APPROACHES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING SKILLS IN ELT:
A STATE OF THE ART

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: APPROACHES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING SKILLS IN ELT: A STATE OF THE ART[*]

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KEY WORDS: Listening skills, listening process, problems and barriers in listening, methodologies and techniques in listening skills, teaching principles in the development of listening skills.

Some improvements have been made in the development of listening skills in the English Language Teaching context. Therefore, this reflects a newfound belief in its vital importance. The topic of this paper is precisely listening and how our students can get better at it. There is plenty to talk about and discuss, listening is quite a complex sense to explore and we are only beginning to understand its full potential.

Listening nowadays is central to the language learning process. It seems that researchers and authors in general have realized cognition itself has one great goal, to locate and process relevant information. This must be the starting point for listening developments and methods. The focus of listening training should be teaching students for *learning to listen.* This includes the stimulation of reception skills, word recognition, parsing, etc.

The history of the development of listening is a convoluted and long one. This paper will provide a comprehensive view of this skill as a key process in language learning. Multiple nuances and a series of approaches have been developed over time with aims to achieve the best possible results for successful language learning.

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RESUMEN

TÍTULO: ENFOQUES PARA EL DESARROLLO DE HABILIDADES DE ESCUCHA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS: UN ESTADO DEL ARTE[*]

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PALABRAS CLAVES: Habilidades de escucha, proceso en la escucha, problemas y barreras en la escucha, metodologías y técnicas para enseñar habilidades de escucha, Principios educativos en el desarrollo de habilidades de escucha

Algunas mejoras se han hecho en el desarrollo de las habilidades de escucha en el contexto de la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa. Esto refleja una creencia reciente en su importancia vital. El tema de este ensayo es precisamente la habilidad de escucha y cómo nuestros estudiantes pueden mejorar en ello. Hay mucho de qué hablar y discutir sobre la habilidad de escucha, éste es un sentido complicado de explorar y apenas estamos empezando a entender su pleno potencial.

Hoy en día, la habilidad de escucha es el eje central del proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua. Parece que, en general, los investigadores y autores se han dado cuenta de que la cognición tiene un gran objetivo, situar y procesar información relevante. Esto tiene que ser el punto de partida para el desarrollo de la habilidad de escucha y sus métodos. El foco de la instrucción de la habilidad de escucha debe ser enseñar a los estudiantes a aprender a escuchar; esto incluye la estimulación de las habilidades de recepción, reconocimiento de palabras, análisis, etc.

La historia del desarrollo de la habilidad de escucha es complicada y larga. Este ensayo presentará un panorama completo de esta habilidad como un proceso clave en el aprendizaje de una lengua. Múltiples matices y una serie de enfoques han sido desarrollados a través del tiempo con miras a alcanzar los mejores resultados posibles para el aprendizaje exitoso de una lengua.

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"I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen." — *Ernest Hemingway*

1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings develop their listening skills several weeks before birth when predominant sounds can induce relevant effects over the fetus' behavior that may last for at least a week. Newborn infants are able to perceive and isolate sounds clearly showing a developed sense of hearing, and although newborns have rudimentary auditory abilities, their aural system is not completely developed. This trait may constrain their capability to process more complex aspects of the sound spectrum until several months after birth.

Even though infants' analysis of the spectral characteristics of sound are similar to the ones adults make, after birth, their analysis of the temporal attributes of sounds appears to have a prolonged period of improvement into early childhood. Furthermore, it is important to state that, while the neuro-scientific studies clearly help us understanding the auditory processing during early human development in the mother tongue, the studies of how human beings develop and hone their listening skills in a second language learning process are now a domain of Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

The purpose of this paper is to provide theoretical foundations of the research that has been done in the field of the development of listening skills within the English Language Teaching context (ELT). The reason for this is that listening is assuming greater importance in foreign language classrooms, the emphasis on comprehensible input has been a significant vector for this change. As a result listening stands as a vital aspect in the language classroom; it provides important input for the learner and without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin. Thus, listening is fundamental to second language learning.

With the purpose of providing an appropriate theoretical background, we begin by systematically organizing the information and analyzing the context in which listening skills stand, then in the following pages we will present an explanation of the listening process, an analysis of common difficulties and barriers in listening, also the teaching principles to be applied in the development of listening skills in ELT as well as proposed methods for the development of listening skills, and teaching techniques.

2. BACKGROUND RESEARCH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING SKILLS

First of all, it is important to emphasize that there is no concrete definition of *listening*. In fact, researchers agree that, also, there is no universal definition for *listening comprehension* in a learner's first language (L1) or in their second/foreign language. The authors of this paper would like to note that, surprisingly, in the literature review there is no evidence or prior research work on this topic conducted in Latin-American countries.
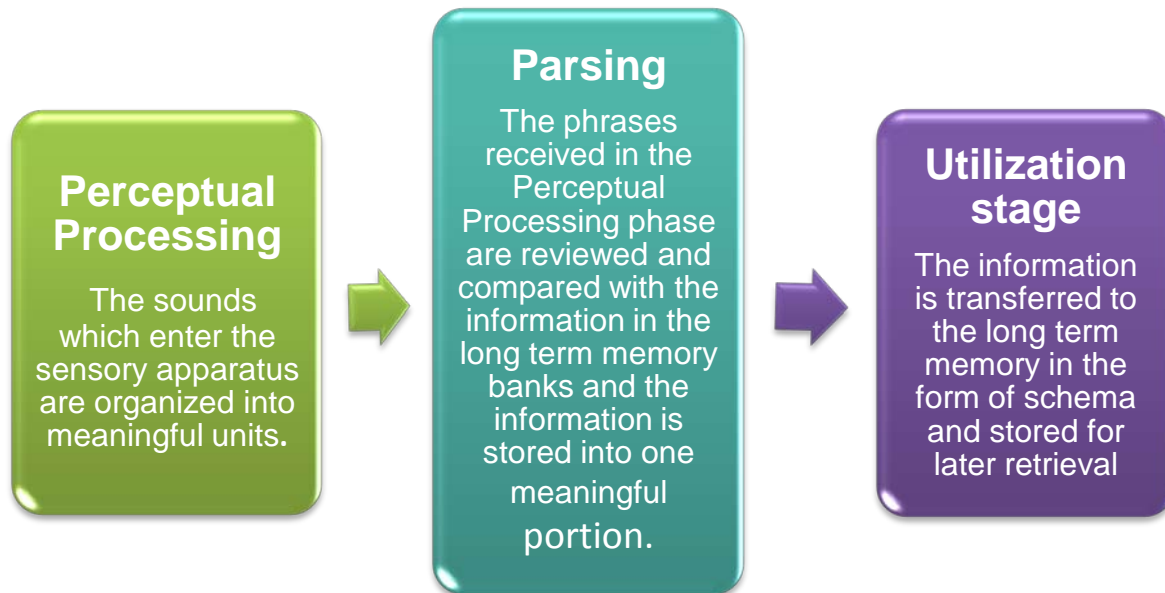
The key role listening plays in a child's language acquisition has been documented by researchers such as Bloom (1970), R. A. Brown (1973), and more recently by Carroll, (1999). Readiness to talk is a developmental phenomenon in the baby. The baby listens for hundreds of hours to other people talking before he or she is able to communicate by speaking.

In ELT, more than 25 years ago, Asher (1981) claimed that speech cannot be directly taught to the beginning-level student just as parents cannot directly teach their infant to talk. He noted that no amount of coaching or coaxing by parents will speed up the appearance of speech in the baby before the child is ready to talk, and before the child has had hours of listening comprehension practice. Joan Morley, one of the most respected listening experts, says that listening comprehension training should be an integral part of teaching English as a second/foreign language. She calls on L2 teachers to provide students with a plethora of listening experiences.

Anderson (1985) divided listening comprehension into 3 phases: The first one is called Perceptual Processing. In this phase, the sounds enter the sensory apparatus and are organized into meaningful units in the short term memory. In the second phase called Parsing, the phrases received in the Perceptual Processing phase are reviewed and compared with the information in the long term memory banks and the information is stored into one meaningful portion. Finally, in the third

phase called Utilization Stage the information is transferred to the long term memory in the form of schema and stored for later retrieval. (Bai and Jing, 1-2)

Anderson's ideas are best explained in the following graphic:

Perceptual Processing

The sounds which enter the sensory apparatus are organized into meaningful units.

Parsing

The phrases received in the Perceptual Processing phase are reviewed and compared with the information in the long term memory banks and the information is stored into one meaningful portion.

Utilization stage

The information is transferred to the long term memory in the form of schema and stored for later retrieval

However, these three phases are not the only issue to take into account in listening comprehension in ELT contexts. O'Malley (1989; 418), found that effective listeners use three strategies which, in fact, distinguish them from the ineffective ones. These three strategies are: self-monitoring, elaboration and inferencing. First, the listeners select what they want from the incoming information and focus on specific items according to what they are interested in; then they relate the new information with their previous knowledge, so they can retain and comprehend faster and finally, they use the information in a text in order to guess the meaning of new items or to complete missing parts. (Bai and Jing, 2-3)

Dunkel and Lim (2006) state that "(L1) learners usually acquire their (L1) with the aid of caretakers/teachers who help them to understand their first language and

to reach out to communicate with their caretakers/teachers and other people who speak the language. The caretakers/teachers, in other words provide the child with comprehensible input giving the child good reasons to listen and good reasons to make appropriate responses after the message is comprehended". Dunkel suggests that among other things comprehensible input helps the (L1) or (L2) learners by:

- Providing a correct model for imitation;
- Reducing the processing load by facilitating segmentation of the input into smaller chunks of language, and by simplifying the length, structure, and lexical load modeled in the input.
- Slowing down the speech when necessary and speeding up when possible
- Directing the learner's attention to the relevant information in the input
- Improving the intelligibility of the language heard
- Providing feedback on the accuracy or inaccuracy of the comprehension
- Promoting a positive effect in the learner toward interaction with others
- Teaching social routines or in the case of Dunkel and Lim's methodology design, rhetorical routines and the signal cues employed by speakers who use one or more of the major rhetorical routines involving process, cause and effect, definition, and so on. (7)

Researchers Bai Shuqin and Jing Jiangbo (2004) from the Shan Xi University of Finance and Economics in China found three problems faced by ineffective listeners: The first problem is the inadequate listening input, it means that the listening exercises presented on textbooks contain dialogues and passages which are read slowly, clearly and with unnatural or monotonous intonation, "some are originally written materials meant to be read, not listened to".

The second problem deals with the absence of training in listening strategies. The majority of teachers are more focused on correcting mistakes, rather than analyze why students fail in the listening activities (listening is tested but not taught). Teachers favor bottom-up processing over the top-down processing

probably because they regard the limited linguistic knowledge as the single barrier hindering students' listening comprehension (3-7).

Finally, the third problem is low levels of motivation in students rooted in the affective filter (Krashen, 1981, cited in Bai and Jing), and also, in the lack of confidence generated by false beliefs such as the one that states that a student has to understand every single word in order to achieve an optimal listening comprehension and that spoken and written language are the same. These two issues can cause great problems, for example, students can panic when they fail to catch a certain word and lose important information that is coming up continuously. (8)

According to Dunkel and Lim in recent years, "helping ESL and EFL learners develop their listening comprehension has become a major focus of teaching for several reasons. First, listening plays a key role in the development of a learner's first language (L1), and listening is believed, by extension to play a prime role in the development of a learner's second language (L2)". (6)

According to Dunkel we all manage to acquire our first language and we do it primarily through listening. There is a seamless connection between learning to listen and acquiring our first language (L1). We acquire listening ability in our first language in a gradual and seemingly effortless way, and regardless of what the first language is we all tend to acquire it in about the same amount of time. We do it through practice and by gaining confidence that we can learn to listen and use the language effectively. (Dunkel and Lim, 7)

In contrast, Peter Skehan (1998) makes explicit claims from other authors that "second language learning does not lead to the same success as L1 learning does". Many factors have been proposed as the reasons and many methodologies have subsequently proposed as an attempt to connect L1 acquisition with L2 learning. (11)

In this view, two major approaches to developing listening skills in L2 teaching have surfaced: comprehension-driven learning and engaging in interaction and production of input.

Regarding comprehension-driven learning, Skehan relies upon Krashen's comprehensible input theory provided that "comprehensible input stands as the driving force for inter-language development", and enforces the premise of learning to speak by listening. Based on these claims, methods and approaches have been developed throughout time, as examples we can find the TPR method and immersion education as well. (12)

Regardless of the achievements of immersion education, detractors of this theory such as Skehan himself and others, maintain that "speaking does not come for free simply through listening to comprehensible input and that comprehension alone (listening-centered methods regardless of meaningful input) does not secure production".

Paradoxically, we need good output to negotiate better input (listening). But at the end the L2 learner will not always be rewarded by being provided meaningful, clear and understandable input. Not even native speakers have such an advantage; they employ strategies that are both syntactic and semantic whenever they engage in the production/comprehension processes. "Their comprehension may be described as probabilistic since it is composed of a variety of means that maximize the chances they have to recover the intended meaning". (14)

Thus, when listening, native speakers draw on three different sources of knowledge:

1. Schematic knowledge
   - Background knowledge: factual and socio cultural
   - Procedural knowledge (how knowledge is used in discourse)
2. Contextual knowledge
   - Knowledge of situation (physical setting, participants, etc…)
   - Knowledge of co-text (what has been and will be said)

3. Systemic knowledge

- Syntactic

- Semantic

- Morphological

"These sources of knowledge are drawn on, interactively to achieve comprehension. Listeners build meanings by drawing on a wider range of resources, including both schematic and contextual knowledge. This implies that we are not exclusively dependent on the nature of the sounds addressed to us to achieve meaning, if we can relate what has been said to previous knowledge that we have, and then we may be able to make very effective inferences about the message concerned. In this respect, listeners behave exactly the same way as skilled readers do when they sample the printed material in front of them, rather that pouring over every letter. (Comprehension is a mixture of bottom up and top down processes. What all this implies is that comprehension processes can be partly detached from the underlying syntactic system and hence from production)". (Skehan, 14)

Therefore, we have two inherently different strands from the aforementioned authors regarding the way second language students must be taught in order to develop their listening skills; the first one is a linear perspective where both skills, listening and speaking, are developed separately but in parallel (first listening and then speaking). This theory was first introduced in the natural approach where the students first have to do a lot of listening before they speak.

The second perspective states that teachers should not separate listening from speaking given that if students manage to develop their listening skills, they will develop their speaking skills. This approach was first introduced by the Whole Language Approach which strongly opposes the decoding approach that focuses on teaching separately components of language such as grammar, vocabulary, word recognition and phonics. Whole language sees language as a complete entity and argues that languages should be taught as whole.

Consequently at this point, we consider appropriate to provide a brief description of the process that occurs while listening due to the fact that it is important to achieve understanding of the steps the learners must go through when listening, so we as teachers can improve further listening instruction.

3. THE LISTENING PROCESS

Listening in essence is interactive and requires certain steps to be successful. The most important one would be comprehension, which in turn is made up of several mental processes. According to D. Brown's text, "a list has been developed of the eight processes that occur simultaneously in the brain during microseconds eventually leading to comprehension". (Only the first and last one are fixed in that same order) (249)

1. The hearer processes the raw speech (phrases, clauses, intonation, stress patterns, etc.) and holds it in the short term memory.
2. The hearer determines the type of speech (conversation ,radio broadcast, a speech, etc)
3. The hearer infers the objectives of the speaker depending on the type of speech.
4. The hearer recalls relevant background information (schemata)
5. The hearer assigns literal meaning to the utterances. This involves semantic interpretation of literal and intended meanings. This is could pose as a difficult process in which the learner, sometimes must go beneath the surface of an utterance to assign the correspondent meaning (literal ,metaphoric or idiomatic)
6. The hearer finally assigns the meaning. This is ultimately based on the human ability to match perceive meaning with intended meaning.
7. The hearer determines what information should be retained in short-term or long-term memory (depends on the context; for instance if it is a conversation or a lecture).
8. The hearer deletes the original form of the message and the information is retained in conceptually. (D. Brown 249)

In contrast with the eight processes proposed by D. Brown, Dunkel says that "in order to understand spoken English we need to be aware that our students go through a number of mental steps. While going through these steps, they apply cognitive strategies to discover the meaning of what they hear. Dunkel

hypothesizes that "listeners, whether native or non-native speakers, go through four basic steps. The steps may not be carried out in sequential order. In fact, listeners may even jump backward or forward through the steps as necessary": (4)

Step 1: The listeners sort out why they are listening and what they want and need to know. In other words, there must be a *good reason* for listening. However, many times in our classrooms, our students must listen (whether what they hear is interesting to them or not) in order to answer test questions about what they heard. This task may be important to us teachers, but it is uncertain whether it's a real reason for our listeners to listen to English, except for those students who want to get high grades all the time.

Step 2: Listeners *predict* some information they expect to hear. They try to figure out how much of the information they're going to hear will be new and how much will be familiar. Rixon (1986) suggests that these two steps allow the listener to reduce some of the listening to a monitoring task. This monitoring requires the listeners to find the similarities and differences in what they hear with what they already know about the topic of conversation or the information heard.

Step 3: Listeners decide how much of the message is important with respect to the *reason* why (and when) they first began to listen. In other words, the listeners *must ignore* much of what they hear in order to *concentrate* on what information in the message matches their *reason or reasons* for listening.

Step 4: Listeners then *check* their understanding of the message. They do this checking in a number of ways. For example, the listeners may ask or answer some questions about the information in the message. This happens a lot when listeners are having a conversation with another person or other people. The listeners can also check their comprehension by *doing something.* They might, for instance, take notes on what they hear in a lecture

Dunkel states that it is also up to teachers to "provide focused and task-oriented activities that help students use the same strategies that fluent L2 and even L1

listeners use to process speech". To become successful L2 listeners, students need to use strategies such as:

- *getting the background information* they need to know something about what they're going to hear
- *making predictions* about what they will hear,
- *ignoring* information in the speech they don't need,
- *noticing* if they are not comprehending what they hear,
- *checking* their comprehension often as they listen, and, if they are speaking with another person,
- *Making an appropriate response* to keep the conversation going.

But we should keep in mind that these strategies are not flawless and they may not guarantee a successful completion of language listening tasks for all learners. As English language students and pre-service teachers, we have often seen how difficult listening can be for some, if not most of the students. Their complaints are so alike they could be categorized; in fact, certain studies have been performed upon these complaints.

4. COMMON DIFFICULTIES IN LISTENING

Byung and Ji-sun (2001) propose a list of some of the most common but relevant complaints that language learners present regarding aural comprehension activities. For instance, "listeners complain they cannot control the speed of delivery or that they cannot have the words repeated"; also "there is lack of vocabulary, lack of contextual knowledge, and even concentration break ups" just to name a few. Moreover, "lack of attention, poor listening training and inadequate listening activities generate and exacerbate comprehension problems". (166)

Considering other studies, Douglas Brown proposes several factors that alone or in combination make the listening process difficult.

First, we see *clustering* which is very common in most languages perhaps due to our disposition. Language learners have a hard time with this, since they are used to receive the words or phrases in isolation, perfectly spelled and pronounced. Learners have the tendency of trying to attend to every word in the utterance, what makes them fall behind and not understand the whole text. Then, we find 'redundancy' that basically encompasses repetitions, rephrasing, elaboration or even little insertions (I mean…You know…). (Brown 252)

Listeners take advantage of *clustering* to create meaning and learners should train themselves to be aware of them and take advantage of these elements that actually help them; redundancies, for example, provide more processing time. Then, there are the "reduced forms", quite common in the English language. They can be morphological (I will - I'll), syntactic (Ellipsis: When will you be back? Tomorrow, maybe), phonological (Did you eat yet? - Djeetyet?), or even pragmatic (Phone rings, kid answers: "Mom, phone!"). As mentioned, learners are used to being exposed to full forms of the language; hence, reduced forms present a problem. (Brown 252)

"Cultural and social context present important factors as well. Idioms, slang, reduced forms, and shared cultural knowledge are part of colloquial language". Learners may find difficult to understand this, in view that most of them have been

exposed to text book language, or have not been introduced to key vocabulary before the main task so they can be able not only to discriminate the different parts of the speech, but also its semantics. (Brown 253)

There are other factors that are part of the native speakers' nature. Except for planned speeches, spoken English is filled with performance variables such as hesitations, false starts, corrections and pauses. Native speakers are conditioned to their use, but for language learners they interfere with comprehension. In written form they look like gibberish, but it is the kind of language we hear all the time. Everyday language produced by native speakers is full of ungrammaticality. Furthermore, native speakers speak too fast, this known as 'rate of delivery'. Hearers may not have the chance to stop the speakers as they would in reading. (D. Brown 253)

The prosodic features of English are really important for comprehension. "English is a stressed-timed language"; hence, it is difficult for learners in view of the high amount of syllables produced between stress points. Also, intonation is very important, not only to understand straightforward elements like questions, but also to understand more subtle messages as in sarcasm, praise, insults, or solicitation. (D. Brown 253)

Finally, interaction plays a large part in comprehension. So, to learn, to listen, is to learn, to respond, and to continue a chain of listening and responding. "Classroom techniques must include instruction in some way of two-way communication. Students need to understand that good listeners are good responders". (Brown, 253)

Osada (2004), on the other hand, explains that "listening in fact involves many processes characterized as highly problem-solving activities". Research into listening over the past few decades has highlighted the fundamental intricacy of the processes involved. In order to comprehend spoken messages, "listeners may need to integrate information from a range of sources: phonetic, phonological, prosodic, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic", that is why the fact that we

achieve all this in real time as the message unfolds makes listening complex, dynamic, and fragile. (56)

Alternatively, Lijun and Fang (2005) say that "listening difficulties of the EFL learners are based on their inability to keep up with the different aspects of the language". This inability is rooted in the lack of exposure to real-life language, making learners unable to distinguish performance variables such as rhythm, pronunciation, accents, and intonation or stress patterns. In addition, language learners lack the ability to link words to context, skim an audio text, guess meaning and even keep up with redundancy. (14)

Besides the difficulties stated by the previous authors, a study at the University of Taiwan was performed by *Chen Yiching* with aims at exploring the barriers EFL learners present in acquiring listening strategies. The author classified these barriers into 7 groups, as will be described in the following section.

4.1 BARRIERS FOR LISTENING STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTATION

When a second language is taught, difficulties become an important issue of the learning process. However, learning difficulties have not been widely researched in the field of language learning strategies. The following chart presents common difficulties in listening. These difficulties have been divided into categories and their corresponding subdivision or type, as well as examples which better illustrate each one of them.

CATEGORY	TYPE	EXAMPLE
1. **Affective barriers:** Some affective influence might distract learners from	N/A	A learner may feel depressed after failing to comprehend an utterance.

learning the target strategies. The affective factors that play a negative role in strategy acquisition include anxiety, distress, frustration, and resistance.		
2. Habitual barriers: Some learners reported that they were more inclined to resort to their old "survival kit," i.e., their former listening habits, than to try the listening strategies introduced in the training. Although not all of the listening habits disadvantaged comprehension, some may impede learners to activate their comprehension	N/A	Listening for every spoken word, relying on subtitles, written transcriptions and non-purposeful listening.

	process.	
3. **Information processing barriers**	**1. Obstacles pertaining to spoken-word recognition:** Learners reported the obstacles in strategy use that were complicated by spoken-word recognition problems.	Some, learners have trouble with the matching tasks between the pronunciation of the spoken words and the words they already knew. Others are unable to recall the meanings of the spoken words. And, there are also learners who experience both obstacles.
	2. Obstacles pertaining to processing speed: Some learners report their failure to process spoken input efficiently, even though they attempted to apply strategies.	Some students complain not having time to think about strategies when doing a listening activity due to the speed used by the speaker and that the processing input with listening strategies took up additional mental efforts and precious processing time.
	3. Obstacles pertaining to input retention: Some learners experience difficulties in retaining perceived input for	Learners, which memory limitations or capacity in the sensory register or/and short-term memory, have difficulties in retaining the new

	further processing.	information presented in the listening exercise.
	4. Obstacles pertaining to processing distraction: Some learners report that their attention is distracted or information processing is interrupted while they try to apply strategies in listening.	Learners complain about the use of self-monitoring, due to the distraction that results from the effort of strategy use.
	5. Obstacles pertaining to interpretation: Some learners experience problems regarding interpretation of the perceived input, even though some comprehension strategies are used.	Learners are unable to find the appropriate meaning or interpretation of particular vocabulary items, expressions, or entire text.
	6. Obstacles pertaining to fatigue: Some learners mention	For learners, their attention or other mental efforts for listening are

	fatigue as one of the causes in the malfunction of spoken word processing.	affected by their overall condition, i.e., whether they were tired or not
4. English proficiency barriers	**1. Obstacles pertaining to limited English vocabulary:** Some learners regard their limited English vocabulary as a barrier to activating listening strategies.	Some learners believe that the first priority in improving listening comprehension is to increase their vocabulary instead of using strategies such as getting the main idea of the text. They think that once they increase their English vocabulary, listening strategies would fall into place.
	2. Obstacles pertaining to poor grammar: Some learners stress the importance of grammar in relation to listening comprehension or strategy application.	Some learners do not think that picking up some words will be useful for them since their ability to listen for phrases or sentences is too bad, and also their English grammar is as terrible as their ability to

		English conversation.
	3. Obstacles pertaining to overall English proficiency: There are learners who attribute the difficulties of strategy acquisition to their listening skills or overall language skills.	Learners claim the failure of their listening strategies result from the poor listening ability.
5. Strategic barriers	**1. Forgetting to activate strategies while listening:** Learners sometimes forgot to apply listening strategies while listening.	Learners say that they cannot always remember some strategies such as the inference one and cannot use them often either.
	2. Regarding strategies as extra burdens to information processing: Some learners describe one learning obstacle as having to process both	Learners tend to wait until the end of the listening activity in order to make an effort and use the strategies.

	language input and strategy utilization at the same time.	
	3. Challenged by the complex nature of the strategy: There were some strategies that imposed a greater challenge to the learners than other strategies did. The challenge is usually related to the complexity of the strategy.	More mental effort is usually involved for some strategy application than others, perhaps because more contextual clues or schematization is needed to be elicited and activated.
	4. Having problems conducting the proper strategies: Some learners encounter practical problems when trying to put their understanding of strategies into practice.	It might be that the learners are not familiar with the procedures or the optimal conditions for specific strategy application.
	5. Still unable to comprehend the text after applying strategies: Another frequent report from learners is that the texts are still not	Even when some learners use their strategies when inferring the meaning of a word from the context they are still not able to understand what the

	comprehensible in spite of strategy use.	speaker is trying to say.
6. Belief barriers	**1. Applying strategies after other language skills were acquired:** Some learners consider strategies as the last priority in improving listening comprehension, and believed that other language skills such as vocabulary or grammar development are more important.	Learners prefer practice grammar or vocabulary exercises at home rather than practicing listening exercises.
	2. Attending to every word or demanding full comprehension of text: Some learners, regard listening as a task to apprehend every spoken word or a task to gain complete understanding of the whole text.	Even when some learners make use of the newly learned strategies in listening they cannot see the results they expect, as a result they experience frustration.

7. Material barriers	1. **Obstacles pertaining to difficulty level of materials:** Learners are more inclined to practice strategies with materials that are not too difficult for them.	Learners compare two speeches, and then they choose the easier one for practicing listening.
	2. **Obstacles pertaining to spoken features:** A substantial number of learners' accounts are devoted to the challenges imposed by the spoken features in the materials.	The three most frequently mention features are: (1) rate of speech, (2) clarity of voice, and (3) accents.
	3. **Obstacles pertaining to length of sentences or texts:** For some learners, length of the sentences or the texts also counts for the difficulties of strategy application.	Some learners complain that even when they have learned strategies; their listening problems are still there.
	4.**Obstacles pertaining to text genre:** Learners report that some genres present more challenges than others	Learners report that interviews on radio, news, reports or commercials are more challenging that weather

		forecasts, cartoons or call-in programs.
	5. Obstacles pertaining to topics: Some learners regard text topic as another factor in strategy application.	Whether they are familiar with the topic of the text or not influenced the success or failure of the strategy use.
	6. Obstacles pertaining to modalities: Some learners were concerned about the modality of the materials. Some saw a combined mode, using both visual and auditory channels as beneficial; others thought that materials delivered through a single modality were more helpful for strategy application or attention concentration.	In the examples favoring visual support, some learner pointed out "the gesture or facial expressions" gave her some clues about the speakers' emotions and intended message. Similarly, visual support was considered by others as a "more relaxing" and "easier" form, which made easy using the inferencing strategy.

5. TEACHING PRINCIPLES TO BE APPLIED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING SKILLS IN ELT.

Given the aforementioned problems, some practical principles for designing aural comprehension techniques have been developed over time by different researchers. D. Brown's principles state that when dealing with content-based curriculums that integrate skills, "teachers must make sure to **give enough focus to each one of the skills**". It is commonly assumed that the input given orally by the teacher during class time can be efficiently internalized by learners and further converted into intake; we have identified this situation in the ELT program at UIS, where at the beginning of the program, there is an integration curriculum with no special focus on one skill, and contrastively, each one has its own separate assessment. Clearly this represents a nerve-racking situation for learners, who must perform well in individual skills assessment with no prior focused training in either one of them. (258)

Another issue is motivation. According to D. Brown **"the techniques used to train students must be intrinsically motivating and appeal to their interests and goals"**. This must be done in order for students to employ schemata, which is a vital tool to attain comprehension in a listening situation. The students' *cultural background* also has the outmost importance to both, facilitating and inferring within the listening process. "**The techniques must engage students get caught up in the activities so they are self-propelled towards the final objective**". What's more **the use of real-world tasks enables students to see the relevance of the classroom exercises as related to their long-term communicative goals**. (258)

*"**The teacher has to take into account the listeners responses** since comprehension itself is not externally observable"*. D. Brown affirms "it is necessary to design techniques in which students' response indicate whether comprehension has been reached or not". According to this author, nine different ways have been discovered in which we can observe students' comprehension:

"Doing, choosing, transferring, answering, condensing, extending, duplicating, modeling and conversing". (259)

Conversely, Lijun and Fang propose a method based on the idea of stages in the listening process. The authors assert that in order to overcome most of the problems related to listening comprehension, the teacher has to be aware of the three different stages in the aural perception of utterances. During the first stage the sounds go into a sensory store often called the "echoic" memory, and are organized into meaningful units, according to the knowledge of the language the listener already possesses. The second stage is "the processing of the information by the short-term memory". At this point, words or groups of words are checked and compared with information already held in the long-term memory, and the meaning is extracted from them.

The final stage is that the listener is "able to construct a meaning from the utterance if not fully". Students might transfer the information to the long-term memory for later use. In spite of these stages, the process does not flow that smoothly when someone is listening to a foreign language because the listeners either do not have the language skills yet, or have little knowledge about the language. Thus, even at the first stage, they have difficulty in organizing the stream of sounds into meaningful units; listeners will find it more difficult to reach the second stage of information processing and final stage of transferring it to the long-term memory. (15)

6. PROPOSED METHODS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING SKILLS IN ELT

Douglas Brown explains that "listening as the major part of the language learning process was first proposed by in the TPR method". Also, in the same way, the Natural approach recommended a silent period during which students were just concerned with listening. The comprehensible input principle added a new dimension to listening training, by recommending suitable material that could be more easily internalized, in other words it is not just the quantity but the quality. (247)

From now, we will present an analysis of three methods for listening training that we consider hold the greatest significance in the history of second language teaching.

6.1 The Default Method

In most classrooms around Japan and perhaps, in many more around the globe, the common way to teach listening is to have students listen to some language tape, and then the teacher asks a few comprehension questions.-Did the students understand? No? Well ok, play the tape again. Ask the question again. Did they understand? No. Ok, well . . . tell them to practice and one day they will get used to English and will be able to understand-. Practice makes perfect as the saying goes.

The default method is then, a type of listening instruction where students are set to acquire listening proficiency by being constantly exposed to repetitive language drills. Therefore, with this method, practice is the main concern in the EFL classroom. Other than practice is not enough and instead of giving students plenty of sometimes meaningless listening practice, teachers should divide the skill of listening into micro-skill components, making sure that our students are aware of what they need to know to understand.

A well known SLA expert, Richard Schmidt (1995), has presented a theory called the 'Noticing Hypothesis', which states that learners have to notice something before they can learn it and in so, we need to help our students notice language points that teachers need to teach.

Schmidt stated that there is support in the literature for the hypothesis that attention is required for all learning, and so learners need to pay attention to input and pay particular attention to whatever aspect of the input (phonology, morphology, pragmatics, discourse, etc) they are concerned to learn (1)

An ideal listening class should then provide both practice and instruction. Students need practice in listening for meaning and also some instruction about how to apply the contents effectively.

According to Lightbown & Spada (1999), a number of studies provided enough classroom data to support the perspective that form focused instruction and corrective feedback are more effective for second language learning, as long as they are provided within the context of a communicative program, than programs focused on accuracy and fluency. (117)

Osada once explained how training in listening comprehension attracted little interest from teachers and researchers, while the other skills (speaking, reading and writing) covered all the attention. (5)

This proves that the efforts for providing quantity and quality in listening skills development are still deficient as long as teachers choose to focus on other activities or apply methodologies that do not take into account the students' need for understanding. This is not far from the reality of EFL classrooms in Colombia. For this reason we will present an explanation of Patricia Dunkel and Phyllis Lim's stages method which features a structure that allows students to assimilate and understand the contents of the listening activities.

6.2 The Patricia Dunkel and Phyllis Lim Stages Method:

Taking into account the principles D. Brown and Osada proposed for a high-quality listening training where bottom up and top down techniques are necessary, a good methodology must be designed having in mind that principle. That is why Lijun and Fang, along with Dunkel and Lim proposed a training method divided into three main stages: the pre-listening stage, the while-listening or main listening stage and the post-listening stage (15)

The **Pre-listening** stage is where the students focus on "the topic and activate their background knowledge and prior knowledge on the language", in order to prepare themselves and to predict the content and the course of the discourse. (Lijun and Fang 15)

The pre-listening stage is divided according to Dunkel and Phyllis in three sub stages:

a. *Listening preparation:*
This initial portion activates students' world knowledge to help him or her predict the content and the course of the discourse. The student is prepared for the talk he or she will hear and is asked to focus on the topic of the discourse. Evocation of mental imagery is attempted in this preparatory stage.

b. *Preview of vocabulary and sentences:*
Here, students focus on the low frequency and/or story-specific vocabulary with a gloss and then the item in the talk-specific context.

C. *Rhetorical Listening cues:*
Finally, this section highlights the specific vocabulary, structures and organization of the particular rhetorical pattern used during the talk. (10)

The second is the **While-listening** or the **Main listening** stage where "the teacher presents the initial task; requires students to focus on the details" the teacher will ask questions with the purpose of checking the students' comprehension about the given messages. The idea of this activity is to help students develop the skill of eliciting messages from spoken language. (Lijun and Fang 16)

This second stage is also divided into three sub stages:

a. *Initial Listening:*

This section presents the listening passage in its entire form. A natural and clear pace delivery is used by the speaker.

b. *Mental rehearsal and review of the talk:*

The student is provided with the opportunity to review and mentally rehearse the essential message units of the talk. The rehearsal allows for chunking of the information contained in the talk. The students repeat the units sub vocally, concentrating on the comprehension and recalling of information presented in the talk.

c. *Consolidation:*

This final segment presents the message units reinserted into the contextual and syntactic whole of the talk, the speaker uses redundancies, reiteration and verbal fillers in the presentation. Students can take notes during the paced presentation if they wish. (10-11)

Finally, the **Post-listening** stage is where students individually and/or with the teacher's help will have the chance to "check whether their answers are right or wrong, and recall the factual information on the talk, also they are given the opportunity to consider the attitude and manner of the speakers in the listening texts", an optional activity in this stage is having the teacher expand the topic or language of the listening text and transfer what they have learned to another task or context i.e. summarize what they just have learned, write a report, do a role-play

activity, discuss in groups about the passages or do an oral presentation). (Lijun and Fang 17)

Dunkel and Lim proposed a series of stages within the post-listening stage as well:

a. *The comprehension check:*

- *Recognizing information and checking accuracy:* here, students check their comprehension and recall the factual information contained in the talk. The student becomes familiar with standard oral-comprehension testing formats, including multiple choice items, true-false statements, short answer questions, etc.

- *Using expanding on the information in the talk:*
  a. Recapping the information from one's own notes: this activity offers students the opportunity to retell the information in the talk with the aid of their notes.
  b. Expanding on the information in the talk: this aspect allows students to interact with other students, expressing their own ideas and opinions on a variety of topics related to the listening text.

b. *The listening expansion:*

Tasks 1 and 2 can be completed only carefully listening to the directions and information given orally. The listening task exercises spiral through previously presented rhetorical patterns, vocabulary and structures and also presented novel listening and testing experiences.

c. *The listening factoids:*

The two listening factoids present novel, high-interest and sometimes surprising facts related to the topic of the chapter. Students listen to absorb interesting bits of information or trivia to ponder or discuss as appropriate. (11)

6.3 The Steven Brown Method

In contrast with the methodology Lijun and Fang along with Dunkel and Phyllis suggested, other authors like Steven Brown proposed different sequential processes for teaching listening to EFL students. He gives a systematic presentation of "listening for main ideas, listening for details, and listening to make inferences": (5)

Brown says that "we always have a purpose for listening that will make it easier and more effective for us. For example, when listening to a weather report if our purpose is to decide whether to wear a coat or take an umbrella, we will focus on the temperature". The same happens to our English language students, for instance we can give them a box with missing information they will have to hear and complete about someone: telephone, city, best friend etc... With this exercise students will know exactly what they are expecting to hear, if it is a number, a city or the name of a person. Brown highlights the fact that "before these kinds of exercises some teachers just give students lists of questions ((What times does the train leave? How much does the ticket cost?) So the students do not have any idea of what they were listening until after the fact (unless the teacher gave them the questions beforehand, which many did not)". (5)

Exercises for students to practice listening for main ideas will involve the teacher asking questions such as: "What's the most important idea in this conversation? What is the main thing they are talking about?" Brown said that with these exercises students will just want to get a general idea of what is being said the details are less important. (S. Brown 5)

Students will need to listen for details that they had first understood, the main idea of the conversation or message, next they will focus on specific information requested by the teacher, for example: what are they going to eat?, In this example the students need only to understand one detail of the conversation.

For example, we need the details when we are getting directions to some place like a friend's home. (S. Brown 6)

Lastly, Steven Brown proposes a third important purpose for listening which is listening for inferences. Here "students won't have to focus on what they hear but on what they can understand between lines to figure out what is really meant"; "speakers do not always say exactly what they mean, that is, important aspects of meaning are sometimes implied rather than stated".

With this systematic procedure that Steven Brown suggests, listening for main ideas, listening for details, and listening to make inferences, it will be easier for students to find out the purpose of what they are listening and how to do it better. We think teachers can improve students' listening skills by asking them to focus on their main reason for listening in the different activities so at the end they will definitely be more organized and will have the opportunity to reflect on their own learning.

According to our experience as learners and pre-service language teachers, we have seen how in our local setting the *default method* is perhaps the primary choice for listening training. Listening in schools and language institutes is clearly neglected in favor of developing other aspects of language. The focus of most educational institutions, especially the public ones, is favoring literacy over oracy. Therefore understanding is left aside as students go through their language learning process.

We think a different method, more centered on listening development stands as an alternative to improve our students' oral proficiency. It is important to bear in mind that the implementation of such methods represents a challenge for English language teachers and institutions due to time constraints, curriculum conditions, size of classrooms, and general lack of awareness about latest developments in the area, also it results especially difficult if we consider the formal setting of our education system.

However, institutions should be stimulated to take action and help students talk and listen their way into meaning. In the following pages, we will present techniques that have been proposed to help students develop their listening skills by scaffolding their learning process and employing different cognitive processes while at the same time taking into account proficiency levels.

7. TEACHING TECHNIQUES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING SKILLS IN ELT AND PROFICIENCY LEVELS.

In accordance with Douglas Brown, the techniques employed in listening training must be at "variance according to the learners' proficiency level" and so he presents three lists of techniques for each level. Each list is broken down in top-down, bottom-up and interactive types of activities. For the purposes of our project, we will only present the list pertaining to the intermediate level listeners' category, since it is the level that the majority of freshmen students possess when they enroll in the ELT program. (260)

7.1 Bottom-up exercises:

1. **Goal:** Recognizing fast speech forms. Listen to series of exercises that contain unstressed function words, Circle your choice among 3 words on the answer sheet, for example: "a", "up", "of".

2. **Goal:** Finding the stressed syllable. Listen to words of two (or three) syllables. Mark them for word stress and predict the pronunciation of the unstressed syllable.

3. **Goal:** Recognizing words with reduced syllables. Read a list of polysyllabic words and predict which syllabi vowel will be dropped. Listen to the words read in fast speech and confirm your predictions.

4. **Goal:** Recognize words as they are linked in the speech stream
   Listen to a series of short sentences with consonant/vowel linking between words.

5. **Goal:** Recognizing pertinent details in the speech stream
   Listen to a short dialogue between a Boss and a Secretary regarding changes in the daily schedule. Use an appointment calendar. Cross out appointments that are being changed and write in new ones.

Listen to announcements of airline arrivals and departures. With a model of an airline information board in front of you, fill in the flight numbers, destinations, gate numbers, and departure times. (D. Brown 260)

7.2 Top-Down Exercises

1. **Goal:** Analyze discourse structure to suggest effective listening strategies
   Students listen to six radio commercials with attention to the use of music, repetition of key words, and number of speakers. After that they talk about the effects these techniques have on the listeners.

2. **Goal:** Listen to identify the speaker or the topic
   Students listen to a series of radio commercials. On their answer sheet, choose among four types of sponsors or products to identify the picture that goes with the commercial.

3. **Goal:** Listen to evaluate the themes and motives
   Students listen to a series of radio commercials. On their answer sheet are four possible motives that the companies use to appeal to their customers. Circle all the motives that you feel each commercial promote: *"escape from reality, family security, snob appeal, and sex appeal".*

4. **Goal:** Finding main ideas and supporting details
   Students listen to a short conversation between two friends. On their answer sheet are scenes from television programs. Then they find and write the name of the program and the channel. Decide which speaker watched which program.

5. **Goal:** Making inferences
   Students listen to a series of sentences and after each sentence, they answer inferential questions such as "where might the speaker be?" "How might the speaker be feeling?" also after each sentence, they suggest possible context for the sentence (place, situation, time, participants). (D. Brown 261)

7.3 Interactive Exercises

1. **Goal:** Discriminating between exercises of speech and tones of voice

   Listen to a series of sentences. On your answer sheet mark whether the sentence is polite or impolite.

2. **Goal:** Recognize the missing grammar markers in colloquial speech

   Listen to a series of short questions in which the auxiliary verb and subject have been deleted. Use grammatical knowledge to fill in the missing words: (Have you) got some extra? "

3. **Goal:** Use knowledge of reduced forms to clarify the meaning of an utterance

   Listen to a short sentence containing a reduced form. Decide what the sentence means. On your answer sheet, choose the one (or three) alternative that is the best paraphrase of the sentence you heard. Example: "You can't be happy with that" you read: (a) "What can you be happy?" (b) "That will make you happy" (c) "I don't think you are happy".

4. **Goal:** Use context to build listening expectations

   Read a short want-ad describing job qualification from the employment section of a newspaper. Brainstorm additional qualification that would be important for that type of job.

5. **Goal:** Listen to confirm your expectations

   Listen to short radio advertisements for jobs that are available. Check the job qualifications against your expectations.

6. **Goal:** Use context to build expectation, use bottom up processing to recognize missing words, compare your prediction to what you actually heard, read some telephone messages with missing words, decide what kinds of information are missing so you know what to listen for, Listen to the information and fill in the blanks. Finally, discuss with the class what strategies you use for your predictions. (D. Brown 261-62)

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In our opinion, Dunkel and Lim's methodology might serve as the corner stone, around which all the other theories and methods portrayed in this paper will revolve. Nowadays, arriving to an absolute definition for listening can turn out to be a rather complex task. Researchers and teachers define listening in many different ways; an occurrence that derives from the fact that currently there is no universally accepted definition for the term "listening".

According to P. Dunkel, every definition of listening draws on four basic orientations or perspectives: receptive, constructive, collaborative, or transformative as defined here:

Orientation 1: *Receptive Listening* = receiving what the speaker actually says

- Listening means catching what the speaker has said.
- Listening means getting the speaker's idea.
- Listening means decoding the speaker's message.
- Listening means unpacking the speaker's content.
- Listening is receiving the transfer of images, impressions, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions from the speaker.

Orientation 2: *Constructive Listening* = constructing and representing meaning

- Listening means figuring out what is in the speaker's mind.
- Listening means finding something interesting in what the speaker is saying.
- Listening means finding out what is relevant for you.
- Listening means reframing the speaker's message in a way that's relevant to you.
- Listening means understanding why the speaker is talking to you.
- Listening means noticing what is said.

Orientation 3: *Collaborative Listening* = negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding

- Listening is coordination with the speaker on the choice of a code (the language) and a context (situation).
- Listening means responding to what the speaker has said.
- Listening is the process of negotiating shared information or values with the speaker.
- Listening means showing interest while the speaker is talking.

- Listening is signaling to the speaker which ideas are clear and acceptable to you.

Orientation 4: *Transformative Listening* = creating meaning through involvement, imagination, and empathy

- Listening is being involved with the speaker, without judging.
- Listening is creating a connection between the speaker and the listener.
- Listening is empathizing with the speaker's motivation for speaking.
- Listening is imagining a possible world for the speaker's meaning.
- Listening is feeling the flow of consciousness as you pay attention to things.
- Listening is the process of altering the cognitive environment of both the speaker and the listener.

When looking at the many kinds of orientations and the different listening definitions, we need to keep in mind that we can design lessons and materials that suit our learners' different needs and our own goals. We can attempt to include these listening orientations into our own lessons and into the curriculum we design for ourselves and other teachers.

Despite the fact that there have been some research studies that shed light on possible solutions to the problems faced by language learners in the development of their listening skills, there are still some barriers which, if overcome through

reliable methodologies, could have a positive effect on both the student's learning process and the quality of teacher training programs.

As a contribution to creating the aforementioned scenario, we thought necessary to recommend the development of a research study measuring the effects of one of the listening methods presented, targeting first and second year ELT students at UIS.

The sample population hereby suggested requires an optimal development of the listening skills, considering that they will not only profit from them in their academic lives, but will be able as professional teachers to transform ELT instruction in high school provided their experience.

As stated along this paper, in the past listening skills were rather overseen by educators and researchers. Over the last few years things have changed, and according to several recent studies conducted in universities of the United States, listening is one of the most important but also most difficult skills to develop when it comes to learning a new language. It stands as a very unique component of the language classroom activity due to its very nature; students just cannot turn the page back if they get lost along the way, as in reading for instance.

Hence EFL and even ELT students often fall into panic states and mental blocks, discontinuing the learning process. Building solid listening foundations within the classroom is vital, because eventually these students must face informal spoken English situations which embed numerous complex features and elements such as repetitions, incomplete utterances, or the linking of sounds.

In this view, teachers and institutions should be aware of what listening training method presents the best conditions within each particular context but also and perhaps more importantly, taking into account the most dominant profile of students, they should implement a methodology that suits the needs and learning styles of the highest number of students. To put it in simple words, the most efficient system for the highest number of students.

We know that most institutions cannot provide personalized instruction to each and every one of the student that may ever enroll in a language learning program, but with the right planning, it is possible to set the conditions for a more efficient developing process for all the language skills. In this case, we will engage in the listening skill since as we mention, it is the most difficult one and perhaps, in the general picture of the basic intercommunicative skills, the most useful and essential.

Considering that students in the ELT program are taught English language formally during the first fourth semesters, and is in this period when they learn the different grammatical structures as part of an intensive communicative based English language course that attempts to cover the different skills (writing, listening, reading and speaking). That's why it is in this period where they must receive solid listening training that they can rely upon.

In view of the fact that first semester students present a variable English language proficiency, and third or fourth semester students (mostly academic survival instinct, if we may) have already acquired learning habits and strategies to achieve functional English level, it is relevant and favorable to apply the listening training methodology over a group of second semester students currently attending the intermediate English class whose L2 proficiency is on a leveling state and their disposition to gain a better understanding and handling of the language is at its highest.

The principle underlying the methodology design we propose to be applied in the aforementioned group of students is the development of the listening skills through stage-divided training sessions *(pre-listening stage, while-listening stage, and post-listening stage)* proposed by Patricia Dunkel along with Phyllis L. Lim. The main reason why we thought this will be the most appropriate model to follow was not only because of its adaptability to the different topics embedded within the English language course but also because of the time English language professors at the university have to invest in each unit. *(See appendix 1)*

As we already said, the target population for the suggested study will be second semester students in intermediate English level. Based on this starting point, we highly recommend to future researchers to take into account the following criteria when deciding about the sampling:

- *Coed students:*
  It will be better to apply the methodology design over a group of coed students, since it will let you determine whether o not the students' sex stands as a relevant vector that may affect their performance on the chosen listening training methodology.

- *Socio economical background (ranging from lower-middle to upper-middle class):* though the students belong to different socio economical backgrounds, this aspect may or may not affect the students' level of English language exposure. Aiming at allowing future researchers to achieve the highest level of validity in their project; we recommend considering this aspect but knowing that there is not guaranteed reliability when dealing with information provided by students regarding their social class in surveys or questionnaires.

Also an optional variable for future researchers, is to take into account that not all students share the same learning style, as a result, some of them will find it easier to perform in the different listening activities included the listening training, that is why a survey will be needed at the beginning of the study in order to draw key conclusions regarding the implications learning styles have over students' language pace and understanding of English as a second language. A possible and recommended model for researchers to follow is Neil Fleming's VARK model (2006) which assures validity since it has been applied and tested in previous occasions.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

INTERMEDIATE LISTENING COMPREHENSION

WORKSHOP # 1 *(Estimated Time 50 minutes)*

Name: _____*Date:* _____

Life Stories Montse's life

I. PRE-LISTENING (Estimated time 12 min)

a. You are going to listen to a woman, Montse Pinero, talking about her life. Try to figure out where she is from; what does she do for living, what does she like to d, how is he, is she married, does she have a boyfriend etc…

b. Preview of vocabulary and sentences

Engaged: *Adjective.* Having made a promise to get married. **i.e.** Me and my girlfriend got engaged last night

Tarragona: A city of northeast Spain on the Mediterranean Sea west-southwest of Barcelona. **i.e** My parents are from Tarragona

Temporary job: not permanent, not lasting jobs. **i.e.** last summer I got a temporary job

Once: One time only. **i.e.** once a day.

Apart: As a distinct item or entity. **i.e.** Quality sets it apart.

Hopefully: It is hoped. **i.e.** hopefully the weather will be fine on Sunday

c. Rhetorical listening cues

In this talk the speaker tells you about her life. The story is told chronologically order, that is, the events are related in the order in which they happened. The story begins with Montse's place of birth 1977 and ends with countries she has visited recently, listen for what happens when Montse was eleven and sixteen years old.

II. LISTENING (Estimated time 18 min)

a. Initial listening (4'04'') let's listen to a talk about Montse Pineros. It may help you to concentrate on the talk if you close your eyes while you listen. Just relax and listen   carefully!

b. Mental Rehearsal and review of the talk: all right let's listen to the talk once again. This time, the talk will be given in message units. Please repeat each unit to yourself   silently after you hear it. Remember don't say the units aloud.
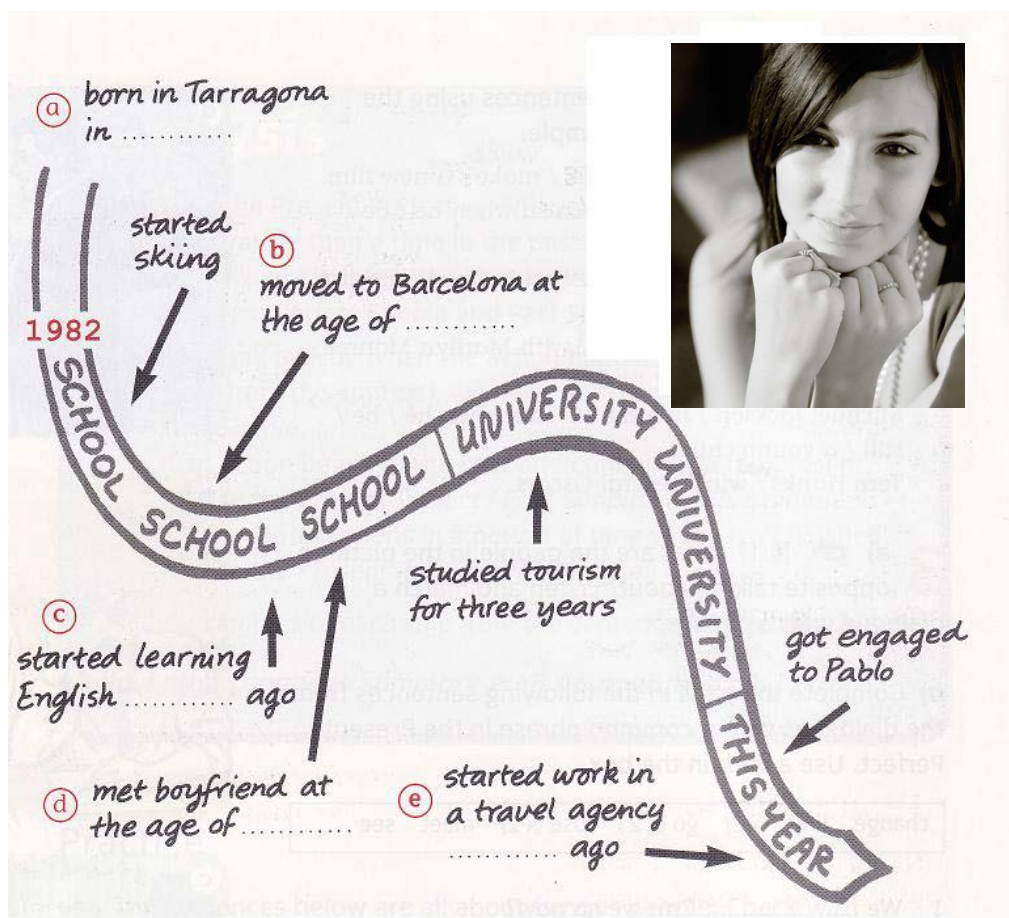
c. Consolidation: You will hear the talk given once again. This time as you listen, take notes on what you hear

III. POST-LISTENING (Estimated Time: 20 minutes)

1. Comprehension check:

a. Recognizing information and checking accuracy: You are going to hear Montse Pinero talking about her life one more time. Complete the lifeline using the information on the cassette

(a) born in Tarragona in ....

started skiing

(b) moved to Barcelona at the age of ....

1982

SCHOOL SCHOOL SCHOOL UNIVERSITY UNIVERSITY THIS YEAR

(c) started learning English .... ago

studied tourism for three years

got engaged to Pablo

(d) met boyfriend at the age of ....

(e) started work in a travel agency .... ago

b. Use the lifeline and the information on the audio program to complete the following sentences. Complete the gaps when necessary with the best form of the verb in brackets.

a. Montse Pinero was born about _____ years ago

b. She_____ (live) in Barcelona since 1988

c. She _____ (meet) her boyfriend when she was at school

d. she _____ (know) her boyfriend since they were teenagers

e. she studied tourism for _____ at the University

f. She's worked in a travel agency for about _____

g. she _____ (be) engaged for nearly six months

h. she's been going skiing since she _____ (be) a child

i. She's been learning English for about_____.

2. Using and expanding on the information in the talk:

a. Recapping the information from your notes: use your notes to recap the information you learned about the life of Montse. Present the information to the class or to one of your classmates

b. Expanding the information from the talk: Discuss with a classmate the following aspects

- About your own life story.

- Cities/countries you have visited

- Funny anecdotes

- Jobs you have had

- Embarrassing moments

- Things you plan to do for the near future