorrect way.

It means that teacher needs to pay attention about given clear instruccions and previos knowledge that students have to get better results.

5.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Why is listening skill difficult to develop for some students?

The results obtain show that the main factors that affect students listening comprehension the lack of control over the speed at which speakers speak.

Also the lack of vocabulary which represents difficulty because most of the time native speakers use complex vocabulary to the listener for that reason the listener gets confuse.

Finally the lack of suitable material (CD, tape recorder and so on.) it means the quality of it to get the main idea of the listening task

What are the factors that affect student's English listening comprehension?

The results of this research show the five different factors that interfered in listening comprehension are classified according to the cause.

The first one is social because when English is learning as a second language the students are not in touch with the social context of the conversation as well the physical factor that is refers to the lack of healthy hearing and speaking finally it is found the cognitive factor too it may refer to the development disruption which may appear as an inability to establish and maintain discourse topics.

In conclusion it is necessary to analyze each situation and context if different activities are not useful.

5.4 Implications.

The analysis performed and the results suggest that the lack of practice listening activities in intermediate level related to the suitable environments.

For example the implementation of different pre- listening activities to give to the students more key words to answer in a suitable way the exercises with more motivation.

Also the use of post-listening activities to evaluate the results of decisions in the listening task to have an idea if the information was clear or not.

5.5 Limitations.

The conclusions on this research are based on the results found in one section in at the in Facultad De Lenguas De la Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla; this faculty is located in Puebla City. The participants of the research are males and females and they belonged to intermediate level in section 001. They were 26 students however the kind of answers may be different according to students' contexts.

5.6 Directions for further research.

One of the recommendations for this research is to make a project which would be studied if students at the end of their degree had the same limitations in their listening comprehension. Besides, we recommend that teachers take time to identify the problems that the students will have when they will practice the listening comprehension. Also, it could be very interesting to find out if there are some internal factors that affect their listening comprehension, taking into account the feelings and perceptions of the students because all this is very important to get a real conclusion.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS
BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA
FACULTAD DE LENGUAS.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify the factors that affect the listening comprehension skill at the **LEI students**. The information you provide will be used for academic purposes.

PERSONAL INFORMATION.

Gender: F _____ M _____ Age: _____ Term: _____

Instructions: Circle the option that best describes your experience as a student of the LEI.

1. Pre-listening activities about the content of the text improves my listening comprehension.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

2. I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the speech.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

3. Taking notes of what I listen helps me to comprehend better.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

4. Ignoring information of the speech that I do not need improves my listening comprehension.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

5. Unfamiliar words interfere with my listening comprehension.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

6. Difficult grammatical structures interfere with my listening comprehension.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

7. I find it difficult to interpret the meaning of a long spoken text.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

8. I find it more difficult to listen to issues that are not from my area.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

9. I find it difficult to predict what speakers are going to say from the title of the speech.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

10. After my teacher stops the tape I find it difficult to predict what will come next.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

11. I find it difficult to do listening activities in pair work

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

12. I find it difficult to do listening activities in group work.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

13. I find it difficult to do listening activities that require other than a short answer (e.g. why or how questions)

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

14. It is difficult for me to understand the natural speech when it is full of hesitations and pauses.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

15. It is difficult for me to get a general understanding of the speech from the first listening.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

16. When I do not understand the speech, I feel nervous and worried.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

17. I find it difficult to understand the speech which is not of interest to me.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

18. Lack background knowledge hampers my listening comprehension.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

19. Lack target language's culture hampers my listening comprehension.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

20. It is difficult for me to understand the meaning of words when they are not pronounced clearly.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

21. It is difficult for me to comprehend the meaning of the speech without seeing the speaker's body language.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

22. I find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

23. I find it difficult to comprehend well when speakers speak with varied accents.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

24. It is difficult for me to understand the speech when there are not visual clues (pictures, diagrams, charts, videos, Etc)

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

25. I find it difficult to comprehend well when the teacher does not provide me with tape scripts before listening tasks.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

26. I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded speech than to my teacher reading aloud.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

27. Unclear sounds resulting from poor quality tape recorder hamper my listening comprehension.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

28. Outside noise or unclear sounds resulting from poor classroom conditions hamper my listening comprehension.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

29. I find it difficult to hold a discussion after listening to the speech.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

30. I find it difficult to write a summary of the speech.

Always Very frequently Sometimes Seldom Never.

We appreciate your participation.

