



BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA  
FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

TESIS  
“STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT OF LISTENING  
STRATEGIES AT LEI”

PRESENTADA POR JAVIER SOBERANIS RAMOS

COMO REQUISITO PARA OBTENER EL TITULO DE LICENCIADO EN LA  
ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

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PUEBLA, PUE.

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## **DEDICATIONS**

I want to thank my family for giving me the support to continue with this long journey since the beginning of my degree until the conclusion of this project. This thesis is dedicated to all of them, my parents Carmen and Tito, my brother and his wife, Edwin and Valentina and my nephew Eder. Without your help this would not be possible.

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## ABSTRACT

The assessment of listening strategies plays an important role in the classroom since it gives students the opportunity to strengthen their listening ability together with speaking, reading, and writing. This research aims to seek into the listening strategies used in their Target Language II and how they are perceived by students. The research questions that guide this study are: 1) Which listening activities do target language II LEI students practice in the classroom? 2) Which listening strategies are missing in target language II LEI students' classes? and 3) Which listening strategies do target Language II LEI students require? This research adopted a mixed methodology combining quantitative and qualitative method designs. The instrument consisted of a questionnaire. 136 participants took part of the study. They were students from 18 to 23 years old in the Target Language II class with a B1 Level. The analysis of participants' responses shows how difficult or easy the listening activities are, and those most required strategies participants need in their learning. Study findings indicate that; a) participants feel that they only practice with traditional listening activities and there is no practice of micro and macro skill, b) unknown words do affect participants' focus on the information in the audio, c) unknown accents, speed, and length of audios affect participants' comprehension directly, d) participants need to activate their previous knowledge with visual support, e) participants demand the integration of the four abilities in for a more real-life learning and finally f) participants need authentic material for better understanding of the listening.

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## Chapter 1

### 1.1 Introduction

English has become an important language around the world, nowadays. According to Reddy (2016) “There are 375 million English as a first language speakers and 750 million English as a second language speakers.” (p. 179). It is one of the official languages in the United Nations (UN) and thanks to globalization, English has an important role in the working field such as worldwide enterprises, organizations, and schools. English is the language of business; international companies communicate in English. Besides that, English has an important role in education; many international exchange programs request a certain level of English. Universities around the world offer English programs in their curricula as a main or elective language. According to Harmer (1992), “Although English is not the language with the largest number of native or “first” language speakers, it has become a lingua franca” (p. 1) and this is an indicator of the importance of English worldwide.

In Mexico, English is officially taught as a foreign language from basic to undergraduate education. According to Secretaría de Educación Pública “In today’s world speaking English means more than speaking a language; it implies the possibility of being part of the global community”. (2017) The Ministry of Education in Mexico (Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP) oversees the education in Mexico with an educational program called National Strategy of English. This program attempts to make Mexico fully bilingual by the year of 2020 providing educators with the English level and pedagogy to fulfill student's needs. Teachers are an important piece of this strategy; they are the ambassadors of English in their classrooms in a country where English it is not an official language.

English language teachers are an important piece in this globalization movement where everyone needs to be language proficient to compete with others in the other side of the globe. Part of this professional development is learning English, and this process begins from constant study and practice. Teaching English in Mexico has an important role nowadays, students from newer generations have more job opportunities around the world and inside Mexico if they have the appropriate level of the foreign language. English Language teachers have the important task of training students to accomplish the language level by giving them the tools and the strategies to work and practice. To accomplish these objectives, teachers need to be part of this transformation since they are pre-service teachers (students) or even if they are in-service teachers on training.

Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP) is an autonomous public university involved in the instruction and training of future professionals, ELT teachers. According to BUAP's official website (2018), the mission of the university is to attain professionals with the strength and the capacity of generate, adopt, recreate, innovate, and apply the knowledge within the professional and social context. BUAP is a leader of innovation and educational quality among the universities in the country and internationally. The quality of the degrees and courses offered fulfill the student's needs with a flexible educational model that focuses on students, developed with science, technology, arts, and culture.

One of the degree programs offered by BUAP, at the Faculty of Languages, is focused on teaching English as a foreign language, the undergraduate program is called LEI (In Spanish, Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés). This program has the mission to form English language teaching specialists involved with the language and culture and to be proficient in teaching and related fields. At the end of the program, students can handle the target language at the B2 level in the specifications of the Common European Framework for Reference for languages and qualified

to continue studying and developing professional and personal life. To reach this level, students should be proficient in the language skills using speaking, reading, writing and specially on the listening ability. Students at LEI need to practice the listening ability in the classroom with different strategies and activities since they will become future English language teachers.

## **1.2 Problem**

This research will take place in a public university in the center of Mexico where a teacher's focused program is offered. This program is for students to become in-service English language teachers, they can give classes at any level or age. This research is focused on second semester students who are taking target language II classes. The students from those classes demonstrate problems with listening comprehension activities in English language classes. Those problems can be observed from students not reaching higher scores in listening activities such as listening comprehension exercises, communicative language activities (dialogues, role plays, simulations), those activities inside chapter tests and even with language certifications with standardized tests (Cambridge, IELTS, TOEFL, and many others).

As future teachers, pre-service students need to have the ability for listening; otherwise, it may affect the development of their listening and slow down improvement during their classes and the overall learning environment in the classroom. Communication happens when you develop the listening comprehension skill and apply it during classroom activities for interaction. Moreover, it is important to highlight the fact that future English language teachers must be prepared in all the aspects of the language to carry out language instruction and evaluation of their prospect students. Improving the quality of the teachers will, consequentially, improve the quality of the classes and performance of students.

### **1.3 Research questions**

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Which listening activities do Target language II LEI students practice in the classroom?
2. Which listening strategies are missing in Target language II LEI students' classes?
3. Which listening strategies do Target Language II LEI students require?

### **1.4 Significance of the study**

The significance of this research is to identify the listening activities applied to students from target language II at the LEI. Through the collection and study of the data to be obtained from students, this study is going to identify the listening activities applied to students from target language II at the LEI. This study is important for students at the LEI in the view of the fact that they are becoming future English language teachers. According to UNESCO (2003) "The way languages are taught is constantly changing and may vary considerably from one country to another or even within the same country" (p. 17). This is an example of why it is needed to modernize the listening strategies that are presented in today classes.

This investigation will also seek into techniques and strategies from listening activities that are used in target language II classes to identify which ones are missing and which ones are used. It is expected that with the results of this study teachers could improve their listening teaching strategies since these students will require them as part of their professional development as future language teachers. Students soon to be future teachers will need to be evaluating listening and to understand which activities can help their future students.

Another significance is that LEI students need to consolidate their listening skills because “Part of being a proficient speaker is listening to oral language and understanding what is said” (O’Malley & Valdez, 1996, p. 58). In Mexico’s context, English is studied as a foreign language and the classroom is the only place where Mexican students can have the opportunity to be in contact with the foreign language. The main practice takes place within the classroom’s boundaries where students can be exposed to the language they are attempting to learn. Finally, the Faculty of languages could consider the results of this study for the redesign and updating of the current target language programs for the betterment of the curriculum.

### **1.5 Summary of the chapter**

In this first chapter, there was the introduction for the topic, the problem was established, the research questions were presented, and the significance of the study was explained. This study is going to be divided into five chapters where the problem is going to be addressed, the data is going to be analyzed, and finally, the research questions are going to be answered. In the next chapter, the literature review is going to be presented to respond the research questions by describing the theory supporting listening comprehension.

## Chapter 2

In this chapter, the theoretical context around language teaching is included and the complexity of language abilities, focusing on listening ability by studying the approaches and strategies that can be useful in the teaching-learning process. In this chapter, it is also included the theory around listening as a language ability within the nature and the complexity of it.

### 2.1 Introduction

English has become an important language around the world, nowadays. According to Reddy (2016) “There are 375 million English as a first language speakers and 750 million English as a second language speakers.” (p.179) It is one of the official languages in the United Nations (UN). Thanks to globalization, English has an important role in the working field such as worldwide enterprises, organizations, and schools. English Language also takes an important role in the education nowadays, with the need of more language certified workers globally, teachers need to apply new methods and approaches to their teaching and adapt them to student’s needs and skills.

Language skills are divided into productive (speaking and writing) and receptive (listening and reading) according to their function in the language. The productive skills are those that create or produce something such as speaking and writing. The receptive skills are those which help receiving and processing information, these skills are listening and reading. These four skills complemented each other as Harmer (1992) states, “What we say or write is heavily influenced by what we hear and see” (p. 266). This means that skills function altogether regardless of which skill is emphasized when learning a language.

A language skill is the representation of the language function as language abilities externalize what happens inside the brain and how it transforms language into something visible and measurable. One way to measure language knowledge is through the practice of the abilities individually or by conjunction in the classroom and by tests as well. Listening, for example, has long been assessed through audios, songs, and comprehension exercises but there are more practices inside the classroom to be considered for listening.

## **2.2 English language teaching**

Teaching English language as a Foreign language requires different aspects outside teaching and learning. The classroom is almost the only place where the target language is practiced, and it depends on the place where is taught as Carter & Nunan (2001) said, “In the first place, the contexts in which L2s are taught and used differ considerably. Teaching English in Japan, for instance, is a very different experience from teaching it in Brazil.” (p. 2) That means that the teachers need to be conscious of the context of the place where they teach to know the needs of the students and adapt their teaching for them. As a result, English teaching relies not just on knowing the language, it also relies on the needs of the students according to their geographical localization.

English as a foreign language teaching needs to be changing as the language changes, Savignon (2001) pointed out that in the last fifty years, communicative language teaching (CLT) has been announced around the world as the most innovative approach to teach English as a foreign language. Teaching materials, pedagogy, course descriptions and curricula announce a win for communicative competence approach inside the education. Those changes are following the language acquisition theory and giving a new perspective of education in English language teaching. Savignon (2001) also stated; “Today, listeners and readers no longer are regarded as passive. They are seen as active participants in the negotiation of meaning” (p. 261).

### **2.3 The methodology of teaching a language**

Because of English language teaching around the world, there have been different methods and approaches to meet student's needs by adapting some ideology with pedagogy to help in the matter. Savignon (2001) listed out some of the most widely used methods around the world, listing their orientation and problems. Those methods and approaches are grammar-translation (an adaptation of teaching classic languages to teach modern languages), the direct method (an approach to produce orally a foreign language), the reading approaches (a method with the integration of reading), the audiolingual approach (a reaction to reading approach and it lacks emphasis on oral-aural skills), the cognitive approach (an approach influenced by the cognitive psychology), the affective-humanistic approach (a reaction to the general lack of affective considerations), the comprehension-based approach (second and first language acquisition are almost the same ability), and the communicative approach (the work of anthropological linguistics combining with the new research).

These methods and approaches show an evolution of the previous one by improving them with research and theories. Listening ability is included as part of the learning process in some of these methods, for example, the audiolingual approach focuses on audios, using listening activities as the main skill, with the idea that listening is where language begins. The comprehension-based approach takes the first and second language as the same in terms of acquisition where listening takes an important role in class with comprehension activities. The communicative approach uses the four skills as an integrated unit as listening is combined with speaking, reading, and writing. The direct method uses the voice of the teacher as the way of communication, and it relies on pronunciation.



## **2.4 Listening and hearing**

Listening is not the same as hearing, Brown (2007) considers that "...listening comprehension is the psychomotor process of receiving sound waves through the ear and transmitting nerve impulses to the brain" (p. 249). Listening carries out a mental process in our brain and needs our attention for achieving the objective of listening. In contrast, as Rost (2011) pointed out, "Hearing is the primary physiological system that allows for reception and conversation of sound waves that surround the listener" (p. 11). Hearing does not actually involve cognitive processes in the brain, it is a background process helping the hearers knowing what surrounds them. A simple example between listening and hearing can be a student who is hearing the teacher but, at the same time, is not listening to him.

## **2.5 Listening**

Listening is a receptive skill, and it is the input in the exchange of information of the spoken form of language. It was mentioned that the four abilities work in combination and listening is completely in communion with speaking. As Harmer (1992) pointed out, it is important to remember that well-to-do spoken communication relies not only in the spoken ability but also it relies on the usefulness of listening ability as well. This means that the influence of listening is in the limit of understanding or misunderstanding the language and what it has been told or said.

As Brown (2007) pointed out, the relevance of listening as a language skill can be slightly overvalued. As stated before, listening is considered a receptive ability among the four and the importance of listening goes further than just being only a receptive skill. Listening is as important as speaking, writing, and reading, it is the input the speaker has available in an oral conversation. Speakers need to listen to answer questions or requests to continue with the talk. According to

Brown (2007), “Through reception, we internalize linguistic information without which we could not produce language” (p. 247).

For some authors (e.g., Brown, 2007, 2009; Harmer, 1992; Richards, 1985) receptive skills are only a complement of the productive skills; however, the four skills have their own importance and participation in a language proficient individual and they always work better in combination. Listening ability is the input of the spoken language that goes through our ears to be processed inside the brain, when the brain processes the information, the receptor can turn into the speaker to continue with the conversation. The listening process is equally connected with speaking in a direct line and makes the connection with the other two abilities (reading and writing).

The nature of the language it is hard to handle with the authenticity of it, for instance, Flowerdew & Miller (2005) said that listening is an extremely communal activity, in which the hearer and speaker change the nature of the message and how it is going to be interpreted. In other words, what makes listening natural in a conversation is the people (hearer and listener) who are exchanging and interpreting information in real time. Listening ability needs to be natural, authentic, and contextualized in order to be realistic.

## **2.6 Listening comprehension**

Comprehension is the main purpose of listening as it is when the hearer catches the idea of the speaker and then processes it in the brain to produce speaking. Listening comprehension is the merger of processes inside the brain. As Brown (2007) listed out eight processes involved in listening comprehension.

1. The hearer processes the intonation, clauses, phrases, and stress patterns.
2. The hearer determines the type of speech is being processed.

3. The hearer infers the objectives of the speaker.
4. The hearer recalls background information.
5. The hearer assigns a literal meaning to the utterance.
6. The hearer assigns an intended meaning to the utterance.
7. The hearer determines whether information should be retained in short-term memory or long-term memory.
8. The hearer deletes the form in which the message was originally received.

It is important to state that these steps do not follow this sequence necessarily as they happen interchangeably in a matter of seconds.

## **2.7 Types of listening**

According to Brown (2007), there are different types of listening performance in the classroom. These are listed as *Reactive listening* when students only listen to for certain things in the audio and it is not really generating meaning. *Intensive listening* is when students only focus on certain things of the audio or conversation for educational purposes, in the classroom or for homework. *Responsive listening* is when students are elicited individually by the teacher and reply immediately. *Selective listening* (like scanning in reading) is when students process certain things to give meaning for specific questions. *Extensive listening* is a global understanding of what is being said, from listening to audios in the classroom to listening to the news on the internet. *Interactive listening* is the blending of the five types of listening that helps individuals focus on a real-time conversation and it also works with speaking at the same time.

## **2.8 Micro and macro skills in listening**

The listening ability is subdivided in micro skills and macro skills as an approach to “attack” from different angles those relevant aspects involving listening (Brown, 2007; Richards, 1985; Harmer, 1992; Field, 2009; Nation & Newton, 2009). As Richards (1985) explains; “Taxonomies of micro skills involved in different types of listening are developed from a variety of sources, including needs analysis, discourse analysis, and related research.” (p. 198) This means that the study of the development of micro skills has taken several years, and it takes into consideration studies from different fields of language study. The following is a list check of micro skills from Richards (1985) adapted by Brown & Abeywickrama (2010, p. 163)

### **2.8.1 Micro skills**

1. Discriminate among the distinctive sounds of English
2. Retain chunks of language of different lengths in short-term memory
3. Recognize English stress patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, intonation contours, and their role in signaling information.
4. Recognize reduced forms of words
5. Distinguish word boundaries, recognize a core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance
6. Process speech at different rates of delivery
7. Process speech containing pauses, errors, corrections, and other performance variables.
8. Recognize grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), patterns, rules, and elliptical forms
9. Detect sentence constituents and distinguish between major and minor constituents
10. Recognize that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms

#### 11. Recognize cohesive devices in spoken discourse

As it can be observed on the above list, Micro skills are small elements of language that may go from the sounds of the English language to more complex parts such as the recognition of meanings depending on the grammatical form. By contrast, Macro skills, presented below, show a broader idea of using more complex ways of communication as body language and guessing the meaning of words to facilitate listening comprehension.

#### **2.8.2 Macro skills**

1. Recognize the communicative functions of utterances, according to situations, participants, goals.
2. Infer situations, participants, goals using real-world knowledge
3. From events and ideas described, predict outcomes, infer links and connections between events, deduce causes and effects, and detect such relations and main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification
4. Distinguish between literal and implied meanings
5. Use facial, kinetic, body language, and other nonverbal clues to decipher meanings
6. Develop and use a battery of listening strategies, such as detecting keywords, guessing the meaning of words from context, appealing for help, and signaling comprehension of lack thereof

These seventeen Micro and Macro skills of listening exemplify how complex it can be from a research standpoint and how difficult it can be for teachers to apply them inside the classroom and for their students to practice all of them. The use and unification of all these Micro and Macro skills makes the hearer listen and understand better what he or she is being told.

## 2.9 Listening strategies

According to Field (2009), “Second language strategies have become a complex area in terms of the terminology used and the concepts involved” (p. 293). This means that strategies may be labeled differently depending on the author as the emphasis differ; however, strategies may remain the same. For example, according to O’Malley and Chamot (1990), there are three main paths in the listening strategies designed for the newer generations and are divided into different strategies: *Metacognitive*; suggest the planning process and the monitoring of the success of the lesson inside the classroom. *Cognitive*; are the operation of the class and changes in how language is manipulated and how learning is exchanged among students. Finally, *Social-Affective*; include the interaction of students to support their listening and exchange information for a more entertaining class. These strategies and a variety of other activities can help teachers create ways for their students to overcome those difficulties in listening comprehension.

By contrast, Richards (1985) presented more comprehensive exemplifications of the listening strategies to have a broader understanding of what they consist of. For instance:

- *Matching or Distinguishing* is a strategy to choose a response in written or pictorial form that corresponds with what was heard such as placing pictures in a sequence in a story or a set of events or to select a picture to match a situation like listening to a radio advertisement and finding the product from a set of pictures.
- *Transferring* involves receiving information in one form and transferring the information or part of it into another form, for example, students listen to a discussion about a house and must sketch the house.
- *Transcribing* means listening, and then writing down what it was heard, dictation is the most common example of this strategy.

- *Scanning*, listeners must extract selected items by scanning the input to find a specific piece of information (e.g., listening to a news broadcast and identifying the name of the winning party in an election).
- *Extending* is a strategy that involves going beyond what is provided, such as reconstructing a dialogue when alternate lines are missing or providing a conclusion to a story.
- *Condensing* has to do with reducing what is heard to an outline of main points, such as it is required when taking notes.
- *Answering* is the strategy to answer different kind of questions that focus on different levels of listening such as questions that require recall of details, inferences, and deductions or those that require evaluation or reactions.
- *Predicting* is guessing or predicting outcomes, causes, relationships, and so forth, based on information presented in a conversation or narrative.

These examples of listening strategies can be extended in an infinite number of different activities and they rely on the teachers and the way they experiment with the activity and the content of the class. As mentioned before, the listening strategies work better if they are real and natural by taking into consideration students' background and preferences.

### **2.10 Listening comprehension difficulties**

Listening, as in all languages, present some difficulties influencing its comprehension such as rhythm and speed, pauses and errors. Brown (2007) stated, “second language learners need to pay special attention to such factors because they strongly influence the processing of speech and can even block conversation if they are not attended to” (p.252). In other words, students need to have an idea of what it is influencing their listening performance and teachers need to revise their teaching to be able to help students improve their listening in those aspects.

Richards (1985) calls them “*Medium factors*” and are described as:

1. **Clausal basis of speech:**

In spoken language, the relation is brought by clauses as several clauses arrange the creation and process of utterances.

2. **Reduced forms:**

In spoken language, many words need to be slurred or dropped and other words noticeable.

3. **Ungrammatical forms:**

At full speed speech, grammar rules do not really matter to give the message.

4. **Pausing and Speech error:**

As part of oral communication, pauses, hesitations and errors may appear, with silence or filled with well, oh, umm...

5. **Rate of delivery:**

The number of pauses within each word or phrase per second (wpm).

6. **Rhythm and Stress:**

Some syllables are stressed, and the others must be accommodated following their rhythm.

7. **Cohesive Devices:**

Words that in oral language sound the same (the difference is the context) but in written form have different spelling.

8. **Information content:**

The speaker and the hearer connect with words as “well, really, of course” to continue the talk.

9. **Interactive:**



Non-verbal language as body movement, gestures and so on, makes listening an interactive process.

All the above factors can affect either positively or negatively the listening performance of the hearer and change their understanding of what it is being said.

### **2.11 Supporting listening**

As the four language abilities complement each other, Harmer (1992) stated that language abilities can be supported by the other abilities, for example, speaking can serve as preparation and stimulus to discuss topics from the class as a warmup. Texts can serve as examples or models as to what students can write and reading texts out loud can show about their own writing. The integration of tasks where students take notes of the audios, read a text, discuss the topic with their partners is a common practice. In other words, the teacher can use almost any situation or activity in the classroom to practice and embrace the four abilities and complement them depending on students' needs and preferences.

The listening ability can be heavily supported by visual aids as pictures, diagrams, videos, non-verbal language as body language and gestures, among others as it can give the listener the context around the situation, the mood of the speakers and to infer clues. Regarding videos, Harmer (1992) points out that video is stronger than audio; the speakers can be observed; their body language can evidence the real meaning; clothes, the place they are in, etc. Setting can be expanded in a perceptible way. Some teachers consider that video is not as beneficial for listening instruction than audio since with the visual intellect involved just like the aural intellect, students pay not as much focus to what they in reality are hearing (Harmer, 1992). However, this is a good example of how visual support with video can be used in class to help students' listening as teachers can take

care of the way listening is delivered by using different strategies to maintain students focused on the activity.

### **2.12 Listening and the integration of other skills**

Harmer (1992) states that nearly any sort of speaking labor is likely to relate to listening surely, even so, when pupils are implicated as part of a collective writing they will be speaking, listening, writing, and reading at the same time. In other words, students are already using the four abilities inside the classroom without noticing it. They can share comments with their partners about the activity, they can hear their partners' comments, they can write down their ideas and read the guidance from the book all in one activity all of this in their native language or in the target language depending on their level and how the teacher encourages them.

As mentioned before, listening needs, and it is complemented by the other language abilities (speaking, reading, and writing) because listening by itself does not have a purpose from a language standpoint. Brown (2007) stated that instead of being obligatory to stick to a course that restricts itself to one way of operation, students should have the option to expand their work in a more significant assignment. This means that if the course includes the four abilities, students should have more options to choose from and see what ability they perform better and what ability they need to address. By contrast, if the course only bases instruction on one language ability, it can affect the whole language experience as students may not have those activities that fit with the whole use of language.

### **2.13 Listening assessment**

According to Harmer (1992), O'Malley & Valdez (1996), and Brown (2007), assessment is the evaluation process teachers carry out to measure students' performance and make sure all the

course aims were covered. Also, teachers should take into consideration the aspects of assessment to make it real, reliable, and consistent as O'Malley & Valdez (1996) describe “we use the term *authentic assessment* to describe the multiple forms of assessment that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities” (p. 4). That means that assessment is not only about exams and quizzes, but it also takes into consideration factors that affect students' performance during the ongoing assessment process of their learning.

Assessment can take the shape of formative assessment and summative assessment. Formative assessment, as Brown & Abeywickrama (2010) stated, is assessing pupils to “shape” their knowledge and capability with the aim of assisting them to keep going and making progress. In other words, this kind of assessment is the one that is present in all the activities on a regular basis and teachers use it to help students overcome difficulties in the meantime. Douglas (2009) also stated, “The results of formative assessments are often provided to learners in the form of feedback on strengths and weaknesses in learning and information about what to do in order to make further progress or correct weak points” (p.72). This means that formative assessment is an ongoing process to help students during class.

Summative assessment, as Brown & Abeywickrama (2010) mention, it is the “aims to measure, or summarize, what a student has grasped and typically occurs at the end of a course or unit of instruction” (p. 5). That means that summative assessment is the wrap of all the assessment, and it takes into consideration the achievement of students during the course. Douglas (2009) described that summative assessment outcomes are often applied in the shape of grades or scores, still progressively, any kind of helpful feedback could be as well, added. In other words, achievement in the shape of exams, projects, portfolios, etc., during the course are taken into consideration and moved towards or transformed into a grade or score.

As for how listening tends to be assessed in the classroom whether summative or formative, Popham (2017) stated “Traditionally, the need to dole out grades to students has been a key factor spurring teachers to assess their students.” (p. 32) This means that the result of any listening assessment is transformed into a grade at the end of the course which require teachers to devise diverse assessment strategies to achieve learning and then the grades.

For instance, Buck (2001) exemplified three approaches to assessing listening: the *discrete-point approach*, the *integrative approach*, and the *communicative approach*. The discrete-point approach consists of isolating and separating the little bits of the linguistic knowledge and test them separately, the most common activities applied are true/false items or multiple-choice tests. Some other examples activities are phonemic discrimination tasks, paraphrase recognition, and response evaluation tasks. In contrast, the integrative approach consists of assessing students on their ability to process multiple bits of linguistic knowledge at the same time. Examples of these are activities are reduced redundancy, dictation, sentence repetition tasks, statement evaluation, and translation. Finally, the communicative approach assesses how a student uses the target language according to the situation where grammar correctness is not the priority but communication; for example, using authentic texts with a communicative purpose are very common to assess listening.

Brown & Abeywickrama (2010) made emphasis on those tasks traditionally used for assessing listening and categorized them into *Intensive Listening*, *Responsive Listening*, *Selective Listening and Extensive Listening*. In *intensive listening*, activities focus on recognizing phonological and morphological elements like phonemic pairs where the hearer identifies different consonants and vowels (-ed at the end of the verb, for instance). Stressed sound tasks are those where the hearer differentiates stressed and unstressed word pronunciation and must choose between two words that may sound the same. As the hearer gets a better listening ability the teacher

can also use paraphrase recognition tasks where the hearer listens to a phrase and the answer is a paraphrased version of it. *Responsive listening* has to do with offering the appropriate response to a question, for example, the hearer listens to a WH- question and chooses the correct answer to the question with personal preferences or information.

As for the *selective listening* tasks one is the listening cloze exercise where the hearer listens to one or more sentences or to song lyrics and must write the missing words (verbs tenses, articles, prepositions, etc.). Another *selective listening* task is the information transfer where multiple images, drawings, maps, charts, or pictures are used as visual support for the hearer to choose the correct answer according to what he/she listened to. Another task is sentence repetition, also used as listening assessment, where the hearer must interact and should continue with a conversation.

Lastly, dictation is an *extensive listening* task where the hearer listens to a reading passage three times, first, at natural speech with no pauses, the second time is with pauses and breaks so the hearer writes the information and finally the third time for the hearer to check responses. Another extensive listening task is the communicative stimulus-response which includes dialogue and multiple-choice comprehension items, and questions on specific details. Extensive listening also includes authentic listening tasks such as note taking or editing where the hearer listens to identify an error or discrepancy from a visual support, for example, a newspaper. Finally, interpretive tasks are also extensive where the hearer analyzes and reflects about songs, recited poetry, or news channel to determine what is being said. Retelling is another extensive listening task where the hearer listens to a story or a piece of news and retells it, or summarizes it (spoken or written).

At the end of the day and due to listening having its own level of difficulty and assessing it authentically, it is ought to teachers and administrators by choosing activities, to evaluate students,

based on preferences, context, number of students, reliability, and validity as well as the washback and the feedback at the end of the assessment process. Buck (2001) argues that “each testing situation is unique, and there are many different variables that affect test design and construction, so it is impossible to offer any hard and fast rules.” (p. 194) This may be understood as teachers are the appointed ones to design their tests and assessment activities according to the variables of their students and the results they want to achieve.

## **Chapter 3**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This study was about identifying listening strategies and activities applied at the LEI target language II course. The purpose was to identify those listening activities applied and how students perceived listening was assessed in target language II at the LEI. Through the collection and study of data obtained from students, it is possible to detect which listening strategies participants report are missing or not assessed and those they need to acquire or practice more frequently in the classroom. It is expected that teachers may use this information to expand their repertoire of listening strategies since students will require them as part of their professional development as future language teachers.

In this chapter it will be explained the methodology of the research, the setting, the participants of the investigation, and the instrument. A description will also be provided of how data was collected for answering the guiding research questions.

### **3.2 Setting**

This research took place in a public university in the center of Mexico in the state of Puebla where a teacher's focused program is offered. This program is for students to become in-service English language teachers having the competence to give language classes at any level or to any age group. The English teaching program trains future teachers to specialize in English and it is designed to meet the standards of those from public and private schools.

### **3.3 Participants**

The participants of this research are pre-service teacher-students from Target Language II course in the second semester of their program. The participants are 37 males and 81 females. It is

worth mentioning that 18 participants missed specifying their gender and age on the questionnaire. Then, the total was 136 participants. Their ages ranged from 18 to 23 years old. Some participants are from the state of Puebla, and some are from different places within the Mexican republic. The English level of the participants is B1 or upper intermediate which is tested at the beginning of the program (Licenciatura) with a placement test. According to this placement test, they are in the appropriate target language B1 level.

### **3.4 Research methodology**

This research is based on a mixed methodology that combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies to triangulate the information and produce a stronger study. According to Creswell (2014), “If we further assume that each type of data collection has both limitations and strengths, we can consider how the strengths can be combined to develop a stronger understanding of the research problem or questions” (p. 215). A mixed methodology combines the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods by minimalizing the weakness each of these methods may present and complement information and results. In words of Creswell and Plano (2015) “By combining quantitative and qualitative data, therefore, researchers argue that the study can develop a more complete picture of social phenomena that includes both trends and individuals’ experiences.” (p. 386) In summary, the mixed methodology helps to present findings and results in a more comprehensive manner to give a more ample picture of the findings.

Some authors as Creswell (2014), Creswell & Plano (2015) and Groves, M., Floyd J., Fowler Jr., Couper, M., James M., Lepkowski, E., and Tourangeau, R. (2009) also assert that by using a mixed method the analysis can be done from two different perspectives. For example, from the perspective of quantitative research there is the use of surveys. According to Cohen, Manion &



Morrison a survey uses various distinctives; commonly, it is applied to overlook a broad domain of issues, populations, degrees etc. (2000) Groves et al. also pointed out that “Because survey methodology has this inherently multidisciplinary nature, it has only been recently developed as a unified field.” (2009, p. 31) Therefore, the main strength of a survey is the numerical data that they can yield to represent the information in a graphic manner, and it can be applied in many questions and participants. On the other hand, the surveys only give the specific information that is being asked and it is closed- ended type.

In the qualitative research perspective, there are questionnaires. According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) the open-ended item is a highly enchanting design for smaller-scale investigation or for those parts of a questionnaire that ask an honorable, individual comment from the respondents in summation to circling numbers and tick off lists. The strength of a questionnaire is that it can give more detailed information as personal comments from the participants that may not be in the original plan or that it was not considered at first. Dörnyei & Taguchi (2010) reflected upon questionnaires, and they consider that “They are also very versatile, which means that they can be used successfully with a variety of people in a variety of situations targeting a variety of topics” (p. 6). In contrast, the questionnaire lacks large scale characteristics; it only can be presented as several questions and the answers are more difficult to manage and analyze.

### **3.5 Instrument; Survey and questionnaire combination**

The instrument for this investigation is a combination of a survey and a questionnaire to complement each other to obtain more reliable data. The printed instrument contained 19 items for the survey numerical purposes and 4 open questions for the questionnaire section for a total of 23 items. The survey was designed from the start guided by Cohen, Manion & Morrison’s (2000) definition of survey and it underwent a pilot stage to make sure it was understandable and viable

for the context it was intended to be applied. The instrument items were accommodated in such a way that they could yield information from participants' opinion and their suggestions regarding their listening strategies. The survey section uses the Likert scale with numbers from 1 to 5 in which number 1 is *totally disagree* and 5 is *totally agree*. The questionnaire section includes open-ended questions for participants to answer freely. (See Appendix)

### **3.6 Data collection procedure**

Once the instrument was first reviewed, the piloting phase started. The piloting phase included a group of fourteen students in target language II. The piloting took place in a class scheduled on Friday from 6 to 8 pm which somewhat influenced the attendance of 14 students out of 22 according to the teacher's official list. The feedback received from both the written answers of the participants and their doubts during the application gave some insights to correct two items and to consider the timing for students to answer the instrument. Once the piloting finished, the corrections were made to polish the final version of the instruments. It is worth mentioning that during the piloting phase some of the findings were replicated once again and in more detail in the final application of the instrument.

The data collection phase took a week at different days, and it was applied to nine groups. The application started in the morning with two groups at 7 am, the first group was with 3 students and the second one was with 18. The following were two groups at 9 am with 19 and 21 students each. The fifth group was at 11 am with 19 students. In the afternoon, the instrument was applied to four more groups, two groups at 2 pm with 17 students each and two other groups at 4 pm with 20 and 19 students each.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

After collecting all the data, the information from the instrument (survey and questionnaire) was analyzed. First, the data of the survey was analyzed as the nineteen categories were written in a table using Microsoft excel to do graphics and analyze information; bar charts and pie charts were done to get the percentages of each category. Secondly, the information from the questionnaire was checked. The information obtained from the four open-ended questions was analyzed; the questions were directly transferred to Microsoft Excel for doing the tables with the quotations to separate information and have it organized. The categorization started from reading all the answers and underlining common words and salient themes that were repeated among the participants in their open questions. The scale of the study made the categorization of the information difficult since it was 136 different opinions divided into four major categories. After that, the answers were categorized in different colors according to the micro and macro skills applied to listening and the analysis was written in paragraphs mentioning the most salient topics and quoting the most illustrative for each one of the answers.

### **3.8 Chapter Conclusion**

In conclusion, all the feedback given in the piloting phase was the point of inflection for the instrument to have the correct information revised as the investigation needed it for reliability and triangulation. Furthermore, the information obtained from the instrument is surprisingly broad and revealing because of the great number of participants who kindly accepted to be part of this study. In the next chapter, the results obtained will be explained and presented accordingly.

## **Chapter 4**

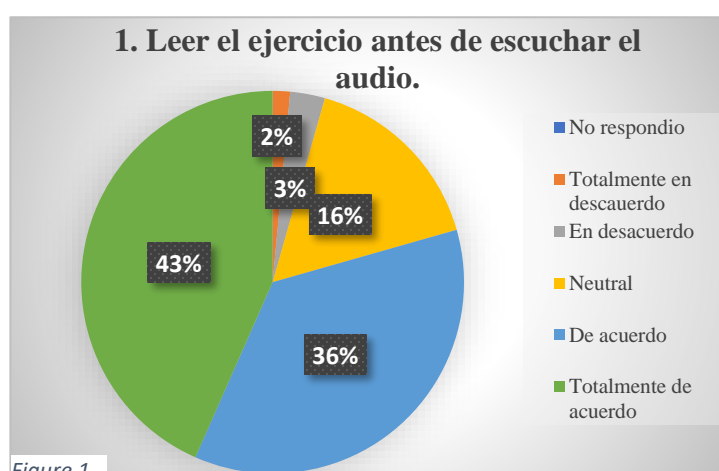
### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the findings of this research are presented and explained. All the information obtained from the questionnaire will be presented in tables and analyzed in the chapter. The information from the instrument was transcribed into two sections: quantitative and qualitative results. The following are the results obtained from those sections of the instrument.

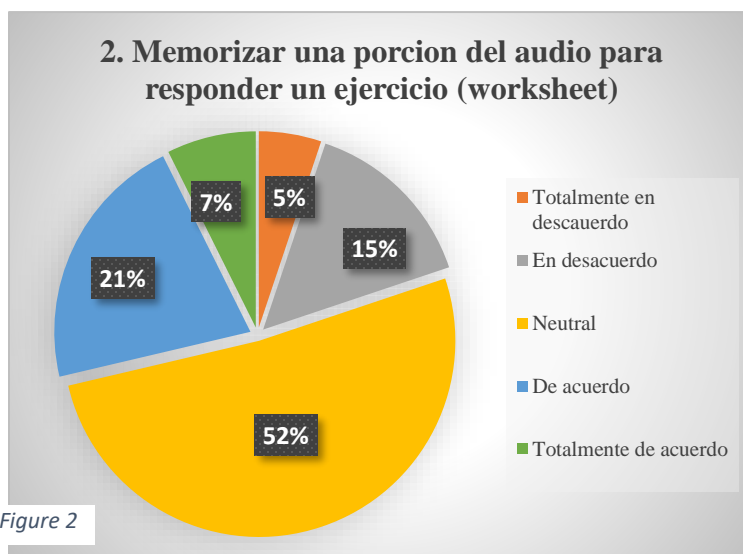
### **4.2 Quantitative results**

A survey was answered by the participants to find out their perceptions about listening activities. The statements were in Spanish to guarantee students' understanding when responding. In questions 1 to 19, the scale ranged from 1 to 5 where 1 was 'strongly disagree' and number 5 was 'strongly agree' (See Appendix A). In this section of the instrument the most used listening strategies obtained from the survey (questions 1 to 19) are presented below. The following figures show 19 statements and percentages.

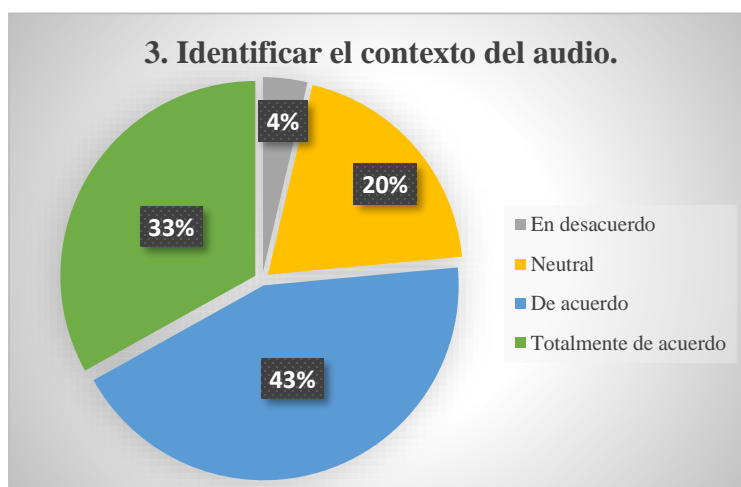
In figure 1 concerning with the notion of reading the exercise before listening to the audio, the figure 1 reflects that almost half of the participants chose the option *totally agree* with 43 percent of participation. Those participants are followed by 36 percent *agree*, and 16 percent were *neutral* with the idea of reading the exercise before listening to the audio. Richards (1985) mentions that reading before listening is considered as a macro skill where the student relates the reading ability to make predictions about what is next, to infer clues and possible details from the listening by itself and information inside the activity.



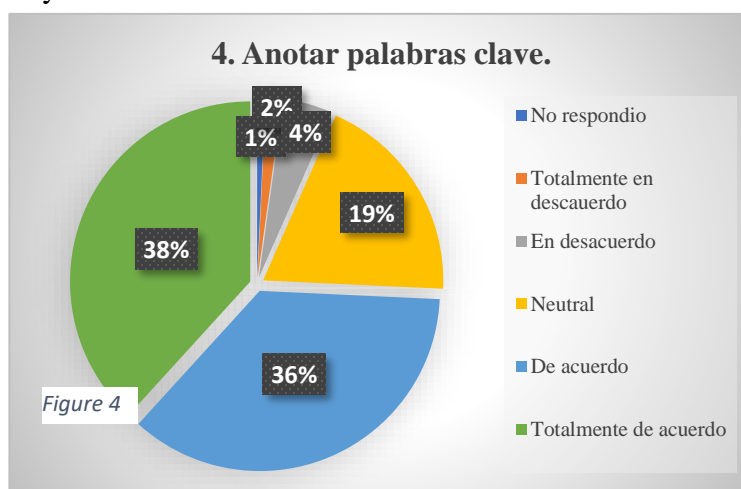
As it can be noticed in figure 2, about 52 percent were *neutral* in the use of their memory to help their listening during the activity with a worksheet. 21 percent *agreed* that memory is relevant for a listening exercise followed by 15 percent of participants who *disagreed*, and 7 percent who *totally agreed*. The use of the memory, according to Brown & Abeywickrama (2010), is part of a micro skill, and for a listening activity memory helps participants infer future information, and most of the time, it also helps predict incoming information from a written or spoken pre-listening. The use of memory is differentiated from the first question as in this case, it is more focused on the memory itself rather than using reading strategies as skimming and scanning for obtaining information.



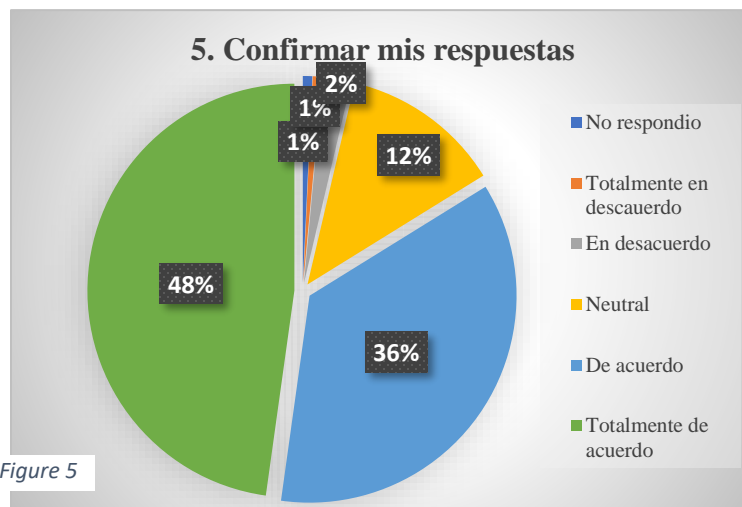
In figure 3 regarding identifying the context of the audio, it can be noticed that 43 percent, almost half of the participants, chose the option *agree* that context is important to identify what the speakers are talking about, followed by 33 percent who *totally agree*, and a 20 percent were *neutral* about this aspect. Identifying the context in the audio helps their listening development, there is a difference of a 10 percent with respect of those participants who selected *totally agree*. The context of an audio and the relation with listening is identified as a macro skill (Richards, 1985) and according to the situation, the student can recognize the information better.



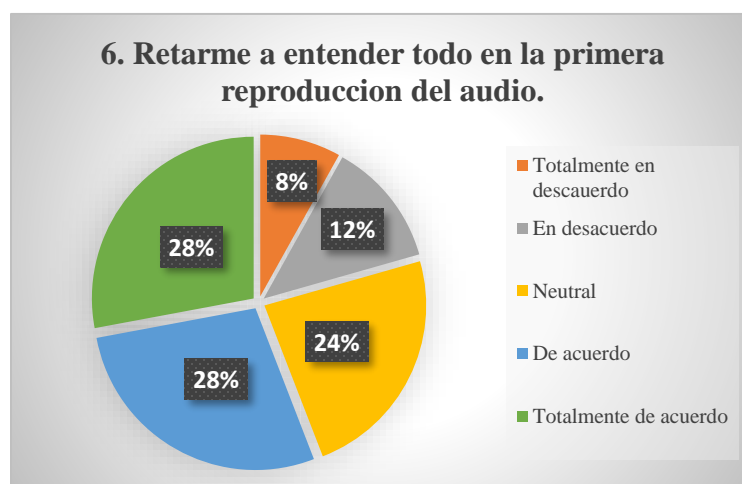
As it can be observed in figure 4, taking notes of key words seems to be very popular among the participants. It is spotted that almost the same part of the participants optioned *agree* and *totally agree* with 36 and 38 percent each in that order. Also, 19 percent of the participants optioned *neutral*. Given the fact that most of the participants either *agree* or *totally agree* gives the precedent that, students need to have a written support with keywords (Harmer, 1992) to answer their exercises accurately.



It can be seen in figure 5 that confirming or double-checking answers during listening activities is useful for participants' listening development that almost half of the participants *totally agree* with 48 percent and 36 percent marked *agree*. Also, 12 percent of the participants were in a *neutral* position. As mentioned before, it is noticeable that the majority *totally agreed* that confirming their answers comes from the second or third time the audio is played. Most of the time, this strategy might give them confidence to continue with the audio. In this regard, the role of repetition of the audio is important to be done at least two times per activity.

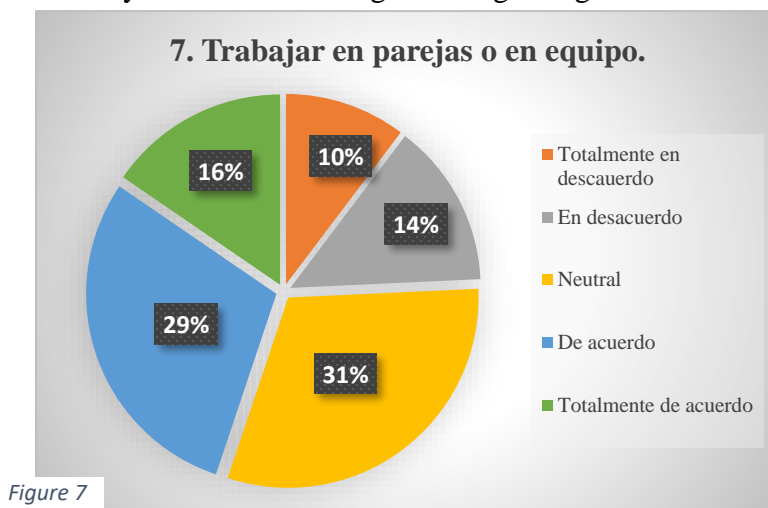


The figure 6 shows most of participants like the challenge to just listen to the audio once and then answer the exercise. Their answers were distributed into three major percentages. 28 percent *totally agreed* that listening just once is a challenge; 28 percent *agreed* with this same idea and 24 percent remained *neutral* regarding doing the listening just once. Also, 12 percent of the participants optioned *disagree* and the 8 percent remained *totally disagree* which means that these participants would rather listen more than once (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010) to understand what it is being said is part of a micro skill that is about retaining chunks of language in short term memory to just listen to an audio once and this means that storing information in the brain is more difficult when you just listen to something only once.



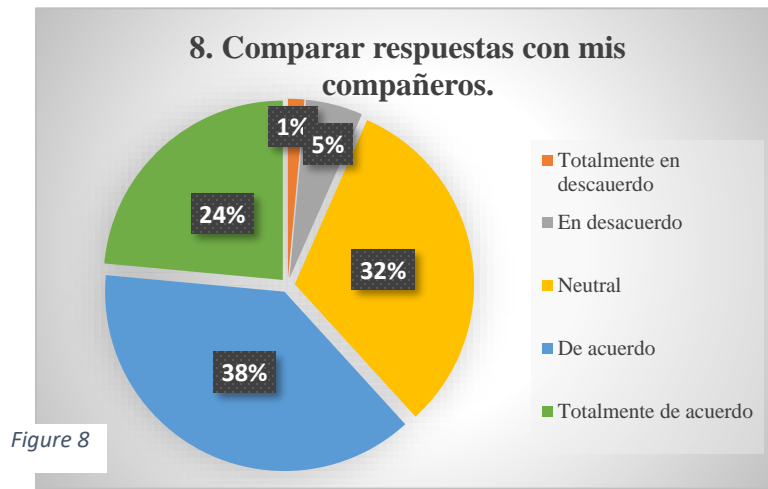


In the figure 7, it is shown that the participants set apart their opinions more than in past items in respect to working in pair or groups when listening to an audio. 16 percent *totally agreed*, and 29 percent *agreed* that working in pairs to work with their classmates it is not a welcome strategy since listening activities require concentration and groupings can be distracting. Also, 31 percent of the participants were *neutral*, 14 percent *disagreed*, and 10 percent *totally disagreed*, it shows that even when most students were *neutral* or above, a good part of the participants does not prefer to work in pairs or in groups. From the results, it is noticeable that working in pairs is not popular because some conflicts may arise when sharing ideas regarding the audio.

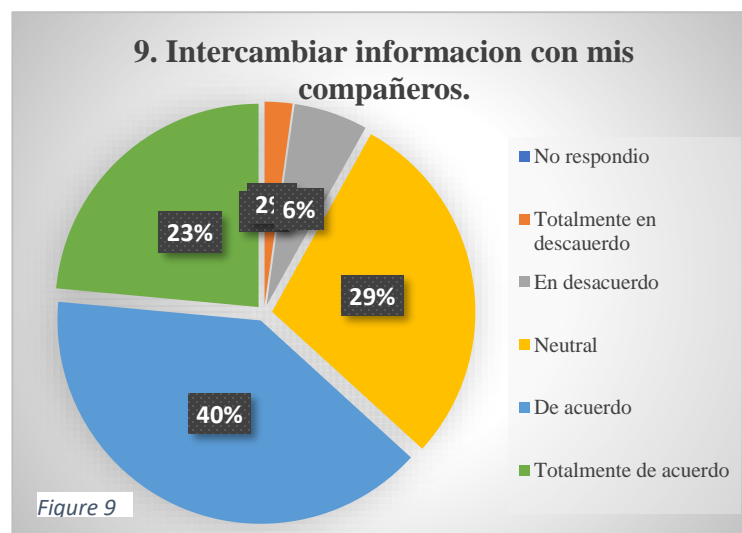


As it can be seen in figure 8 the importance of the interaction among students when comparing their answers with one another yielded interesting results. There are two major percentages between *neutral* and *agree* with 32 percent and 38 percent each which means that most students consider important to compare answers. 24 percent of students *totally agreed* with the above consideration. Almost a third of the participants selected *neutral* which seems that students are not totally sure that comparing their answers with peers helps them improve their listening development.

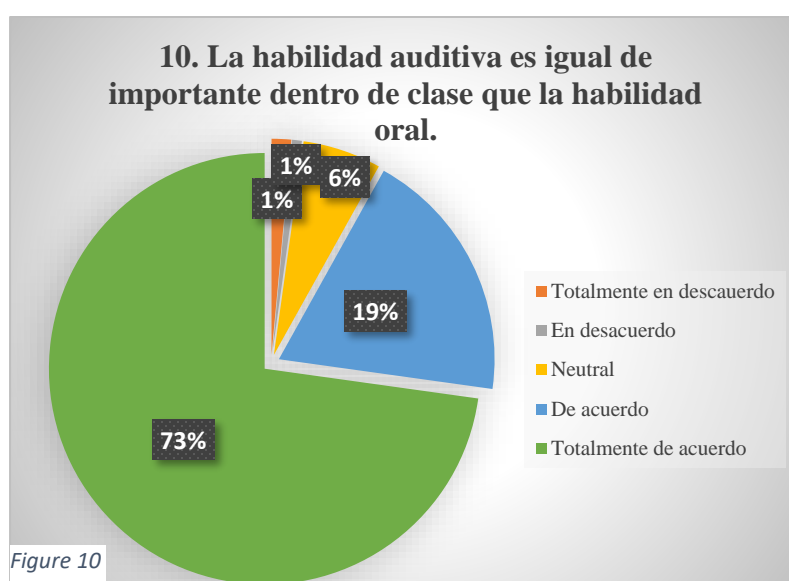
Figure 6



In figure 9, it can be perceived that the exchange of information between students about the listening activity brought interesting results. It seems that 40 percent of students who chose the option *agree* like to exchange important information with their partners while 29 percent who chose *neutral* are not sure whether it is advisable to share information or answers or to rely on the situation where the exchange of information happens. Also, given the fact that only 23 percent of participants opted by *totally agree* it shows that participants who really like to exchange information is low. This could be explained by the fact that some students observe that the exchange of information helps to reinforce the information given in an audio and it seems to be important for them to answer an activity.

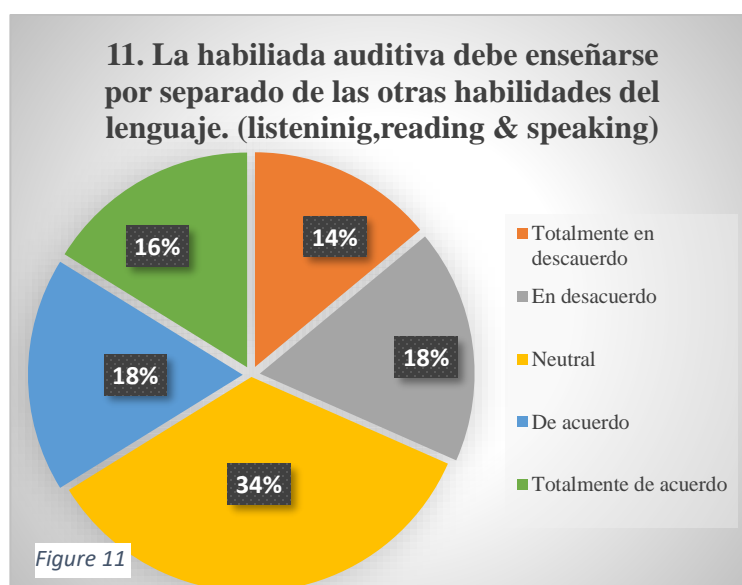


In figure 10 it can be observed that regarding the importance of the listening skill compared to the oral one there is an incredible number of students, a 73 percent, who totally agreed that the importance of speaking is just as relevant as listening in order to have a better performance during listening activities. Only 19 percent *agreed*, and 6 percent were *neutral*. This item with the 73 percent of participants is surprising because it shows students are aware of the importance of listening inside the classroom as this reinforces their ability to interact orally with peers.

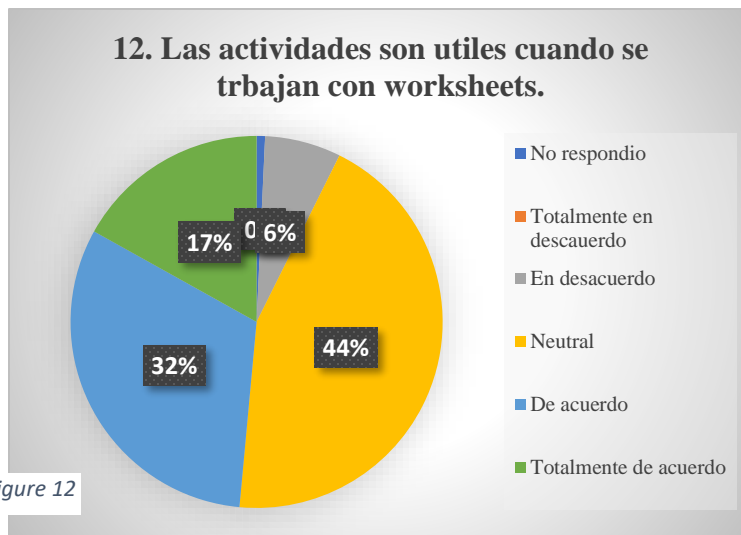


It can be noticed in figure 11 how participants take the importance of the listening ability when asked if it should be taught separately from the other abilities (speaking, reading, and writing) or not. It is important to highlight that participants optioned the items in a proportional manner that can be seen in the figure. 34 percent of the participants selected *neutral*, as the highest percentage and it shows that those participants are not decided whether it is, or it is not good for them the combination of the four abilities or the separation of them. From there, there is the same among of students into two items; 18 percent *agree*, and 18 percent *disagree* with the idea of mixing or separating the abilities. While 16 percent *totally agreed*, and 14 percent *totally disagree*. This is interesting because two extremes can be seen where students would accept the teaching of abilities

separately and those who would like this to be done integrated. At the end, these results show three main portions where two extremes have their own perception about how language should be taught and a group of students who do not know what to choose as it is shown as the highest percentage as *neutral*.



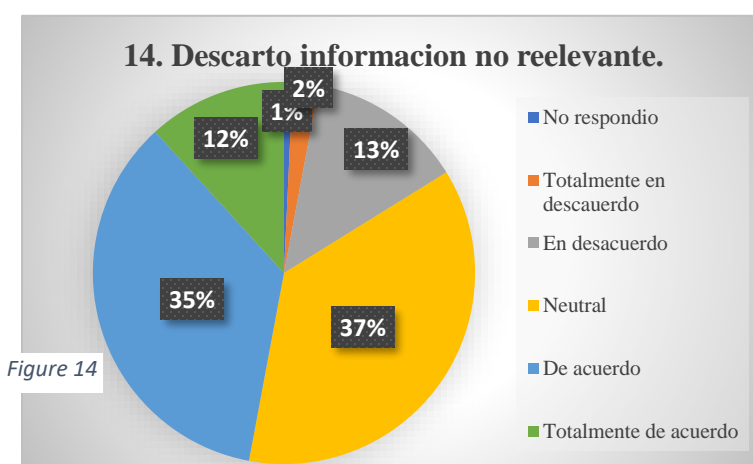
From the results shown in figure 12, students perceive the use of worksheets while working on listening as good. It can be seen that most of the participants were *neutral* with 44 percent of participation followed by 32 percent who optioned *agree* and only 17 percent opted by totally agree. This means that almost 49 percent of participants perceive worksheets as useful to be used in the listening practice of a class as worksheets are for students to recognize and reaffirm the knowledge, they previously have before the listening activity. Only 6 percent of participants disagreed with the use of worksheets.



In figure 13, it can be observed that using previous knowledge to answer a listening activity takes an important role in the class listening activities. 45 percent of participants *agree while a 33 percent totally agree*, this means that almost 78 percent use their previous knowledge as a tool to understand a listening clip. 18 percent was *neutral while 3 percent and 1 percent* disagreed and totally disagreed accordingly. Using previous knowledge is a macro skill (Richards, 1985) where previous events or ideas help student infer and predict the answers without even listening to the audio and they can later confirm their answers when the audio is played.

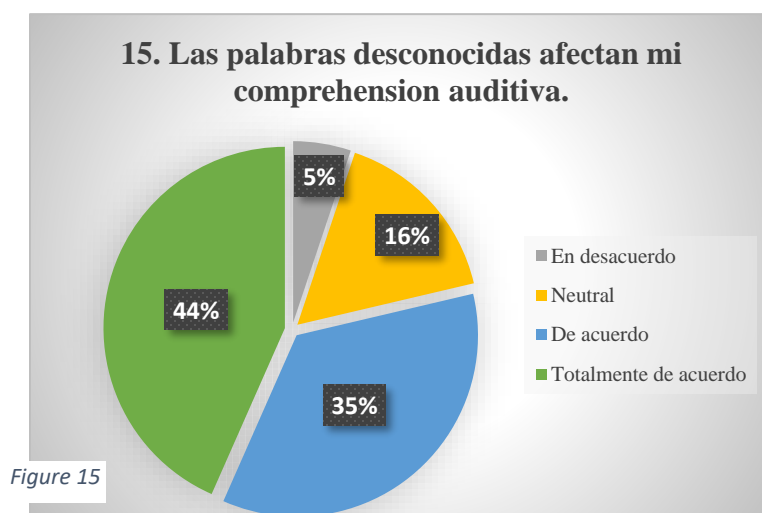


Regarding discarding irrelevant information while listening, it can be visualized in figure 14 that 35 percent agreed, and 12 percent totally agreed which means that almost half of the participants usually dismiss such information they do not consider relevant for the answering of the activity. 37 percent chose *neutral* while 13 percent selected *disagree*, 2 percent *totally disagree*, and 1 percent *did not respond*. These results express that micro skill of dismissing information (Richards, 1985) is a strategy that students find useful to avoid oversaturation of information in order to respond questions accurately. This also helps students to detect key words and differentiate words that are not that important to answer the questions in the listening exercise.

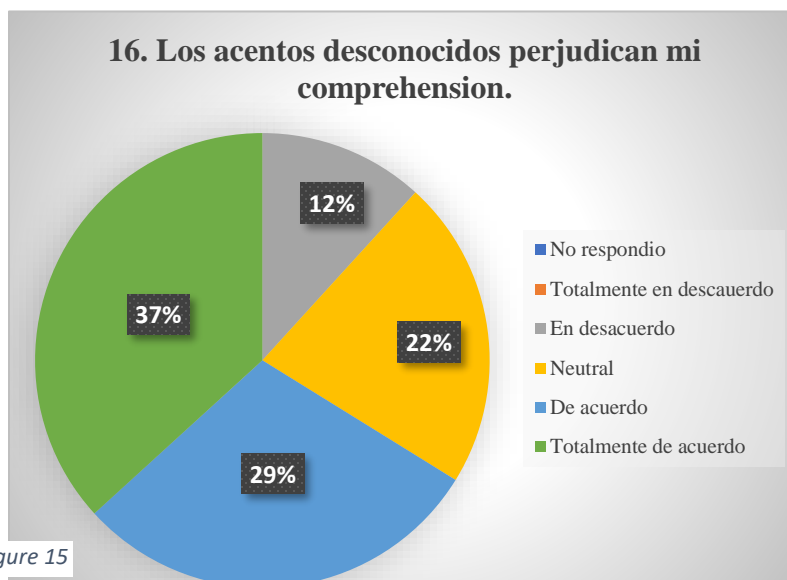


In figure 15, it is shown the question concerning to how unknown meanings of words affect listening comprehension. 44 percent is the highest percentage with *totally agree* and 35 percent *agreed* which means that an overall of 79 percent of the participants consider that not knowing meanings can affect their understanding of what they are listening. Followed by *neutral* with 16 percent and *disagree* with 5 percent. Detecting unknown words (Richards, 1985) is a macro skill that it seems students need to practice more as it was shown in the results above. Not knowing meanings affect participants' listening comprehension for their activities since the meaning of a

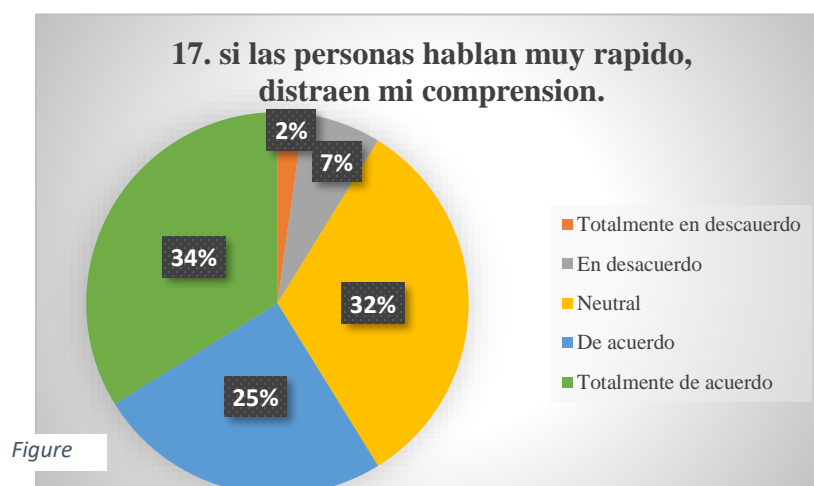
word can be the key to answer an exercise and if the meaning is missing, it is going to be difficult to understand the audio itself.



In figure 16 on the topic of accents in language it can be observed that most participants optioned *totally agree* with 37 percent followed by 29 percent who optioned agree, this means that most students find it difficult to understand a listening when the accent is hard to follow inside the listening. This can hinder their comprehension. 22 percent were *neutral* which means they do not know whether accents affect their comprehension or not. Finally, a 12 percent *disagreed* which shows a small number of students who have no issues with accents. It can be noticed, in this item, that most students have problems listening to unknown accents and it affects their listening comprehension. This is categorized as a micro skill where students need to recognize stress patterns, stressed and unstressed words pronounced, and intonation contours to decipher the message (Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010).

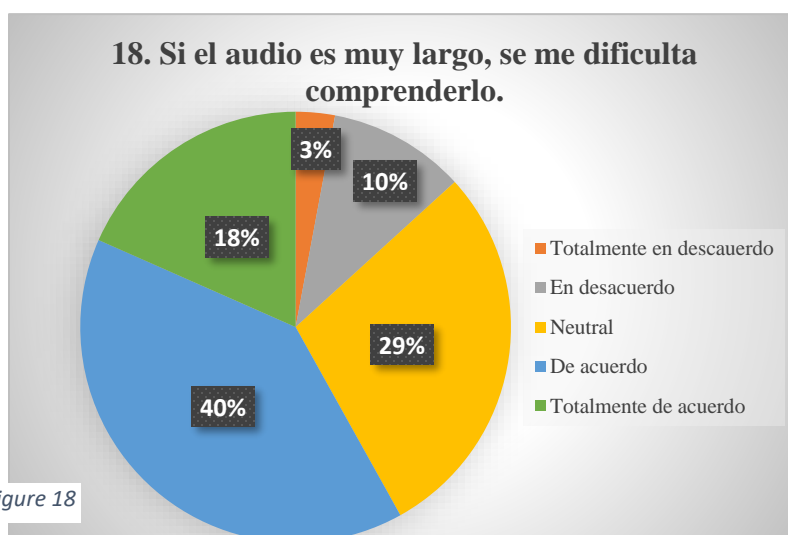


In figure 17 it is shown aspects related to how the speed of speech can affect comprehension which it is also a micro skill. 34 percent optioned *totally agree*; 25 percent optioned *agree* and 32 percent were *neutral*. It can be noticed that for more than half of the participants, 59 percent, the speed of the speech of people talking in audios it is relevant as it can block their comprehension to answer a listening exercise. The neutral options can show that participants did not know if this was a relevant factor in their listening comprehension. Finally, 7 percent disagreed, and a 2 percent totally disagrees which shows a small portion of students who have no problems with the speed of speech for their understanding. According to Richards (1985) this micro skill has to do with how a person processes the speech at different speeds and gets the most information out of it for a specific purpose.

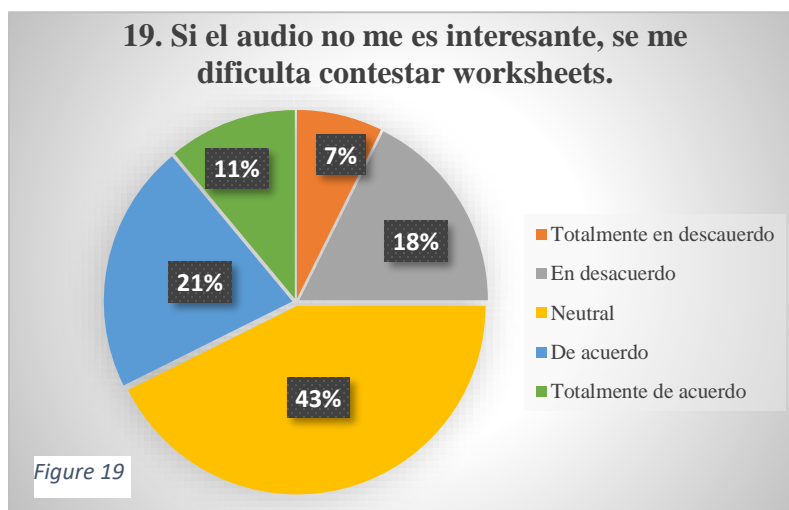




In figure 18 it can be seen how the length of an audio makes it difficult for participants to comprehend. Most of the participants opted for the option *agree* with 40 percent, 18 percent *totally agreed* followed by *neutral* with 29 percent. More than half of the participants believe that the length of a listening exercise can make it hard for them to follow the conversation and respond the exercises. The length of an audio can affect students' comprehension as it is related to a micro skill that processes the speech at different speeds. According to Brown & Abeywickrama (2010) this is a micro skill, and it processes the speech depending on the length of the audio whether the listener can understand all the given information or not.



In figure 19 it can be visualized how the particular interest of students in regard to the audio can determine their comprehension. 43 percent of the respondents optioned *neutral* which means that they probably are not sure about how to respond to this item. 21 percent chose *to agree* and 11 selected *totally agreed* which expresses that students understand better if the topic in the audio is connected to their interests. Also, 18 percent *disagree*, and 7 percent *totally disagreed*, it is noticeable that these participants connect with the audio no matter the topic which makes them more efficient in terms of their attention and comprehension. These results set the precedent that the interest in the audio depends on external factors that might be affecting their development in the class.



As it can be seen, the first part of the instrument yielded a lot of important information about the opinion of the participants about the listening activities. The participants used their experience in their classes to answer the survey and it gave the study lots of rich numerical data. In the section below, the results of the qualitative part of the instrument are presented, as students complemented the survey with their responses in the open-ended questions.

### 4.3 Qualitative results

There were four open-ended questions added to the instrument (questionnaire section) to complement and triangulate the information. The following are the salient categories that emerged from the questions with some of those relevant quotes to illustrate what participants responded.

#### Visual support

The participants expressed that listening activities that include visual support are easier for them to comprehend and those give a contextual idea of what the audio is talking about and relate it with a visual aid. Harmer (1992) mentions that visual support can be explored with videos and with the integration of the four abilities. The participants are interested in practicing in their classes with more activities containing visual aids. As discussed before, visual support is key for the participants to relate the content of the audio with something visual as a reading text, a picture, a movie, or a video, among others. Visual support is, according to the participants, what they really want to be included and addressed in their classes as a complement to their listening activities. Here are the quotations from the participants:

*“On videos, I can catch the way they communicate with their expressions, body language, movements, etc.”*

*“When the teacher speaks in English and she uses body language or movements, and she talks slowly for me to comprehend better”*

*“Those with video because the audio by itself sometimes confuses me a bit”*

*“I prefer the visual support, also the listening is important, in my case I need to see the word, pronunciation, intonation, etc. To make it easier”*

### **Authentic material**

It is also observed that participants would like to see authentic materials more often. Brown (2007) mentions that authentic materials can help learners with pronunciation, repetition, and everyday topics since the variation of activities seem to give them more confidence as authentic materials can be a representation of real life. The participants relate activities with authentic material as easier to do since in some cases these materials help participants to better understand the content, rather than simply listening to an audio with a plain conversation in class. The participants express their wish to complement music videos with extra visual support because this may bring their own experience on a particular topic or simply bring back memories when they must previously read a text or a story or talk about what it is going on in social media before listening. It is important to emphasize that participants reported songs as authentic listening activities they wish to have more practice with and that should be added to their classes as students feel songs make the listening activities easier. Perhaps listening to songs or watching movie clips are more appealing or perceived as more authentic. The participants also say that textbook activities are not the sole source of activities they need for their listening development, this means they are requesting more variety both in visual support and authentic materials. Below there are some examples:

*“Maybe a movie clip [scene] or some music, everything randomly presented, sometimes [playing] only audios is tedious”*

*“When they play a song, and you have the lyrics on paper, and you fill it out with the missing words”*

*“Through games, listen to a word that the teacher is saying and writing it down on the board by competing against a partner”*

*“Movies, mainly, in that way you recognize what you hear with what you see equally to the songs with the music”*

*“Audios and videos inside and out of the book, the integration of dynamic topics, movies, music, audiobooks (short)”*

### **Length of the audio**

According to participants' responses, they lose track of the audio when the teacher plays it several times and, also, when more than two people interact in the audio, it makes the conversation difficult to understand. Richards (1985) considers the length of the audio as a factor that interferes with students' understanding and therefore, a problem that can be solved by putting into practice micro skills such as inferring situations or using short-term memory. According to the participants, it is easy when the audio of the activity is short in length as participants seem to lose track of the audio and therefore, interest in the activity. The length interferes negatively or positively on the participant's development during the playing of an audio. Here are some examples listed below:

*“I believe that short audios are easier and clear, when I know most of the words they say”*

*“Those [exercises] which have long audios, and we do not understand them in the first round, it is then repeated several times, and this is tedious and boring”*

*“When they play a long audio with similar answers to other questions, and we have to identify which question they refer to”*

*“Those activities that last less than two minutes and have illustrations because it helps me to visualize the context”*

### **Accent and speed**

Participants expressed that accent and speed are the issues that affect their listening comprehension. For example, Richards (1985) mentions that accent and speed are listening micro skills that can undoubtedly affect listening comprehension whether in a positive or negative way. For example, accent and speed represent a difficulty for students since their ability to understand is avoided by trying to differentiate the accent and keep up with the speed of the speakers' speech. Also, it can be observed that participants somewhat acknowledge that pronunciation exercises could benefit them when the teacher combines listening and speaking as they become familiar with speed and accent. The following are extracts to illustrate:

*“The listening on the learning platform, to me, the accent is still difficult to understand”*

*“Listening to audios and videos on the learning platform, to me, they are difficult to understand given the fact that the accent is confusing, and they talk fast”*

*“Long length audios confuse me a lot, also the British accent”*

*“The sounds of the words making use of the phonological phonetic charts”*

*“Colloquial language or pronunciation”*

## Vocabulary

The participants say that knowing the vocabulary that the audio includes beforehand will help them overcome the listening exercises and understand the audio better. Students also would like to see more vocabulary according to the context of the activities they are listening to so they can match their previous knowledge with new knowledge. Brown (2007) points out that vocabulary can help learners relate the new presented information to previous knowledge as this is an important factor in the listening comprehension process. For instance, participants mentioned that the lack of vocabulary is a factor that interferes with their listening since it is important for them to know the vocabulary to comprehend the listening exercises or topics. In this regard, participants also mentioned that familiar topics make their listening comprehension easier by linking their previous knowledge to the ongoing activity and vocabulary. Participants report that vocabulary is easier to understand when the listening covers everyday topics because they can contextualize vocabulary. Some examples are presented below:

*“Those [activities] which the audio is related to the topic of the class, so, I have the vocabulary to understand it”*

*“Where the audio is too long, with words that we have not seen before and if the context it is not introduced first”*

*“Audios that provide relevant information and with our vocabulary to increase our repertoire”*

*“About daily life situations where phrases are used over the day”*

*“The majority [activities] are easy, as long as you know the vocabulary, so, you can understand what they are talking about and mainly, you can understand the audio”*

### **Communicative activities (listening and speaking)**

Participants are interested in having a variety of different listening exercises because they feel the activities they practice the most are from the textbook only. For example, activities such as filling in the gaps or writing down key words from a listening exercise and later have a discussion with their partners are very common in their classes. The participants would like to see more integrated communicative activities added into their classes, especially, when listening relates to speaking. Harmer (1992) mentions that integration of the four abilities plays an important role in the language learning since it gives students more tools to be involved with the language and subsequently in the listening exercises. Practicing more with role plays, including interview simulations, confirming what they hear in an audio in a spoken way, having discussions about the topics heard in the listening in groups or in pairs as to resemble what communication is or even the opportunity to have a conversation with a native speaker are some of those suggested activities. Participants seem to like the idea of different types of activities not included in their textbook, activities where they can listen to daily-basis topics, to native English speakers, or at the very least, a mix of listening textbook activities with more “real” ones. Here is what some of the participants said:

*“We practice a lot of speaking in class and I believe listening goes hand to hand with the correct pronunciation of the words”*



*"When the teacher combines listening and speaking and makes us interact with each other"*

*"Listening comprehension, listen to native speakers' audios and answer questions about it or write down a text with what we understood"*

*"Role-plays are interesting and help me to understand different situations"*

*"An interview where we had to answer questions about it"*

#### **4.4 Chapter summary**

As a conclusion, it can be seen that both sections of the instrument are linked by the participants' answers. The information presented shows that almost half of the participants' answers agree in the categories regarding micro and macro skills like reading exercises before the audio, the use of memorization, and taking notes of key words. They also agree in using authentic materials as visual support in the shape of images, notes, vocabulary, short reading passages, and context of the audios before doing listening activities. Also, participants agree that using their previous knowledge can help concentrate easily on the activities and that these activities can help them use both speaking and listening. All data found in the instrument are addressed by the participants in the Likert scale and in the open-ended questions section as a strategy of triangulation to better explain the information obtained.

## Chapter 5

### 5.1 Introduction

This study was undertaken to investigate about the students' perception about the assessment of their listening ability and see what they have to say about how this listening ability is assessed in the classroom through different activities. The results of this study show what participants consider to be those elements they require to improve their listening in class. The results also show what the participants like about their listening activities currently available in their classes. The participants also described a series of activities they feel more confident to answer during their listening activities. As a result, in this chapter it is going to be addressed what the students said about their listening classes and discuss limitations, future research and general conclusions.

### 5.2 Research questions and answers

#### **Which listening activities do target language II LEI students practice in the classroom?**

According to the study, participants' perception is that they almost always practice with the activities that come from their participants' coursebook, those activities as listening to certain information given in the unit of the coursebook they are using. This can give the idea that, as students get bored with these listening activities, any change of listening activities and strategies inside the class seems to be unnoticeable.

Furthermore, the study also shows that participants do not necessarily perceive group or pair work strategies as beneficial, particularly for listening activities. It is inferred that participants may not feel comfortable working with peers after listening to an exercise and then compare responses. This may show no benefit if they caught different things in a listening exercise, but they cannot understand why unless the teacher explains it. On the other hand, they seem to enjoy

working along with music and activities with visual support and worksheets or videos as any type of support is welcomed to make them understand the audio better. Participants also appear to practice with memorization of certain information during their listening activities as it helps them to link the information stored in their brains with what they hear.

### **Which listening strategies are missing in target language II LEI students' classes?**

Those strategies that include activities with any kind of visual support as videos, audios linked to images or texts, according to most participants, are missing or are not used as they would like in their classes. Also, the time to take notes between replaying the tape and think about what they heard should be longer. Students also say that more vocabulary given before the audio itself is missing in their classes.

They also require more real-life material that the participants can use daily and that are about topics they care about or affect their life directly or indirectly. Another aspect the participants reported to need is the integration of the four abilities (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). The use of listening with speaking is also mentioned in the study as the participants start to analyze the link between the two and between reading and writing.

### **Which listening strategies do target Language II LEI students require?**

According to the results, participants require the use of visual aids to complement the listening exercise. They also require the inclusion of more listening activities in groups or in pairs that can offer them with evident benefits for their listening comprehension. Participants may feel more comfortable working with peers if they receive feedback on their answers especially after comparing responses. Activities including the interaction with native speakers is also a requested activity.

The use of real-life topics and authentic materials (videos, magazines, comics, newspapers) that they can use in their daily basis as a complement of their classes. In addition, more interaction in target language between the teacher and the students inside and out of the classroom. A gradual increase in the level of difficulty of the listening activities inside the classroom is also required by students since they feel that the activities are difficult since the beginning of the course.

### **5.3 Summary of key findings**

Micro skills such as retaining chunks of language in short-term memory, recognize the stress patterns in the pronunciation, recognize the different meanings of a word depending on the context and many other strategies applied into listening seem to be unnoticeable among students since they feel that they only practice with traditional listening activities (for example: listening to audios to answer comprehension questions, pronunciation exercises to identify sounds or words, listening activities to be completed in the textbook, etc.). Unknown words do affect student's performance since the participants may overfocused on the unknown word and they end up missing the thread of the audio and fail in grasping the general idea. Unknown accents, speech fast speed, and long duration of audios also affect participants' comprehension since these are parts of the audios that can make them lose concentration when they try to identify the variants of the speakers.

The use of macro skills such as inferring situations from previous knowledge, distinguish between literal and implied meaning, use of body and kinetic language as many other strategies used in listening appear to go also unnoticeable among students since they feel that they only practice with the same traditional listening activities and strategies. Students also need to activate their previous knowledge by linking the content of the class with topics that the students might already have experienced to make sure they understand what they are listening to. According to

the results, students demand the integration of the four abilities (speaking, listening, reading and writing) since every ability is taught separately or not consistently inside the classroom.

Another finding is that students really like to use activities that include visual support aids for them to activate their previous knowledge. Students like reading the exercise before the listening and supplement listening activities with images. Participants report that listening activities that include worksheets, as visual support, help them link the information they see or read before they do the listening. Also, participants would like to see more videos in class to be used as a listening activity to support what they hear and connect it to visual things such as lip movement and body language. The participants mentioned their interest in exercises with music (music of their interest) and fill-in the blanks with the lyrics ever since they hear music in English everywhere and they do not really know what the song says.

Another key finding is the authentic material like magazines, newspapers, Facebook publications and blogs since students mentioned them as being missing in their classes. In addition, authentic material is a much-needed material in the target language that can be easily found everywhere, and it is about real-life situations as news or stories. This type of material is necessary to be included inside the classroom since students can observe how people from other parts of the world express themselves and how a certain chunk of information is transmitted through or simply to see how the target language from different perspectives.

#### **5.4 Contributions of the study**

For LEI professors, they could apply a diagnostic ability test as this study can contribute to approach certain activities or strategies that would make the teaching-learning process easier for them and for their students. This may also contribute to offer more tools to those teachers already

innovating in their classes when teaching listening. As for other teachers, this may help them to consider such options to be included in their teaching to transform their classes besides using traditional methods and materials. As for LEI students, they can better focus on their listening ability and in a certain way can improve their speaking with the integration of the abilities. In addition, students at LEI not only can practice the listening ability in the classroom with different strategies and activities but also, they can apply those strategies in their own teaching practice by the time they become English language teachers. Also, the students can recognize their learning styles, their micro and macro skills and try to self-teach and become more independent when looking for content that may be of interest to them and link it with their classes outside the classroom.

### **5.5 Limitations of the study**

The limitations of the study come from the time of the application since it was in a really short time. The instrument was applied during a week in different schedules every day and the time to answer it was only a few minutes. The fact that the application of the study was in a week is because the semester was ending and the next week was set for finals. The instrument was applied at the end of every class since it was the only chance the teacher allowed for its application. Despite the fact students did not refuse to answer the instrument, most of them were in a rush to leave the classroom, this could, in turn, affect the responses for the study since they were overwhelmed with previous classes.

Also, an interview with teachers was planned to contrast what they would perceive against what their students perceived but because of the limitations of time and that the semester was ending it was not feasible to be done. Also, some of those teachers tried to be contacted individually but it was difficult to search them as it was a different semester; therefore, the study heavily focused

on the thick part of the numerous students' responses. Also, the study is missing some interviews with the students to have a deeper approach to what their answer were like, in a more detailed manner, as the instrument was anonymous, and it wasn't possible to track participants plus the issue of timing. Finally, the questions of the questionnaire may have somewhat led in answers in the open-ended questions since they can use the information that was presented before and some of the information is repeated throughout the answers.

### **5.6 Directions for further research**

As stated above, another study can focus on asking teachers and students to see the contrast of both parties in terms of perceived listening strategies used inside the target language II class. Also, another study can focus on interviewing both groups in a minor scope of students and teachers with more questions and more time to apply instruments. Given the results of this study, another research can be about the use of visual support to complement listening and the advantages/drawbacks of it. Another study that can be followed is the relation of listening and speaking and how they can be integrated with reading and writing.

### **5.7 Conclusions**

As a conclusion, it is worth noting that a big portion of students feel that listening is boring and that it is not well carried out in their target language classes. They feel confused and they do not see the use of the listening activities in real life, for example, listening activities that involve how to continue conversations, listening to the news to report or explain something, listening to others on social media to reply, etc., which is a relevant mismatch to consider. However, participants also reported that some teachers are trying to innovate in their classes when teaching listening by using what they have at hand while others seem to simply continue using traditional

methods and materials they already have, so there is not an attempt to transform their teaching. Moreover, students are not practicing their listening at home as they urgently need to discover what strategies and activities can offer benefits for their listening improvement. Finally, the lack of evident ability integration of listening with speaking, reading, and writing it may also affect their ability to communicate in a more interactive manner as the way you do in real life since when you are speaking, you also need to listen to or when you write, you also need to read to complement your understanding.



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## APPENDIX

BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

Género: (F) (M) Edad: \_\_\_\_\_

El propósito de este cuestionario es obtener información para mi proyecto de investigación de tesis, el cual está enfocado en las estrategias y actividades auditivas que los estudiantes participantes utilizan en el aprendizaje del inglés. El manejo de la información obtenida será totalmente confidencial.

Completa la encuesta encerrando el número de acuerdo a tu criterio.

**1 = Totalmente en desacuerdo. 2 = En desacuerdo. 3 = Neutral. 4 = De acuerdo.**

**5 = Totalmente de acuerdo.**

Las siguientes estrategias me ayudan a comprender un audio en clase, tales como:

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Leer el ejercicio antes de escuchar el audio                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Memorizar una porción del audio para responder un ejercicio (worksheet) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Identificar el contexto del audio                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Anotar palabras clave   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Confirmar mis respuestas  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Retarme a entender todo en la primera reproducción del audio            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Trabajar en parejas o en equipo   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Comparar respuestas con mis compañeros                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Intercambiar Información con mis compañeros                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Pienso que...

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. La habilidad auditiva es igual de importante dentro de clase que la habilidad oral                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. La habilidad auditiva debe enseñarse por separado de las otras habilidades del lenguaje (Listening, Reading & speaking) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Las actividades son útiles cuando se trabajan con worksheets  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Cuando escucho un audio en clase...

13. Uso mi conocimiento previo para responder la actividad	1	2	3	4	5
14. Descarto información no relevante	1	2	3	4	5
15. Las palabras desconocidas afectan mi comprensión auditiva	1	2	3	4	5
16. Los acentos desconocidos perjudican mi comprensión	1	2	3	4	5
17. Si las personas hablan muy rápido, distraen mi comprensión	1	2	3	4	5
18. Si el audio es muy largo, se me dificulta comprenderlo	1	2	3	4	5
19. Si el audio no me es interesante, se me dificulta contestar worksheets	1	2	3	4	5

**Las siguientes preguntas pretenden obtener información personal acerca de su habilidad auditiva, Por favor responda de manera libre.**

20. Para ti, ¿Cuáles han sido las actividades de listening más difíciles que has llevado a cabo en clase?

21. Para ti, ¿Cuáles han sido las actividades de listening más fáciles que has llevado a cabo en clase?

22. ¿Cuál crees que ha sido la actividad de listening más interesante que se ha llevado a cabo en tu clase de Lengua Meta II?

23. De acuerdo a tu experiencia en tu clase de lengua meta, ¿Cuál actividad de listening te gustaría que se practicara frecuentemente en tu clase de Lengua Meta II?

**¡GRÁCIAS POR TU PARTICIPACIÓN!**