

***IDENTIFYING ELT PRE-INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS' NEEDS
IN TERMS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LISTENING SKILL***

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Gratefully to our families

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: IDENTIFYING ELT PRE-INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS' NEEDS IN TERMS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LISTENING SKILL*

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KEY WORDS: Listening skill development, disengagement, learning strategies, listening sequence.

This study aimed at investigating the reason why English Language Teaching pre-intermediate students disengage from class listening activities and do not play an active role during these exercises. The study took place at Universidad Industrial de Santander in Colombia. Twenty seven subjects participated in this piece of research. The participants included 25 ELT students and two ELT teachers. The study followed the steps and measures suggested by Survey Research guidelines. Therefore, this piece of research was based on qualitative data that were collected through two means: two survey questionnaires and thirteen lesson observations. The data were analyzed using taxonomic analysis and Excel tools for the calculation of percentages and the creation of graphics. Important conclusions concerning students and teachers' roles were reached. The reasons why ELT pre-intermediate students do not engage in class listening activities derive from two sources: the teacher's instruction and/or the student. The findings concerning the survey indicate that the students lack the necessary learning strategies to carry out listening activities successfully. The results of the observations suggest that contextualization during pre-listening activities is not sufficient. It is quite important that ELT professors address all the issues concerning contextualization previous to listening activities. Likewise, ELT pre-intermediate students must be provided with well-planned listening activities that support the development of the listening skill out of class.

* Proyecto de grado.

** Facultad de Ciencias Humanas. Escuela de Idiomas. Director: Magister Tatiana Mikhailova.

RESUMEN

TÍTULO: IDENTIFICANDO LAS NECESIDADES DE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE INGLÉS PRE-INTERMEDIO DE LICENCIATURA EN INGLÉS EN TÉRMINOS DEL DESARROLLO DE LA HABILIDAD DE ESCUCHA *

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PALABRAS CLAVE: Habilidad de escucha, desenganche, estrategias de aprendizaje.

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo el investigar la razón por la cual los estudiantes de la materia de inglés pre-intermedio de la carrera de licenciatura en inglés se desenganchan de las actividades de escucha en clase y no desempeñan un papel activo durante estos ejercicios. El estudio ocurrió en la Universidad Industrial Santander. Veintisiete sujetos participaron en este trabajo de investigación. Los participantes incluyeron 25 estudiantes de la carrera de licenciatura en inglés y a dos profesores de la misma. El estudio siguió los pasos y las pautas sugeridas para un modelo de investigación basado en encuestas. Por lo tanto, esta investigación fue basada en datos cualitativos que fueron recogidos por dos medios: dos encuestas-cuestionarios y trece observaciones de clase. Los datos fueron analizados usando análisis taxonómico y las herramientas de Excel para el cálculo de porcentajes y la creación de gráficos. Conclusiones importantes referentes a los papeles de los estudiantes y de los profesores fueron encontradas. Las razones por las cuales los estudiantes de la materia de inglés pre-intermedio de licenciatura en inglés no se enganchan en las actividades de escucha de la clase se derivan de dos fuentes: el estudiante y/o las instrucciones de los profesores. Los resultados referentes a las encuestas indican que los estudiantes carecen de las estrategias de aprendizaje necesarias para realizar actividades de escucha con éxito. Los resultados de las observaciones sugieren que la contextualización durante las actividades de pre-escucha no es suficiente. Es absolutamente importante que los profesores de la carrera de licenciatura en inglés aborden todos los pasos referentes a la contextualización anterior a las actividades de escucha. Así mismo, los estudiantes de inglés pre-intermedio de licenciatura en inglés deben ser provistos de actividades de escucha bien pensadas y que apoyen el desarrollo de la habilidad de escucha fuera de clase.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

After carrying out the first phase of a research project under the tutoring of Professor Maribel Vega in eighth semester, two important conclusions were reached. It was found that ELT pre-intermediate students do not have an active participation during listening exercises and they do not achieve the main objectives of these exercises. A second phase of this study is called for in order to answer the question: Why do ELT pre-intermediate students disengage from class listening activities?

1.2. JUSTIFICATION

The findings of the first part of the research project revealed that ELT pre-intermediate students do not accomplish the goal of class listening exercises. It also gave researchers insights about the possible reasons why they are not actively involved during class listening activities. In a semi-structured interview, students related their difficulties in class listening activities to the characteristics exhibited by incomplete pre-listening exercises in which new vocabulary is not taught and previous knowledge is not activated. Additionally, the literature review suggests that the reasons why students disengage from class activities come from two possible sources. According to this, the reasons can be instruction-oriented

(Skinner & Belmont, Wilson) or student-oriented (Goh & Taib, O'Malley & Chamot). A second part of the research is required to determine whether the reasons why ELT pre-intermediate students disengage from class listening activities are instruction-oriented, student-oriented or a combination of both. The results of this study will help us better understand what prevents ELT pre-intermediate students from playing an active role in class listening activities.

1.3. OBJECTIVES

- To find out the reason or reasons why ELT pre-intermediate students disengage from class listening activities and do not play an active role in class.
- To gain a better understanding of ELT pre-intermediate students' actual needs in terms of the development of the listening skill.

2. METHOD

2.1. PARTICIPANTS

We have selected ELT students who are currently taking English lessons at the pre-intermediate level. The population surveyed included only those students who are taking the course for the first time. Twenty five ELT pre-intermediate students were surveyed for the purposes of this research. Additionally, two teachers were observed to obtain data about listening instruction.

2.2. MEASURES

Although there was strong evidence that ELT pre-intermediate students disengaged from class listening activities, the researchers considered it necessary to confirm the most important findings of the first phase of the project. The reason for this is that the first part of the research was done two semesters ago, with different participants. A pilot-focused observation (**See appendix 6**) carried out in one of the present pre-intermediate groups showed that the disengagement phenomenon is still a major characteristic while the listening activity takes place.

Confirming the previous findings required the application of a Needs Analysis survey, together with 3 more lesson observations (selective) per each group of ELT pre-intermediate students. After the data were collected and the results analyzed, the causes of pre-intermediate students' disengagement were investigated to fulfill the purposes of the present study.

We aimed at finding the reasons why ELT pre-intermediate students disengage from class listening activities. As the literature review indicated, those reasons can come from two different sources: the teacher's instruction and the student. Based on that, the researchers used five instruments.

The following is a description of the instruments that were used to confirm the results of the first phase of the project. Then, the description will focus on the instruments that were used for the second phase of this study.

2.2.1. Confirmation instrument I: Survey ELT pre-intermediate students' Needs Analysis (See Appendix 1)

This survey consisted of 10 closed items. The purpose of this survey was to find out students' perceptions about different aspects of the class listening activities.

These aspects entailed: the listening activity itself (e.g. type of listening activities they enjoy, how difficult they find listening activities), their performance during the activities and the teacher's instructions. The survey was applied again in order to confirm the results of the previous phase of the project, but with a larger population. The Needs Analysis came out of a lesson in Applied Methods II in which both Professor Vega along with the students designed the questions.

2.2.2. Confirmation instrument II: Selective observations (See Appendix 6)

Six selective observations were carried out to confirm ELT pre-intermediate students' disengagement during class listening activities.

PRESENT PROJECT

2.2.3. First instrument: Survey about contextualization during pre-listening activities (See Appendix 2)

This survey consisted of four closed questions. Each of them represents one of the requirements that must be fulfilled during the pre-listening stage of a listening activity (talking about the context in which the conversation takes place, showing the importance of the conversation in real life, drawing on previous knowledge, and getting familiar with key words that students do not know). With this instrument, the researchers intended to find out how often the requirements above are addressed during the pre-listening stage. The researchers designed this instrument under the tutoring of Professor Mikhailova, who is the director of this project.

2.2.4. Second instrument: Language Strategy Use Inventory (Listening Strategy Use) by Andrew D. Cohen, Rebecca L. Oxford, and Julie C. Chi. (See Appendix 3)

This is a standard tool for the identification of learning strategies in individual students. Its design is built up on the premise that learning strategies make the students aware of what works or what does not when exposed to learning. For our study, the section about Listening Strategy Use was called for. It gave researchers an insight on what learners do to increase their exposure to the target language (English), to become more familiar with the sounds in the target language, to prepare to listen to conversation in the target language, to listen to conversation in the target language and what they do when they do not understand some or most of what someone says in the target language.

2.2.5. Third instrument: Inventory of seven lesson observations (See Appendix 4)

This was a checklist that included the same four items of the first instrument (contextualization during pre-listening activities). This instrument gave the researchers a second perspective on what aspects of the pre-listening stage are most often taken into account during class listening activities. Three observations were carried out for each of the ELT groups.

2.2.6. Fourth instrument: Semi-structured interviews

The aim of these interviews was to obtain data from both ELT pre-intermediate students and ELT teachers to have the researchers' perspective on the strategies and considerations the participants use for the development of the listening skill. As the data obtained from the first three instruments provided very clear results, the application of this instrument was not necessary.

2.3. DESIGN

This is a Survey research. The researchers obtained data through surveys and observations.

2.4. PROCEDURE

First, a focused observation was already carried out in one of the three pre-intermediate groups. The collected data showed once again that the problem of disengagement is still present in listening activities. Based on this and on the results of the previous phase of the project, the researchers carried out three selective observations per each one of the three pre-intermediate English groups. Teachers' consent was elicited for this (See Appendix 5). Then; a Needs Analysis Survey was applied to most of the students who belong to the three English pre-intermediate groups. Since they are pre-intermediate learners, this instrument was used in the mother tongue in order to obtain more reliable results. Also, asking students if they were taking the course for the first time, allowed the researchers to discriminate who were the students who are really new to the course from the ones who are repeating. After analyzing all the observations and the Needs Analysis Survey, the results indicated that it was possible to go ahead with the second phase of the project.

A Contextualization Survey was then applied to the population. With this instrument, the researchers intended to elicit information about the pre-listening stage of listening exercises as it was stated in the description of the instruments in the proposal. Once again, this instrument was also applied in the mother tongue to get rid of any possible threats to the reliability of the study due to misunderstandings caused by a lack of English proficiency. When handing in the survey sheet to students, the researchers asked them if they were taking the course for the first time.

A similar procedure was followed for the application of the Strategy Use Inventory. As this instrument is copyrighted, the researchers only changed some technical

terms to make it comprehensible to the population. Assistance was provided during the application of the instrument to avoid misunderstanding of lexical items.

The observations were done after consent of the teachers. The semi-structured interview was not carried out, since the other three instruments provided enough and reliable information to this study.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The development of the listening skill has been recently recognized as an important facet of language learning. Therefore, it is quite important to go deep into the issues that prevent proper listening skill development from happening. One of those issues is disengagement. Students who are not engaged in class listening activities are easy recognizable, since they do not participate actively and do not achieve the main objectives of these tasks. Authors such as Wilson and O'Malley and Chamot suggest that there are two possible sources of disengagement. One of them is instruction-oriented and the other one is student-oriented. This review deals with an account of the aspects involved in each one of the sources.

To begin with, it is vital to define the concept of engagement clearly. According to Skinner and Belmont (as qtd. In Brewster and Fager), engagement is the desire for the learner to choose activities at the border of his competence, to step ahead when starting a new activity and show effort and concentration when trying to fulfill certain task. For instance, these authors provide a list of indicators that help identify learners who are either engaged or disengaged during task performance. Students who engage successfully show a variety of positive emotions: enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity and interest. On the other hand, students who are disengaged from tasks are passive, do not try hard and give up easily when facing a challenge. Now, it is time to explore the two sources of disengagement.

The first source to be described is related to instruction. Instruction must provide learners with the tools they need to develop learning tasks successfully. In terms of the listening skill, recent research suggests that activities must be planned following three stages. These are pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening (Wilson 60). Each of the stages implies fulfilling certain requirements, which are mentioned in the next paragraph.

During the pre-listening phase students should get familiar with the context in which the recorded communicative act occurs, be aware of the importance of that act in real life, be given unknown key words, and should be given the opportunity to activate their previous knowledge (Wilson 64). Likewise, clear instructions should be given so that learners know what to do with the information to be listened to. At the while-listening stage, learners must be asked to do activities, such as extracting information or performing actions. Doing those exercises keeps students' attention on the activity itself. Finally, the post-listening part is devoted to check answers, summarize ideas and provide any other possible kind of feedback. It is essential that teachers take into consideration the aspects above mentioned, since equipping learners with the knowledge and practice they need ensures students' engagement in the listening activities.

The second source of disengagement is related to students and has to do with a lack of learning strategies. According to Weinstein and Mayer, learning strategies are defined as "*behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning that are intended to influence the learner's encoding process*"¹ (Weinstein and Mayer as qtd. In O'Malley and Chamot 43). The main goal of learning strategies is to assist the learner from the very selection of the information to be acquired to the evaluation of his or her own intellectual production. Learning strategies are divided into three main groups: cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies and social/affective strategies (O'Malley and Chamot 199). Cognitive strategies include

¹ O'Malley, Michael, and Anna Uhl Chamot. *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge University Press, 1996

rehearsal, organization, inference, summarizing, deducing, imagery, transfer and elaboration. The metacognitive strategies are selective attention, planning, monitoring and evaluation. The third group embraces cooperation, questioning for clarification and self-talk. These three categories allow students to manage their own learning process, which is coherent with the concept of autonomy as defined below.

In the words of Little, autonomy is defined as the capacity for critical reflection, decision making and independent action (Little 81). Therefore, this so called autonomy has a direct effect on motivation. According to some studies carried out in the field of learner's autonomy, it was found that the development of autonomy had a positive impact on intrinsic goal orientation and tasks development (García and Pintrich 479). In contrast, the lack of autonomy can lead to boredom and frustration during task development (Goh and Taib 230), since the task value for one's own learning is not seen. Nevertheless, the development of learning strategies and autonomy do not only depend on the learners but also on the teachers.

To sum up, the phenomenon of disengagement comes from two possible sources: instruction-oriented or student-oriented. In that way, those learners who act passively and do not show interest in the task being carried out may be facing a class which does not promote proper and active involvement to come up or it may be a learner who lacks the proper strategies to deal with the proposed task. Either way, a combination of both may occur, breaking in this way the right balance of the learning process and demanding extra effort from one or both parts affected, student or teacher.

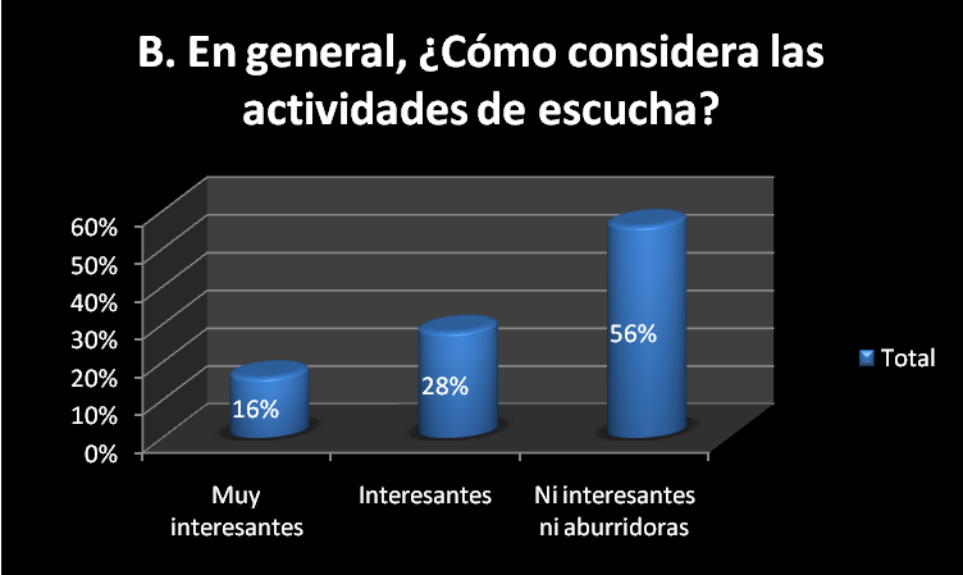
4. REPORT AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS: CONFIRMATION STAGE

As specified in the research proposal, it was necessary to confirm the results of the previous phase of the project in order to continue with its second phase. The confirmation stage was carried out by applying two instruments. One of them was a Students' Needs Analysis, and the other one was concerned with three selective observations. Both instruments were designed taking into account the indicators of engagement proposed by Skinner and Belmont. This report deals with an account of all the findings obtained in the first part of the data collection process.

4.1. STUDENTS' NEEDS ANALYSIS SURVEY

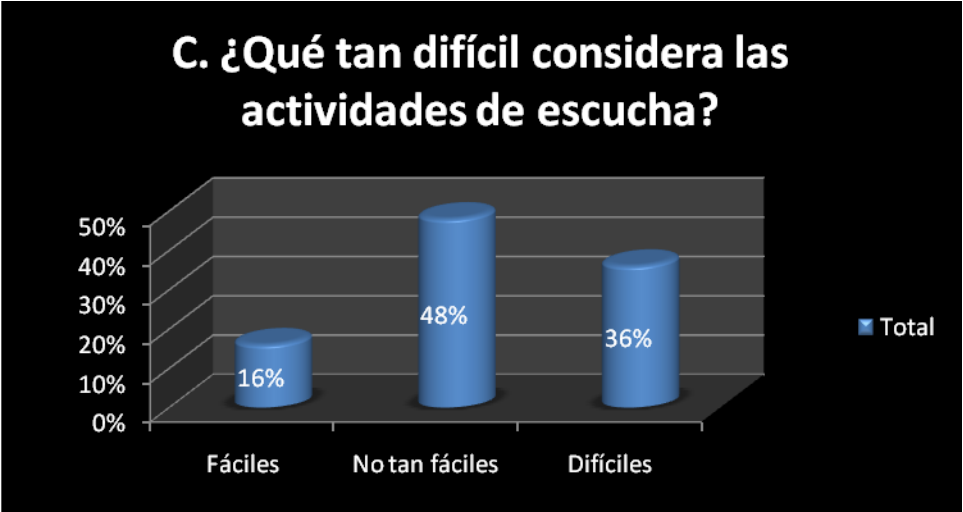
To begin with, an analysis of the students' survey is called for. This instrument consisted of ten items, through which the researchers sought to identify both students' perceptions of the listening activity itself and their perceptions of their own performance in listening activities. The following is the interpretation of the results for each of the aspects and their respective graphics.

The issue of students' perceptions of the listening activity is addressed by items B, C and D. The data obtained from item B shows that a 56% of the population considers the listening activities neither interesting nor boring (Graphic 1). Then, a 28% considers them as interesting, and a remaining 16% considers them as very interesting. This fact proved that a significant percentage of the population is not very keen on this kind of activities.



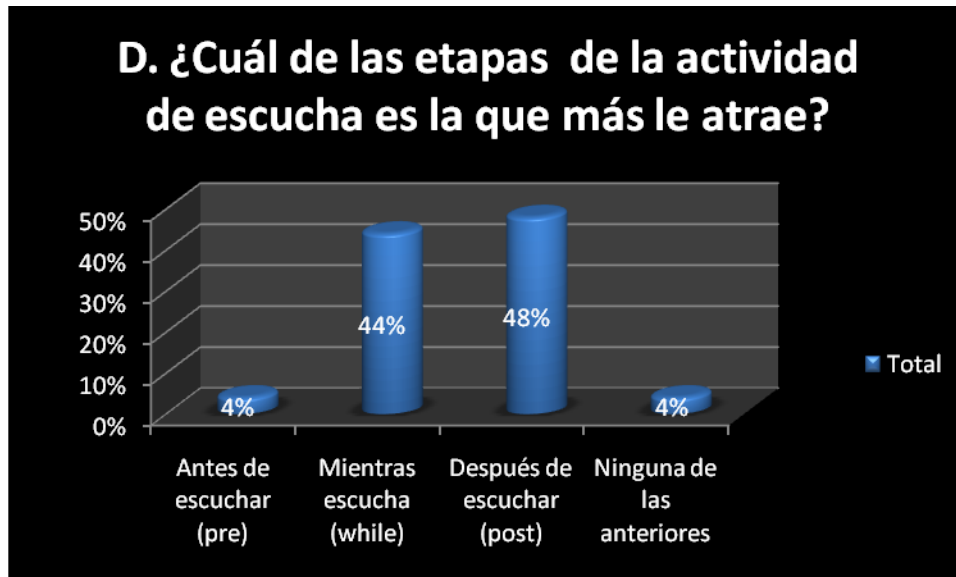
(Graphic 1)

The information obtained from question C showed that a 48% of the population considers the listening activities not so easy to carry out and another 36% of the population claimed that the listening activities are difficult. These two percentages together showed a negative tendency towards the fact that the students may perceive the listening activities as difficult to accomplish. Only a 16% of the population stated that the listening activities are easy, as it can be seen in graphic 2.



(Graphic 2)

The data gathered from item D (Graphic 3) shows that the stage of a listening activity that is more appealing to them is the post-listening stage (48%) followed by the while-listening stage (44%) and the pre-listening stage (4%). Another 4% of the population claimed that there is not a stage appealing to them.

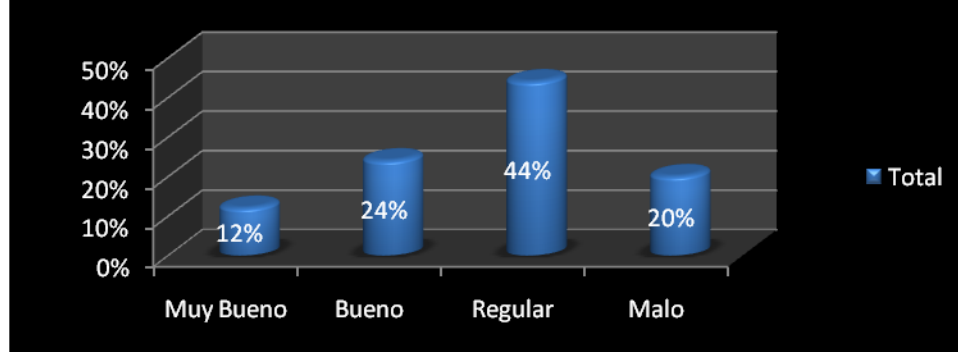


(Graphic 3)

An important point to consider in here is that the strongest tendency goes towards the while and post-listening stages, while the pre-listening stage remains almost null. This fact leads to a question: what is happening in the pre-listening stage that students do not seem to be interested in it?

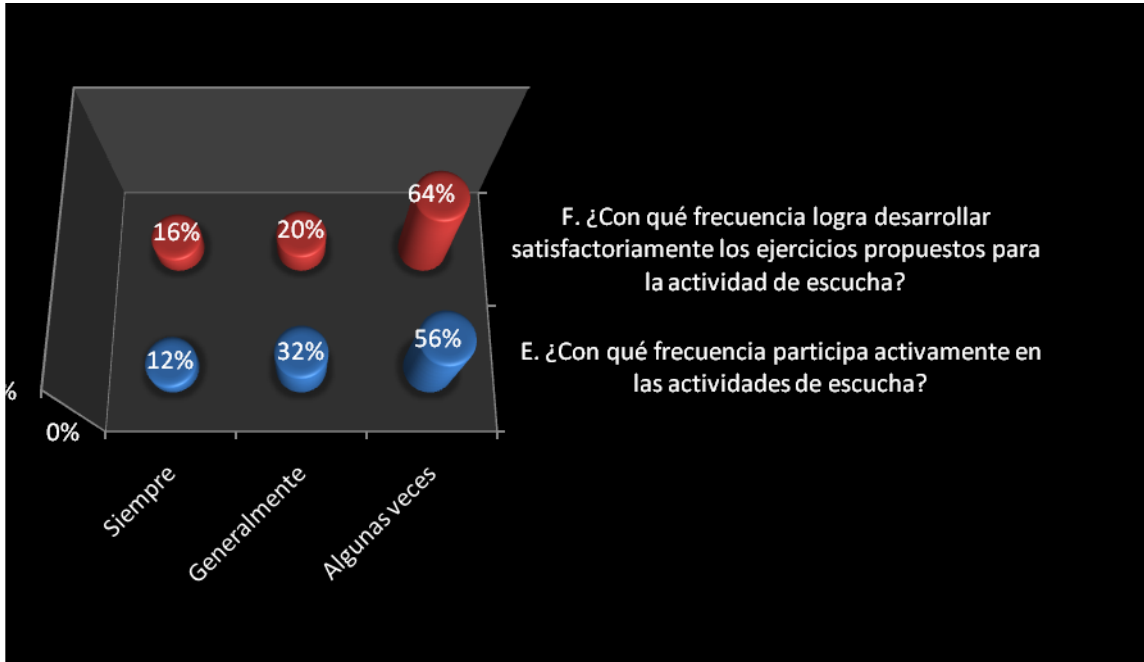
Now, the following items were designed to find out students' perceptions on their own performance, participation and feelings during the listening activities. The data obtained rely merely on the students' opinions.

A. ¿Cómo se considera en la siguiente habilidad del idioma Inglés? Escucha (listening)



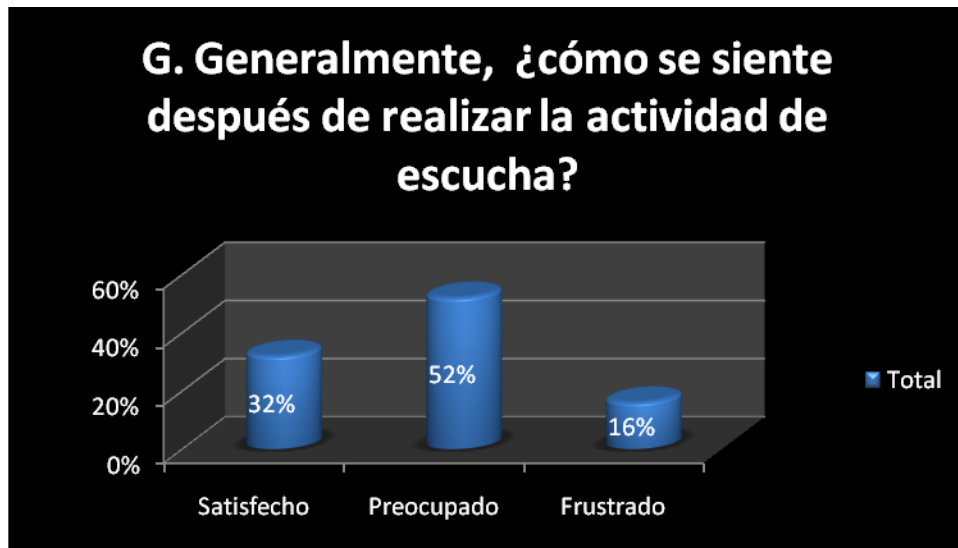
(Graphic 4)

The results obtained from question A shows (Graphic 4) that the majority of the students expressed a negative perception of their performance when listening. 44% of the population claimed to be just regular and a 20% claimed to be bad listeners, reaching in this way a 64% with a tendency to a negative perception of their own performance. Besides, answers to questions E and F demonstrated that students do not participate frequently in class listening activities (56% sometimes), and they do not frequently accomplish the objective of the listening activities (64% sometimes), showing in this way that students tended to choose the option with the lowest frequency out of the possibilities given in both items, as portrayed in graphic 5.



(Graphic 5)

Question G inquired about how learners feel after carrying out a listening activity (see graphic 6). The item showed that a 52% of the population claimed to feel worried and a 16% claimed to feel frustrated, which is a matter of concern.



(Graphic 6)

Questions H and I inquire about what the students actually do when they face a listening activity. The information gathered from question H showed that a 64% of the population followed the instructions given by the teacher; however, a 28% gets distracted from the activity. Only an 8% claimed not to follow the instructions. In contrast, question I showed that a 56% of the population is not sure about what they have to do in the listening activities. Therefore, the majority of the students follow the instructions although they are not really sure about what to do (see graphic 7).



(Graphic 7)

Wrapping it up, and taking into account that it is the pre-listening stage the one that sets the scene and immerses the listener into, there may be a bond that links the fact that the students follow the instructions given by the teacher although they are not very sure about what to do, and the fact that the pre-listening stage is not appealing to them (as it was shown in graphic 1). Therefore, a possible interpretation of this relationship might be that there is a failure in the development of the pre-listening stage.

4.2. SELECTIVE OBSERVATIONS

The second confirmation instruments were the selective observations. The domain analysis was organized in a way that allowed researchers to analyze both students' and teachers' actions, and the most outstanding features of the listening activity itself. The following is the domain analysis concerning teachers' activities during class listening exercises and its interpretation.

4.2.1. Domain Analysis: Teachers' activities during listening exercises

PRE-LISTENING STAGE	Teaching unknown words
	Giving instructions
	Checking comprehension of instructions

WHILE-LISTENING STAGE	Playing the CD three times
	Pausing the CD for teaching other unknown words

POST-LISTENING STAGE	Making sure that students have got the gist of the conversation
	Checking some students' answers to the exercises of the book
	Providing feedback to students
	Doing exercises to check students' pronunciation
	Doing a speaking exercise based on the topic of the recording

	Announcing the end of the activity
--	------------------------------------

In terms of teachers' actions, data revealed that teachers offer a listening instruction consisting of the three stages (pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening). The pre-listening part is characterized by the pre-teaching of new vocabulary and the instructions. The while-listening stage consisted mainly on playing of the CD and teaching other unknown words. The post-listening stage was observed to be the richest stage since students were asked to check and summarize primary and secondary ideas of the conversations. Besides, the teachers also invited students to connect the information heard to their daily lives, and to do some pronunciation practice at this stage. It seems, however, that contextualization is not fully addressed in the pre-listening stage. This fact may lead to students' disengagement from the listening exercises. Nonetheless, confirming this statement requires examining the domain analysis about students' actions and features of the listening activities.

4.2.2. Domain Analysis: Students' activities during listening exercises

PRE-LISTENING STAGE	Listening to the teachers' instructions
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WHILE-LISTENING STAGE	Answering the exercises of the book
	Talking to their classmates
	Looking at the board
	Looking through the window
	Sleeping on the chair
	Using the dictionary while the recording is being played
	Doing nothing

	Sharing the answers
	Reading the tapescripts

POST-LISTENING STAGE	Providing the answers when asked to.
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4.2.3. Other domains related to the listening activity

X	<i>is a way to</i>	Y
Reading the tapescripts		get the answers to the exercises (students)
Sharing the answers		
Guessing		

X	<i>is a kind of</i>	Y
Following instructions		students' activity of rare occurrence during the listening exercise
Listening attentively to the recording		

X	<i>is a kind of</i>	Y
two students participating		common feature of the listening exercise
four students participating		
Students cheating to get the answers		
Students looking for unknown words in the dictionary while the CD is being played		
Students getting distracted while the CD is played		

When talking about students' actions, data revealed that ELT pre-intermediate students disengage from class listening activities. According to Skinner & Belmont, cheating and giving up easily in the face of task challenges are indicators of disengagement or disaffection. These indicators are present in the ELT pre-intermediate students' actions, such as getting the answers to exercises by reading the tapescripts, sharing the answers or guessing. Furthermore, disengagement is also noticeable when students get easily distracted and do not listen attentively to the recordings. In terms of common features of the listening activities, the lack of voluntary participation and distraction are also indicators of students' disengagement.

To sum up, both the Students' Needs Analysis Survey and the three selective observations provided researchers with valuable information about ELT pre-intermediate students and the development of their listening skill. Several indicators of disengagement from listening activities were found in the ELT pre-intermediate students. To exemplify those, students hold negative perceptions about their performance in listening exercises and tend to consider listening activities difficult, and as one more of the activities that they do in their English lessons. During the listening activities, most students just participate when asked to and use cheating as a means of getting answers to the exercises. They recognize that although the teachers' instructions are clear, they tend to get lost during the activity and start doing other things that are not related to their roles as listeners.

The data collected in the confirmation phase, as well as the literature review also shed light on the possible reasons why students disengage from the listening activities. On the one hand, students seem to lack the knowledge they need to develop listening exercises successfully. On the other hand, there is some evidence that during the pre-listening stage of an activity, students are not given all

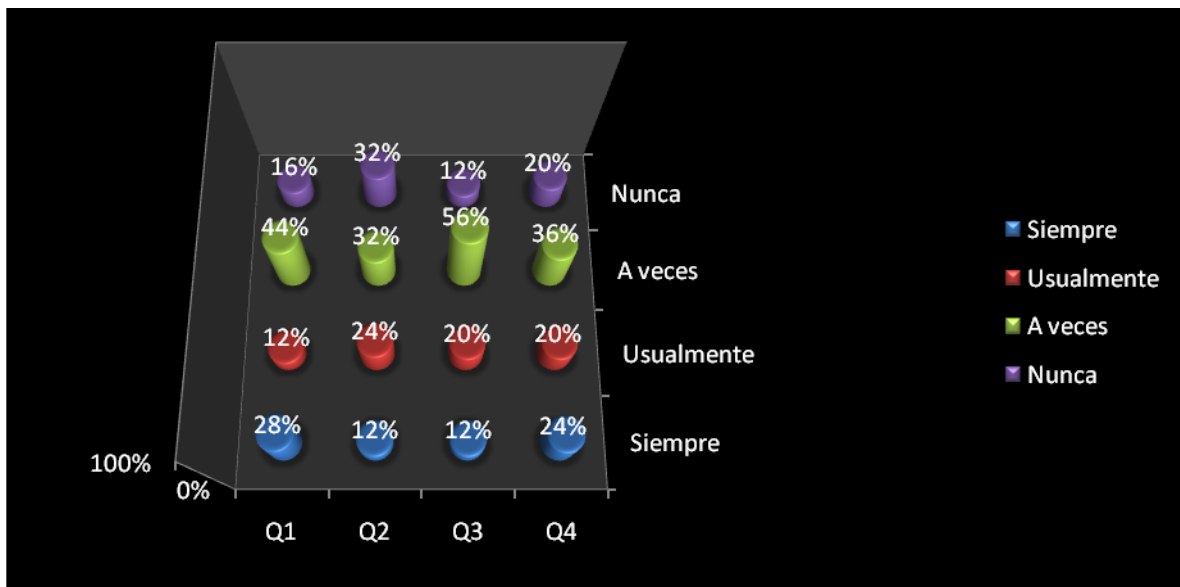
the tools they require, such as knowledge of the situation around which the conversation occurs, time to generate some ideas about what the recording will deal with, questions that make students think of the necessity that this type of exercises has for the development of their language abilities. Nonetheless, the focus of the first part was about confirming ELT pre-intermediate students' disengagement during listening activities. Further research is necessary to determine what ELT pre-intermediate students need in terms of the development of the listening skill. The instruments used for the second phase of the project are analyzed in the next section.

5. REPORT: PRESENT PROJECT

5.1. SURVEY ABOUT CONTEXTUALIZATION DURING PRE-LISTENING ACTIVITIES

This instrument consisted of four items. Each of the items addressed one of the aspects that must be taken into account in the pre-listening part of a listening exercise: getting students familiar with the context in which the conversation takes place, showing the usefulness of the conversation in real life, pre-teaching unknown vocabulary, and activation of schemata. The results of this survey can be observed in the diagram below.

Survey about contextualization during pre-listening activities



(Graphic 8)

In question 1, subjects were asked how often the teacher talked about the context in which the conversation in the recording took place. The majority of the subjects (44%) reported that this issue was *sometimes* addressed and a 28% answered that this *always* occurred before listening to the recording. The standard deviation (1,1), as well as the percentages show high dispersion in the answers.

The second question of the survey intended to find out if the teacher showed students the importance that the conversation to be listened had in real life interactions. For this aspect the results are not satisfactory. A 32% of the population answered that this issue was *never* dealt with, and another 32% reported that this *sometimes* occurred previous to the listening activity. The standard deviation is also high for this item (1,0), which also shows dispersion in the answers.

The third question was concerned with the pre-teaching of key words that appeared in the recording. Referring to this aspect, the subjects' answers show that the teachers address this issue previous to a listening activity (56% *sometimes*, 20% *usually*). The standard deviation for this item is adequate (0,8). However, the fact that the issue of pre-teaching unknown vocabulary is *sometimes* addressed is a matter of concern, since the four aspects in the survey are an essential part of a listening activity.

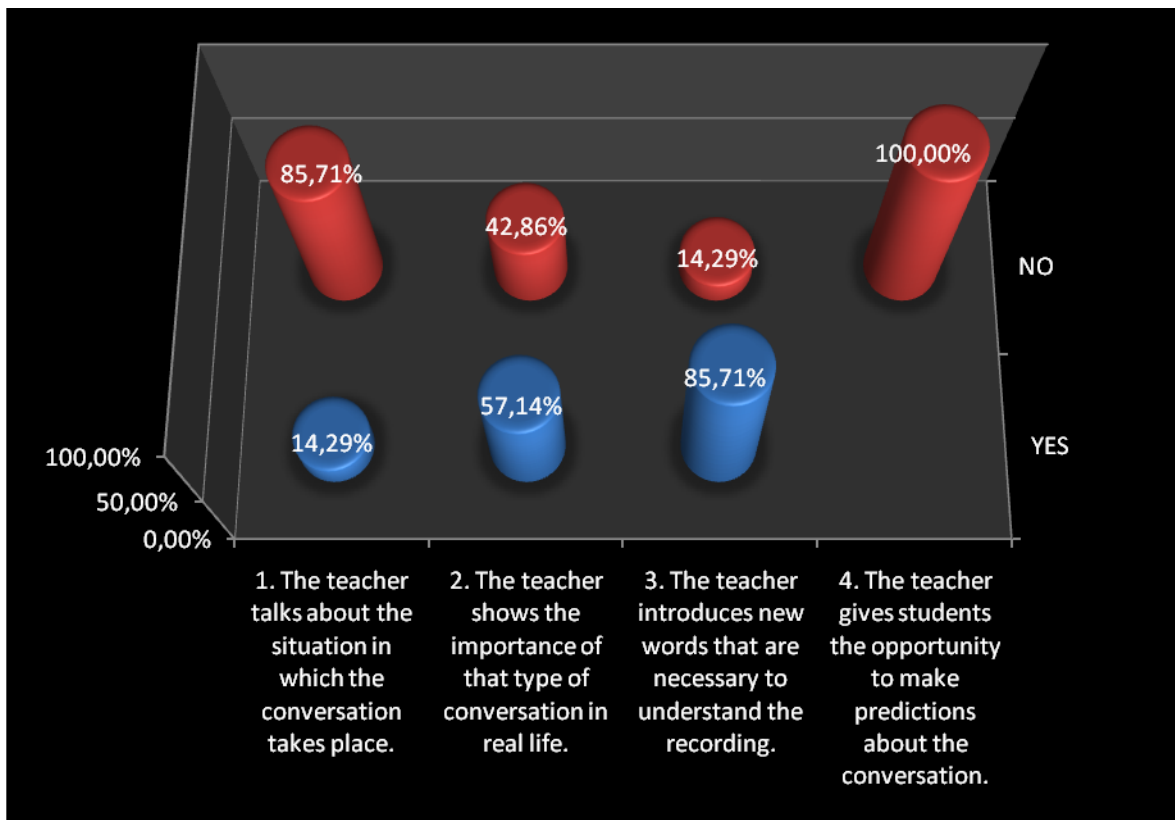
Question four was related to the activation of schemata through prediction. The standard deviation for this item is also high, and the highest percentage is only a 36% reporting that the teachers sometimes give students the time to make predictions before listening to the recording.

The results of this survey are not satisfactory. The overwhelming majority of subjects reports that the requirements of the pre-listening stage are *sometimes* fulfilled, which indicates that listening activities lack an appropriate contextualization.

5.2. INVENTORY OF SEVEN LESSON OBSERVATIONS

The observations were carried out as a means of having a second source of data which would allow the researchers to determine whether the reason for students' disengagement is no contextualization during pre-listening activities. Data was registered in two inventories which consisted of the same four items students were asked about in the survey about contextualization.

Inventory of lessons observations- contextualization



(Graphic 9)

Important findings could be derived from the application of this instrument (Graphic 9). For the first item data reveals that teachers do not talk about the situation in which the conversation takes place (85,17% of the times). This issue was only addressed

by teachers a 14,29% of the times. This is a matter of concern, since each one of the aspects must be taken into account every time listening activities are done.

In the results obtained from item 2 there is a tendency (57.14%) to the teacher showing the importance that the conversation heard has in real life. Nonetheless, the other percentage (42.86%) shows that there is a significant lack of this demonstration in class.

For item 3 data shows a great tendency (85.71%) to the teacher introducing the new words that are necessary to understand the recording prior the listening act itself takes place.

Finally, in item 4, data states that the teacher does not provide students with enough time for them to come up with predictions on what they will listen to (100%). It is clear that teachers must start addressing this issue when doing listening exercises.

Concluding the main findings of this instrument, it can be stated that there are two issues of contextualization which are addressed by ELT teachers *most of the times*. These aspects are concerned with the pre-teaching of key words and talking about the context in which the conversation occurs. Nonetheless, ELT teachers should also give priority to other issues, such as showing students the importance of those listening exercises, and activating their previous knowledge before listening to the recordings. Doing this could help teachers enhance students' engagement.

The next section deals with the results obtained through the application of the Language Strategy Use Inventory. This was done to determine if it is students' lack of learning strategies what leads them to disengage from class listening exercises.

5.3. LANGUAGE STRATEGY USE INVENTORY

As stated above, this instrument sought to establish if the use of learning strategies is a characteristic of ELT pre-intermediate students. The strategies in the inventory are divided into five groups according to the purpose they seek to achieve. The analysis of each group of strategies is provided in this section.

Items 1 to 4 reveal the strategies the population uses in order to increase their exposure to the target language. Items 1 and 3 show the expected data due to the context the participants live in. Item 1 shows that a 68% of the population has never attended out-of-class events where the new language is spoken. A 20% claims having tried this strategy, and a remaining 12% uses it. In the same way, item 3 shows that a 60% of the population has never listened to the language in a restaurant or store. A 12 % says they have tried it and a 28% claims it does not fit for them. On the other hand, item 2 shows that a 56% of the population listens to talk shows on the radio, watch TV shows, or watch movies in English. A 36% has tried it, and an 8% has never done it. Item 4 portraits that a 40% of the participants listens in on people who are having conversations in English to try to get the message of what they are saying, 52% says they have tried to, and a 4% has never done it. A remaining 4% reports that this strategy does not fit for them. For instance, it is noticeable in items 2 and 4 that the participants use the strategies they have access to in order to increase their exposure to the target language.

Items 5 to 8 gather information about the strategies the participants use in order to become more familiar with the sounds in the target language. In item 5, 24% of the participants claims to practice sounds in English that are very different from sounds in their own language to become comfortable with them. A 36% of them has tried it and a 28% states they have never used it as well as a 12% claiming that it does not fit for them. In item 6, a 28% of the populations says they look for associations between the sound of a word or phrase in the new language with the sound of a familiar word. A 64% has tried it and would use it again, and only an 8% reports not having used it. Then, item 7 reveals that only a 12% of the participants imitate the way native speakers talk and a 28% as tried it. The remaining percentage, 60%, states they have never done it. Finally, in this section, item 8 shows that a 36% of the participants has tried to ask a native speaker about unfamiliar sounds they hear, and a 52% says they have never tried it. The remaining 12% says that this kind of strategy does not fit for them. The results in this item are not surprising since the context the participants are in does not provide them with that access to native speakers.

As it is shown, items 5, 6 and 7 reveal that the participants are still constructing the strategies which allow them to become more familiar with the sounds in the target language, although in item 7 the negative tendency (60%) portrays how reluctant the subjects are to imitate the naturalness of a native speaker's talk.

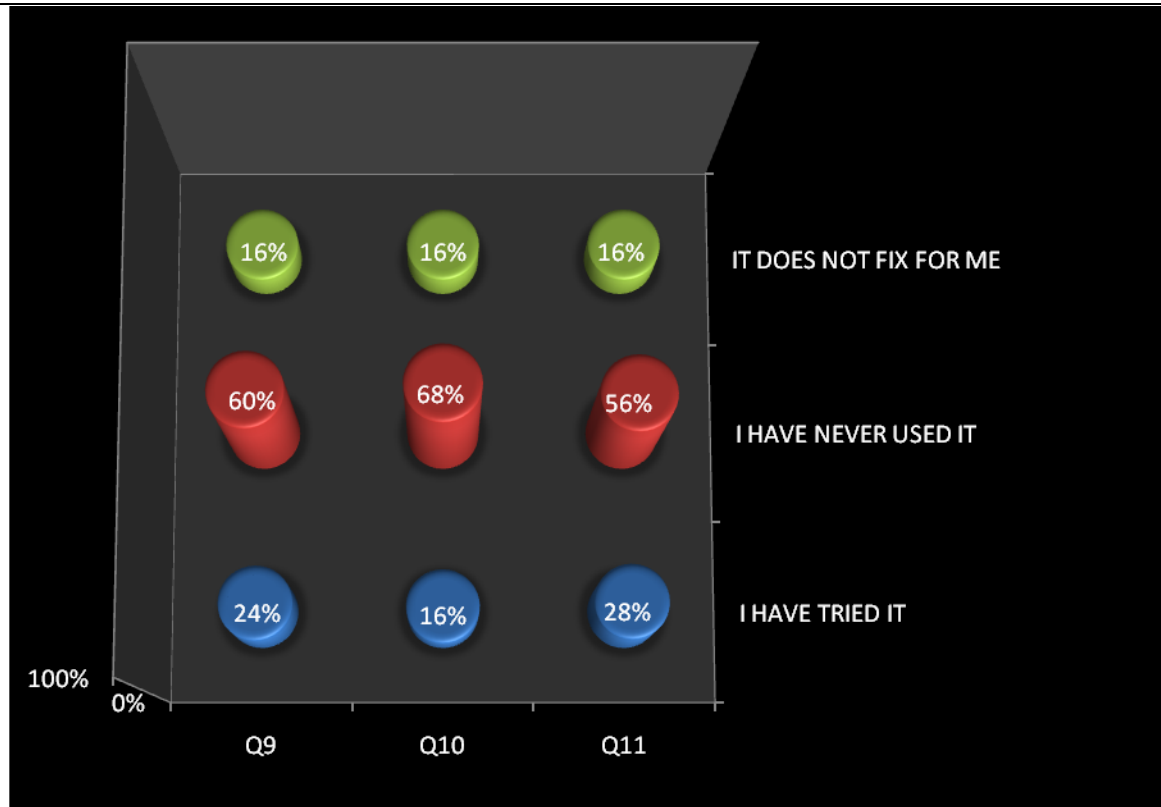
Referring to items 9, 10 and 11 (Graphic 10) or strategies used by the students when preparing to listen to conversations in the target language, answers are a matter of concern. The data obtained shows that none of these 3 strategies is used by the ELT pre-intermediate students. According to the results, only a 24% of the students has tried strategy 9, while a 60% of them has never used it and a 16% says this strategy does not fit for them.

Strategies used by the students when preparing to listen to conversation in the target language

Q9. Pay special attention to specific aspects of the language (e.g., the way the speaker pronounces certain sounds).

Q10. Try to predict what the other person is going to say based on what has been said so far.

Q11. Prepare for talks and performances I will hear in English by reading some background materials beforehand.



(Graphic 10)

As it can be seen, item 10 did not obtain different results. Data reveals that only a 16% of the subjects has tried this strategy, a 68% states that they have never used it and a 54% claims this strategy does not fit for them. Likewise, for item 11 the results show that a 28% of the students says to have tried this strategy while a 56% states not having used it and a 16% claims it does not fit for them.

To sum up, it can be said that the participants lack the strategies necessary for them to prepare to listen to conversation in the target language. The negative tendency in all the items in this section leads the results to conclude so. Therefore, the role the participants are supposed to assume in this stage is not being fulfilled.

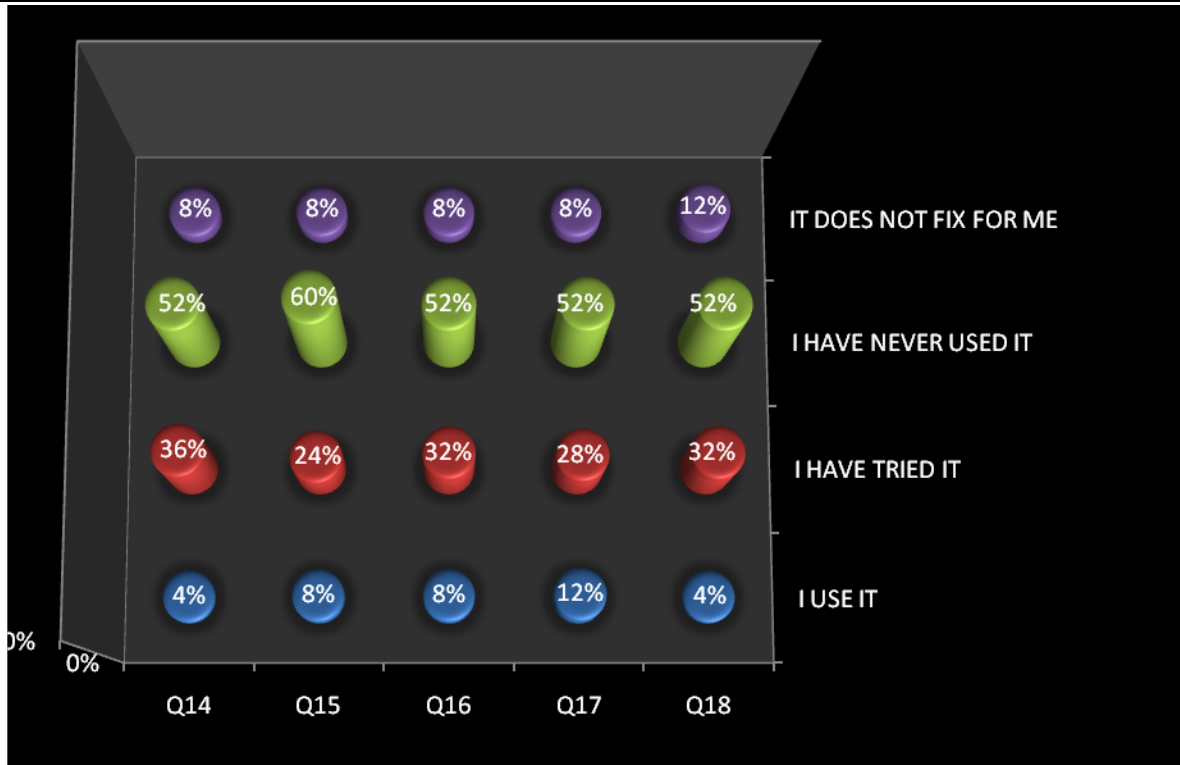
In terms of the strategies that ELT pre-intermediate students use when listening to a conversation in English, results are not satisfactory. The four of them show a negative tendency. Only a 40% of the subjects reported that they have ever tried to *listen for key words that seem to have the main ideas* and would like to try it again. On the contrary, a 36% stated that they have never used this strategy, but they are interested in it. These results are not satisfactory, since trying a strategy is good, but it is only a point of departure. Proficient listeners make use of strategies *frequently*.

Similar results were found in the use of the strategy related to *listening for word and sentence stress to see what native speakers emphasize when they speak*. In this respect, a 60% of the subjects reported having used it and feeling like using it again. Individuals are autonomous when they have *acquired* behaviors that assist them to accomplish their goals.

Data also revealed that more than half of the population has never used any of the strategies that can be used during the while listening stage. The percentages obtained concerning items 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 oscillate between a 50% and a 60% (Graphic 11). Time should be then devoted to pay attention to when and how long people tend to pause, pay attention to the intonation of speech by native speakers, practice skim listening, try to understand what they hear through key words, and focus on the context. By putting into practice these strategies during class activities, ELT pre-intermediate students will become aware of which strategies actually help them improve in the development of their listening skill.

Strategies used by the students during the while - listening stage

Q14. Pay attention to when and how long people tend to pause.
Q15. Pay attention to the intonation of speech by native speakers--the "music" of it.
Q16. Practice "skim listening" by paying attention to some parts and ignoring others.
Q17. Try to understand what I hear without translating it word-for-word.
Q18. Focus on the context of what people are saying.



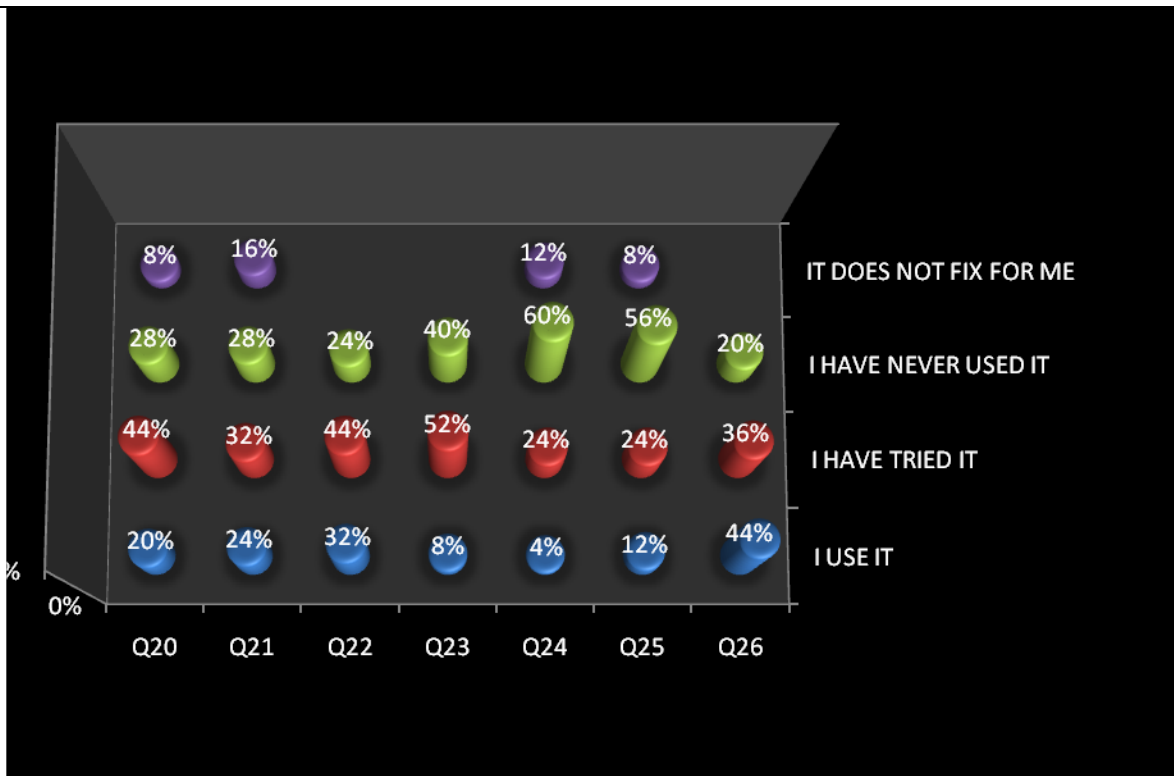
(Graphic 11)

There was, however, a positive outcome related to the use of strategies to listen to conversations in the English language. A 56% of the population reports listening for specific details to see whether they can understand them. This is the only strategy employed by the subjects during the while-listening stages of a class listening activity.

Finally, items 20 to 26 (Graphic 12) are related to the strategies for when participants do not understand some or most of what someone says in the target language. Item 20 shows that a 20% of the population asks speakers to repeat what they said if it was not clear to them. A 44% says they have tried it and a 28% says they have never done it. A remaining 8% says the strategy does not fit for them. In item 21, participants state that only a 24% of them ask speakers to slow down if they are speaking too fast, a 32% says they have tried it and a 28% says they have never done it. Only a 16% of the population says that this strategy does not fit for them.

Strategies used by students when they do not understand what someone says in the target language

Q20. Ask speakers to repeat what they said if it wasn't clear to me.
Q21. Ask speakers to slow down if they are speaking too fast.
Q22. Ask for clarification if I don't understand it the first time around.
Q23. Use the speakers' tone of voice as a clue to the meaning of what they are saying.
Q24. Make educated guesses about the topic based on what has already been said.
Q25. Draw on my general previous knowledge to get the main idea.
Q26. Watch speakers' gestures and general body language to help me figure out the meaning of what they are saying.



(Graphic 12)

In item 22 the information obtained reveals that a 32% of the population asks for clarification if they do not understand what someone has said the first time around, a 44% has done it, and a 24% has never tried it. Item 23 displays if the population uses the speakers' tone of voice as a clue to the meaning of what they are saying.

Only an 8% says they do it, along with a 52% that says they have done it. The other 40% says they have never tried it.

In item 24, a 4% of the subjects says that they make educated guesses about the topic based on what has already been said and a 24% says they have tried to do that. A 60% claims they have never used it. Only a 12% states this strategy does not fit for them. In the same way, in item 25, only a 12% says they have drawn on their general previous knowledge to get the main idea, a 24% has tried to do it, and the general tendency, a 56% and 8%, goes towards they have never tried it and the strategy does not fit for them respectively.

In item 26 the information reveals that a 44% of the population watches speakers' gestures and general body language to help them figure out the meaning of what they are saying. A 36% says they have tried it and the remaining 20% claims they have never done it.

As a final point, the data provided by the Strategy Use Inventory demonstrated that ELT pre-intermediate students only use and like using three learning strategies to achieve different goals. Although the percentages are not so high, it can be stated that a half of the population uses media as a way to increase their exposure to the English language. Besides, when they are listening to a recording, they focus on specific details to find out if they can understand them. One more strategy employed by a 44% of the subjects is to analyze speakers' body language to figure out what they are saying.

In terms of the remaining 23 learning strategies, nonetheless, results were mostly negative. In some cases, the subjects reported having ever tried some strategies,

while the others claim not having used them at all. These findings enable researchers to state that ELT pre-intermediate students' lack of learning strategies is one of the reasons why students do not engage in class listening activities. They have not acquired ways of managing their learning process in terms of the development of the listening skill. The following section deals with the conclusions of this study, its limitations and further research.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- The instruments applied in the confirmation phase gave researchers sufficient information to consider disengagement during listening activities as a problem that is present in ELT pre-intermediate students. Likewise, it enabled researchers to continue with the second phase of the project to determine the reason(s) why the subjects do not engage in class listening activities.
- The sources of disengagement, identified through the literature review (instruction-oriented and student-oriented), served as the basis for the creation and selection of the instruments for the second phase. These instruments provided researchers with valuable information to answer the research question: Why do ELT pre-intermediate students disengage from class listening activities? According to the results, ELT pre-intermediate students do not engage in class listening activities as a result of the combination of a listening instruction that lacks some important issues of contextualization (during the pre-listening stage), and the subjects' lack of learning strategies to develop listening activities successfully.
- It is worth mentioning, however, that ELT teachers do offer a listening instruction. Their while-listening and post-listening activities actually fulfill the requirements specified at these stages. By doing this, ELT teachers are playing an important role in the development of their students' listening skill.
- It is suggested that ELT teachers include in the pre-listening stage activities that allow students to activate their previous knowledge and make them aware of the importance that those communicative acts have in daily

situations. This can be achieved by having students make predictions based on the key words and general ideas they are given before listening to the recording. Similarly, asking questions that raise students' curiosity about the roles that speakers play in the conversation and how they deal with them is also a suggested activity.

- Since the possibilities ELT pre-intermediate students have to expose themselves to the target language are limited (as concluded from the learning strategies they use), further work is necessary to provide them with tools that support their listening practice out of class. Those activities exhibit certain characteristics that are specified below.
- Overcoming students' lack of strategies demands the design of well-planned listening activities for being done out of class. It implies that those listening activities are graded according to their level of difficulty and follow an appropriate sequence (pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening).

7. LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

- The study intended to include all the students who were taking Pre-intermediate English as included in the first semester of the program. The original considered population consisted of 46 people. However, due to the irregular academic activity (caused by strikes), the resulting population consisted of 31 students. Then, after doing all the tests, only 25 out of the resulting 31, managed to complete the study.

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APPENDIX 1

UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL DE SANTANDER/ ESCUELA DE IDIOMAS / LICENCIATURA EN INGLÉS

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RODRIGO MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ MORENO

ENCUESTA PARA ESTUDIANTES DE INGLÉS PREINTERMEDIO

- ¿Desea responder la encuesta? Si _____ No _____

☺ **Responda las siguientes preguntas basándose solo en las actividades que se realizan durante la clase de Inglés**

A. ¿Cómo se considera en la siguiente habilidad del idioma Inglés?

HABILIDAD	¿Cómo me considero?				
	MALO	REGULAR	BUENO	MUY BUENO	EXCELENTE
1. Escucha (<i>listening</i>)					

B. En general, ¿Cómo considera las actividades de escucha?

1. Muy interesantes
2. Interesantes
3. Ni interesantes ni aburridoras
4. Aburridoras

C. ¿Qué tan difícil considera las actividades de escucha?

1. Muy fáciles
2. Fáciles
3. No tan fáciles
4. Difíciles

D. ¿Cuál de las etapas de la actividad de escucha es la que más le atrae?

1. Antes de escuchar (pre)
2. Mientras escucha (while)
3. Después de escuchar (post)
4. Ninguna de las anteriores

E. ¿Con qué frecuencia participa activamente en las actividades de escucha?

1. Siempre
2. Generalmente
3. Algunas veces
4. Nunca

F. ¿Con qué frecuencia logra desarrollar satisfactoriamente los ejercicios propuestos para la actividad de escucha?

1. Siempre
2. Generalmente
3. Algunas veces
4. Nunca

G. Generalmente, ¿cómo se siente después de realizar la actividad de escucha?

1. Feliz
2. Satisfecho
3. Preocupado
4. Frustrado

H. Durante las actividades de escucha, usted normalmente:

1. Sigue estrictamente las instrucciones del profesor
2. No sigue las instrucciones del profesor
3. Se distrae fácilmente
4. Realiza otras actividades

I. En las actividades de escucha, usted normalmente:

1. Sabe exactamente lo que tiene que hacer
2. No está seguro de lo que tiene que hacer
3. No sabe lo que tiene que hacer

J. Durante las actividades de escucha, ¿cómo considera las instrucciones del profesor?

1. Muy claras
2. Claras
3. Confusas
4. No entendibles

APPENDIX 2

UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL DE SANTANDER
ESCUELA DE IDIOMAS
LICENCIATURA EN INGLÉS

ENCUESTA PARA ESTUDIANTES DE INGLÉS PREINTERMEDIO

¿Desea responder esta encuesta?

Sí ____

No ____

☺ *Escoja una opción para cada pregunta basándose solo en las actividades que se realizan durante la clase de Inglés.*

CONTEXTUALIZACIÓN EN LAS ACTIVIDADES DE ESCUCHA

5. Previo a la actividad de escucha, su profesor habla de la situación en la que la conversación toma lugar.

- a. Nunca
- b. A veces
- c. Usualmente
- d. Siempre

2. Antes de la actividad de escucha, su profesor le muestra la importancia de esa conversación en la vida cotidiana.

- a. Nunca
- b. A veces
- c. Usualmente
- d. Siempre

3. Previo a la actividad de escucha, su profesor le enseña palabras nuevas que son importantes para entender la grabación.

- a. Nunca
- b. A veces
- c. Usualmente
- d. Siempre

4. Antes de la actividad de escucha, su profesor le da la oportunidad de hacer predicciones sobre lo que será dicho en la conversación.

- a. Nunca
- b. A veces
- c. Usualmente
- d. Siempre

APPENDIX 3

Language Strategy Use Inventory

Andrew D. Cohen, Rebecca L. Oxford, and Julie
C. Chi

The purpose of this inventory is to find out more about yourself as a language learner and to help you discover strategies that can help you master a new language. Check the box that describes your use of each listed strategy. The categories are: *I use this strategy and like it*; *I have tried this strategy and would use it again*; *I've never used this strategy but am interested in it*; and *This strategy doesn't fit for me*

Listening Strategy Use

Strategies to increase my exposure to the target language:

- | | I use this strategy
and like it | I have tried this strategy
and would use it again | I've never used this strategy
but am interested in it | This strategy
doesn't fit for me |
|---|------------------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Attend out-of-class events where the new language is spoken. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Listen to talk shows on the radio, watch TV shows, or see movies in English. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Listen to the language in a restaurant or store where the staff speak in English. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Listen in on people who are having conversations in English to try to get the message of what they are saying. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strategies to become more familiar with the sounds in the target language:

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5. Practice sounds in English that are very different from sounds in my own language to become comfortable with them. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Look for associations between the sound of a word or phrase in the new language with the sound of a familiar word. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Imitate the way native speakers talk. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Ask a native speaker about unfamiliar sounds that I hear. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strategies to prepare to listen to conversation in the target language:

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 9. Pay special attention to specific aspects of the language (e.g., the way the speaker pronounces certain sounds). | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Try to predict what the other person is going to say based on what has been said so far. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Prepare for talks and performances I will hear in English by reading some background materials beforehand. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strategies to listen to conversation in the target language:

	I use this strategy and like it	I have tried this strategy and would use it again	I've never used this strategy but am interested in it	This strategy doesn't fit for me
12. Listen for key words that seem to carry the main ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Listen for word and sentence stress to see what native speakers emphasize when they speak.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Pay attention to when and how long people tend to pause.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Pay attention to the intonation of speech by native speakers—the “music” of it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Practice “skim listening” by paying attention to some parts and ignoring others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Try to understand what I hear without translating it word-for-word.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Focus on the context of what people are saying.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Listen for specific details to see whether I can understand them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Strategies for when I do not understand some or most of what someone says in the target language:

20. Ask speakers to repeat what they said if it wasn't clear to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Ask speakers to slow down if they are speaking too fast.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Ask for clarification if I don't understand it the first time around	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Use the speakers' tone of voice as a clue to the meaning of what they are saying.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Make educated guesses about the topic based on what has already been said	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. Draw on my general previous knowledge to get the main idea.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. Watch speakers' gestures and general body language to help me figure out the meaning of what they are saying.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What other listening strategies do I use?

APPENDIX 5

Consent Form for participating in the research study:

IDENTIFYING ELT FRESHMEN NEEDS IN TERMS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LISTENING SKILL

Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Professor Tatiana Mikhailova and the students Juan Carlos López Gerena, Beatriz Helena Neira Blanco, Rodrigo Manuel Rodríguez Moreno and Laura Cristina Rueda Balaguera. The purpose of this research is to identify ELT freshmen needs in terms of the development of their listening skill.

Your participation will involve:

- Three observations focused on the listening activity during English lessons.

The amount of time required for your participation will be from one to two weeks.

Risks and discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research.

Potential benefits

This research may help us to understand what ELT freshmen need to be provided with, in order to have them engage in class listening activities.

Protection of confidentiality

Your identity will not be revealed in any publication that might result from this study. If this happens, however, it would be only to determine if we conducted this study properly and adequately protected your rights as a participant.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Professor Tatiana Mikhailova at Universidad Industrial de Santander.

Consent

***I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions.
I give my consent to participate in this study.***

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

A copy of this consent form should be given to you.

APPENDIX 6

FORMAT OF CLASS OBSERVATION

OBSERVATION	MEMOING