

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



Topic:

The factors that influence English listening skill on students from “Profesorado en Idioma Ingles para Tercer Ciclo de Educación Básica y Educación Media” semester II-2010 from the Foreign Language Department at UES

Presented by:

Carné

Martínez De La Cruz, Sandra Caridad

MD05009

Ramírez González, Mario Isaac

RG04003

Villalobos Jiménez, Nelson Edgardo

VJ02003

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Advisor

Ricardo Garay Salinas, M.Ed.

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AUTORIDADES DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE EL SALVADOR

ING. RUFINO ANTONIO QUEZADA SANCHEZ

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JEFE DE DEPARTAMENTO

LIC. RICARDO GARAY SALINAS

COORDINADOR GENERAL DE LOS PROCESOS DE GRADO

LIC. RICARDO GARAY SALINAS

DOCENTE DIRECTOR

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Abstract

The following report presents an investigation regarding the factors that influence English listening skill on students from “Profesorado en Idioma Ingles para Tercer Ciclo de Educación Básica y Educación Media” semester II-2010 from the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador. First of all, it was necessary to collect the theory which supports all the findings of this investigation. Then the data was collected by means of instruments that were designed in order to obtain students’ perception concerning the factors that influence their English listening skill. The data analysis and its interpretation allows to determine twelve factors which as an influence on students’ listening skill, nine factors as the most commonly reported by students and three as least reported. All this information presented in this report will be an important tool in future investigations in the Foreign Language Department.

I. Introduction

Factors that influence listening comprehension have been discussed by some authors in other countries in the second language listening field. A well-known research in this area was carried out by Rubin (1994) who identified five main factors: text, task, interlocutor, listener and process. Such study was the main reason that motivated the study of Goh (1999) on which this research is based. In which one of her main purpose was to find how much do learners know about the factors that influence their listening comprehension.

The main aim of this research was to describe the factors that influence English listening skill on students from “Profesorado en Idioma Ingles para Tercer Ciclo de Educación Básica y Educación Media” semester II-2010 from the Foreign Language Department at UES.

The theoretical framework this study followed was the Goh (1999) research that identified 20 factors that influence listening comprehension according to their awareness on her findings on a group of Chinese ESL learners. In this case the following research is organized into two parts. The first part outlines the literature review where some definitions of listening can be found, then there is a description of the factors that were found by Joan Rubin in his review of second language listening comprehension research and at the same time the study carried out by Goh (1999) which is called “How much do learners know about the factors that influence their listening comprehension?”. This study reported 20 factors that influence listening comprehension. In other words in this part there is a discussion of the factors involved. Based on that, the present research considered only twelve factors.

The second and the last part include the methodology, the collected data and revealed the findings. Besides that, some conclusions and recommendations were given.

1.1 Topic

The factors that influence English listening skill on students from “*Profesorado en Idioma Ingles para Tercer Ciclo de Educación Básica y Educación Media*” semester II-2010 from the Foreign Language Department at UES

1.2 Statement of the problem

Nowadays, it is essential to learn English since in most of the human knowledge and development areas is required to learn this language. It is spoken in many countries around the world as a second or a foreign language. Although English language does not have the greatest number of speaker, it seems that is a language widely used in the world. It is difficult to know how many people speak English around the world, but according to some estimation (published on internet) there are around 400 millions of native speakers and more than 1400 millions of people that have English as a second language.

In the teaching-learning process of any language, listening is an important macro skill, since we create output according to the input that we get in a conversation. In real life situation there is not always a second chance to get the message in an accurate way; for this reason Joan Rubin (1994) has shown his concern about the difficulty when understanding spoken English and he has developed a review of second language listening comprehension research in a attempt to give some important factors that should be taken into account in the teaching-learning language process to avoid any failure.

For those reasons, the purpose of this study is to know the factors that influence English listening skill on students from “*Profesorado en Idioma Ingles para Tercer Ciclo de Educación Básica y Educación Media*”.

1.3 Research Questions

General:

What are the factors that influence English listening skill on students from *“Profesorado en Idioma Ingles para Tercer Ciclo de Educación Básica y Educación Media?”*

Specific:

Does the previous knowledge of English affect the listening process?

Do the physical conditions meet the requirements to develop English listening skill in the classroom?

Does familiarity with passage content facilitate listening?

Does everyday contact with English influence students listening ability?

Does the teacher ability to motivate students in the classrooms make possible the development of listening skill?

Does knowing the vocabulary previous to a listening activity in the classroom help to improve the listening comprehension?

Is the listener interest required to succeed on listening skill?

Does the speech rate influence students to master on listening skill?

Is it important for students to get visual aids in the classroom to get a better understanding of listening activities?

1.4 Objectives:

General:

To know the factors that influence English listening skill on students from *“Profesorado en Idioma Ingles para Tercer Ciclo de Educación Básica y Educación Media”*

Specific:

To determine in which way the students’ previous knowledge interfere the listening process.

To show the physical conditions that meet the requirements to develop English listening skill in the classroom.

To state if the familiarity with passage content facilitate listening.

To identify the type of input that affect listening.

To demonstrate the speakers’ accent that influence on listening skill.

To discover what are the listener interest as a requirement to be successful on listening skill.

To identify the type of visual aids to use to succeed on listening skill in the classroom.

1.5 Justification

The topic “The factors that influence English listening skill on students from “Profesorado en Idioma Ingles para Tercer Ciclo de Educación Básica y Educación Media” semester II-2010 from the FLD at UES” will be studied because there is not much available data related to the topic. Another reason to study this topic is the necessity to raise people’s awareness on the factors that, based on lots of studies carried out in other countries about this issue, affect students’ listening comprehension. Furthermore, according to the teachers’ point of view and the students themselves, they consider that they usually fail the TOEFL exam, among others, due to the difficulty of the listening part

The group is going to carry out this descriptive-kind research in order to generate new information since there is not a project about it. During the literature stage the group found many studies that talk about the factors that affect students listening comprehension but they were carried out abroad, on the other hand, there are only two studies based on Listening here in the FLD, and the people that were taken as a sample for doing those research were students from the major “Licenciatura en Idioma Ingles Opción Enseñanza”. It means that there is none of information regarding Profesorado en Idioma Ingles. The two undergraduate projects the group found are: the first one, “Improving Listening Comprehension through a Systematic Approach: the case of students from Consejo de Becas y de Investigaciones Cientificas de la UES, 2008. And the second one: “Techniques Applied to Evaluate the Listening Performance of Students of Advanced English II, semester I 2008 at the FLD, 2008.

Raising awareness on student about this issue is important here in the FLD in order to make three things happen, for example to develop more investigations, descriptions and eventually some solutions; however, throughout the development of

the research the team noticed that there is a lack of interest not only by the students both the ones on undergraduate process and the one taking the major, but also by some teachers. As a result the only ones facing the consequences of not having enough competence to succeed at the final requirement requested by the MINED to get the license are the students that are at the final stage of their major.

Finally, the carry out of this research will contribute to the professional development of future teachers graduated from “Profesorado en Idioma Ingles para Tercer Ciclo de Educación Básica y Educación Media” of the FLD at the University of El Salvador.

II- Theoretical Framework

Learning English has always been a real necessity in different fields and professions because it is the language of the globalized world, and El Salvador is going through. In the teaching-learning process, listening is one of the hardest skills that help to determine how well students learn English as a second or foreign language.

To have a specific level of proficiency (performing in a given art, skill or branch of learning with expert correctness and facility, American Heritage Dictionary) in English Language, the learners need to acquire knowledge related to the four macro-skills that are involved on it (ACTFL guidelines); these are divided into two groups: The receptive skills, which are reading and listening and the productive skills which are speaking and writing. The first group refers to the skills that provide input of the language, while the second refers to the output or the production of the language (Omaggio, 1993). Some authors define the receptive macro-skill listening, from different points of view; some definitions of Listening are:

According to Howatt and Dakin (1974), listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This process involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, the speaker's grammar and vocabulary, and comprehension of meaning.

Ronald and Roskelly (1985) define listening as an active process requiring the same skills of prediction, hypothesizing, checking, revising, and generalizing that writing and reading demand.

Wang Shouyuan (2003), defines listening as the most important component in the five aspects of overall English competence, he suggests as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, it deserves particular attention. At the same time, he considers that educators must actively explore the nature and process of listening comprehension and study the theory and methodology of listening comprehension in order to improve listening teaching outcomes and make students recognize that listening is the crucial aspect of English learning.

“Listening consist of processing information which the listener gets from visual and auditory clues in order to define what is going on and what the speakers are trying to express” , Rubin 1990.

Some authors stated that listening has been considered as a secondary skill, with speaking and writing as predominant skill in the second-language education process (Morley 1990 and Numan 1997). On the other hand, Feyton (1991) considered that more than 45% of the human communication/ time is spent on listening, whereas speaking takes the 30% approximately. Besides that, Morely (1990) consider that people spend measurably more time on

listening than any other communication skill; through the normal course of a day, listening is used nearly twice as much as speaking and four to five times as much as reading and writing (Rivers, 1981); thus, if listening is considered to be a substantial part of language, then it would seem that students' listening skill are not getting the amount of attention they merit.

People who have studied a foreign language know that it can be one of life's most rewarding experiences; they also know how much effort it takes. Faced with the prospect of endless hours of learning vocabulary, memorizing grammar rules, and practicing pronunciation, etc, many people simply abandon hope of ever achieving a high level of performance in any of the four macro skill. However, over years many students and teacher have developed useful tools to make language- learning process smoother, faster, and more enjoyable.

In spite of those considerations, students are not always aware of the kind of *factors* that influence their ability in learning the new language (*it means their understanding of what was involved in learning to listening to English*)

Factors that influence listening has been discussed by many authors in the last two decades to determine the effects that specific factors have on relative success or failure of learners' comprehension during listening. Among the authors we can mention Boyle (1984) "Factors affecting listening comprehension"; Rubin (1994) "A review of second language listening comprehension research"; Christine Goh (1999) "How much do learners know about the factors that influence their listening comprehension?".

The study carried out by Goh on a group of Chinese ESL learning in 1999, was based on Rubin research (1994) that identified five factors that influence listening comprehension which are: text, task, interlocutor, listening

and process. Based on this, Goh found twenty more factors that she categorized under five characteristics: text, listener, speaker, task and environment, and she stated that many of the factors identified were related to text and listener characteristics.

However, Goh report that five out 20 factors were reported by more than two-thirds of the forty language learners who participate in her study. Those factors were *vocabulary, prior knowledge, speech rate, type of input and speakers' accent*. Also the study emphasized that a majority of the high ability listeners reported twelve factors whereas the low ability group reported only four factors.

The theoretical framework she adopted for her study was based on John Flavell's metacognitive knowledge (1979). Flavell further distinguished three types of metacognitive knowledge: person, task and strategy. These refer to the specific knowledge that individuals have about themselves as learners, the learning tasks they have to undertake, and the strategies that are most appropriate for accomplishing these tasks.

The type of metacognitive knowledge discussed in Goh's study is task knowledge and Flavell's study revealed three types of task knowledge: *factors influencing listening comprehension, methods for developing listening ability and the nature of second language listening*. But Goh just only report the first one that is factors that the students believed had influenced listening comprehension.

As it was stated above, the twenty factors (found by Goh), with a briefly description, are shown as follows: Students' task knowledge about factors that influenced their listening comprehension.

TEXT

Phonological modifications: Features that might make it difficult to divide streams of speech, such as linking, stress.

Vocabulary: The presence of familiar/unfamiliar content words. This includes English idioms, jargon and academic terms.

Speech rate: The perceived speed or slowness at which words are produced.

Type of input: Effects of features related to specific text types, such as lectures, TV/radio news broadcast, stories, face-to-face conversations.

Sentence length and complexity: Sentence types, such as simple sentences or long complex ones with embedded clauses.

Visual support: Pictures, handouts, captions, subtitles that support the spoken text.

Signposting and organization: The presence of macro- and micro-discourse markers.

Abstract and non abstract topics: Abstract topics dealing with concepts compared with those that describe events, people or objects

SPEAKER

Accent: This is related to where a speaker comes from.

Competence in speaking: The speaker's command of English, overall fluency, and their ability to interest listeners or facilitate their comprehension.

LISTENER

Interest and purpose: This is related to whether the information is crucial to the listeners or can generate sufficient interest in them to continue listening.

Prior knowledge and experience: This includes specific knowledge about the topic being talked about.

Physical and psychological states: Fatigue, nervousness, anxiety, impatience, feeling relaxed and calm.

Knowledge of context: A general sense of what the spoken input is about

Accuracy of pronunciation: Listeners who themselves do not pronounce certain words accurately may have problems recognizing these words when the speaker says them correctly.

Knowledge of grammar: The ability to parse long complex sentences.

Memory: The ability to retain what is heard or processed.

Attention and concentration: The ability to direct one's attention to the task at hand and not to be distracted or discouraged when understanding is not immediately forthcoming.

TASK

Sufficient time available for processing: Time available between processing one part and the next or before responding.

ENVIRONMENT:

Physical conditions: The presence of noise, the acoustics in a room, or the loudness of input.

According to Goh, the five most common factors that influence the students listening comprehension are:

Vocabulary

Prior knowledge

Speech rate

Type of input

Speaker's accent

As it was stated above that El Salvador is going through English instruction process, in this case the University of El Salvador is not excluded: Since the year 1993 the careers “*Lic. En idioma ingles opcion: enseñanza*” and “*Profesorado en Idioma Ingles*” are been offered in the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador for all the Salvadorian society and foreign people as well.

One of the goals of the career *Profesorado en Idioma Ingles* offered by the Foreign Language Department at UES is to develop the necessary language/teaching skills for the students to perform as competent professionals in the teaching field; however, not all the students get the same performance when learning this language, due to the different difficulties that they face when trying to master all the four macro skill: *speaking, reading, writing and listening*.

In this case, one of the most difficult skills is listening as it is considered not only for students but also for some teachers, as well as the head of the Foreign Language Department, Mit. Edgard Nicolas Ayala, who has been working in this area in order to overcome this situation: for example, in the year 2005 they created “El club de conversación” which gives the students the chance to improve their speaking skill through intensive conversations with their classmates; and 2 years later “El club del cine” which purpose was to expose students to real English input.

Furthermore, in the career *Profesorado en Idioma Ingles* there is a project that started in the year 2006, in charge of the coordinator Lic. Mauricio Contreras, that is called “Clases de refuerzo para TOEFL” which purpose is to help students of this career to improve their performance in the areas that this exam demands (specially listening skill), since is mandatory to pass the TOEFL

exam administered by MINED. Besides that, there are some undergraduate research projects related to this area like the following:

“Improving Listening Comprehension through a systematic approach: the case of students from Consejo de Becas y de Investigaciones Científicas de la UES, 2008” carried out by Núñez Mancía, Rafael Oswaldo; Rubio Torres, Hugo Eduardo and Torres Hernández, Catarino.

“Techniques applied to evaluate the listening performance of students of advanced English II semester I-2008 at the Foreign Language Department 2008” carried out by Campos Rivera, Bessy Marina; Gomez Díaz, Sara Ines; Hernandez Ceren, Ana Cristina.

“Strategies students of advanced English I use to develop the listening skill in the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of El Salvador.” carried out by Ramírez González, Mario Isaac; Sa Vasquez, William Vladimir and Villalobos Jiménez, Nelson Edgardo. Semester II 2009 as seminar research project.

In spite of those investigations carried out in the Foreign Language Department, there is not any research intended to find out the influence that specific factors have on listening when students learn a second language, specifically English. So that, we considered really important to carry out a research on *The factors that influence English listening skill on students taking the last semester of the career “profesorado en idioma ingles” from the Foreign Language Department at UES, and based on the twenty factors mentioned above from the study carried out by Goh (1999)*, this research will focus on twelve of those factors.

III- Methodology

3.1 Type of research

This investigation followed the positivism paradigm (also known as quantitative paradigm, which interest is to explain and to interpret the phenomena that are being studied) since it was intended to describe the factors that influence English listening skill on students taking the second, the fourth and the sixth semester of the career "*Profesorado en idioma Ingles para tercer ciclo de educación básica y educación media*", from the Foreign Language Department (FLD) at the University of El Salvador (UES). For carrying out the investigation, it was used a quantitative method because the research is based on the positivism paradigm. And also the research used the qualitative method (this method is based on the way of thinking about the social reality being studied), which interest is to interpret and to discover the phenomena in the context carried out.

As it is stated above, the type of research is descriptive and in order to collect the data, the quantitative method permitted the gathering of reliable data from the application of the different instruments, such as the questionnaire and a test. On the other hand, the qualitative method allowed us to analyze and to interpret the collected data; finally, both methods (quantitative and qualitative) were used to describe the factors that really take place in the field that is being studied.

3.2 The study population and sample

This study took place at the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, on semester II, 2010. In this research, the population was the students from the career "*Profesorado en idioma Ingles para tercer ciclo de educación básica y educación media*" taking the subjects "*gramatica*

comparada ingles-español” group (01), “*lectura y vocabulario en ingles I*” group (01), and “*lectura y vocabulario en ingles II*” group (01) semester II, 2010; due to the low amount of students on those courses, the sample taken was the same population which was 45 students.

3.3 Data collection

Some preliminaries activities were done three weeks before to administer the final instruments, first of all, the questionnaires were checked by people that are in contact with the learning process at the FLD; then a pilot study was carried out at CENIUES to three groups with a previous authorization that was given by the sub-coordinator Licda. Guadalupe Martinez. All this was done with the purpose of checking the understanding of the instruments and the methodology that would be taken; by means of this, it was possible to indentify and fix some problems with the items from the questionnaires.

The final instruments of gathering data used were the questionnaire and a listening test that was administered to a sample of 45 students from the courses: “*gramatica comparada ingles-español*” group (01), “*lectura y vocabulario en ingles I*” group (01), and “*lectura y vocabulario en ingles II*” group (01) semester II, 2010.

It is important to mention that the above mentioned instruments included the curricula of the career of “Profesorado en Idioma Ingles” in order to place students accurately in the different semesters according to the amount of subjects they had previously taken. (See annex 1)

The questionnaires contained twelve closed questions (see annex 2) and the objective of the questionnaires was to find out the factors that influence English listening skill on students of the career “Profesorado en Idioma Ingles”.

The test, which was the diagnostic TOEFL test (listening part), was administered to the same sample, 45 students (see annex 3). Its purpose was to measure students' listening comprehension level in order to contrast the results obtained with the factors that influence their listening skills.

After collecting all the data from the questionnaires and the tests, this was analyzed. The findings, getting from the questionnaires and the tests were compared to determine the level of concordance among what students list as the factors that influence their listening skills and what their listening performance stated.

IV. Findings

The followings tables and graphs show the statistical results obtained from the questionnaires and the listening tests administered to the students from "Profesorado en Idioma Ingles para Tercer Ciclo de Educación Básica y Educación Media" semester II-2010 from the FLD at UES.

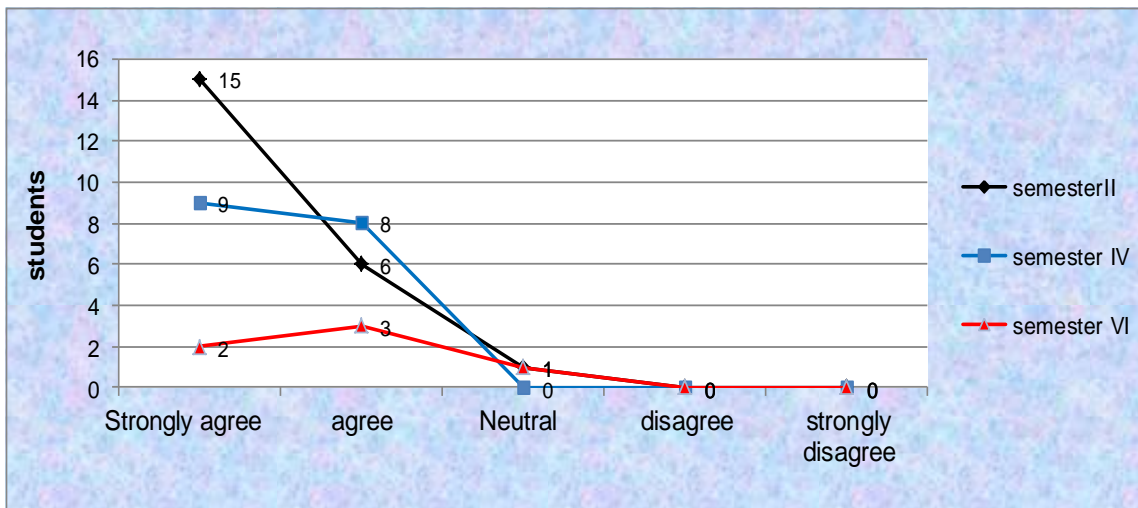
Table 1. The twelve factors that influence students listening comprehension from Profesorado en Idioma Ingles.

Category	Factors
Text	Vocabulary
	Speech rate
	Type of input
	Sentence length and complexity
	Visual support
Speaker	Accent
	Competence in speaking
Listener	Interest and purpose
	Prior knowledge and experience
	Knowledge of context
	Accuracy of pronunciation
Environment	Physical conditions

1. Do you consider that knowing the meaning of the vocabulary used in activities for listening comprehension of English in the classroom help you to improve your listening skills?

Factor Vocabulary

scales	semester II	semester IV	semester VI	total
Strongly agree	15	9	2	26
agree	6	8	3	17
Neutral	1	0	1	2
disagree	0	0	0	0
strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
total (students)	22	17	6	45

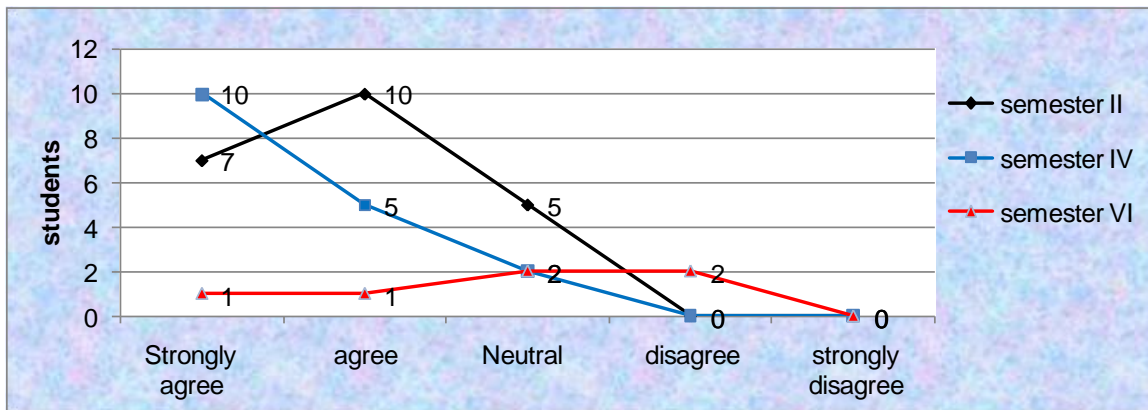


The results obtained from the questionnaires show that the 15 students from semester II, 9 from semester IV and 2 from semester VI, strongly agreed that knowing vocabulary helps to improve the listening skill. Besides that, 6 students from semester II, 8 from semester IV and 3 from semester VI also agreed with the importance of knowing vocabulary.

2. Being familiar with the topics presented in class is important for you to understand spoken English?

**Factor
Knowledge of context**

scales	semester II	semester IV	semester VI	total
Strongly agree	7	10	1	18
Agree	10	5	1	16
Neutral	5	2	2	9
Disagree	0	0	2	2
strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
total (students)	22	17	6	45

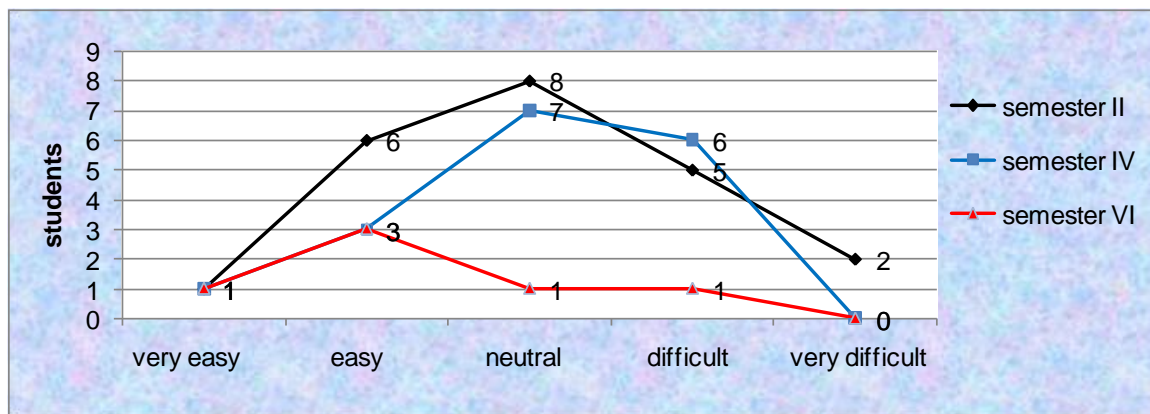


The results showed by question two revealed that 7 students from semester II, 10 from semester IV and 1 from semester VI strongly agreed that being familiar with the topic presented in the class is important to understand spoken English. And 10 students from semester II, 5 from semester IV and 1 from semester VI also agreed; on the other hand there are 5 students from semester II, 2 from semester IV and 2 from semester VI that neither agreed nor disagreed; and just 2 from semester VI disagreed.

3. When the speaker's first language is English, for you to understand their message in the activities of understanding through audio in the classroom it is:

**Factor
Speech rate**

scales	semester II	semester IV	semester VI	total
very easy	1	1	1	3
easy	6	3	3	12
neutral	8	7	1	16
difficult	5	6	1	12
very difficult	2	0	0	2
total (students)	22	17	6	45

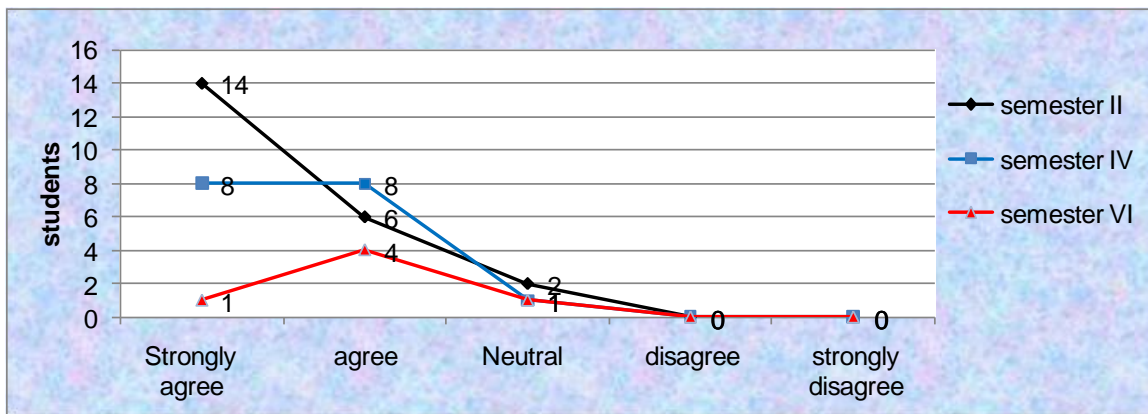


The results obtained show that 1 student from semester II, 1 from semester IV and 1 from semester VI think that it is very easy to understand the message on listening comprehension activities in the classroom even if it is from native speaker, and the 6 students from semester II and 3 from semester IV and 3 from semester VI considered easy. But 8 students from semester II, and 7 IV, and 1 from semester VI neither agreed nor disagreed and there are 5 students from semester II, 6 from semester IV, and 1 from semester VI think that it is difficult to get the messages through.

4. Do you consider that Prior knowledge of English help you to understand better the topic being discussed in an activity when using audio (cassettes, CD's)?

Factor
Prior Knowledge and experience

scales	semester II	semester IV	semester VI	total
Strongly agree	14	8	1	23
Agree	6	8	4	18
Neutral	2	1	1	4
Disagree	0	0	0	0
strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
total (students)	22	17	6	45



The results demonstrated that 14 students from semester II, and 8 from semester IV, and 1 from semester VI think that previous knowledge helps to understand better the topic presented in a listening comprehension activity. And 6 from semester II, and 8 from semester IV, and 4 from semester VI also agreed. But 2 students from semester II, 1 from semester IV, and 1 from semester VI neither agreed nor disagreed.

5. How necessary is for you the fact of having visual aids such as posters, illustrations, slides, within the classroom to understand better the listening activities of English?

**Factor
Visual Support**

scales	semester II	semester IV	semester VI	total
very necessary	15	11	0	26
Necessary	4	4	3	11
Neutral	0	2	1	3
no necessary	2	0	2	4
no very necessary	1	0	0	1
total (students)	22	17	6	45

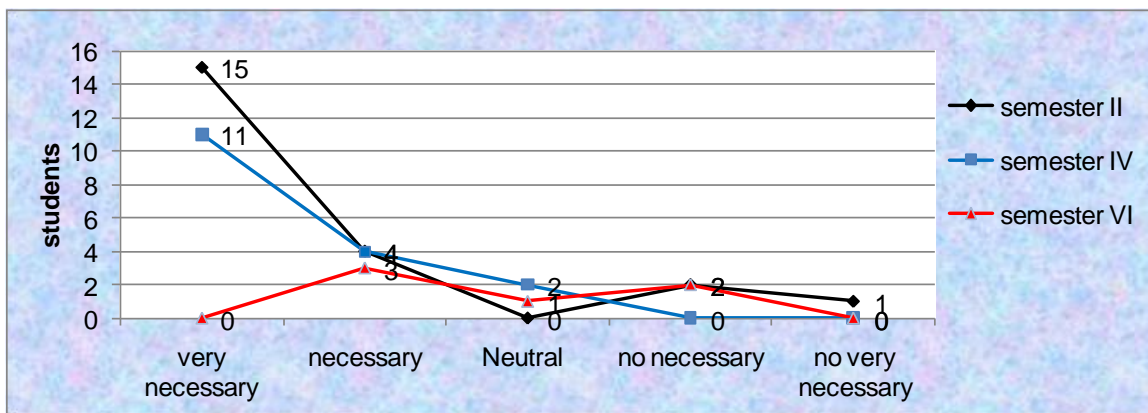


Table number 5 shows that 15 students from semester II, and 11 from semester IV think that is very necessary to count with visual aids to best understand listening activities, and no students from semester VI think the same. Another 4 students from semester II, 4 from semester IV, and 3 from semester VI think that it is necessary.

6. Do you think that English listening comprehension depend on the accent that has the speaker?

**Factor
Accent**

scales	semester II	semester IV	semester VI	total
Strongly agree	9	5	1	15
Agree	9	7	4	20
Neutral	4	4	1	9
Disagree	0	1	0	1
strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
total (students)	22	17	6	45

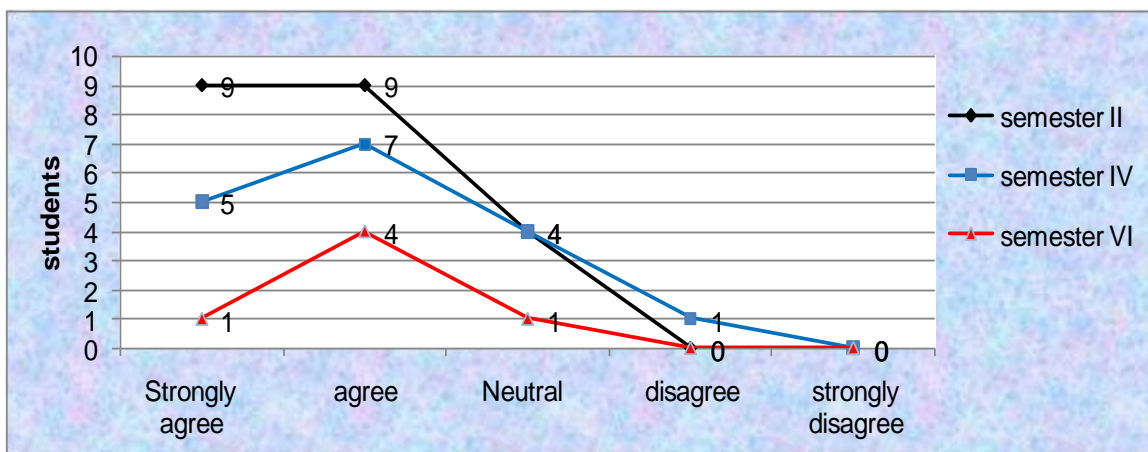


Table number 6 shows that 9 students from semester II, 5 from semester IV, and 1 from semester VI strongly agreed with the idea that English listening comprehension depends on the accent of the speaker. There is another group of 9 students from semester II, 7 from semester IV, and 4 from semester VI that agreed with this idea. 4 students from semester II, 4 from semester IV, and 1 from semester VI neither agree nor disagree with this factor.

7. Do you think that teacher's ability to motivate students in the classroom can facilitate listening comprehension of English?

**Factor
Competence in speaking**

scales	semester II	semester IV	semester VI	total
Strongly agree	14	11	3	28
Agree	6	4	1	11
Neutral	2	1	1	4
Disagree	0	1	1	2
strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
total (students)	22	17	6	45

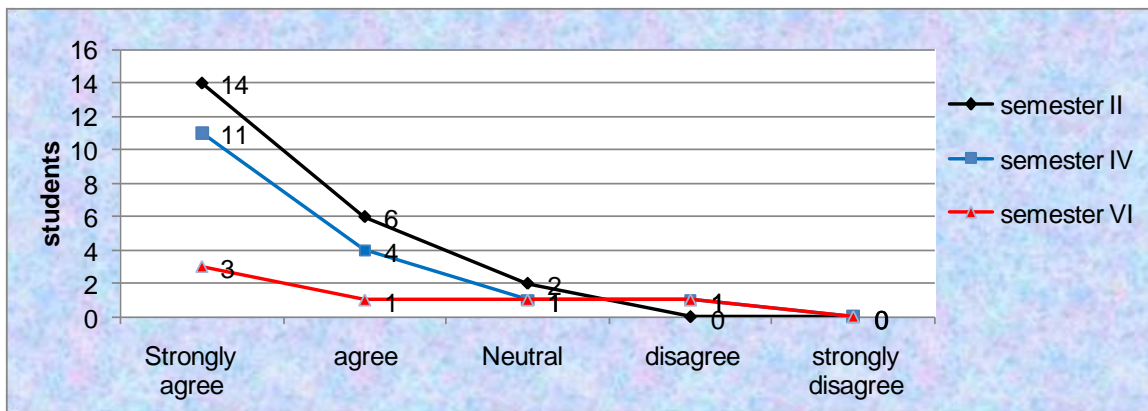
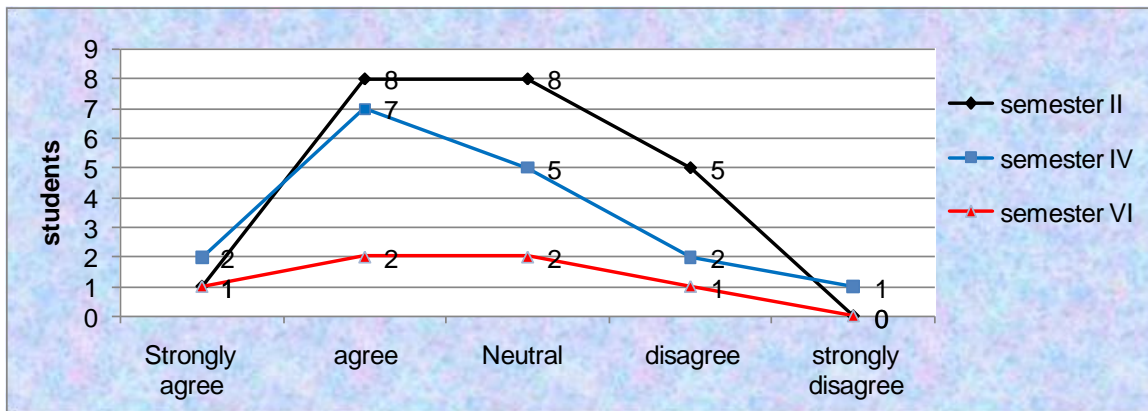


Table 7 says that 14 students from semester II, 11 from semester IV, and 3 from semester VI that strongly agree in thinking that the teacher's competence and ability to motivate students plays an important role in listening. 6 students from semester II, 4 from semester IV, and 1 from semester VI only agree with this factor, and there are only 2, 1, and 1, in the same order, that neither agree nor disagree.

8. Does your interest on an English listening comprehension activity in the classroom depend on the topic presented in this activity?

**Factor
Interest and purpose**

scales	semester II	semester IV	semester VI	total
Strongly agree	1	2	1	4
Agree	8	7	2	17
Neutral	8	5	2	15
Disagree	5	2	1	8
strongly disagree	0	1	0	1
total (students)	22	17	6	45

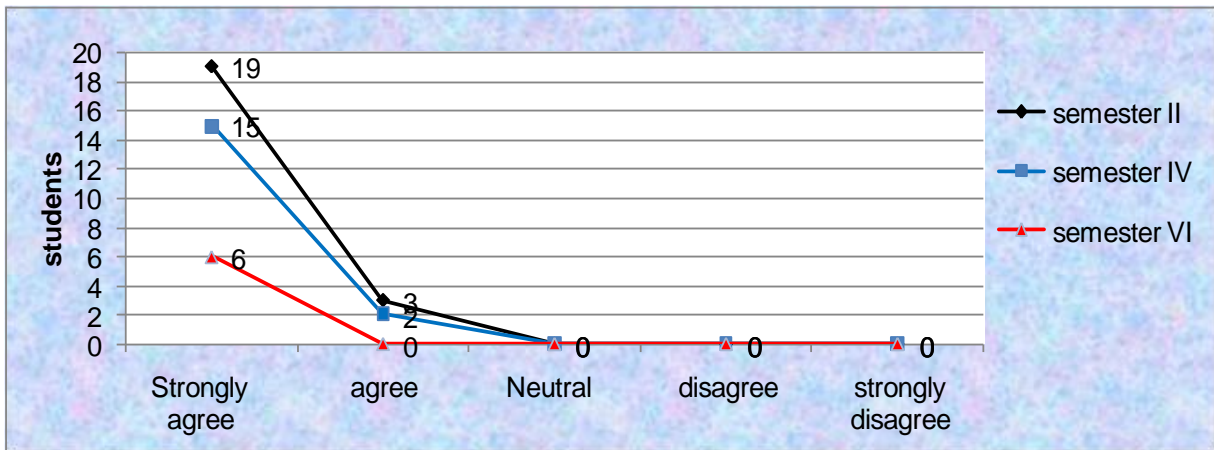


The results obtained show that 1 student from semester II, 2 from semester IV, and 1 from semester VI strongly agreed that their interest on a listening activity in the classroom depends on the topic presented; furthermore, 8 students from semester II, 7 students from semester IV, and 2 students from semester VI agree with the same asseveration. On the other hand, 8 students from semester II, 5 from semester IV, and 2 from semester IV neither agreed nor disagreed. 5 students from semester II, 2 from semester IV, and 1 from semester VI think that the interest on a listening activity in the classroom not depends on the topic presented.

9. Do you think that daily use of activities outside the classroom, such as: Internet, listening to music in English, watching English movies, etc. Have a positive influence to understand spoken English?

**Factor
Type of input**

scales	semester II	semester IV	semester VI	total
Strongly agree	19	15	6	40
agree	3	2	0	5
Neutral	0	0	0	0
disagree	0	0	0	0
strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
total (students)	22	17	6	45

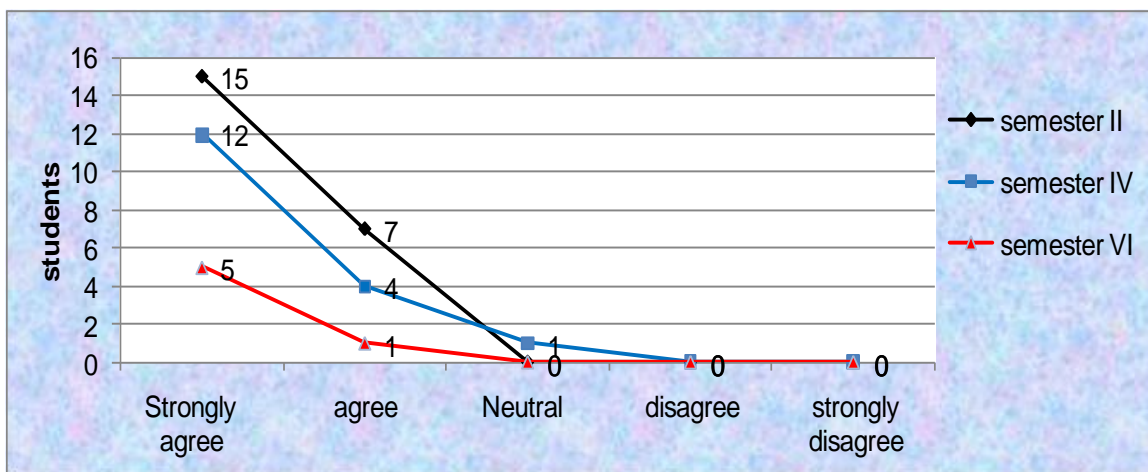


According to the results gotten from question 9, 19 students from semester II, 15 from semester IV, and 6 from semester VI strongly agree that daily use of activities outside the classroom has a positive influence to understand spoken English; besides that, 3 students from semester II and 2 from semester IV agree with the same asseveration.

10. Do you consider that people English pronunciation from the audios and teachers in the classroom help you to improve your listening skills?

**Factor
Accuracy of Pronunciation**

scales	semester II	semester IV	semester VI	total
Strongly agree	15	12	5	32
agree	7	4	1	12
Neutral	0	1	0	1
disagree	0	0	0	0
strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
total (students)	22	17	6	45

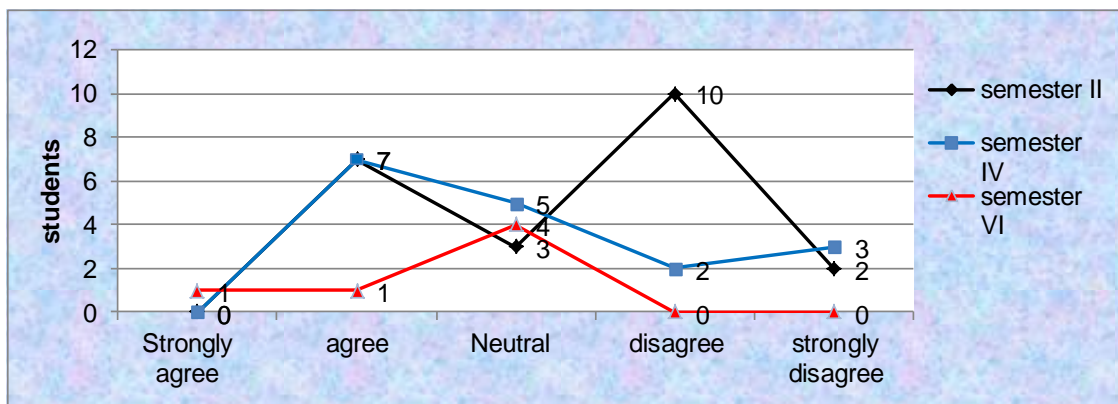


The results gotten from question 10 revealed that 15 students from semester II, 12 from semester IV, and 5 from semester VI state that the English pronunciation of people involved in audios and the teacher in the classroom helps to improve their listening skills. Moreover, 7 students from semester II, 4 from semester IV, and 1 from semester VI agree with the same statement

11. Does the sentence structure used by the teacher when he speaks in the classroom, affects students' ability to listen?

Factor
Sentence length and complexity

scales	semester II	semester IV	semester VI	total
Strongly agree	0	0	1	1
agree	7	7	1	15
Neutral	3	5	4	12
disagree	10	2	0	12
strongly disagree	2	3	0	5
total (students)	22	17	6	45

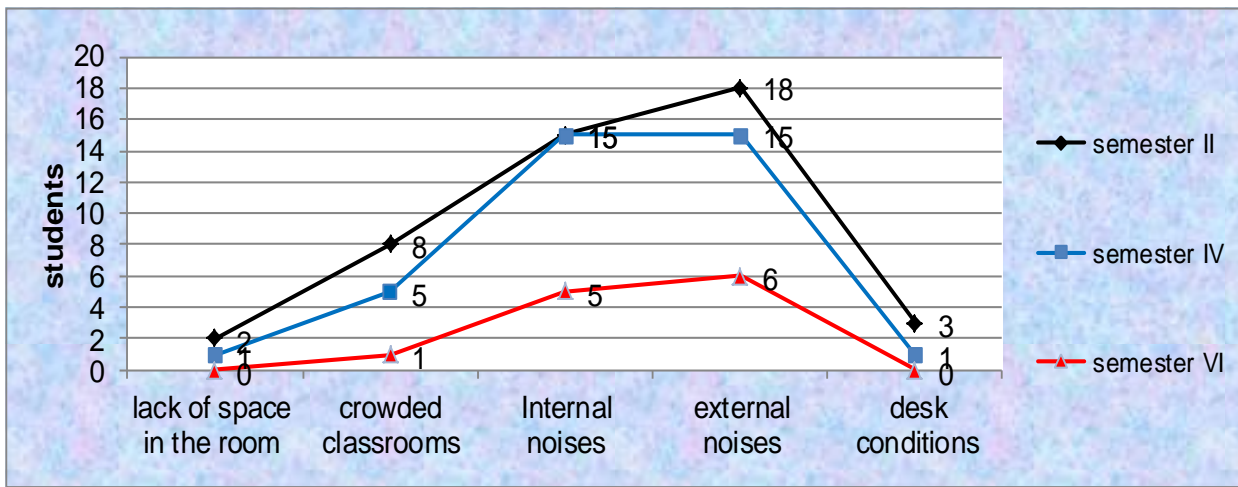


According to the results obtained on question 11, 1 student from semester VI strongly agree that the sentence structure used by the teacher when he/she speaks in the classroom, affects their ability to listen. Besides that, 7 students from semester II, 7 from semester IV, and 1 from semester VI agree with the same asseveration. On the other hand, 3 students from semester II, 5 from semester IV, and 4 from semester VI are neutral in their opinions. And the 10 students from semester II and 2 from semester IV consider that sentence structure used by the teacher when he /she speaks in the classroom doesn't affect their ability to listen.

12. Place an "X" which (s) of the following physical characteristics of the classroom affect negatively on your English listening comprehension (you can choose more than one option)

**Factor
Environment
Physical conditions**

scales	semester II	semester IV	semester VI	total
lack of space in the room	2	1	0	3
crowded classrooms	8	5	1	14
Internal noises	15	15	5	35
external noises	18	15	6	39
desk conditions	3	1	0	4
total (students)	46	37	12	95

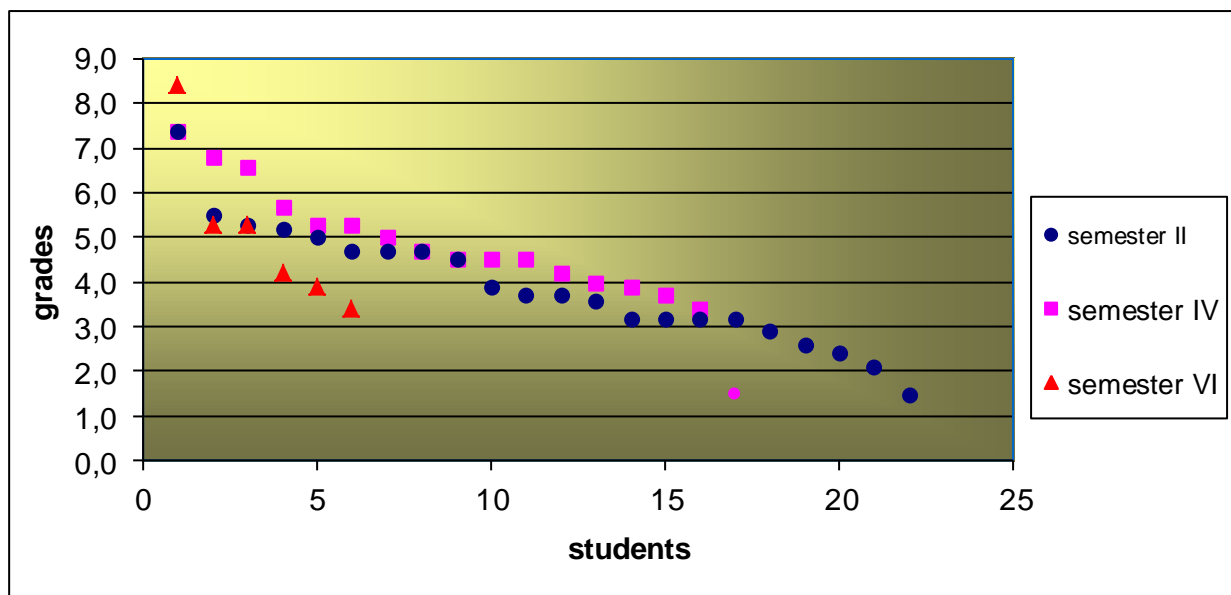


According to the results gotten from question 12, 8 students from semester II, 5 from semester IV, and 1 from semester VI consider that crowded classrooms affects negatively on their listening comprehension. 15 students from semester II, 15 from semester IV, and 5 from semester VI think that internal noises affect their listening comprehension negatively. On the other hand, 18 students from semester II, 15 from semester IV, and 6 from semester VI stated that external noises affect their listening comprehension.

Table 2. Students' grades gotten from the listening part of the TOEFL test

Grades	semester II	semester IV	semester VI	Total
8.4			I	1
7.4	I	I		2
6.8		I		1
6.6		I		1
5.7		I		1
5.5	I			1
5.3	I	II	II	5
5.2	I			1
5	I	I		2
4.7	III	I		4
4.5	I	III		4
4.2		I	I	2
4		I		1
3.9	I	I	I	3
3.7	II	I		3
3.6	I			1
3.4		I	I	2
3.2	IIII			4
2.9	I			1
2.6	I			1
2.4	I			1
2.1	I			1
1.5	I	I		2
Total	22	17	6	45

Students' grades tendency



Students' grades, from semester II, IV and VI, gotten from the listening part of the TOEFL test are shown in the above table along with the three intervals which illustrate their tendency. The numbers in the table show the lowest grade which is 1.5 and the highest 8.4. There is an interval place in an interval between 8.4 and 5.5 with concentration of 7 students, another interval place between 5.3 and 3.2 which concentrations is 32 students and the last one with 6 students between 2.9 and 1.5.

4.1 Data analysis and interpretation

After collecting all the data from the questionnaires and the tests, this was analyzed. The findings, getting from the questionnaires and the tests were compared to determine the level of concordance among what students list as the factors that influence their listening skills and what their listening performance stated.

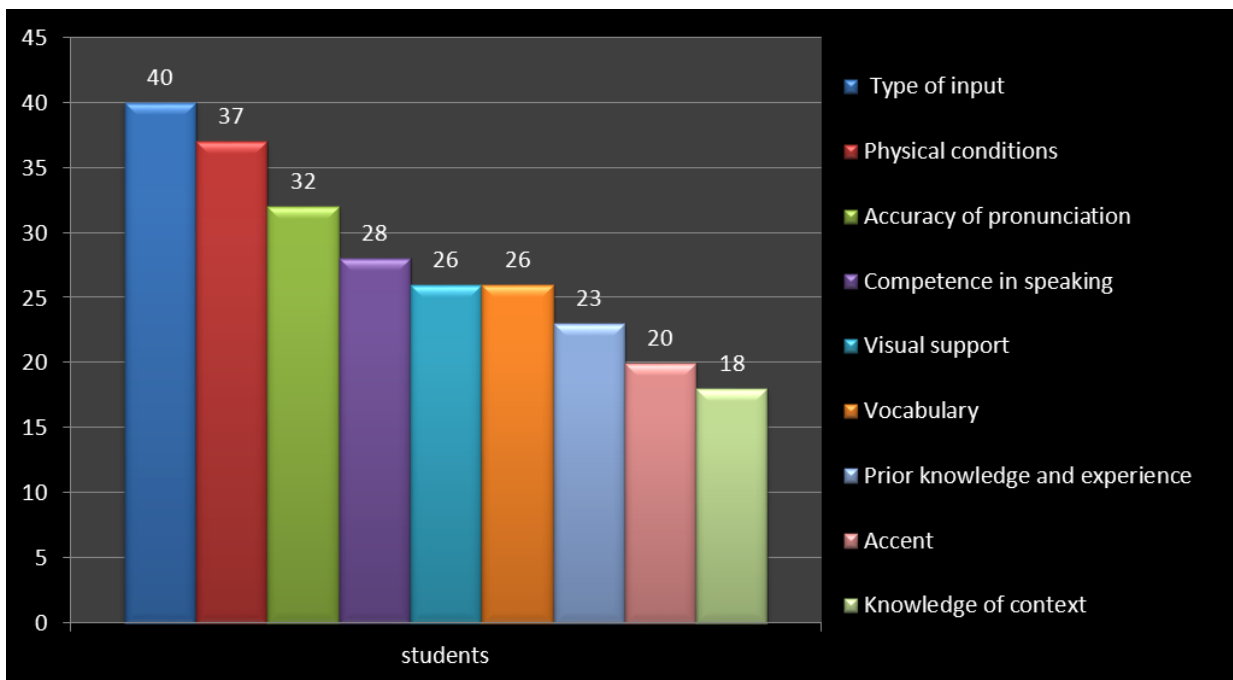
During the research students were exposed to twelve factors to determine which of them influence their listening comprehension, those factors are presented in two groups in the data analysis, the first one includes the nine most commonly reported factors by students in the survey, as the one revealed in table 3; and the second one shows the three least reported factors by students as shown in table 4.

The nine most commonly reported factors by students

Of the twelve factors shown in table 1, nine were reported by almost two thirds of the forty five students involved in the study taking semester II, IV, and VI. Table 3 shows these nine factors and the number of students who reported them. Each of these factors is discussed next along with the answers gathered from the questionnaires and the listening part from the TOEFL test so that the reader can know the context in which these perceptions were revealed supported by previous studies.

Table 3. The nine most commonly reported factors by students

Factor	students
Type of input	40
Physical conditions	37
Accuracy of pronunciation	32
Competence in speaking	28
Visual support	26
Vocabulary	26
Prior knowledge and experience	23
Accent	20
Knowledge of context	18



Category: Text

Factor: Type of input

According to the results gotten from question 9, 19 students from semester II, 15 from semester IV, and 6 from semester VI, strongly agree that daily use of activities outside the classroom such as watching TV, listening to music, surfing the internet, etc has a positive influence to understand spoken English; besides that, 3 students from semester II and 2 from semester IV agree with the same asseveration.

A study carried out by Goh (1999) also found that 70% of the students reported that type of input was an important factor in determining their level of comprehension. Most of the students found conversations easier to understand than other types of input. One reason given was they were able to make use of other types of information from the speaker (e.g. facial expressions) to assist comprehension. Another reason was that they could always ask the speaker to repeat or clarify. Limei & Weifang demonstrate this knowledge:

“When I have a chat with my Singaporean friend, I could understand her. I could guess the meaning from facial language. But when I listened in the telephone, I couldn’t get any information to help me catch the words.” (Limei)

“When I didn’t understand one word or another, I tried to guess and if it was necessary, I asked the speaker to make it clear. Then advantage to listen in the speech is that I can stop and question the speaker. The direct face-to-face communication may be better to test the listening skills.” (Weifang)

Besides that, she also stated that many of the students in her study also noted that English spoken over TV easier to understand than radio broadcasts. Their perceptions about the benefits of watching TV and video are also consistent with the findings in a number of studies (for example, Mueller, 1980; Secules, Herron & Tomasello, 1992) as well as experts’ opinions on the matter (for example, Rubin,

1995). Here is one excerpt from the verbal reports comparing watching TV with listening to the radio:

“With the aid of the screen I still could understand the intention of the video. I’m not quite satisfied with the result because if it was not a video, but the radio, perhaps I could catch very little.” (Yang Yong). Another study that also support the importance of this factor is given by Anderson & Lynch (1988) .They highlighted the elements within each type of input that could directly affect comprehensibility; these included the type of language used, the context in which listening occurred and the purpose of listening. They also noted the level of difficulty of the same input could vary according to the listeners’ purpose in listening. Furthermore, Wolff (1989) reported in his study that his learners frequently tried to identify the type of text they were listening to before proceeding to process it.

Another contribution to this study comes from Stephen Krashen who is an expert in the field of linguistics, specializing in theories of language acquisition and development. Much of his research has involved the study of non-English and bilingual language acquisition. His theory of second language acquisition consists of five main hypotheses: the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Input hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis. The input hypothesis attempts to explain how learners acquire a second language. The Input Hypothesis also states that acquirers must not be forced to produce early. Their production is not taught directly.

The best methods are therefore those that supply “comprehensible input” in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. (Krashen,1985). The main task of a teacher is to provide comprehensible input to the students as much as possible. When an acquirer is provided with comprehensible input, his/her LAD (language acquisition device) is activated and he/she acquires. *Zheng Dong-lin (Sep. 2008)*

Category: environment

Factor: physical conditions

According to the results gotten from question 12 out of the conditions provided in the survey (lack of space in the room, crowded classrooms, desk conditions, internal noises, external noises) the 33% of the students from semester II, the 41% from semester IV and the 42% from semester VI think that internal noises affects their listening comprehension negatively; besides that, the 39% of the students from semester II, the 41% from semester IV and the 50% from semester that external noises also affects their listening comprehension.

In a study carried out by Goh (1999) she also included this factor as an important issue affecting listening comprehension, and she briefly describe it as: The presence of noise, the acoustics in a room, or the loudness of input. Bronzaft and McCarthy (1975) stated that poor classroom acoustics also impact teachers and some studies have shown that poor classroom acoustics negatively affect learning. The sources of classroom noise can be interior noise (such as Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning - HVAC) and interior equipment such as the fans in overhead projectors and computers. Walls, ceilings and floors not properly insulated can also contribute to noise. Noise sources can also come from exterior sources such as aircraft and highway traffic. Whether the noise source is interior or exterior, student's learning suffers.

According to David Lubman, "teachers are less likely to talk with students or will talk with them for shorter periods when noise levels are high." When teachers have to raise their voices over background noise, their voices can become fatigued. Working in this environment on an ongoing basis can contribute to teacher frustration and even burnout. Gifford, Environmental Psychology, Allyn and Bacon, Inc., (1987) Noise is more bothersome in crowded classrooms; teachers in those classrooms might resort to quieter, less effective teaching methods because of the conditions. Yerkes-Dodson said in there Law – Noise study that it produces arousal. This will help performance, provided the arousal (noise) is not excessive. Too much noise

leads to lowering of performance and as it is mentioned in the Environmental Load Approach unpredictable noise requires attention and therefore interferes with the task. A complex task requires more attention so therefore more easily disrupted by noise.

Category: Listener

Factor: Accuracy of pronunciation

The results gotten from question 10 revealed that 15 students from semester II, the 12 from semester IV, and 5 from semester VI state that the English pronunciation of people involved in audios and the teacher in the classroom helps to improve their listening skills. A study carried out by Goh (1999) states that Listeners who themselves do not pronounce certain words accurately may have problems recognizing these words when the speaker says them correctly.

Regarding accuracy of pronunciation and narration we can name one example; the deficiencies most frequently cited in the review of audio book original master recordings are errors in pronunciation and narration. The spoken text must be a word-for-word rendition of the printed text, and the importance of accuracy in pronunciation and narration cannot be overstated. Correct pronunciation in a recorded book is the equivalent of correct spelling in a print book. Pronunciation must be appropriate to the style and period of the text and to the nature of the characters. Proper names, foreign words, and phrases in a foreign language must be pronounced with accuracy and delivered with naturalness without breaking the rhythm of narration.

Another definition affirms: pronunciation refers to the way a word or a language is spoken, or the manner in which someone utters a word. If one is said to have "correct pronunciation", then it refers to both within a particular dialect. A word can be spoken in different ways by various individuals or groups, depending on many factors, such as: the area in which they grew up, the area in which they now live, if they have a speech or voice disorder, their ethnic group, their social class, or their education.

On the other hand we have written language which is one of the most important features of the listening language is its quick speed. Generally speaking, the speed of an oral text is 140 to 180 words per minute, while that of television news broadcasting or weather forecasts are the quickest. So it is common that listeners find it hard to have a good command of listening language speed. Pronunciation also affects listening comprehension in some way. There are many phonetic variations in listening texts, such as assimilations and continuations. For instance, when “could” follows “you”, the end consonant [d] in “could” and the beginning consonant [j] in “you” assimilate. So the pronunciation becomes [dʒ]. However, these two obstacles is, to a large degree, because listeners seldom or do not even practice listening in their spare time and do not pay attention to the imitation of foreigners’ pronunciation. Foreign language learners should cultivate and form the habit of imitating native speakers’ pronunciation from the very beginning of language learning.

Category: Speaker

Factor: competence in speaking

Question 7 says that there are 14 students from semester II, 11 from semester IV, and 3 from semester VI that strongly agree in thinking that the teacher’s competence and ability to motivate students plays an important role in listening. 6 students from semester II, 4 from semester IV, and 1 from semester VI only agree with this factor, and there are only 2, 1, and 1 in the same order, that neither agree nor disagree.

Goh (1999) defines Competence in speaking as the speaker’s command of English, overall fluency, and their ability to interest listener or facilitate their comprehension and also Judith Arter (1989) defined it as the ability to communicate effectively for various purposes within various social contexts. This includes not only

knowledge of what words mean and how to construct messages, but also what constructions are most effective for various audiences, settings and purposes.

In this sense, motivation plays an important role when listening, but there are certain preconditions to be met before any attempts to generate motivation can be effective. Some of these conditions are the following: appropriate teacher behavior and good teacher-student rapport. So that, whatever is done by a teacher has a motivational and formative influence on students. In other words, teacher behavior is a powerful “motivational tool” (Dornyei 2001:120)

Another perception of what motivations means is that teacher influences are various, ranging from the rapport with the students to teacher behaviors which “prevail upon” and / or “attract” students to engage in task. For Alison (1993) a key element is to establish a relationship of mutual trust and a respect with the learners, by means of talking with them on a personal level. This mutual trust could lead to enthusiasm. At any rate, enthusiastic teachers impact a sense of commitment to, and interest in, the subject matter, not only verbally but also non-verbally – cues that students take from them about how to behave. (Motivational and motivating in the Foreign Language Classroom by Dimitrios Thanasoulas)

Category: Text

Factor: visual support

Table number 5 shows that 15 students from semester II, and 11 from semester IV think and no students from semester VI that is very necessary to count with visual aids to best understand listening activities, and 4 students from semester II, 4 from semester IV, and 3 from semester VI think that it is necessary.

Listening is a demanding process, not only because of the complexity of the process itself, but also due to factors that characterize the listener, the speaker, the content of the message and any visual support that accompanies the message (Brown and Yule 1983). “Listening consists of processing information which the listener gets from visual and auditory clues in order to define what is going on and

what the speakers are trying to express” (Rubin 1990, Clark 1977, Richards 1983) also some studies have suggested that visual support as a factor can enhance listening comprehension on students, “improving Foreign Language Listening Comprehension” (Joan Rubin 1990); “a comparison study of the effects of Video versus Text-Centered Instruction in the Foreign language Curriculum” (Morris, Secules 1995).

There are some studies based on the fields of visual aids as a factor that influence students listening skill. According to Goh (1999), visual aids can be defined as pictures, handouts, captions, subtitles that support the spoken text. While Carol Van Dozer(1997) said that visual support such as video, pictures, diagrams, gestures, facial expressions, and body language can increase comprehension if the learner is able to correctly interpret it.

Learning aids are instructional materials and devices through which teaching and learning are done in schools, colleges, etc. Examples of learning aids include visual aids, audio-visual aids, real objects and many others. The visual aids are designed materials that may be locally made or commercially produced. They come in form of wall-charts illustrated pictures, pictorial materials and other two dimensional objects. There are also audio-visual aids. These are teaching machines like radio, television, and all sorts of projectors with sound attributes (Adeyanju, 1997).

Category: Text

Factor vocabulary:

The results obtained from the questionnaires show that 15 students from semester II, 9 from semester IV and 2 from semester VI strongly agreed that knowing vocabulary helps to improve the listening skill. Besides that, 6 students from semester II, 8 from semester IV and 3 from semester VI also agreed with the importance of this factor. The following studies also agreed with the importance of knowing vocabulary.

The fact that so many students reported that vocabulary affected their comprehension shows it was a dominant perception among the students.

It seems, therefore, for many learners, knowing the meaning of words in the text is crucial for their comprehension. According to (Goh, 1999) vocabulary is the presence of familiar/unfamiliar content words. This includes English idioms, jargon and academic terms. Vocabulary is defined as a set of words students are familiar with in a language. A vocabulary usually grows and evolves with age, and serves as a useful and fundamental tool for communication and acquiring knowledge. It includes the study of meaning of words, how the words are used, root words, prefixes, suffixes, analogies, etc. Barnhart, Clarence Lewis (ed.) (1968).The World Book Dictionary. Chicago: Thorndike-Barnhart

According to “*learning vocabulary in another language*” (Cambridge university press, 2001) the most ambitious goal is to know all of the language, however, even the speaker do not know all of the language. A less ambitious of setting vocabulary learning goals is to look at what native speakers of the language know. Unfortunately, research on measuring vocabulary size has generally been poorly done (Nation, 1993c) based on that we can distinguish four kind of vocabulary in a text: high frequency words, academic words, and technical words and low frequency words. Another reliable study (Goulden, Nation and Read, 1990) suggests that educated native speakers of English know around 20,000 words families. A word family consists of a headword, its inflected forms, and its closely related derived form.

In order to determine what does it means to know a word because they are not isolated units of language there are aspects related to what is mean to know a word. It is not enough to learn to recognize the form of a word simply by memorizing it. The terms receptive/productive scale of knowledge apply to a variety of kind of language and use when they are apply to *vocabulary* , these terms cover all the aspects of what is involved in knowing a word.

At the most general level knowing a word involves form, meaning and use. From the point of view of receptive knowledge and use, knowing the word for example, underdeveloped involves:

Being able to recognize the word when it is heard.

Being familiar with its written form so that it is recognized when it is met in reading.

Recognizing that it is made up of the parts under-, develop- and -ed and being able to relate its parts to its meaning.

Knowing that underdeveloped signals a particular meaning.

Knowing what the word means in the particular context in which it has just occurred.

Knowing the concept behind the word which will allow an understanding in a variety of contexts.

Knowing that there are related words like overdeveloped, backward and challenged.

Being able to recognize that underdeveloped has been used correctly in the sentence in which it occurs.

Being able to recognize that words such as territories, and areas are typical collocations.

From the point of view of productive knowledge and use, knowing the word *underdeveloped* involves:

Being able to say it with correct pronunciation including stress.

Being able to write it with correct spelling.

Being able to construct it using the right word parts in their appropriate forms.

Being able to produce the word to express the meaning underdeveloped.

Being able to produce the word in different contexts to express the range of meanings of underdeveloped.

Being able to produce synonyms and opposites for underdeveloped.

Being able to use the word correctly in an original sentence.

Being able to produce words that commonly occur with it.

Being able to decide to use or not use the word to suit the degree of formality situation (at present developing is more acceptable than underdeveloped that carries a slightly negative meaning).

It should be clear from this that if we say a particular word is part of someone's receptive vocabulary we are making a very general statement that includes many aspects of knowledge and use, and we are combining the skills of listening and reading. Productive learning is more difficult because it requires extra learning of new spoken or written output patterns (see Crow, 1986, for similar argument)

Category: Listener

Factor: Prior Knowledge and experiences

The results demonstrated that 14 students from semester II, and 8 from semester IV and 1 from semester VI think that previous knowledge helps to understand better the topic presented in a listening comprehension activity. And 6 from semester II and 8 from semester IV and 4 from semester VI also agreed.

Prior knowledge can be explained as a combination of the learner's preexisting attitudes, *experiences*, and *knowledge*:

Attitudes

- Beliefs about ourselves as learners/readers
- Awareness of our individual interests and strengths
- Motivation and our desire to read

Experiences

- Everyday activities that relate to reading
- Events in our lives that provide background understanding
- Family and community experiences that we bring to school with us

Knowledge

- Of the reading process itself
- Of content (literature, science, and math)
- Of topics (fables, photosynthesis, fractions)
- Of concepts (main idea, theory, numeration)
- Of different types of style and form (fiction and nonfiction)
- Of text structure (narrative or expository)
- Of the academic and personal goal

According to Goh (1999) prior knowledge includes specific knowledge about the topic being talked about.

Jean Piaget states that accessing prior knowledge is how children make sense of the world. They attempt to take new information and fit it into existing knowledge in order to create a schema (*organized background knowledge which leads us to expect or predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse*), or mental map that fits into a specific category. This makes the information more accessible because it is more memorable. When they make connections, it allows them to find the information using this network. Prior knowledge has been found to play a key role in the students' comprehension processes and strategy use (Goh, 1998b). According to Joan Rubin (1994), current views on listening comprehensions agreed that background *knowledge or experience* (also called declarative knowledge can affect listening comprehension).

Empirical studies have explored the potential relationship between prior knowledge and listening comprehension.

Mueller (1980) investigated the effects on listening comprehension of locus of contextual visuals. He found that the students who had the contextual visual

before hearing the passage scored significantly higher on the recall measure than those in the visual-after and the no-visual groups.

The influence of religion-specific background knowledge on the listening comprehension of ESL students of varying religion, Markham and Latham (1987). The data indicated that religious background influences listening comprehension. The subjects in this study recalled more information and provided more elaborations and fewer distortions for the passage that related to their own religion.

Bacon's (1992) research sheds light on the effect of background knowledge during listening process. She investigated strategies used in three phases identified by Anderson (1985): perceptual, parsing, and utilization. . She reported that successful listeners tended to use their personal, world, and discourse knowledge while less successful listeners either built erroneous meaning from their prior knowledge or ignored it altogether.

Chiang and Dunkel (1992) investigated the effect of speech modification, prior knowledge, and listening proficiency on EFL listening comprehension. Regarding topic familiarity, the subjects scored higher on the familiar-topic lecture than on the unfamiliar-topic lecture.

Schmidt-Rinehart (1994) carried out a study with the main purpose of discovering the effects of topic familiarity on L2 listening comprehension. She concludes that background knowledge in the form of topic familiarity emerges as a powerful factor in facilitating listening comprehension.

Some researchers consider the role of schematic knowledge as one of the factors affecting comprehension. Brown and Yule (1983), for example, describe schemata as "organized background knowledge which leads us to expect or predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse" (p. 248)

Category: Speaker

Factor: accent

The results obtained show that 9 students from semester II, 5 from semester IV, and 1 from semester VI strongly agreed with the idea that English listening comprehension depends on the accent of the speaker. 9 students from semester II, 7 from semester IV, and 4 from semester VI agreed with this idea.

This factor has been identified as one of the main aspect affecting students listening comprehension not only by some authors but also for the population of this study. According to Christine Goh (1999) the accent is related to where a speaker comes from. Another definition is set by James Ernil Flege (1988) which said that accent is likely to be related to details of segmental articulation, intonation and rhythm. In linguistics, an accent is a manner to identify the locality in which its speakers reside (a geographical or regional accent), the socio-economic status of its speakers, their ethnicity, their caste or social class, their first language (when the language in which the accent is heard is not their native language).

Accent is often singled out as a factor contributing to difficulties for comprehension (Kennedy, 1978; Richards, 1983; Bilbow, 1989). It is true that non-natives studying through the medium of English are likely to encounter a range of accents, both native and non-native. The research into the effect of accent on comprehension is quite clear-cut in supporting the common sense view that unfamiliar accents cause difficulty in comprehension (Eisenstein and Berkowitz, 1981; Smith and Bisazza, 1982; Anderson-Hsieh and Koehler, 1988) besides that accent as an important factor in language learners' listening comprehension has been reported by Boyle 1984, Tauroza & Luk 1997. Besides that, a study carried out by Goh (1999) found that speaker's accent affect listening comprehension; in her study a 68% of the students reported that.

Category: Listener

Factor: Knowledge of context

The results showed by question two revealed that 7 students from semester II, 10 from semester IV and 1 from semester VI strongly agreed that being familiar with the topic presented in the class is important to understand spoken English. And 10 students from semester II, 5 from semester IV and 1 from semester VI also agreed. This factor has been found to be an important role on students listening comprehension and the following authors supported the above mention.

Goh (1999) defines knowledge of context as a general sense of what the spoken input is about. And Vandergrift (2002) stress that listeners use both bottom-up (linguistic knowledge) and top – down processes (prior knowledge) to comprehend a text. While Gebhard (2000) points out that background knowledge relates to our real world experiences and expectations that we have He also found that Familiarity with the topic makes listening easier for the listener as he is able to relate to his own background knowledge.

In the research carried out by Liu, Na and I.S.P. Nation (1991) found that students who are familiar with the topic background knowledge of a listening passage they are going to listen can do better than those who are unfamiliar with it in listening comprehension and vice versa. Familiarity with the topic of oral passages is very helpful for listening comprehension and not familiar with it would definitely slow down the listening process. The effect of topic familiarity can be explained by schemata theory. When students are familiar with the topic of an oral passage, the related schemata in their brains will be easily activated; language skill deficiency can be compensated by the familiarity of the topic of a text (黄子东, 1998). Topic familiarity is the familiarity of background knowledge of the topic of a passage; the familiarity of background knowledge can help listeners activate schemata stored in their brains.

Anderson & Lynch (2000) state that one of the reasons why the listener fails to process incoming speech is that the speech contains words or phrases that the listener can hear adequately but is unable to understand because of serious problems with the syntax or semantics of the language. Another problem is the lack of background knowledge on the topics discussed. Lack of socio-cultural, factual and contextual knowledge of the target language can also present an obstacle to comprehension because language is used to express culture (Anderson & Lynch, 2000). This indicates that background knowledge plays an important role in interpreting meaning, as this forms a foundation for listeners to connect new information to their existing knowledge.

Table 4. The three least reported factors by students

Factor	students
Speech rate	16
Interest and purpose	15
sentence length and complexity	12

In addition to the above nine factors, which were mentioned by more than two thirds of the forty five students involved in the study taking semester II, IV, and VI the three other left factors that came up as not having significant influence on students listening comprehension were revealed in the survey. One Such as factor was speech rate.

Speech rate is the perceived speed or slowness at which words are produced. Christine Goh (1999).Speech rate include a normal rate (the rate at which speaker can usually easily comprehend a text) and a threshold rate(the rate at which comprehension begins to decrease rapidly) Joan Rubin 1994. A study from Rader, Karen Elizabeth (1990) considered the effect of slowing down speech from third

quarter university students of Spanish. Rader noted that the no significant result may be related to :a) the control of background knowledge. B) the high level of difficulty of a texts, c)the lack of student exposure to authentic extended aural discourse, and d) the fact that recall was not done immediately after exposure.

Despite these criticisms, most research quotes a normal speech rate of 165 to 180 words per minutes for native speakers of English Speech rate Griffiths (1991) suggested that different languages have different “normal” rates, thus it is possible what was ‘normal’ rate for a competent speaker of English was perceived as fast by the students who spoke Chinese as their mother tongue.

Another factor quite commonly mentioned was interest and purpose. The most important condition to encourage learning relates to the choice of what is read, namely interest (Elley 1989, Penno, Wilkinson and Moore, forthcoming).Carol Van Dozer (1997) states that interest in a topic increase the listener’s comprehension; the listener may tune out topics that are not of interest. A listener who is an active participant in a conversation generally has more background knowledge to facilitate understanding of the topic that a listener who is, in effect, eavesdropping on a conversation between two people whose communication has been recorded on an audiotape. Listening should be relevant because learners listen with a purpose and listen to things that interest them, accounting for the goals and experiences of the learners will keep motivation and attention high. For example, if learners at a worksite need to be able to understand new policies and procedures introduced at staff meeting, in class they should be helped to develop the abilities to identify main ideas and supporting details, to identify cause and effect, to indicate comprehension or lack of comprehension, and to ask for clarification.

The students also commented that their comprehension could be greatly influenced by whether or not they knew sentence length and complexity. According to Goh, sentence length and complexity is defined as sentence types, such as simple sentences or long complex ones with embedded clauses. Language knowledge is the foundation of learning English. If students’ knowledge of pronunciation, grammar, and

vocabulary is insufficient, it is probable that their English listening comprehension will be negatively affected by lack of language knowledge. For the Chinese student of English the challenge of listening poses particular demands because there are many sentence types that are complex and very different from the home language. If the student is unable to distinguish the main clause from a subordinate clause and is unable to understand their relationships, despite understanding the meaning of every word in the sentence, understanding is unlikely to occur with accuracy. Students do become accustomed to analyzing grammatical structure relatively quickly when they are taught the psychological analysis method.

Nevertheless many students become confused about relationships in a sentence and connections between sentences and they are often unsure of relationship within sentences. Thus lack of grammatical knowledge can reduce English listening levels. Liu (1995)

4.2 Conclusions

The study carried out by Christine Goh, (1999) “How much do learners know about the factors that influence their listening comprehension?” there are 20 factors that influence students listening comprehension and she concluded that Language learners who know about how their listening is influenced by internal and external factors will be better placed to take the necessary measures to enhance and assist their comprehension. According to the literature review there were around 12 factors that may influence students listening comprehension, besides that based on the results gathered from the survey administered to students from “Profesorado en Idioma Ingles para Tercer Ciclo de Educación Básica y Educación Media” semester II-2010 from the FLD at UES they sited nine as the most reported factors in the survey, and three as the least reported factors that influence their listening understanding of English. Taking into account the results obtained from the survey it can be concluded:

1. According to the above mentioned, the research team considered that there are factors influencing students’ listening comprehension in the Foreign Language Department as stated by some authors in different research projects such as Boyle, J. (1984), Goh’s (1999), and Wills, Robin and Naizhao, Guo (2004).
2. In this research twelve factors were considered in the EFL context in the FLD. Out of the twelve factor nine were reported as the most commonly factors that influence students listening comprehension taking semester II, IV, and VI and they are: physical conditions, accuracy of pronunciation, competence in speaking, visual support, vocabulary, prior knowledge and experience, knowledge of context, and accent

3. On the other hand, three other factor were reported as the least commonly factors that influence students listening comprehension taking semester II, IV, and VI and they are: speech rate, interest and purpose, and sentence length and complexity.
4. The results obtained from the TOEFL listening test revealed that students' performance from the three semesters is in the interval between 5.3 and 3.2. It is important to mention that students taking semester VI are inside that interval including the highest grade 8.4 and students from semester II are below that interval and they also got 1.5 which is one of the lowest grades. Based on the data collected the nine factors that they reported really influence their listening comprehension.
5. The team considered that students might know that such factors play an important role when it comes to listening comprehension since the level of agreement does not fluctuate significantly among their grades in the listening performance test and the survey outcomes.
6. All the factors influence students listening comprehension and how they do so depends on this; if they know about the factors they will influence positively and if they do not know the factors they will influence negatively.
7. The findings on this study were the results of the students` performance and their previous knowledge before entering the Foreign Language Department.

4.3 Recommendations

Considering the outcomes obtained, the research team suggest the following recommendations to enhance students' level of listening comprehension

1. Raise students' awareness about the factors that influence their listening skill.
2. Get memberships of on-line libraries from different well-known universities, for example from the United States so that students can have more access to academic materials concerning linguistics.
3. To take into consideration the results of this research project in order to continue with the investigation of each factor in depth.
4. Raise students' awareness on metacognition.
5. The Foreign Language Department needs more research on the factors that influence, positively and negatively, students' understanding of English and on how to overcome the negative ones.
6. To take into consideration the socio-economic factor to further research.

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Annexes

Universidad de El Salvador
Facultad de Ciencias y Humanidades
Departamento de Idiomas Extranjeros

Instrucciones: por favor marque con una "X" las asignaturas que ha aprobado y las que esta cursando actualmente

PROFESORADO EN IDIOMA INGLES PARA TERCER CICLO DE EDUCACION BASICA Y EDUCACION MEDIA
 FLUJOGRAMA

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- * AREA DE FORMACION ESPECIALIZADA
- * AREA DE FORMACION GENERAL



Objective: To gather information about the factors that influence English listening skill on students from the major “Profesorado en Idioma Ingles para Tercerciclo y Educacion Media”

Instructions: Mark with an “X” next to the choice(s) that better answers each question.

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements

1. Do you consider that knowing the meaning of the vocabulary used in activities for listening comprehension of English in the classroom help you to improve your listening skills?

- a) Strongly agree b) agree c) neutral
 d) disagree e) strongly disagree

2. Being familiar with the topics presented in class is important for you to understand spoken English?

- a) Strongly agree b) agree c) neutral
 d) disagree e) strongly disagree

3. When the speaker's first language is English, for you to understand their message in the activities of understanding through audio in the classroom it is:

- a) very easy b) easy c) neutral
 d) difficult e) very difficult

4. Do you consider that Prior knowledge of English help you to understand better the topic being discussed in an activity when using audio (cassettes, CD's)?

- a) Strongly agree b) agree c) neutral
 d) disagree e) strongly disagree

5. How necessary is for you the fact of having visual aids such as posters, illustrations, slides, within the classroom to understand better the listening activities of English?

- a) Very necessary b) necessary c) Neutral
 d) not necessary e) not very necessary

6. Do you think that English listening comprehension depend on the accent that has the speaker?

- a) Strongly agree b) agree c) neutral
 d) disagree e) strongly disagree

7. Do you think that teacher's ability to motivate students in the classroom can facilitate listening comprehension of English?

- a) Strongly agree b) agree c) neutral
 d) disagree e) strongly disagree

8. Does your interest on an English listening comprehension activity in the classroom depend on the topic presented in this activity?

- a) Strongly agree b) agree c) neutral
 d) disagree e) strongly disagree

9. Do you think that daily use of activities outside the classroom, such as: Internet, listening to music in English, watching English movies, etc. Have a positive influence to understand spoken English?

- a) Strongly agree b) agree c) neutral
 d) disagree e) strongly disagree

10. Do you consider that people English pronunciation from the audios and teachers in the classroom help you to improve your listening skills?

- a) Strongly agree b) agree c) neutral
 d) disagree e) strongly disagree

11. Does the sentence structure used by the teacher when he speaks in the classroom, affects students' ability to listen?

a) Strongly agree

b) agree

c) neutral

d) disagree

e) strongly disagree

12. Place an "X" which (s) of the following physical characteristics of the classroom affect negatively on your English listening comprehension (you can choose more than one option)

a) lack of space in the room

b) crowded classrooms

c) Internal noises

d) external noises

e) desks conditions



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



Listening Comprehension Test

Listening Comprehension

In this section of the test, you will have an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to understand conversations and talks in English. There are three parts to this section with special directions for each part. Answer all the questions on the basis of what is stated or implied by the speakers in this test. Do **not** take notes or write in your test book at any time. Do **not** turn the pages until you are told to do so.

Part A

Directions: In Part A, you will hear short conversations between two people. After each conversation, you will hear a question about the conversation. The conversations and questions will not be repeated. After you hear a question, read the four possible answers in your book and choose the best answer. Then, on your answer sheet, find the number of the question and fill in the space that corresponds to the letter of the answer you have chosen.

Here is an example.

Sample Answer

On the recording, you hear:

(A) (B) (C) (D)

- In your test book, you read:
- (A) At last winter is almost over.
 - (B) She doesn't like winter weather very much.
 - (C) This winter's weather is similar to last winter's weather.
 - (D) Winter won't last as long this year as it did last year.

From the conversation you learn that the woman thinks the weather this winter is almost the same as the weather last winter. The best answer to the question "What does the woman mean?" is (C), "This winter's weather is similar to last winter's weather." Therefore, the correct choice is (C).

1. (A) They are enjoying a visit after a long separation.
(B) They don't see each other unless they have to.
(C) They will not see each other again for a long time.
(D) They aren't speaking to each other.
2. (A) Let's go to a movie.
(B) Let's stay home.
(C) Why should we go to a movie?
(D) Why don't we go home?
3. (A) She could not afford to fly to Chicago.
(B) She has taken the bus to Chicago only twice.
(C) Taking a plane costs more but saves time.
(D) It is better to go to Chicago on the bus.
4. (A) At an art exhibit.
(B) In a supermarket.
(C) In a shoe store.
(D) In a clothing store.
5. (A) Ted didn't observe the speed limit.
(B) Ted should go to the hospital.
(C) More time is needed to evaluate Ted's condition.
(D) Ted will soon end his emergency training.
6. (A) She doesn't want to practice any more.
(B) They've been dancing since six o'clock.
(C) The dance routine needs more right turns.
(D) She will be ready to practice at six o'clock.
7. (A) It doesn't serve very good fish.
(B) It is an excellent restaurant.
(C) It has slow service.
(D) He'd like to see it again.
8. (A) He ate too much and needs to go to sleep.
(B) He can't wait to see his friends tomorrow.
(C) The woman should wait until tomorrow to have her party.
(D) He doesn't want to go to the party because it starts late.
9. (A) She didn't need a ride from the airport.
(B) She might have missed her flight from Boston.
(C) She was taking a trip to Boston.
(D) She had decided not to make the trip.
10. (A) She knew the doctor was fifty years old.
(B) She is not surprised by the man's statement.
(C) The man should wait to see a doctor.
(D) She is shocked by the man's statement.
11. (A) Be understanding toward the woman.
(B) Lower the woman's final grade.
(C) Work hard to get an extension.
(D) Expect the woman to finish her paper first.
12. (A) It hasn't rained much lately.
(B) The woman doesn't like Ray.
(C) Ray is behaving differently than usual.
(D) The class started late because of the rain.
13. (A) The woman doesn't need to type her English paper.
(B) He doesn't want to type any papers.
(C) Both of the woman's papers should be typed.
(D) There are two papers this term.

14. (A) John's mother can't hear him very well right now.
28. (A) They should order two more pizzas.
 (B) The pizza isn't large enough.
 (C) He won't eat any more pizza.
 (D) There is enough pizza for everyone.
29. (A) The woman has enough tapes of jazz music already.
 (B) The woman isn't really going to buy any more music.
 (C) He hasn't heard any good jazz lately.
 (D) He doesn't like jazz as well as other types of music.
16. (A) Biology 101 won't be offered next semester.
 (B) Biology 101 is not popular with students.
 (C) She has already taken Biology 101.
 (D) She hasn't heard anything about Biology 101.
17. (A) Open the door to the cafeteria.
 (B) Look at the lunch schedule.
 (C) Get a schedule from someone else.
 (D) Wait in the cafeteria for lunch to be served.
18. (A) She might not graduate.
 (B) She doesn't like to receive presents.
 (C) She might prefer a different gift.
 (D) She doesn't wear gold.
19. (A) Someone else prepared it for her.
 (B) She had to deliver it.
 (C) She had a great time preparing it.
 (D) Someone will help her prepare it.
20. (A) He will help Jane with her work.
 (B) He will work things out with Jane.
 (C) He wishes Jane success in her new job.
 (D) He wants to apologize to Jane.
21. (A) Joe paid too much for his new car.
 (B) Joe is always in a good mood.
30. (A) Elizabeth didn't go out of town after all.
 (B) Elizabeth changed her schedule.
 (C) The man was mistaken about Elizabeth's plans.
 (D) Elizabeth will be out of town this week.
24. (A) He has been helping Linda prepare for her class.
 (B) He thinks Linda is feeling better every day.
 (C) He likes having Linda as a tutor.
 (D) Linda would do better if she got a tutor.
25. (A) He has eaten too much.
 (B) He disagrees with the woman.
 (C) He feels cold.
 (D) He would like to shut the door.
26. (A) He doesn't really want to move.
 (B) He hasn't found an apartment he can afford.
 (C) He will be moving very soon.
 (D) He hasn't looked for an apartment yet.
27. (A) No one seems to have the book she needs.
 (B) She wasn't able to reserve her ticket.
 (C) She closed the travel agency early.
 (D) She has two books to return tomorrow.

Part B

Directions: In this part of the test, you will hear longer conversations. After each conversation, you will hear several questions. The conversations and questions will not be repeated.

After you hear a question, read the four possible answers in your test book and choose the best answer. Then, on your answer sheet, find the number of the question and fill in the space that corresponds to the letter of the answer you have chosen.

Remember, you are **not** allowed to take notes or write in your test book.

31. (A) How to raise butterflies and moths.
(B) How to photograph insects in the wilderness.
(C) Butterflies and their physical development.
(D) The characteristics of black flies.
32. (A) Butterflies are bigger and more colorful than moths are.
(B) The antennae of butterflies and moths — are different.
(C) Butterflies are faster flyers than moths are.
(D) Moths have bigger wings than butterflies do.
33. (A) They tickle and cause a rash.
(B) They swarm and bite.
(C) They are too small to see.
(D) They are difficult to catch.
34. (A) They develop inside of cocoons.
(B) They find mates and reproduce.
(C) They learn how to spin silk.
(D) They travel from plant to plant in search of food.
35. (A) She slept through her alarm.
(B) She had to see a doctor.
(C) She was writing a paper for Professor Smith.
(D) She was too ill to leave her room.
36. (A) She needs a blood transfusion every eight weeks.
(B) She can't finish her work on time for the next class.
(C) She becomes ill when she eats cereal.
(D) She has an illness that many other women have.
37. (A) Eat iron-rich foods.
(B) Buy a new alarm clock.
(C) Stop eating cereal.
(D) Call Professor Smith.
38. (A) Her pills.
(B) The assignment.
(C) Professor Smith's handouts.
(D) The notes for Professor Smith's lecture.

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



Listening Comprehension Test



ANSWER SHEET

1. (a) (b) (c) (d)
2. (a) (b) (c) (d)
3. (a) (b) (c) (d)
4. (a) (b) (c) (d)
5. (a) (b) (c) (d)
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35. (a) (b) (c) (d)
36. (a) (b) (c) (d)
37. (a) (b) (c) (d)
38. (a) (b) (c) (d)

