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FACULTAD MULTIDISCIPLINARIA ORIENTAL
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SECCIÓN DE IDIOMAS**



**INFORME FINAL DEL CURSO DE ESPECIALIZACIÓN:
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**THE LACK OF LISTENING SKILLS MAY HINDER ORAL PRODUCTION IN SECOND-YEAR
MODERN LANGUAGE STUDENTS**

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Abstract

In the present scientific article, the influence of the listening deficiencies on the communication of the students who are currently attending in the second year of the degree in Modern Languages at the University of El Salvador was investigated. Therefore, the objective of this article was to determine the deficiencies regarding the speech comprehension that is affecting the communication of the students and in this scientific article, the quantitative method was used under the descriptive design; for the data collection, 10 students were selected through the use of the probabilistic sampling method and a survey was used as a technique that consisted on a TOEFL-type listening test level B1 that contains 10 questions, and an oral production test. According to the analysis of the results, it was shown that most of the students do not have much problem with their listening skills, but deficiencies were found in the oral production since they had certain difficulties when expressing their points of view regarding the subject presented in the oral test. Therefore, recommendations to improve student performance are to change classroom teaching strategies to those that are focused on students' oral production, whether collective or individual, as well as to implement more oral production activities in the classroom; this will help students not only improve their listening skills by listening to their classmates but also improve their oral production capabilities while sharing their ideas or opinions.

Keywords: *communication, deficiencies, improve, listening skills, oral production, speaking.*

Resumen

En el presente artículo científico se investigó la influencia de las deficiencias auditivas en la comunicación de los estudiantes que actualmente están cursando segundo año de la licenciatura de lenguas modernas en la Universidad de El Salvador. Por consiguiente, el objetivo de este artículo fue determinar deficiencias en la comprensión del habla que afectan la comunicación de los estudiantes y en dicho estudio se utilizó el método cuantitativo bajo el diseño descriptivo; para la recolección de datos 10 estudiantes fueron seleccionados mediante el uso del método de muestreo probabilístico y se usó como técnica una encuesta que consistió en un listening test tipo TOEFL nivel b1 de 10 preguntas y una prueba de producción oral. Según el análisis de los resultados, se demostró que la mayoría de los estudiantes tiene dominio de la habilidad auditiva, sin embargo, se encontraron deficiencias en la producción oral, ya que presentaron dificultades al momento de expresar sus puntos de vista respecto al tema expuesto en la prueba oral. Por lo tanto, las recomendaciones para mejorar el rendimiento de los estudiantes son cambiar las estrategias de enseñanza en el salón de clases a aquellas que están enfocadas en la producción oral de los estudiantes, ya sea colectiva o individual, asimismo implementar más actividades de producción oral en el salón de clases; esto ayudará a los estudiantes no solo a mejorar sus habilidades auditivas al escuchar a sus compañeros de clase, sino también a mejorar sus capacidades de producción oral mientras compartan sus ideas u opiniones.

Palabras clave: comunicación, deficiencias, discurso, habilidades auditivas, mejorar, producción oral.

Introduction

Learning a foreign language involves learning various skills, being listening comprehension one of the most important. The ability to listen and understand what others say is essential for effective communication; for many modern language students the development of this competence represents a significant challenge. Jafari and Hashim (2015) emphasized that “listening is a channel for comprehensible input, and more than 50 percent of the time learners spend in learning a foreign language is devoted to listening.”

Listening comprehension is a fundamental skill for effective communication. It allows students not only to hear words and facilitate the exchange of information, but also to interpret the meaning behind what is said, capture nuances of the tone of voice, and respond appropriately in a conversation, but is also key to social and academic interaction. Students who have deficiencies in this aspect tend to have difficulty understanding their professors, which hinders both their ability to communicate effectively and their learning process.

Understanding English goes beyond simply understanding single words or phrases. It involves capturing the context, cultural nuances and different accents that can influence the meaning of what is heard or read. In everyday life, understanding English can mean the difference between actively participating in a conversation or being excluded from it; between taking advantage of an opportunity or letting it pass. Nevertheless, for Modern Languages students, listening comprehension is presented as one of the most difficult skills to master. Difficulties in this area can hinder both language learning and students' ability to communicate properly. This can lead to misunderstandings and barriers in interaction, affecting both their academic and social performance.

This article is based on a research that had as its main objective to identify the factors that contribute to the deficiencies in the listening comprehension of second-year students of the

Modern Languages career. These deficiencies not only affect the way students understand the language, but also limit their ability to participate in conversations and activities inside and outside the classroom. The objective of this research is to determine which specific deficiencies in speech comprehension affect the communication of second-year students of the Modern Languages career. To do this, various communicative situations were analyzed and the main obstacles that students face when trying to understand and process what they hear in a foreign language were observed.

Additionally, the theoretical concepts that support the development of auditory skills were included in the study, as well as a detailed analysis of the factors that influence the comprehension process. This article also offers a justification for why this topic was chosen for research, highlighting the importance of improving listening skills to achieve more effective communication.

Finally, the results of this research show that students presented numerous problems with fundamental aspects such as grammar, language structures, pronunciation and the proper use of the accent. In addition, it was observed that the interference of their mother tongue, Spanish, was an evident factor in their difficulties. As Shumin (1997) points out, learning to speak a foreign language is not only about mastering grammatical and semantic rules, but also about understanding how native speakers use the language in real contexts of interaction. The deficiency in auditory skills also played a key role, as it contributed to poor communication among students, which negatively affected their ability to conduct conversations and correctly understand what they heard. These findings highlight the need to strengthen not only theoretical knowledge of the language, but also auditory and oral skills to achieve more effective communication.

Methodology

Methodology can be defined as a set of methods, techniques, and systematic procedures used to conduct research, a project, or a specific task. It's also conceived as the approach or the way in which a process is organized and carried out to achieve a particular goal. This provides a structured framework for planning, executing, and evaluating activities efficiently and effectively. It can vary depending on the field of study, discipline, or area of application.

Based on Brown (2006) "Methodology is the philosophical framework within which the research is conducted or the foundation upon which the research is based".

Different fields have specific methodological choices tailored to their needs, such as educational interventions in interactive learning research (Greener, 2018), or the principles of methodology and methodological categories in scientific research in education (Kuznetsova, 2020).

Research design

According to Creswell (2014) "Research design is the specific procedure involved in the research process: data collection, data analysis, and report writing".

In this research, a Non-Experimental design was used, on account of the population and the management of the variables of the study, Non-Experimental research is precise. Gravetter and Forzano (2018) said that "Non-Experimental designs include research designs in which an experimenter simply either describes a group or examines relationships between pre-existing groups". Moreover, in this type of design, researchers can observe and measure the natural behavior of study subjects without intervening in their environment. As stated by Hernández,

Fernández, and Baptista (2014), “What we do in non-experimental research is observe phenomena as they occur in their natural context, and then analyze them.” (p. 245).

On the other hand, according to the period and sequence of the research, a **cross-sectional study** was applied. “An analytical cross-sectional design is a type of quantitative, non-experimental research design that seeks to gather data from a group of subjects at only one point in time”, Schmidt & Brown (2019: p. 206). Furthermore, in accord with the depth of the investigation, a **Descriptive Research Design** was selected. Descriptive design is a research method that tries to describe phenomena, occurrences, events that happen in the present. Creswell (1994) explained, “the descriptive method of research is to gather information about present existing conditions”. Additionally, this design is appropriate to implement in the research since Helen L. Dulock (1993) “descriptive research is used (1) to answer questions based on the ongoing events of the present and (2) to describe systematically and accurately the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest”.

Research approach

“There are three types of research approaches, which are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method approaches”, Creswell (2014).

Quantitative research deals with numbers and statistics, while qualitative research deals with words and meanings, and the mixed method approach is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research. As mentioned by Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.14) in qualitative research “the researcher has several methods for collecting empirical materials, ranging from the interview to direct observation, to the analysis of artifacts, documents, and cultural records, to the use of visual materials or personal experience”.

On the other hand, “the goals of quantitative research are to test causal relationships between variables, make predictions, and generalize results to wider populations using controlled observations and questionnaires”, Black, T. R. (1999).

In this research, **the Quantitative Approach** was implemented as it was appropriate to this study, given that Quantitative research is a research approach that uses structured and objective data collection methods to analyze numerical patterns and relationships in data. From the point of view of Creswell (2014), quantitative research “focuses on the measurement of variables and the application of statistics to establish relationships between them” (p. 17). Also, it is established that Quantitative Research focuses primarily on observable and quantifiable aspects of educational phenomena, it uses empirical-analytical methodology and uses statistical tests for data analysis (Cáceres, 1996).

Sample and Sampling

The population selected for this research comprised 50 second year students of Modern Languages at the Universidad de El Salvador, Eastern Multidisciplinary Faculty, enrolled during Intensive Intermediate English II, from which 10 students were taken. The sampling method chosen for this research is the **probability sampling method**, which is a method that refers to the study or analysis of small groups of a population and uses forms of random selection methods.

Data collection technique

Different techniques have been studied to select the most appropriate to apply the correct methodology. For this research, it was considered as the most appropriate and easy to apply the survey technique. Since Kendra Cherry (2020), surveys commonly are used in research to collect self-report data from study participants. In addition, she established that a

survey could be used to investigate the characteristics, behaviors, or opinions of a group of people.

Data Collection Instrument

The instrument selected for this research was the questionnaire. This instrument provides an organization of the information through questions, whether open or closed. According to Pritha Bhandari (2021) a questionnaire is a list of questions or items used to gather data from respondents about their attitudes, experiences, or opinions. The questionnaire used was composed of 10 multiple-choice questions, taken from a listening test of the TOEFL B1 exam about “the library resources”. Besides that, it was implemented an oral production test to accomplish the aims of communication of this research. The test consisted in speaking for a minimum of one minute and the students had to choose between two topics: “My last vacation” and “My family”. Their answers were recorded and then listened and analyzed by the research team.

Data processing tool

In this research, the main data processing tool when collecting student responses was Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets. Microsoft Excel is a tool with great efficiency used to obtain information and track any type of information. One of the most useful tools contained in this application are the graphics that help to represent the data in a more understandable and simple way. The researcher introduces the data of the responses in a table, which automatically generates a graph, according to the style that is most convenient to the information raised. This process allows showing the information in a shorter and more understandable way, likewise, profiting a successful and effective analysis of data obtained.

Consequently, in the research, the spreadsheet tool was used to process the responses of the surveyed students and to visually represent the tabulated information by means of graphs.

Results and data analysis

Results of Listening test

Chart N° 1: *In this chart below, the compilation of the answer given by the students in the listening test is presented.*

STUDENTS	QUESTIONS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
STUDENT 1	C	C	C	D	B	A	D	B	C	B, C
STUDENT 2	C	C	C	D	B	A	D	B	C	B, C
STUDENT 3	C	C	C	D	B	B	B	B	B	B
STUDENT 4	C	C	C	D	B	B	B	B	C	B, C
STUDENT 5	A	C	C	D	D	B	A	C	C	C
STUDENT 6	A	C	D	D	B	A	D	B	C	B, C
STUDENT 7	C	C	C	D	B	B	B	B	D	B
STUDENT 8	A	C	C	B	B	A	D	B	C	B, C
STUDENT 9	C	B	C	B	B	A	D	B	C	A, D
STUDENT 10	C	C	C	D	B	A	D	B	C	B

- Analysis of each listening test question.

Figure No° 1:

Analysis: 70% of the students chose the literal "c" and 30% chose the literal "a" which is the correct answer. Therefore, the majority was wrong.

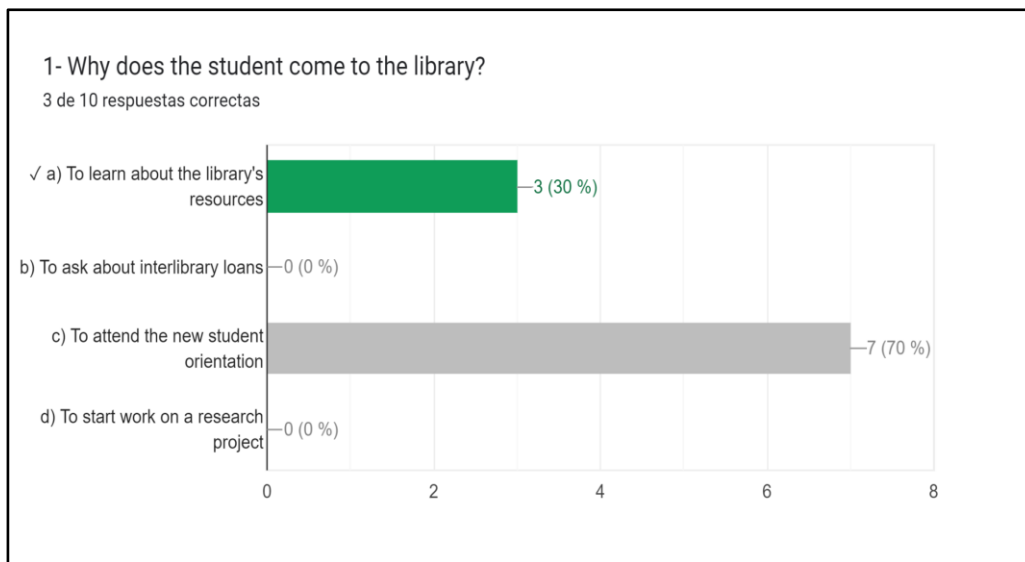


Figure No° 2:

Analysis: In this question, only one student answered wrongly. So, 90% got it right.

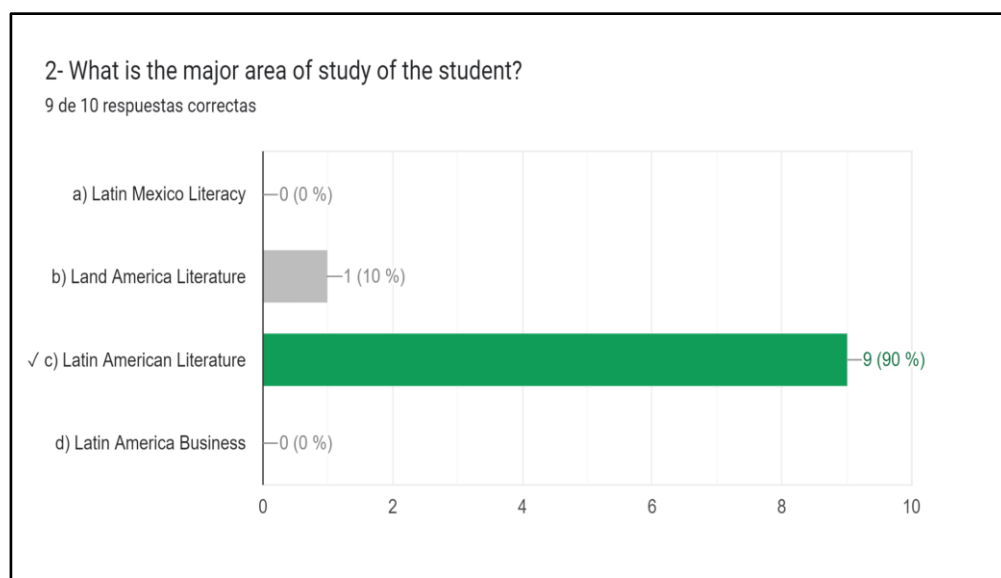
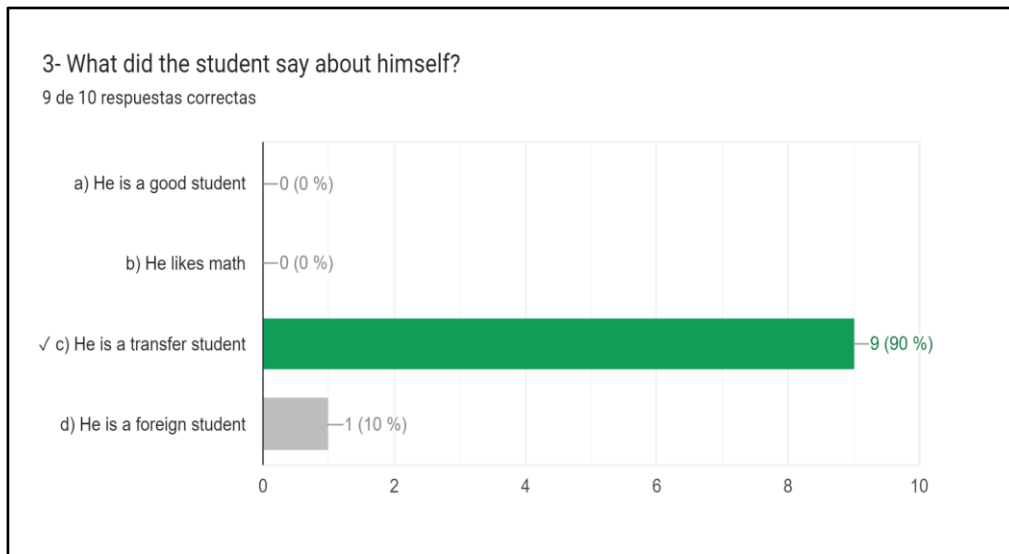


Figure No° 3:

Analysis: 90% of the students selected a literal “c”, this being the correct answer, while only 10% selected 'd'; indicating that only one student responded incorrectly.

**Figure No° 4:**

Analysis: 80% of the students selected literal “d”, this being the correct answer, while 20% selected literal “b”; which indicates that most of the students answered correctly.

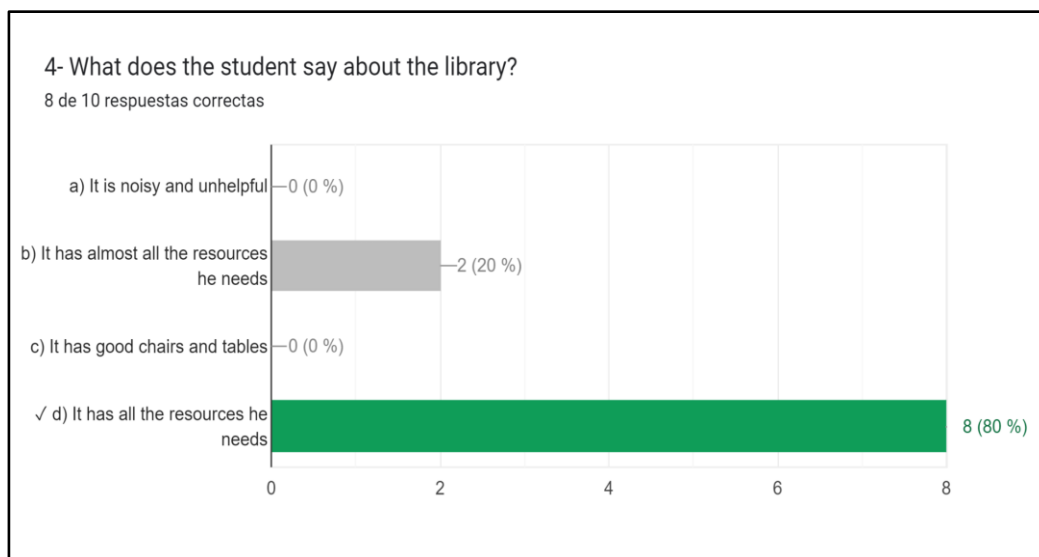
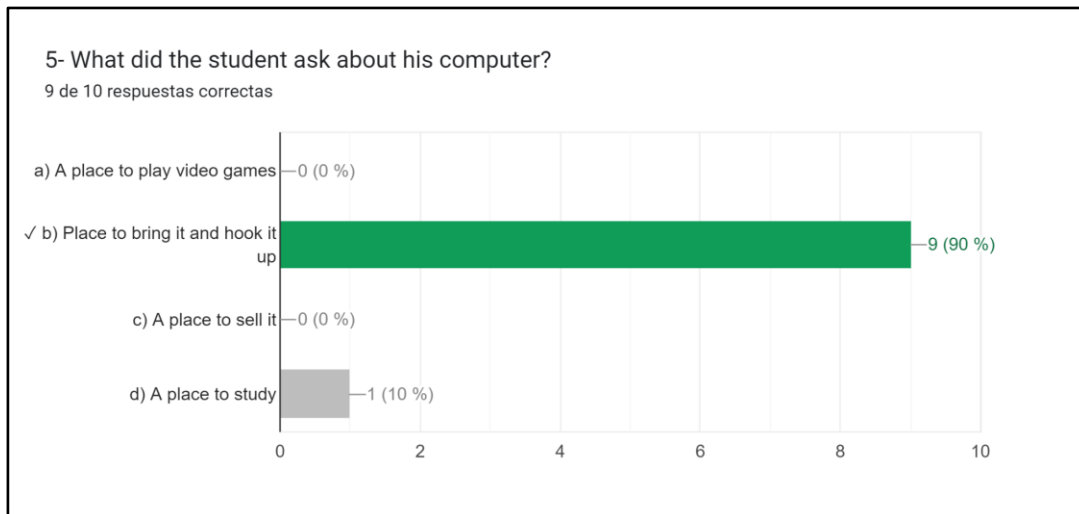


Figure No° 5:

Analysis: 90% of the students selected the literal “b” being this the correct answer, while 10% did it wrongly, selecting the literal “d”.

**Figure No° 6:**

Analysis: 60% of the students selected the literal “a” being the correct answer, while 40% of the students selected the literal “b” which is wrong.

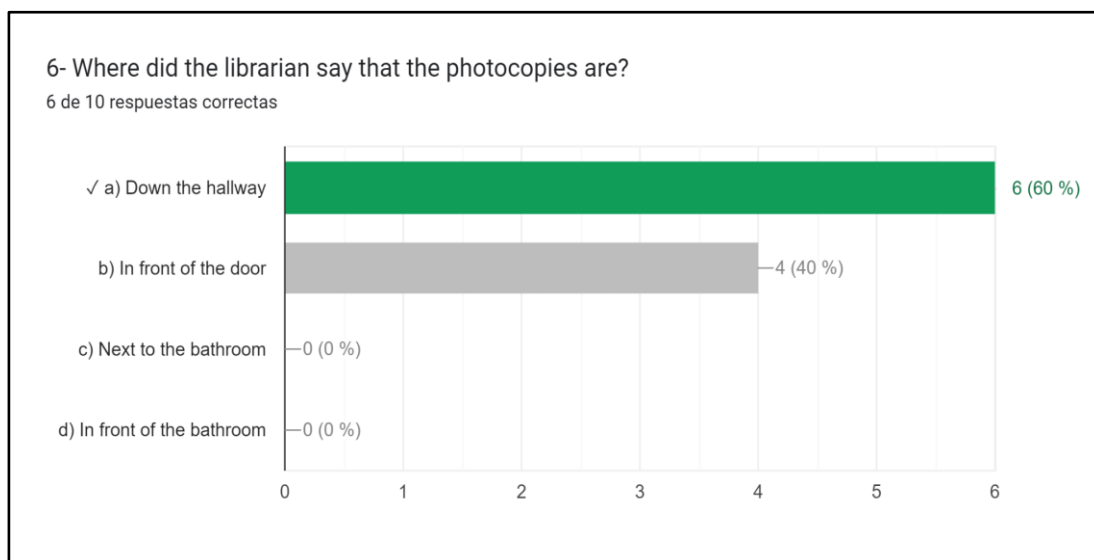
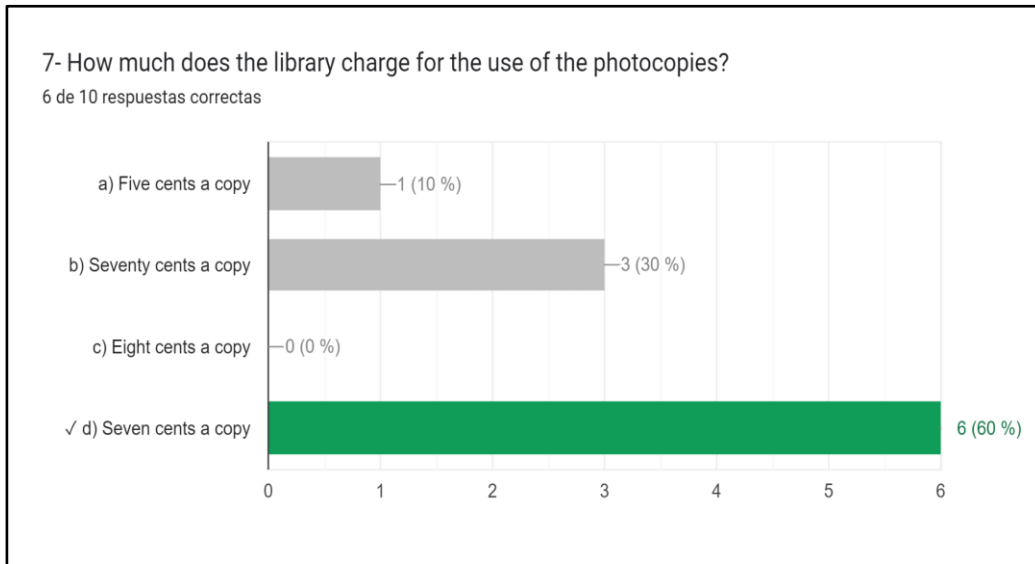


Figure No° 7:

Analysis: In this question, a student answered literal “a” and 30% of the students answered literal “b”, both are incorrect. On the other hand, the rest of the students, 60%, answered the literal “d” which is the correct answer.

**Figure No° 8:**

Analysis: 90% of the students selected the literal “b”, being this the correct answer, while only 10% of the students selected the literal “c”.

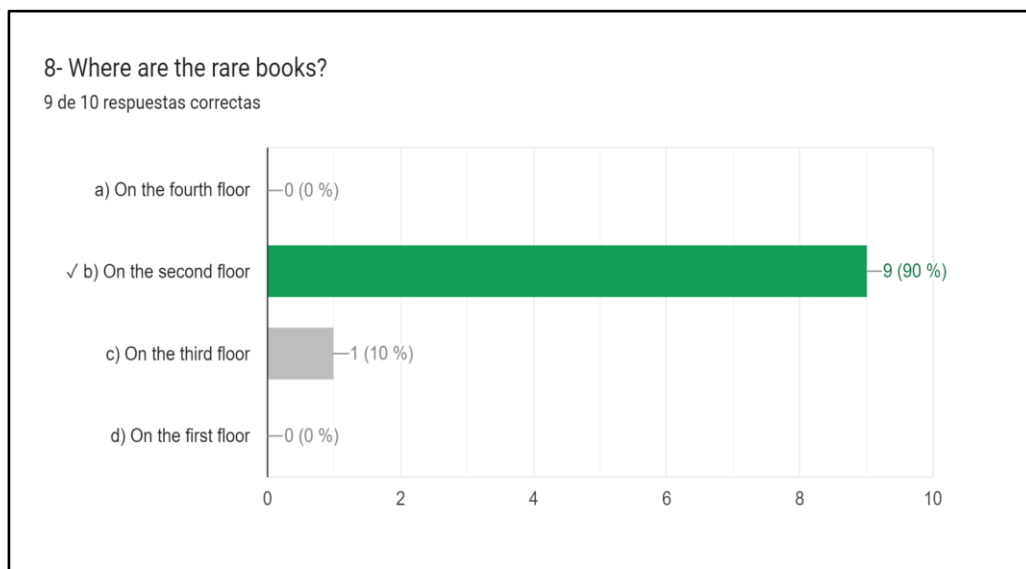
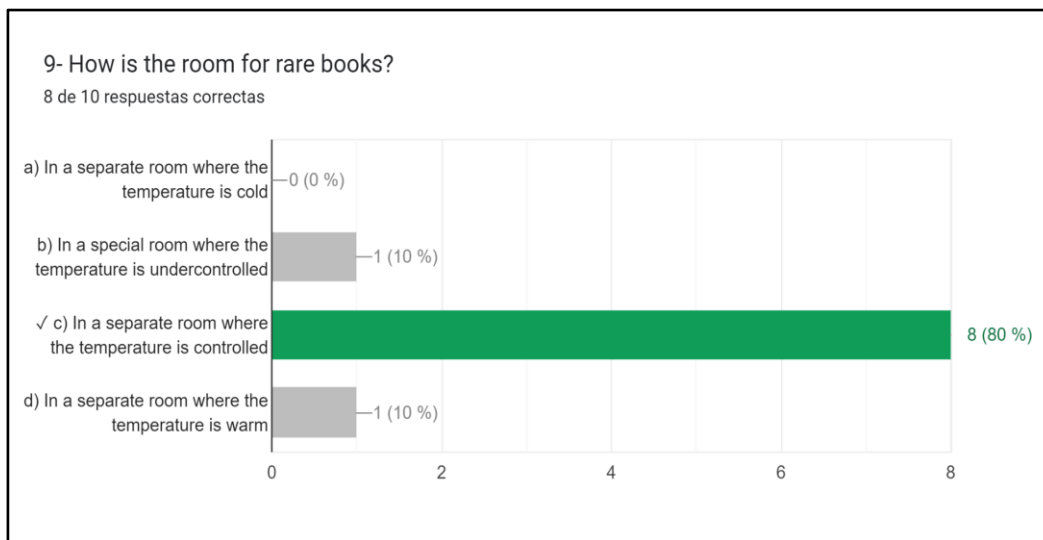
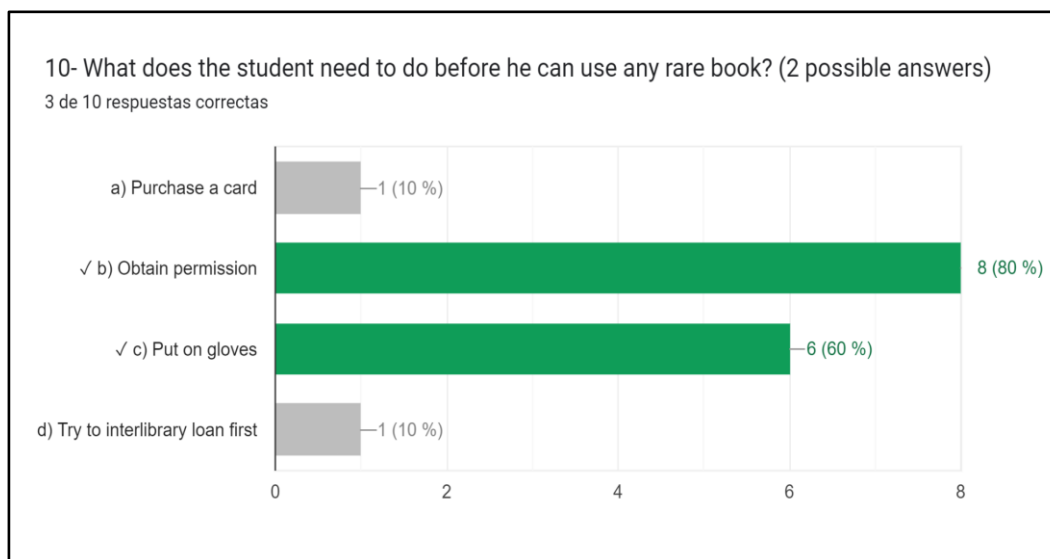


Figure No° 9:

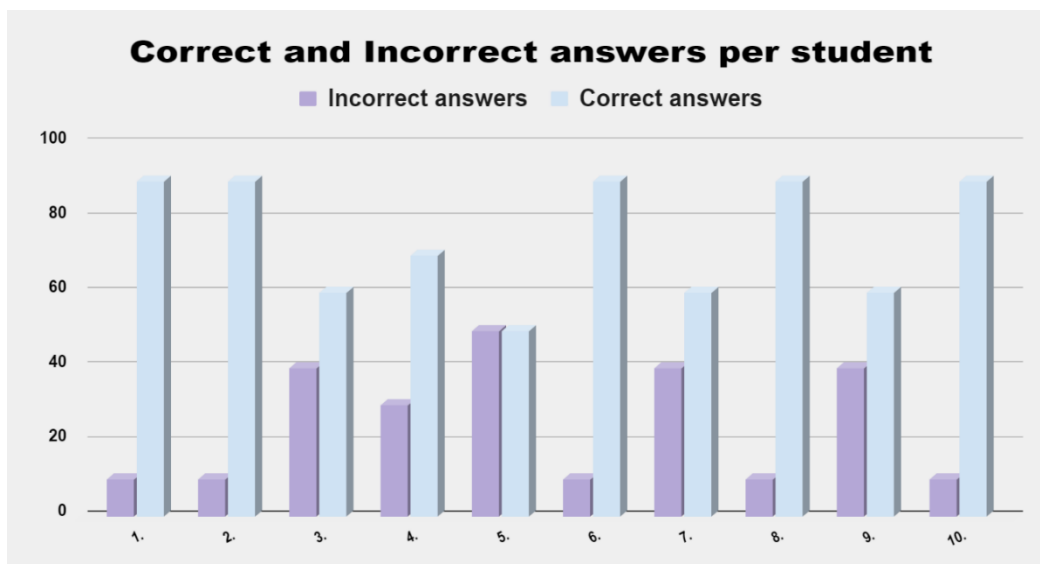
Analysis: 80% of the students selected literal “b”, while 60% selected literal “c”, both answers being correct. On the other hand, 10% of students selected the literal “a” and 10% the literal “d”.

**Figure No° 10:**

Analysis: Based on chart No 1, 50% of the students chose literals b and c which are the correct answers. Moreover, 30% selected only literal b, one student chose literal c and another student chose a and d, both of which are incorrect.



Comparative Graph No° 1: *In this graph, the comparison of correct and incorrect answers per student was presented.*



Interpretation:

It was noted that 60% of the students answered more than 70% of the test correctly, the rest of the students (40%) answered 60 % of the test correctly, and just one student answered the half of the test correctly. In addition, 50% of the total students only obtained 10% of mistakes (9/10 were correct).

Results of Speaking test

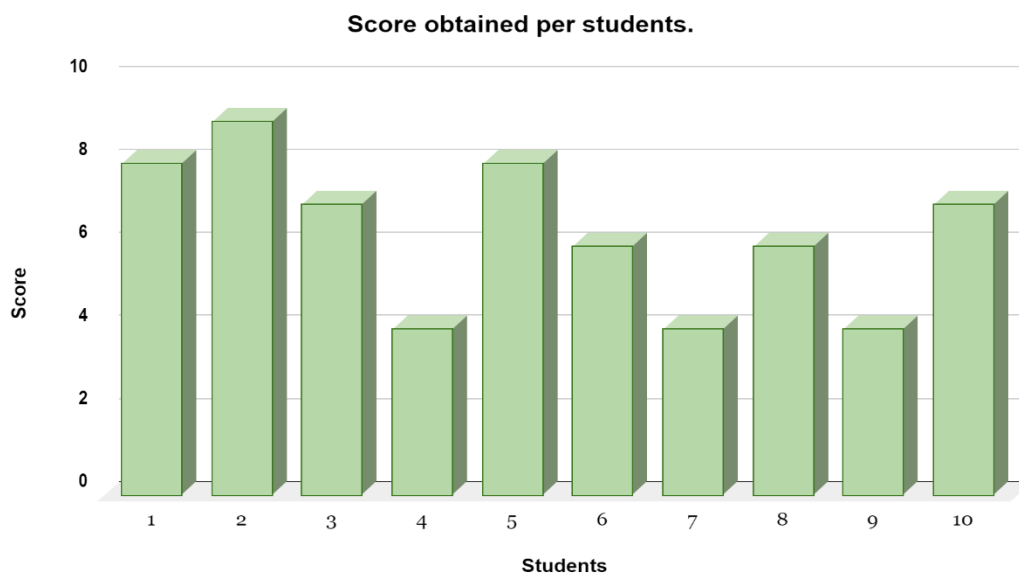
Chart N° 1: *In this chart below, this rubric was presented in order to show how the speaking level was evaluated:*

RUBRIC				
	Insufficient (1 POINT)	Sufficient (2 POINTS)	Good (3 POINTS)	Excellent (4 POINTS)
FLUENCY	Speech is slow, exceedingly hesitant and strained except for short memorized phrases; difficult to perceive continuity in speech; inaudible.	Speech is relatively smooth; some hesitation and unevenness caused by rephrasing and searching for words; volume wavers.	Smooth and fluid speech; few hesitations; a slight search for words; inaudible words or two.	Smooth and fluid speech; few to no hesitation; no attempts to search for words; volume is great.
PRONUNCIATION	Pronunciation is lacking and hard to understand. No effort towards a native accent.	Pronunciation is good; some effort at accent, but is definitely non-native.	Pronunciation is good; good effort at accent.	Pronunciation is excellent; good effort at accent.
ACCURACY	Frequent grammatical errors even in simple structures; meaning is obscured.	Frequent grammatical errors that do not obscure meaning; little variety in structures.	Some errors in grammatical structures possibly caused by attempts to include a variety.	Accuracy and variety of grammatical structures.

Chart N° 2: *In this chart below, the score of the oral performance of each student was presented, based on the rubric above (Chart N° 1).*

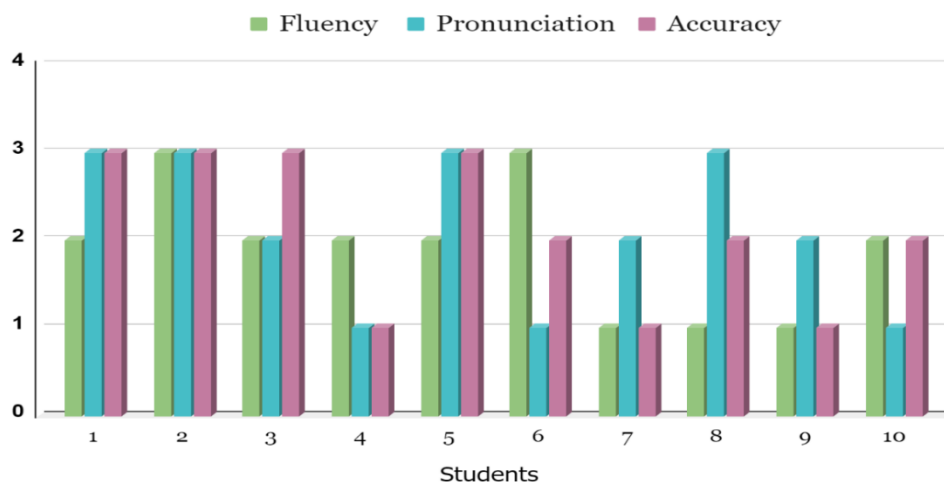
STUDENTS	Performance levels			SCORE
	Fluency	Pronunciation	Accuracy	
1	SUFFICIENT	GOOD	GOOD	8
2	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	9
3	SUFFICIENT	SUFFICIENT	GOOD	7
4	SUFFICIENT	INSUFFICIENT	INSUFFICIENT	4
5	SUFFICIENT	GOOD	GOOD	8
6	GOOD	INSUFFICIENT	SUFFICIENT	6
7	INSUFFICIENT	SUFFICIENT	INSUFFICIENT	4
8	INSUFFICIENT	GOOD	SUFFICIENT	6
9	INSUFFICIENT	SUFFICIENT	INSUFFICIENT	4
10	SUFFICIENT	GOOD	SUFFICIENT	7

Graphic of Scores: *In this graphic below was presented the final score obtained per student in the speaking test.*



Interpretation: *It was found that 50% of students reached a score of 7 and 50% of students less than 6.*

Comparative Graph No° 2: *This chart shows how well each student spoke based on the rubric in chart N°2 (1 point is insufficient, 2 points are sufficient, 3 points are good, and 4 points are excellent).*



Interpretation:

Fluency: 20% of students achieved 3 points, while the majority, 50%, scored 2 points. The remaining 30% received 1 point.

Pronunciation: 40% of students earned 3 points. Meanwhile, 30% scored 2 points, and another 30% received 1 point.

Accuracy: Like pronunciation, 40% of students obtained 3 points, with 30% scoring 2 points and the remaining 30% receiving 1 point.

Data analysis

Listening Skills

After implementing a listening skills proficiency assessment for second-year Modern Languages students, it can be inferred that these students faced challenges in their listening abilities. Yagang (1993) proposes that the sources of listening difficulties came mainly from the four aspects: the message, the speaker, the listener, and the physical setting.

The results indicated that while 50% of the students scored 8/10 in the listening test—suggesting they did not have major comprehension issues—the remaining 50% encountered more difficulties. Factors such as the physical environment and speaker clarity did not contribute to these challenges, as the assessment was conducted in a distraction-free room with clear audio.

The analysis showed that most students struggled with understanding unfamiliar words, complex grammatical structures, interpreting meanings, and experienced fatigue due to unfamiliar topics. For example, in the first question, which addressed the main topic, only 3 students answered correctly. In another instance, many confused “seventy-five” with “seven” in a question about quantities. Additionally, several students waited until the final repetition of the audio to respond, indicating they had not comprehended it during the earlier playbacks.

Communication skills

Following the evaluation of oral proficiency, it was evident that second-year Modern Languages students also faced problems with their speaking skills. Three key elements were assessed: fluency, pronunciation, and accuracy, using a scoring system where 1 point indicated “Insufficient,” 2 points “Sufficient,” 3 points “Good,” and 4 points “Excellent.”

In terms of fluency, 20% of the students received 3 points, indicating some mistakes and hesitations but generally fluent speech. In contrast, 50% received 2 points, demonstrating increased hesitation and word-finding difficulties, while 30% scored 1 point, reflecting poor fluency characterized by significant hesitation and incomplete ideas. Regarding pronunciation, 40% achieved 3 points, suggesting good pronunciation and accent. However, 30% obtained 2 points, indicating some pronunciation issues, and another 30% received 1 point, reflecting significant issues in this area.

For accuracy, 40% of students scored 3 points, showing minor errors that did not impede meaning. Conversely, 30% received 2 points, indicating mistakes in structures and grammar that did not affect comprehension, while another 30% got 1 point, where frequent errors impacted meaning.

The analysis concluded that 40% of students reached an acceptable level for B1 proficiency, while the majority (60%) exhibited substantial difficulties in grammar, structures, pronunciation, and stress, with clear evidence of interference from their native language (Spanish). Besides, Liu & Jackson (2008) identified vocabulary deficiency as a significant barrier to spoken communication among English learners in China, a challenge also observed in the students analyzed, causing them to doubt and lose the meaning of their speech.

Discussion

1. Contextualizing Listening and Speaking Skills in Language Learning

The antecedents presented in the research provided a comprehensive view of the role and importance of listening skills in language acquisition. Rivers (1981) and Wilt (1950) both emphasize the predominance of listening in communication, highlighting its role as a fundamental skill that significantly exceeds reading and writing in everyday use. This perspective is reinforced by the findings, which reveal that many second-year Modern Languages students face notable difficulties in listening comprehension. The observation that 50% of the students achieved high scores (8/10) suggests that these students may have a solid grasp of listening skills, but the remaining 50% exhibited considerable struggles. This discrepancy underscores the challenge of mastering listening skills, which aligns with Yagang's (1993) identification of various factors impacting listening ability.

2. Integration of Listening and Speaking Skills

Tavil's (2010) study on integrating listening and speaking skills in teaching aligns favorably with the results. The data showed that students' difficulties in listening, such as understanding unfamiliar vocabulary and complex grammatical structures, have a direct impact on their oral production. Tavil's findings about how integrated teaching methods improve oral communicative competence, are supported by the data, which indicates that students who struggle with listening also face challenges in speaking, including fluency, pronunciation, and accuracy. This integration is critical because it highlights the need for teaching strategies that address both listening and speaking skills simultaneously to enhance overall communicative competence.

3. Theoretical Frameworks and Their Implications

Krashen's (1981) input-output hypothesis emphasizes that effective language acquisition depends on the quality of input, which is largely influenced by listening skills. The findings that listening difficulties impede oral production reinforce Krashen's theory. The students' struggles with listening comprehension—such as interpreting complex texts and unfamiliar topics—demonstrate how insufficient input can limit language output. This theory supports the necessity of enhancing listening skills as a foundational step for improving overall language proficiency.

4. Listening's Influence on Oral Production

Postovsky (1976) argued that proficiency in listening enhances speaking abilities. This correlation is evident in the results, where students with better listening skills generally showed better performance in oral assessments. The students' difficulties in understanding audio content, as evidenced by errors in interpreting quantities and main topics, reflect the challenges identified by these studies. The fact that students who struggled with listening also faced issues in fluency, pronunciation, and accuracy in speaking reinforce the integral role of listening skills in developing oral proficiency.

5. Addressing Specific Listening and Speaking Challenges

The results indicated that while some students performed well in listening, others had significant difficulties. The observed issues—such as confusion with vocabulary, grammatical structures, and interpretation of meaning—align with the concerns raised by Yagang (1993). These difficulties in listening correspond with problems in oral production, including hesitation and inaccuracies, as evidenced by the evaluation of fluency, pronunciation, and accuracy. This connection suggests that addressing listening challenges could directly improve speaking abilities.

Furthermore, the observed interference from the students' native language (Spanish) and vocabulary deficiencies, as noted by Liu & Jackson (2008), highlight additional obstacles in speaking. These issues reflect Shumin's (1997) view that effective language use requires more than grammatical knowledge—it demands an understanding of contextual language use.

In conclusion, the research findings highlight the significant interrelationship between listening and speaking skills in language acquisition, as evidenced by the performance of second-year Modern Languages students. Listening comprehension challenges, such as difficulties with unfamiliar vocabulary and complex grammatical structures, directly impacted oral proficiency, particularly in areas like fluency, pronunciation, and accuracy. The analysis reinforces Krashen's input-output hypothesis, which stresses that effective language learning depends on the quality of listening input. The students' struggles in both listening and speaking suggest that more integrated teaching approaches, as advocated by Tavil, could be beneficial in improving overall communicative competence. Addressing listening deficiencies is essential, as these are intrinsically tied to the students' ability to produce clear, accurate spoken language. Moreover, interference from their native language and vocabulary gaps emphasize the need for targeted strategies that address these specific issues to enhance their language proficiency.

Conclusion

This investigation into the listening and speaking skills of second-year Modern Languages students provides a clear view of their current abilities and highlights several important areas that need improvement. The research approach, which used various methods to gather and analyze data, gave a detailed insight at the students' skills, showing both what they are doing competently and where they are struggling.

The results showed a noticeable divide in students' listening skills. While some students performed effectively on the listening test, others had significant difficulties. These problems included understanding new vocabulary, complex grammar, and interpreting spoken texts. These findings suggest a need for more focused practice in listening and better strategies to improve comprehension.

In terms of speaking skills, the evaluation revealed a similar split in proficiency. Some students showed good fluency, pronunciation, and accuracy, while others had trouble with hesitation, pronunciation errors, and grammatical mistakes. This indicates that additional speaking practice and targeted feedback are needed to help students improve.

Combining listening and speaking practice could be more effective, given how closely related these skills are. Activities that integrate both listening and speaking exercises might help address the issues seen in both areas. Additionally, the specific challenges identified, like vocabulary and grammar difficulties, suggest the need for more targeted teaching strategies. Providing extra support in these areas through specialized exercises or focused language drills could help students overcome these obstacles.

Incorporating real-life listening and speaking tasks into the curriculum could also be beneficial. Engaging students in practical situations and exposing them to different accents and contexts can improve their understanding and ability to speak more effectively. Regular

assessments of listening and speaking skills can offer continuous feedback and help track progress, allowing for timely adjustments and support.

Overall, some students demonstrate strong skills, while others face significant challenges that require more focused and integrated teaching approaches. By using targeted strategies and practical language exercises, educators can better support students in overcoming difficulties and achieving higher levels of proficiency.

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