
**University of El Salvador
School of Arts and Sciences
Foreign Language Department**



Topic:

The impact of top-down listening strategies and bottom-up listening strategies instruction in the students' listening performance

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Student's Listening Performance

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Introduction

The importance of listening in language learning has only been recognized relatively recently (Oxford, 1993), since the role of listening comprehension in language learning was taken for granted, merited little research and hardly ever pedagogical attention. Although listening played an important role in audio-lingual methods, students only listened to repeat and developing a better pronunciation (Feyten, 1991). However, in recent years there has been an increased focus on second language ability because of its perceived importance in language learning acquisition (Sadighi, 2006: 1). Language learning depends on listening since it provides the aural input that serves as the basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken communication (Guo & Wills, 2003: 3).

It has been recently discussed that listening is the fundamental skill for language acquisition. For it has been considered as the main vehicle through which people gain a large portion of their education (Bulletin, 2004). In fact, input hypothesis suggested that people acquire language by the linguistic information they hear (Krashen, 1985). In addition, the message understood and processed will serve for reinforcing output. Successively, while processing the information heard students compare and integrate their previous knowledge to the information acquired after listening. Afterwards, the processed information is retained for future use (Earway, 1984).

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Understanding spoken language is essentially an inferential process (Rost, 2002); linguistic knowledge and world knowledge interact in parallel fashion as listeners create a mental representation of what they have heard (Hulstijn, 2003). Listeners apply these knowledge sources using top-down and bottom-up processes (Lynch & Mendelsohn, 2002; Rost 2002; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Listeners make use of top- down processes when they use context and prior knowledge (topic, genre, culture and other schema knowledge stored in long-term memory) to build a conceptual framework for comprehension. On the other hand, listeners make use of bottom-up processes when they construct meaning by accretion, gradually combining increasingly larger units of meaning from the phoneme-level up to discourse-level features. Bottom-up processes are developed through practice in word segmentation skills.

Therefore, it seems essential for EFL learners to acquire these processes, in order for them to become proficient when using their listening skills for solving tests and other class activities. Thus, as EFL learners, students trying to get their bachelor degree on teaching English at the University of El Salvador are required to master their listening skill for academic purposes. In that sense, there were two groups of Advanced- Intensive- English II students from the Lic. En Idioma Inglés Opción Enseñanza involved in this study, a control group and an experimental group. The aim of this research was to explore the whether or not top- down and bottom- up listening strategies instruction has a significant impact on students' performance on listening tests. Results are deployed at the end of this research paper with its respective conclusions and recommendations.

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By: Jaime Roberto Pérez

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Topic: The impact of top-down listening strategies and bottom-up listening strategies instruction in the students listening performance.

Statement of the Problem

Around the world today, there are more and more children and adults who, for being well educated persons, for academic purposes and economic reasons, are becoming bilingual or in some other scenarios multilingual. Whether for pleasure, business, education or so on, learning a second language has become quite important (Archibald, 2006). However, in order for a person to be proficient in a second language it is necessary to master the four macro skills the language is composed of, which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. In spite of its importance, second language learners often regard listening as the most difficult language skill to learn and develop (Hasan,2000; Graham, 2003). This is due to that listening is an invisible mental process making it difficult to describe (Vandergrift, 2007). Besides that, for a learner it is really important to develop this skill since it is the skill that helps them to incorporate new vocabulary (Richard, 2008)

Students' and teachers' Insights about Listening

“Listening is the basic skill in language learning, without listening skill, learners will never learn to communicate effectively. In fact, over 50 % of the time that students spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening” (Nunan, 1998). However, in a 28- item learning-strategy survey (see annex A) along with a listening test

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(see annex B) run as a preamble of this study to 49 Advanced -English students from the teaching English major at the University of El Salvador, seems that they make little or even no use of strategies that involve metacognitive processes for successful comprehension, only 15 out of 49 claimed that they occasionally listen to English content. The listening diagnose test's results show that students are having a really difficult time facing listening tasks and applying the right strategies for the effective completion of the assignment. Nonetheless, as language learners and future teachers, advanced students are required to develop listening accordingly for understanding L2 input and aid to the development of other skills (Rost, 2002).

As a result of students' low interest on the listening skill, their weaknesses arouse in listening activities. Based on a preliminary listening test run to 49 advanced students their lack of top- down strategies was reflected. Only 29 students were able to use top- down strategies to order a process which required them to focus attention and set a purpose for the task. Besides being unable to focus attention and setting up a purpose for the task students were also unable to get the main idea of the speaker's opinion about the message that his company conveys. On the other hand, students were asked to grab specific details out of the listening text in order to apply bottom-up strategies. Students were unable to identify specific words such as transportation means, and the name of a country. This leads to the need of listening strategy instruction.

On the other side, the researcher gets not only the opinion of the participants, but also the instructors' opinion about the listening skill, their development and students' performance on the skill. The teachers that were interviewed were the ones that taught

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Advanced -Intensive- English II courses on previous years. There were 8 teachers that answered a 9 semi-open interview questions regarding the listening skill (see annex C).

According to the staff of teachers that taught Advanced- Intensive- English II, they agreed that the listening skill is one of the most difficult skills to learn develop and acquire. Besides that, they pointed out that the listening skill is one that requires physical and mental activity in order to succeed on it. Mental activity, regarding to the way the information is processed in the learners' brain, and physically since once the information is processed the learner has to respond to it in a faster way. Furthermore, the staff of teachers state that they do not pay special attention to the listening skill; they treat it in the same way as they treat the rest of them namely; speaking, writing, reading. Moreover, the staff of teachers not only criticized their job as instructors but also, highlighted the importance of students' attitude toward the listening skill. Most of the teachers consider that there is not enough training on such important skill as listening so that, students have to look for the opportunities to practice by themselves. However, they consider that students do not look for those opportunities and whenever they have to face real listening they are not able to understand it and they get scared to respond to it. Finally, they gave some recommendations for students as well for themselves, teachers in charge of any English subject at the University of El Salvador. For students, pointed out that they must practice English in any situation so in that way they are not going to be improving the listening skill only, but the rest of the skills the language is composed of. Furthermore, they point out that the teachers have to identify students' weaknesses and strengths so that they can focus on the weak areas and give more training on those areas in which students have a hard time with.

Rationale

Listening according to Rost (2002) can be defined in its broadest sense as the process of receiving what the speaker says (receptive orientation); constructing and representing meaning (constructive orientation); negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding (collaborative orientation); and creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy (transformative orientation). Furthermore, Vandergrift (2007) states that listening is an invisible mental process making it difficult to describe in which second language learners have to apply some strategies to succeed on it. This study is aiming at researching advanced -English students' performance in listening tasks as well as the strategies applied to comply with such tasks. Moreover, the researchers' challenge is to discover the impact of listening strategies instruction on advanced- English students. Many advanced- English students show low performance on classroom listening activities and tests. This fact was discovered through a preliminary diagnose in which students' insights about listening strategies and listening skills were tested. Thus, such results showed the need of being taught how to listen effectively through the use of strategies. Therefore, the end of this study is to aid advanced- English students to enhance their performance in listening tasks through strategy instruction.

Objectives

General:

To explore the effect of top-down and bottom – up listening strategies instruction over student's performance on listening tests.

Specific:

To find the listening strategies used by English Advanced II students.

To identify the types of strategies used by students during listening activities.

Hypothesis

Top - down and bottom- up listening strategies instruction has a significant impact on students' performance on listening tests.

Theoretical Framework

Through the last decades English has become one of the most popular languages that is spoken by almost 400 millions of people that use it as their native language, and by 200 millions of people who have adopted it as their second language around the world (Ene, 2010). According to David Crystal an English language expert “All languages are work in progress. But English globalization, unprecedented in the history of languages”... English is the language of some of the most important components of globalization such as technology and international trade. When it comes to technology English evidently is its primary language. Although translated to numerous languages, most of the social networks as well as, the most innovative technological devices are first released in English, which makes all kind of people being exposed to English as well as motivate them to make further efforts to master the language. With the spread of multinational enterprises, outsourcing locations (call centers) overseas English opens up job opportunities for people everywhere in the globe. Therefore, it is a requirement for almost everybody who wants to integrate the workforce to speak English as a second language.

In general, courses on speaking skill have a prominent place in language programs around the world to develop fluency in the target language (Richard, 2008). Most of students focus on this skill since they consider that this skill is the most important and for that reason, it is the main mean in which people communicate, but this is not the only way to show proficiency in second language learning, there are more skills to master and to communicate effectively. Another skill is reading, as it provides important sources of grammar and vocabulary input, language learners often look for articles, stories, poems,

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announcements, letters, labels, signs, bills, recipes, schedules, questionnaires, cartoons, etc. Besides that, writing is another skill that language learners have to master in, since good writing conveys a meaningful message and uses English to communicate their thoughts, students engage the reading skill along with the writing skill. Moreover, Listening skills are vital for language learners. It is actually one of the first skills that are developed, its importance lies on the fact that students get exposed to new vocabulary and pronunciation input.

In recent years, listening has been examined in relation not only to comprehension but also on language learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2004). This is due to the fact that listening can provide much of the input and data that learners receive in the second language acquisition. This attaches listening to the role of noticing that listening can be part of the process of second language learning by which learners can incorporate new words forms and structures into developing communicative competence (Richard, 2008). In other words, a learner acquires the language understanding its structures and all its segments. By doing this, a learner is able to give meaning to the input as well as recreating it (Krashen, 2004). Furthermore, linking listening tasks to speaking tasks provides opportunities for students to notice how it is used and therefore they can reproduce it in different contexts (Richard, 2008).

The importance of listening in language learning has only been recognized relatively recently (Oxford, 1993), since the role of listening comprehension in language learning was taken for granted merited little research and hardly ever pedagogical attention. Although listening played an important role in audio-lingual methods, students only listen to repeat and develop a better pronunciation (Feyten, 1991). However, in recent years there

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has been an increased focus on second language ability because of its perceived importance in language learning acquisition (Sadighi, 2006: 1). Language learning depends on listening since it provides the aural input that serves as the basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken communication (Guo& Wills, 2003: 3).

It has been recently discussed that listening is the fundamental skill for language acquisition. For it has been considered as the main mean through which people gain a large portion of their education (Bulletin, 2004). In fact, Input hypothesis suggested that people acquire language by the linguistic information they hear (Krashen, 1985). In addition, the message understood and processed will serve for reinforcing output. Successively, while processing the information heard students compare and integrate their previous knowledge to the information acquired after listening. Afterwards, the processed information is retained for future use (Earway, 1984).

Listening is defined as a complex process involving a variety of knowledge sources such as linguistic knowledge, knowledge of the co-text, knowledge about the context in situation, general world knowledge and cognitive and the socio-affective factors. (Buck,2011). Both definitions agree that listening besides being an ability is a process that involves mental activity. As language learners and future teachers, advanced students are required to develop listening accordingly for understanding L2 input and aid to the development of other skills (Rost, 2002).

Bottom-up processes and Top- Down processes

Learning strategies are at the core of language acquisition, without them to be proficient in language is not possible. O'malley and Chamot (1995) define learning strategies as special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning, or retention of the information. These strategies vary from skill to skill; strategies are not of universal use, those differ according to each person's learning styles (Brown, 2006).

Bottom-up processing refers to using the incoming input as the basis for understanding the message. Comprehension begins with the received data that is analyzed as successive levels of organization – sounds, words, clauses, sentences, texts – until meaning is derived.

Comprehension is viewed as a process of decoding (Richards, 2008). This is very useful when learners understand very few words from the incoming signal. Most of learners feel afraid when developing the listening skill, since it is well known that this skill is hard to acquire and it implies a mental process (Vandergrift, 2007); however, when it comes to applying this strategy, learners go through a step-by-step task, they are given the key concepts, the setting, and the background of the topic, so that they can grasp content.

Moreover, this processing is also well used for higher-level students who experience some gaps in listening. Furthermore, bottom-up listening activities can help learners to understand enough linguistic elements of what they hear for them to be able to use their top-down skills to fill in the gaps (Wilson, 2003).

On the other hand, listeners use top- down processes when they use context, prior knowledge (topic, genre, culture, and other schema knowledge in long- term memory) and

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individual units of meaning retained from bottom- up processing to eventually arrive at a reasonable interpretation of the message (Vandergrift, 2010). The speed and effectiveness of these cognitive processes depend on the degree to which L2 listeners are able to process what is heard (Segalowitz, 2003). However, L2 listeners have limited linguistic knowledge in contrast to their native language listener counterparts. To compensate gaps of comprehension, skilled listeners use their metacognitive knowledge to orchestrate appropriate cognitive strategies, contextual cues and other relevant information available to them to inference on what was not understood. When listeners are able to (1) analyse task requirements; (2) activate appropriate listening processes for the task; (3) make appropriate predictions; (4) monitor their comprehension; (5) problem solve to figure out the meaning of what they do not understand, and (6) evaluate the success of their approach they use metacognitive knowledge for successful comprehension (Vandergrift, 2010).

The first approach of listening to be developed was the bottom-up approach. It was developed by researchers working in the 1940s and 1950s. According to the bottom-up approach, listeners build understanding by starting with the smallest units of the acoustic message: individual sounds, or phonemes. These are then combined into words, which, in turn, together make up phrases, clauses, and sentences. According to this approach, therefore, the different types of knowledge necessary in the listening process are applied in a serial, hierarchical fashion (Miller, 2008). Shannon and Weaver (1949), say that the sender encodes a message, which passes along the communication channel in the form of a signal and is then decoded by the receiver. Provided that there is no deficiency in the channel and that both the sender and the receiver are using the same code, successful

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communication is guaranteed, it can take place without any reference to the speaker, hearer, or wider context.

On the other side, the top-down approach was developed when researchers considered the fact that experimental subjects are unable to identify reduced sounds in isolation from the words they form apart of, whereas subjects are quite able to identify shortened words so long as they are presented with the surrounding context (Flowerdew, 2008). This suggests that listeners rely on both characteristics: the acoustic signal and prior contextual knowledge to decode a verbal message. The top-down dimension of L1/L2 listening instruction involves teaching learners to reflect on the nature of listening and to self-regulate their comprehension processes, which aims learners to develop metacognitive knowledge about listening (Goh, 2008). Metacognitive knowledge refers to an individual's understanding of the ways different factors act and interact to affect the course and outcome of learning (Flavell, 1979). It can contribute to effective self-direction and can have positive effects on the outcome of learning (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Eilam & Aharon, 2003).

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter introduces, and contains a discussion of the methodological approach. An experimental method is proposed in order to arrive at answers to the research questions. An overview of the research design then follows, beginning with an outline of the key methods employed, for example, surveys, tests given to the students, interviews with teachers, and a listening strategy instruction course that was provided to the students. Given the importance of design and validity in the choice of research instruments, justification of the method used is provided.

Methodological Approach: Experimental Research

Experimental research is roughly defined as “a way of determining the effect of something on something else” (Gass, 2010). “Experimental research composed by a specific research question, hypothesis, explicitly stated variables, randomly selected groups of participants who are assigned to treatment conditions and/or control groups” (Gass, 2010). “Research questions must be stated explicitly and must have some basis in previous literature, they must be answerable questions, and these questions must be feasible in relation to the time and budget of the problem”. For this study, the main research question reads: To what extent does listening strategy instruction influence on student's performance on listening tests? Some other questions were originated from the main one: what type of listening strategies do students use for solving listening tests? And how does the

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experimental group head the control group in terms of performance? “A hypothesis is a specific statement of prediction. It describes in concrete (rather than theoretical) terms what is expected to happen in the study” (Trochim, 2006). In this research, the hypothesis that the researcher has selected reads: Top- down listening strategies and Bottom- up listening strategies instruction has direct impact on students' listening performance. It may lead to the researcher to validate it and to discover to what extent this happens in the sample group for this study. Besides that, every study has to get variables that will lead the researcher to determine the phenomena that will affect one of them. According to Gass 2010, “variables are characteristics of a class of objects that vary. In experimental research, there are essentially two primary variables of concern: independent and dependent variables.

Independent variables are the objects of investigation. Dependent variables are those that the independent variable is having an effect on”. Based on the hypothesis stated above the Independent variables are: top- down and bottom- up listening strategies instruction, and how the latter influences performance on listening tests namely independent variable.

Furthermore, the manipulation of variables is key in experimental research “the investigator manipulates conditions for the purpose of determining their effect on behavior” (Luzzi, 2011). Another characteristic of experimental research is the random assignment of participants, each individual has an equal chance of being assigned to the conditions of the study (experimental or control)” (Gass, 2010). In this project, the participants are two groups of students that are coursing the Advanced -English II, from which the group A is going to be the experimental one the one that is going to be receiving a listening instruction on listening strategies. Whereas, the control group or group B is the one that is not going to be under any treatment at all. This is done in order to get reliable results that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Participants

Bynard and Hanekon (2005), explain that in research methodology, the term population does not refer to the population of a country, but rather to objects, subjects, phenomena, cases, events or activities specified for the purpose sampling.

In this paper the research population, are the students enrolled in the Advanced-Intensive-English II courses from both majors, Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés Opción Enseñanza and Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas in the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador. That course belongs to the third academic year of the macro-skill development area, corresponding to the semester I of the 2013 academic year. There are eight groups that are receiving the Advanced- English II courses. From those groups a sample was chosen.

The sampling of this study has been selected at random, it is made of two groups that attend their classes in the following schedules: the first group from 6:15 am to 8:00 am and the second group from 1:00 to 3:00 pm, from Monday to Thursday in the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador. The first group is composed of 33 students, in which 21 of them are female and 12 of them are male students; on the other hand, the second group was composed of 31 students in total, in which 17 are female and 14 are male. A total of 64 students are enrolled in this investigation in total they are 38 female students and 26 male ones. The majority of the participants are between the age of 19 to 23 years old, to be more specific a 87% of them, and a 13% of them are over 23 years old. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that all of the students have not received any other English course before they were accepted at the University. All the knowledge they

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have is because they have acquired it at the University of El Salvador in the different English courses that their respective major requires. All of them have studied English for almost two years and six months since they were accepted in either one of both majors.

Instruments

In order to get useful and valid data for this research, the researcher will be running a series of instruments to do it. First, a strategy diagnose test on listening was run.(see annex B) According to the Lake Washington Institute of Technology (2008) it is important since on such survey students show the ability to understand and perform certain tasks by applying the corresponding strategies depending on the task. Besides that, according to Craft (2009), pre-test is a method to get target instruction. He also points out that the main objective of this type of test is to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the population to study. At the same time, the strategies test was along with a listening one (see annex A), both together were run to the sample for this study. Such tests gave the researcher an idea about the students' performance on listening activities. On the other hand, the listening strategies survey provides the researcher with some data about the strategies students are using to face listening tests. From the gotten results on the listening test and for the strategies survey, it seems that students are not prepared enough to face listening activities and that they are not applying the right listening strategies to succeed on it. Those results lead the researchers to implement a training in listening strategies focusing on the bottom-up and top- down strategies (see annex D). Bottom- up strategies are text based and involve a combination of sound, words, and grammar. These strategies include listening for specific

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details, recognizing cognates, and recognizing word order pattern. On the other hand, the top-down strategies are listeners-based in which listeners have to apply their previous knowledge of the topic, the situation or context, etc, these strategies include, listening for the main idea, predicting, drawing inferences, and summarizing. According to Morley (1991), training on listening strategies is important since a person spends more time on listening, and by doing that, the listener learns the importance to get from the listening and learn to discriminate the information that is not useful at all. Besides that, there is an interview (see annex C) that is going to be run to the staff of teachers that taught English-Advanced II last year; this was done with the objective of trying to get the opinion of teachers about the students' performance and get their opinion about the listening strategies they use to teach the listening skill.

Data analysis techniques

Data analysis methods in this study will be determined by the research questions driving the study, and the data collection methods that will be used by the researchers. Data from the interviews with teachers will be analyzed qualitatively in order to get teacher's perspective about listening methods applied by their students as well as their own perspective about listening. To enhance the validity of this study, the interviews will be co-administered. The type of questions will be open-ended (see annex C). As first step, and to make the interview compliant with ethic, teachers will be notified that the interviews will be recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Content analysis will be used to analyze the interview data. Content analysis as defined by Patton (1990), involves identifying, coding

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and categorizing the primary patterns in the data, which means analyzing the content of interviews.

Since a pre-test will be carried out with participant students from the two groups, the experimental (group A) and the control group (group B), the goal of this pre-test will be to get an overall score of where the students stand at in the listening skill prior the investigation. Measures of central tendency will play a key factor in analyzing the results. Measures of central tendency describe how the data cluster together around a central point (W. Eysenck, 2004). Various measures of central tendency and of dispersion will be considered such as mean, mode, and standard deviation. The mean is an average worked out by dividing the total of all participants' scores by the number of participants. The mean in each group will be calculated by adding up all the scores in a given condition, and then divided by the number of participants in that condition. Additionally, the Standard deviation is a measure of dispersal that is of special relevance to the normal distribution; it is the square root of the variance. It counts every score, and it is a sensitive dispersion measure. The final measure of central tendency is the mode. This is simply the most frequently-occurring score. At the end of the investigation, the same pre-test will be handed out to participant students as a post-test (see annex B), this is to enhance the validity of the study, to check if students improved their listening skill throughout the investigation.

Consistency Table Pre-listening test

Topic:			
The impact of top- down listening strategies and bottom- up listening strategies instruction in the students listening performance.			
Problematic :			
¿How does the top-down and bottom-up listening strategies instruction influence students' listening performance?			
Objectives	Hypothesis	Variables	Indicators
To explore the effect of top- down listening strategies instruction and bottom-up listening strategies.	Top-down listening strategies and bottom-up listening strategies instructions have a direct impact in student's listening performance	Independent variable: Top-down listening strategies Bottom- up listening strategies Dependent variable: Students` listening performance	-Using background knowledge -Listening for the main idea -Summarizing -planning -monitoring comprehension -Listening for specific details -Recognizing cognates -Recognizing word order pattern Pre- listening test scores

The chart above represents an overview of the data collected among the two groups regarding the pre- listening test, from which the major indicators were obtained. Those indicators are the areas of listening in which the students present troubles with. The following table represents the indicators that students are not proficient enough, they are classified in low, average, and high performance areas (strategies), in which the low area

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means the indicator (strategy) that students are unaware of and most likely are unable to use, on the other hand the ones that are classified as average, are the indicators that students have the knowledge about them but may be unable to apply properly. The ones classified as the high performance the students handled with more ease.

Low performance areas
Top- down: -Using background knowledge -Listening for the main idea -Summarizing -planning -monitoring comprehension Bottom- up: Listening for specific detail

Average performance areas
Bottom- up -Recognizing cognates -Recognizing word order pattern

High performance areas
Predicting Drawing inferences

From the classification of the areas above, the researcher collected some useful data that arise the necessity to choose from the population in this study a control group and an

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experimental group, in which the experimental group was the one that was chosen to be manipulated and the one that received instruction in the listening strategies that were shown in the pre listening test as the low performance and the average performance, but not neglecting the areas in which students are proficient enough already in the listening skill.

Consistency Table Post- listening test

Topic:			
The impact of top- down listening strategies and bottom- up listening strategies instruction in the students listening performance.			
Problematic :			
¿How does the top-down and bottom- up listening strategies instruction influence students' listening performance?			
Objectives	Hypothesis	Variables	Indicators
To explore the effect of top- down listening strategies and bottom- up listening strategies over the students' listening performance	Top- down listening strategies and bottom-up listening strategies instructions have a direct impact in student's listening performance	<p>Independent variable: Top- down listening strategies</p> <p>Bottom- up listening strategies</p> <p>Dependent variable: Students` listening performance</p>	<p>-Summarizing -Listening for the main idea</p> <p>Specific details</p> <p>Post- listening test scores</p>

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The chart below shows how well students from the control group deal with the listening test once the instruction on bottom-up and top-down was done. They reflected an improvement in handling the listening strategies. The experimental group showed an average of 6.1 in the pre- listening test. On the other hand, the control group showed an average of 2.6 when doing the pre- listening test at the beginning of this phase. These averages in grades for both groups, the experimental and the control one, lead the necessity of implementing an instruction in the listening strategies in the experimental group in order to see the improvements for such group. Once the instruction was made and the post- listening-test was run, the average changed for the experimental group. They showed an improvement in such test; the average in the post- listening test was of 7.5, on the other hand, the control group got an average of 4.9 such result showed that the instruction worked it out and that students improved a lot in applying the bottom-up and top-down listening strategies to deal with listening material. However, they still fail in applying some listening strategies namely: Summarizing, listening for the main idea, and specific details in which students have to be trained and be focused more on them.

Results and Discussion

Introduction

This section is devoted to presenting and analyzing the results obtained during the data collection phase. This data was collected and then processed in response to the problematic stated at the beginning of this study. The importance of listening in language learning has only been recognized relatively recently (Oxford, 1993) there has been an increased focus on second language ability because of its perceived importance in language learning acquisition (Sadighi, 2006: 1). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the influence of listening strategy instruction on students' performance on listening tests.

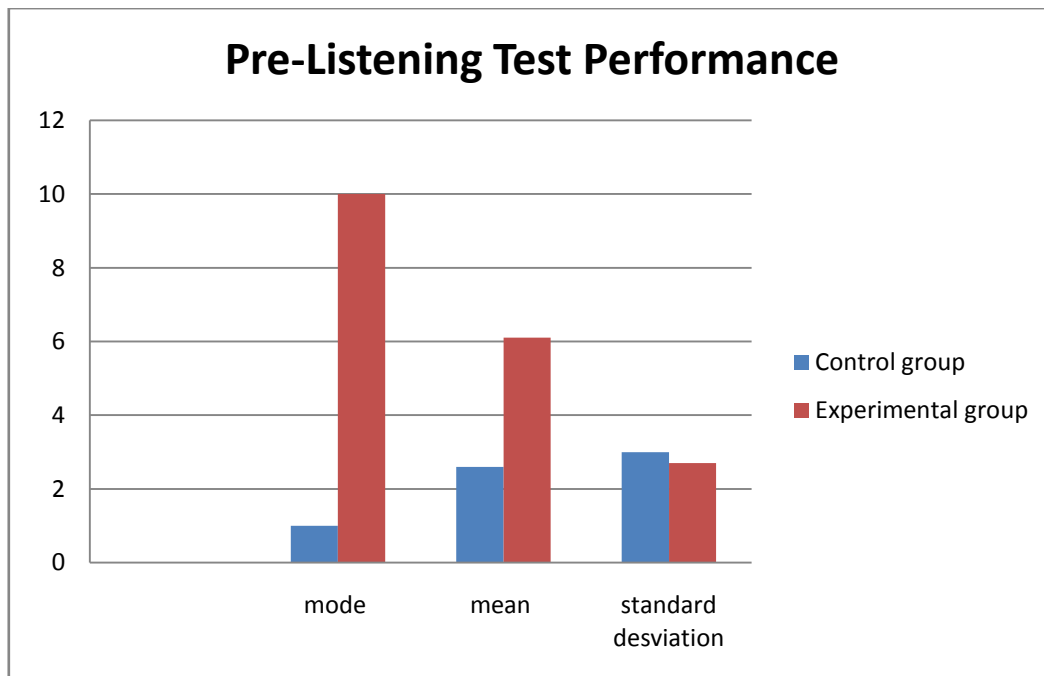
The effect of listening strategy instruction

For answering the main research question "To what extent does listening strategy instruction influence on student's performance on listening tests?" a table has been set to show the results of a preliminary stage in which two groups namely experimental and control were run a listening test for exploring their performance on listening tests before being submitted into training.

Pre-test findings

Group	Central Tendency measures		
	Mode	Mean	Standard Deviation
Experimental Group	10	6.1	2.7
Control Group	0,1	2.6	3

Table representing the central tendency measures regarding the pre-test listening findings



Initial performance in students' pre- listening test

Both the table above and the graphic show the initial scores of both, experimental and control group. Experimental group seems to head control group with a 10 as the most

Students' Listening Performance

repeated grade (mode), an average or mean of 6.1 and a standard deviation of 2.7. After the experimental group went over the listening strategy instruction, such instruction was done with the Advanced-Intensive-English II group for one month, the efficiency of that treatment condition was tested with the same instrument, and such results were better than the results of the previous test, they presented an improvement in every single listening strategy that was assessed; therefore, the measures of central tendency, mode, mean and standard deviation presented an improvement. The results are presented in the table below.

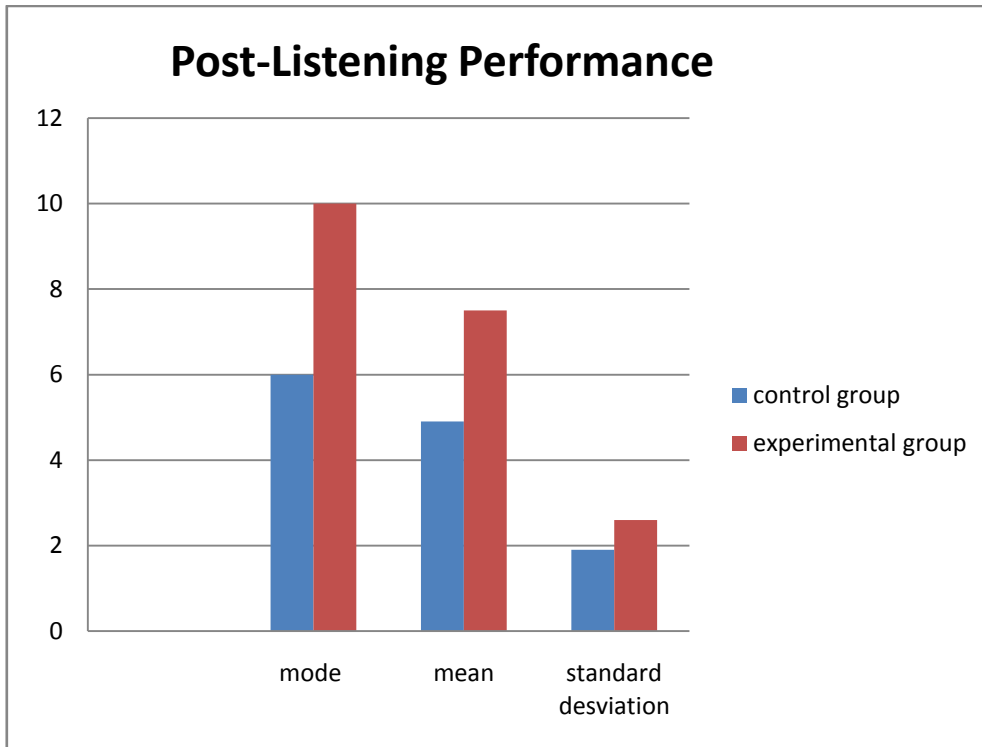
Post-test findings

Group	Central Tendency measures		
	Mode	Mean	Standard Deviation
Experimental	10	7.5	2.6
Control	6	4.9	1.9

Students' performance in the post-listening test

The results presented above show how the experimental group still overtakes the control group keeping a mode of 10, an average of 7.5 and a standard deviation of 2.6. On the other hand, the control group seems to have enhanced during teacher's regular instruction but still unable to reach the scores of the experimental group. From the chart below the researcher can state that the strategy instruction in the listening skill has a positive impact in the students' listening performance when facing listening tests. The next graphic shows in a better way the student's performance regarding the post-listening test.

Students' Listening Performance



Students' performance in the post- listening test

The graphic above shows the performance in the post listening test. The behavior for the experimental group changed in terms of performance. They had better grades in the post-listening test than in the pre-listening test. The change in terms of performance was due to the experimental group received an instruction in the bottom-up and top-down listening strategies which led them to have better results in such test. On the other hand, the control group did not show any improvement at all in terms of performance, they showed the same behavior as they did it in the pre-listening test.

Students' Listening Performance

Grades for the pre- listening test for both groups, experimental and control group

Grades	Frequency
1	0
2	3
3	2
4	2
5	4
6	4
7	5
8	1
9	0
10	7

Grades of the pre- listening test for the experimental group.

Grades	Frequency
0	7
1	7
2	1
3	0
4	0
5	3
6	4
7	1
8	1
10	1

Grades of the pre- listening test for the control group.

Students' Listening Performance

Grades regarding the listening performance of the post- listening test

Grades	Frequency
1	0
2	1
3	2
4	0
5	2
6	3
7	2
8	5
9	0
10	8

Post- listening grades for the experimental group

Grades	Frequency
1	0
2	1
3	3
4	2
5	5
6	7
7	2
8	2
9	0
10	0

Post- listening grades for the control group

For answering the specific question “How does one group of participants head the other in terms of performance?” It was necessary to find the difference between their averages. Therefore, the range found in the pre-test was of 3.5, there was a significant difference taking into consideration that both groups had not been exposed to any treatment condition; however, the experimental group headed the control group at that stage. The range found in the post-test was 2.6, the performance in both groups improved

Students' Listening Performance

considerably. The range decreased in the post-test, but the experimental group was still ahead the control group with an average of 7.5 and 4.9 namely. The control group experienced a slight improvement during their English Course corresponding to the semester I, but it was not enough to reach the level of the experimental group, which enhanced after the instruction. Results demonstrate that both groups improved significantly. The control group experienced an improvement 2.3, on the other hand the experimental group had an improvement of 1.4. Taking into account that the Control group did not get high scores in the pre-test, after their curricular instruction they demonstrated a significant improvement. On the other hand, the Experimental group improved just 1.4, taking into account that in the pre-test phase they were already ahead of control group in terms of performance.

Group	Mean
Experimental	7.5
Control	4.9

Average for both groups after the post-listening test was run.

Answering the specific question what type of listening strategies do students use for solving listening tests? A listening strategy survey was run, (see annex A) its results are presented in the table.

Students' Listening Performance

List of listening strategies used by Advanced- English Students at the University of El

Salvador

Statement	Never	Seldom	Often	Usually	Always
I think of relationship between what I already know and new things I learn in English	0%	6.2%	25%	18%	50%
I try to talk like native English speakers	12.5%	25%	12.5%	31.2%	12.5%
I use the English words I know in different ways.	0%	6.2%	43.7%	31.2%	12.5%
I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.	0%	18%	18%	43.7%	18%
I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.	18%	18%	31.2%	25%	6.2%
I try to find patterns in English.	0%	25%	37.5%	25%	12.5%
I find the meaning of an English word by dividing into parts that I understand	12.5%	18%	37.5%	25%	12.5%
I try not to translate word-by -word	0%	18%	18%	50%	12.5%
To understand unfamiliar English words I make guesses.	0%	6.2%	50%	25%	18%
I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.	6.2%	56.2%	18%	18%	0%
I try to guess what the other person will say next in English	6.2%	43.7%	25%	12.5%	12.5%
If I can't think of an English word , I use a word or phrase that means the same thing	0%	0%	6.2%	68.7%	25%

Students' Listening Performance

I notice m y English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.	0%	6.2%	18%	50%	25%
I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	0%	0%	18%	25%	68%
I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.	12.5%	50%	43.7%	18%	6.2%
I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	0%	18%	25%	50%	6.2%
If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	0%	0%	31.2%	56.2%	12.5%
I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.	0%	18%	25%	25%	31.2%
I practice English with other students.	0%	18%	50%	31.2%	0%
I ask for help from English speakers.	0%	6.2%	25%	43.7%	18%
I focus on getting the information I need to answer the questions.	0%	0%	31.2%	37.5%	31.2%
I pay attention to key words.	0%	0%	25%	50%	31.2%
I focus on the title or topic to imagine what the listening will be about.	0%	0%	37.5%	31.2%	37.5%
I read the questions in advance.	0%	0%	43.7%	25%	31.2%
I identify the main idea.	0%	6.2%	25%	56.2%	12.5%
I pay attention to the speed and accent of	0%	6.2%	18%	56.2%	18%

Students' Listening Performance

the speaker.					
I pay attention to intonation and stress of words or expressions.	0%	6.2%	31.2%	43.7%	18%
I relate the topic with previous experiences.	0%	12.5%	43.7%	43.7%	0

Strategies used by English-Advanced students after running intervention.

From the chart above the researcher can infer that the students apply the following strategies: I think of relationship between what I already know and new things I learn in English (background knowledge), such strategy is applied by the 50% of students from both, the experimental group and the control group. However, when it comes to making predictions only an 18% of students from both groups seem to always make use of such strategy. This data is useful to the researchers since from that they can realize that students are not dealing with listening tests in the way they have to.

Limitations

In spite of the effectiveness of a listening strategy course intervention, there were several limitations to the study. The first limitation was related to the time spent in the intervention. Although objectives were completed, more time spent on listening strategy instruction is required for exploring deeper into issues that hinder student's listening performance. Besides that, it is important to point out that it was impossible to get grades from previous Advanced- English courses to compare the results from the previous groups and the groups that were in treatment in order to compare results and determine how well students under the treatment did it regarding the listening skill. Another limitation was the methodology of the intervention, since students' performance was tested only with the researcher's own instruments and their improvement was not compared with their performance on their curricular listening tests, which may have also provided a wider panorama of the effects of listening strategy instruction. Besides the validity being affected by the time and methodology of the intervention, other instruments such as recall protocols or personal interviews were also needed to dig in the process of listening and how students arrive to choose the correct answer for a test or any other type of listening classroom activity. Another limitation that the researchers faced was the unwillingness of students to cooperate with the instruction, students' attendance during the days of the instruction decreased considerably, many of them missed either the pre-test and some other missed the post-test.

Recommendations for future research

Based on the results of the study, there are several recommendations for future research on the field. First, some of the limitations listed in this study may be minimized or eliminated through revising the implementation of the listening strategy instruction. For the sake of exploring the factors that hinder listening comprehension, lengthening the time of the intervention would be a straightforward measure to have researchers taking the time to explore those variants that interfere in the process of listening. Secondly, expanding the scope the intervention methodology may aid to enhance the external validity of the study, by comparing students' performance in their curricular tests. Another recommendation is to make students aware of the importance of the study in deep, so that they participate in every interaction. Furthermore, it is necessary to try to find out the reasons why the control group which was not submitted to any treatment at all, improved a lot when facing the post-listening test. Finally, more instruments like recall protocols and personal interviews should be used for exploring students' insights about the process of listening.

Conclusions

From this study, major conclusions can be drawn. First of all, implementing the bottom-up listening strategy and top-down listening strategy instruction in English-advanced course enhanced students' performance on listening activities. Initial performance shown on pre-test showed average scores; However, scores improved significantly which was demonstrated in the post-listening test that students faced once the instruction in bottom-up and top-down listening strategies was done, they showed a considerable improvement regarding the listening strategies and the performance on it. Second, it is important to highlight that not only the Experimental group showed an improvement in the scores after receiving instruction, but also the control group showed an improvement comparing their results in the pre-test. The experimental group showed an improvement of 1.4 points after they were submitted to such training in the listening strategies. On the other hand, the control group improved 2.6 in the pre-test. The results showed that it did have an improvement, thus it may be necessary to investigate the reason of such improvement. Third, students' repertoire of listening strategies is enlarged through listening strategies instruction. It was discovered that after students had completed their listening strategies course, students' awareness of metacognitive strategies such as monitoring comprehension and planning was raised. Fourth, it was found that Students rely more on using top-down rather than bottom-up processes. Students from both groups are focusing more on using their previous knowledge as an aid for comprehension, predicting and monitoring their own learning.

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Students' Listening Performance

ANNEXES

Students' Listening Performance

Annex A: Learning Strategy Survey.

University of El Salvador
School of Arts and Sciences
Foreign Language Department



Topic: The impact of top-down listening strategies and bottom-up listening strategies instruction in the students' listening performance.

Questionnaire

Objective: To identify the type of listening strategies used by students during listening activities.

Part One: Background information.

Name _____ Group _____ Sex _____ Age _____

Estimate time studying English _____

The reason for learning English _____

Part Two the strategy inventory for listening skill.

You will find statements about learning English. Please read each statement. Write the response (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) that tells **HOW TRUE OF YOU THE STATEMENT IS.**

1. Never
2. Seldom
3. Often
4. Usually
5. Always

Answer in terms of how well the statement describes you. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. There are not right or wrong answers to these statements. Please make no marks on the items. Work as quickly as you can without being careless. This usually takes about 20–30 minutes to complete. If you have questions, let the teacher know immediately.

Students' Listening Performance

1. I think of relationship between what I already know and new things I learn in English.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

2. I try to talk like native English speakers.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

3. I use the English words I know in different ways.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

4. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

5. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

6. I try to find patterns in English.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

7. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing into parts that I understand.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

8. I try not to translate word-for-word.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

9. To understand unfamiliar English words I make guesses.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

10. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

Students' Listening Performance

11. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

12. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

13. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me to do better.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

14. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

15. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

16. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

17. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

18. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

19. I practice English with other students.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

20. I ask for help from English speaker.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

Students' Listening Performance

21. I focus on getting the information I need to answer the questions.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

22. I pay attention to key words.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

23. I focus on the title or topic to imagine what the listening will be about.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

24. I read the questions in advanced.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

25. I identify the main idea.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

26. I pay attention to the speed and accent of the speaker.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

27. I pay attention to intonation and stress of words or expressions.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

28. I relate the topic with previous experiences.

1 **Never** 2 **Seldom** 3 **Often** 4 **Usually** 5 **Always**

Students' Listening Performance

Annex B: Pre-listening test and Post-Listening test

University of El Salvador

School of Arts and Sciences

Foreign Language Department



Topic: The impact of top-down listening strategies and bottom-up listening strategies instruction in the students' listening performance.

Objective: To explore the effect of learning strategies instruction on students' listening performance.

General Information

Name _____ Group: _____ Sex: M /F Age: ____

Instruction: Listen carefully and complete the following instructions.

1. Number the steps into the right order.

- Do research.
- Drew sketches
- Took pictures.
- Get to South America

2. How many days did the team take to get to that remote area?

- a) 5 days
- b) 3 days
- c) 6 days
- d) 1 day

Students' Listening Performance

Choose the best option for the following questions

3. What does Pixar try to present in their movies?

- a) Show the world we know in a way you never seen it before.
- b) To entertain people with amazing stories
- c) To know about toy's life
- d) None of them

4. How did the crew get to that place in South America?

- a) by airplane
- b) by helicopter
- c) by jeep (car)
- d) all of the above.

5. Where was that lost world in South America?

- a) Colombia
- b) Brazil
- c) Venezuela
- d) Chile

6. What is the story about?

- a) He wanted to travel to South America.
- b) He promised his wife to live a life of adventures together.
- c) He wanted to visit his wife.
- d) He was doing an experiment with balloons.

Students' Listening Performance

Annex C: Teacher's semi- opened interview

University of El Salvador

School of Arts and Sciences

Foreign Language Department



Topic: The impact of top-down listening strategies and bottom-up listening strategies instruction in the students' listening performance.

Objective: To get the teachers opinion about students' listening performance

Questions

1. -How would you define the listening skill?
2. -Do you consider listening as one of the most difficult skills?
Yes/ No Why?
3. -What are your approaches for teaching listening?
4. -How much time of your class is devoted to develop listening skill?
5. -How would you qualify the listening performance of advanced students?
a) poor b) regular c) good d) excellent, why?
6. -Do you think students make proper use of strategies when listening?
7. -How would you qualify student's attitude towards this skill? Why?

Students' Listening Performance

8. -What strategies do students use to improve their listening skill?

9. Is there any recommendation that you can give to both students and future teachers in order to develop and teach the listening skill?

Students' Listening Performance

Annex D: Strategy Instruction Syllabus

Universidad de El Salvador
School of Arts and Sciences
Foreign Language Department



I. General information

Subject: Instruction on listening strategies

Course receiving the instruction: Advanced English Students II group 4

Major: Licenciatura en Idioma Ingles and Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas

Semester/Academic year: I-2013

Academic unit in charge: Foreign Language Department (Graduation Project Students)

School: Arts and Sciences

Course length: 3 weeks

Number of working hours: Six sessions of 2 hours/12 hours.

Instructors:

Jonathan Alexander Solís

Jaime Roberto Pérez

Cesar Baltazar Rodas

II. Course Description

English listening instruction is a course designed for Advanced Intensive English II students from both majors Licenciatura in English Teaching and Modern Languages.

This Course will provide the development of listening strategies through the instruction of such strategies, tasks and activities related to it. This course will help students to enable and do better in listening activities by applying what they are going to be taught.

This instruction will focus on the bottom- up strategies and top- down strategies

Students' Listening Performance

regarding the listening skill that will lead students to get a better performance on such skill. The activities and tasks in listening skill will give students the opportunity to experience in the skill and use it in real situations.

III. Objectives

1. To explore the effect of learning strategies instruction on students' listening performance.
2. To identify the type of listening strategies used by students during listening activities.
3. To analyse the results obtained between an experimental group and a control group.

IV. Contents of the course.

IV.I Listening Strategies

Listening strategies are techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input. Listening strategies can be classified by how the listener processes the input.

Top-down strategies are listener based; the listener taps into background knowledge of the topic, the situation or context, the type of text, and the language. This background knowledge activates a set of expectations that help the listener to interpret what is heard and anticipate what will come next.

IV. I.II Top-down strategies:

- Making associations.

Students' Listening Performance

- Using background knowledge.
- Listening for the main idea.
- Drawing inferences.
- Summarizing.

IV.I.II.I Metacognitive strategies

- Planning.
- Monitoring comprehension.
- Evaluating completion of a task.

Specific objectives:

-To get participants to use previous knowledge for making association with new content.

-To get participants to figure the main idea out of a listening text.

-To get participants to make predictions of an unfinished listening text.

Time :Eight hours.

Bottom-up strategies are text based; the listener relies on the language in the message, that is, the combination of sounds, words, and grammar that creates meaning. Bottom-up strategies include

- listeningforspecificdetails
- recognizingcognates
- recognizingword-orderpatterns

Students' Listening Performance

Specific objectives:

-Identify specific details for answering comprehension questions.

-To identify word order patterns for answering.

Time: four hours

Timetable

Dates.	Content/ Activities
May 21 st	-Making associations -Using background knowledge
May 23 rd	Listening for the main idea Predicting.
May 28 th	-Drawing inferences -Summarizing
May 30 th	Metacognitive strategies Planning Monitoring comprehension
June 4 th	Evaluation completion of a task Bottom- up strategies Listening for specific details.
June 4 th	Recognizing cognates Recognizing word-order patterns.
June 6 th	Post- test: Behind the camera Up.