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« *The Influence of Background Knowledge on Second Language Listening Comprehension - A Case Study of First Year Master LMD Students, University of Constantine* »

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements of the Master degree in Language Sciences and English Language teaching

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Dedication:

With love to my parents

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ABSTRACT

Previous researches in second language listening comprehension have considered the role of prior knowledge in listening to texts presented by more than one speaker. Despite this, second language learners commonly encounter situations in which they must understand what one speaker is saying, whether in the language classroom, in an academic context, on TV, and on other media. This study attempts to investigate the hypothesis that prior knowledge of topics would aid comprehension, and familiarity with the topic would support understanding spoken discourse. In other words, it seeks to explore the effect of background knowledge on listening comprehension. Two first year master classes took part in the study. The students of the experimental group received some treatment in the form of topic familiarity and background knowledge activation. Then, they watched the video of the President Barack Obama inaugural address. A test of listening comprehension was administered to both experimental and control group. Ultimately, the results of the test confirm the validity of the hypothesis.

List of Abbreviations

C.G: Control Group.

E.F.L: English as a Foreign Language.

E.S.L: English as a Second Language.

F.L: Foreign Language.

E.G: Experimental Group.

L.2: Second Language.

L.1: First Language.

O.E: Oral Expression.

P.1: The First Person Party (The Sender).

P.2: The Second Person Party (The Receiver).

S.L: The Second Language.

S.L.A: The Second Language Acquisition.

T.E.F.L: Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

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Introduction

Listening to one another has become vital in our global village. In the past, it was often mostly written texts that crossed borders. Today, people carry their language with them as they fly over frontiers; television, radio, the Internet, and the convenience store on the corner make foreign languages familiar. So, listening comprehension, always of interest, is again a current topic among students, teachers, and researchers. Among other technologies in this village, the networked computer makes it increasingly easy to digitize speech, store it, and send it to a desk to people anywhere in the world for the use of general listeners, teachers, researchers, and learners (Davis, 2003).

The need for understanding drives students to learn languages. The need to guide students drives instructors, and the need for an explanation for how students come to understand what they hear drives researchers, as well as instructors and students. The purpose of this study, then, is to investigate the role of prior knowledge in listening comprehension in the English as a second language setting.

1. Statement of the Problem

SL Learners with more prior knowledge of a topic can be expected to understand more of what they hear in a listening comprehension task, for instance. This can be measured by the accuracy of their predictions of what they might hear next in listening to native speakers' records.

Our basic interests are to decide on the nature of relation which joins listening comprehension and the background knowledge, and the influence of the prior knowledge activated on learner's listening competence. This study was driven by the need to determine the

problems that students face when listening to spoken texts. Specifically, this study is carried out in order to investigate if listening comprehension could be improved by providing the necessary background knowledge.

2. The Aim of the Study

In much of listening comprehension records, meaning between the speaker and learners is not face to face so that negotiation can take place. The aim of this negotiation is to match up the speaker's intention and the listener's interpretations. Thus, the aim behind this research is to identify how a better background knowledge activation can pave the way to improve SL learner's listening comprehension.

3. Research Questions

The main concern of this study is to measure to what extend background knowledge can influence listening comprehension of second language learners. In other words: is listening comprehension influenced by the background knowledge of the learners? What is the effect of the prior knowledge of a topic on the listening comprehension?

4. Research Hypothesis

The present research is firmly attached to the idea that a good activation of the prior knowledge leads to a better understanding by the listener. So, we hypothesize that the more and *the active* background knowledge students have, the better listening comprehension they will show.

5. Data Collected Instruments

The topic, the aim, and the hypothesis of our research lead us to opt for an experimental method. The necessary data for investigating the stated hypothesis will be gathered by means of a test given to the sample population. The test is in appendix 1.

The (32) students that represent our sample population are invited to answer some of the listening comprehension questions that will help me state the reasons that make them familiar with the topic and to know if the background knowledge influences the FL learners' comprehension. The test will be given to two groups (control and experimental). The experimental group is going to have an introduction about the topic of the videotaped speech they will watch; the introduction will respect several criteria i.e., time, manner, quantity, quality and so forth. The control group is not going to have any introduction and samples of that group will directly listen to the speech. Further, the two groups will have only one test due to several problems that we will present later.

6. Methodological Procedure

Beside the general introduction that states the main purpose of this study, the dissertation is divided into two major chapters.

The first chapter provides a review of the literature to clarify the research central points. This chapter starts with some definitions of the listening skills and listening comprehension, and then the major processes that the learner goes through while listening. The importance of listening comprehension tasks for L2 learners is also mentioned. The shared knowledge, the background knowledge and its influence on listening comprehension are the last three points to be discussed in the first chapter.

The second chapter is divided into two parts; in the first part we will explain how our data were collected. This chapter will explain the methodology of the study and provide explanations to support the choice of this specific methodology. First, general procedures for administering the listening study will be discussed. Information about the participants recruited for the study will then be presented. Participants answer listening comprehension questions that provide information about their background knowledge, and measure to what extend this knowledge has been activated. The listening test for the study is included as an appendix.

The second part of this chapter is devoted mainly to suggest some pedagogical recommendations which aim at attracting the (OE) teachers' attention on this crucial element in the process of learning foreign languages. The whole aims essentially are meeting the learners' needs.

Before the general conclusion, a brief description of the difficulties that we face in carrying out this research is introduced under the heading 'limitation of the study'.

CHAPTER ONE

Listening Comprehension and Background Knowledge

Introduction

"We were given two ears but only one mouth."

Listening is among the four basic language skills. It is a receptive skill, that is to say, it requires responding to language rather than producing it (Spratt and Pulverness, 2005: 30). On the same scope Hedge (2000) sees that second languages learners are trained to hear English sounds and structures widely through videos, tapes, songs and so forth. Accordingly, there is actually a great interest in oral skills; and the ability to understand and participate in spoken communication is one of several more recent educational focuses. This field has generated a stronger focus on listening in SL classrooms (229).

In this context, Mendelsohn and Rubin (1995) point out:

"Listening has come to be recognized as an active rather than a passive skill and its importance acknowledged in the acquisition of language. With the emergence of video and multimedia as teaching tools, it is being given renewed attention. It has received increasing attention from ESL/EFL professionals in recent years. The digital revolution has made spoken language much easier to record and to work with. This digital revolution will not change the fact that understanding of what someone says in a second language remains a challenge."

Limitation of vocabulary is not a major criterion upon which we will decide on the learners' listening competence. Listening activities are a source of new vocabulary. And the ways of introducing and concluding topics of listening classes by teachers, depending on the learners' knowledge make the difference and would lead the learner to fail or to succeed in getting the speaker's intended meaning.

In order to answer these questions, we need information about the importance of listening skills, the nature of the listening comprehension, what happens during the process of listening, the knowledge that is shared between participants, and the background knowledge and its relationship with listening comprehension.

1.1. Listening Skills

Listening is a source of knowledge, values and integration with foreign cultures. For these reasons listening skills are taking a major importance in teaching foreign languages and especially in teaching English as a FL. In our era of fast information, listening skills are a crucial element in the process of acquiring foreign languages.

Othman and Vanathas (2004: 19) point out:

"For too long listening has been given little attention in the English language classroom. This could be due to the fact that there has been a lack of research interest into listening. Furthermore, listening has often been considered as a passive skill which learners just "pick up". Teachers believe that exposing students to spoken language is sufficient instruction in listening comprehension".

Nunan (1997) has mentioned that listening is the Cinderella skill in second language learning. Speaking skill, unfortunately, has taken the major importance vis-à-vis listening skill. This is the reason behind the traditional or the popular point of view toward the acquisition of second languages which says 'acquiring a foreign language means being able to speak and to write in that language'. Listening and reading are, therefore, secondary skills or for those who marginalize them: skills of second class.

Listening enables the listener not only to receive information and ideas in the form of in-put, but also to acquire new vocabulary items which help in speaking (out-put). Thus, what has been already stored by the listener will be expressed whether orally or in a written form. Listening skills play a vital role and are a key stone in the development of language skills.

Saricoban (1999) states that listening is the ability to identify what others are saying, and to understand what others intend to mean. This leads us to two ways road; the first is directed to understand the speaker pronunciation including grammatical structures and lexical items; and the second is directed to grasp the speaker's meaning. An able listener is capable of following the two ways simultaneously. Saricoban lists a series of micro-skills of listening, which he calls enabling skills which are the following:

- predicting what people are going to talk about
- guessing at unknown words or phrases without panic
- using one's own knowledge of the subject to help one understand
- identifying relevant points; rejecting irrelevant information
- retaining relevant points (note-taking, summarizing)
- recognizing discourse markers, e. g., well; Oh, another thing is; Now, finally; etc.
- recognizing cohesive devices, e. g., *such as* and *which*, including linking words, pronouns, references, etc.
- understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stress, etc. , which give clues to meaning and social setting
- understanding inferred information, e. g. , speakers' attitude or intentions. Willis (1981: 134)

Listening is not only a matter of understanding the speakers' grammatical structures and lexical items, but also a whole process which makes the listener grasp what the speaker intends to mean by his utterance. The preceding point shows the homogeneity of the listening process's steps. This process requires a predictive ability of the listener based on his background knowledge and a well interpretation of some linguistic items such us: discourse markers.

To conclude with, listening is no longer attached to learning languages. It is dependent and independent, let me say the primary source of knowledge. Second language teachers and specialists in the field are supposed to move from teaching FL Students how to listen

effectively to "how to use the visual cues" effectively. The effective use of both our ears and eyes may lead us to a better understanding and a perfect communication.

1.2. Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension requires a fast understanding from the part of the listener. Many factors must be taken into the account of the listener to insure a right understanding. Context and facial expressions, for instance, are aids that must be exploited by the listener to pave his way to the speaker's intended meaning. In addition to that, the background knowledge helps the learner to choose the right interpretation. Rost points out:

> "At a further remove from the physics of sound, and the linguistic level of texts we arrive at listening comprehension. Definitions of L2 listening comprehension tell us as much about the definer as they do about listening. Characterization of listening -- both first and second language listening – may be explicit or implicit, and they have varied with their times. Listening has been seen as arising from habit formation, as a function of innate cognitive language abilities, as akin to computation, as a quality related to psychology or self-awareness, as cultural awareness, or information processing." (2002: 01)

In the same vein Lynch (2009) states that while assessing the student's ability as a listener, we have to bear in mind that listening as a mental process can take several forms in relation not to the attitude, but to the aim behind listening. He comes up with the idea that when we listen to someone whether in our mother tongue or in a FL; there are four main types of listening:

- appreciative listening: for pleasure and relaxation, such as listening to music, a joke, a story,

- informational listening: to gain knowledge, such as watching a documentary,

- critical listening: to assess the validity or the credibility of what is being said, such as seminars, politicians' speeches,

- empathic listening: to understand someone's feelings, such as when we listen to a friend talking about emotional problems.(78)

In relation to the previous types of listening in an academic situation, as far as we are concerned, such as; seminars or lectures, students must combine between more than two types. In such context a combination between informational and critical listening can be fruitful in order to grasp the maximum knowledge (quantity) and to get reliable information (quality).

According to Nunan (1997), second language listening comprehension is a complex process. It takes its importance from the role it is playing; as a shaper in second language acquisition. Since the role of listening comprehension in language learning was either overlooked or undervalued, it merited little research and pedagogical attention in the past, but at present, some researchers have devoted more time to the listening tasks and believe it to be a major skill in teaching and learning.

The centre of our research is the student and the teacher as well; whether the teacher is the speaker or not, our interest is on the process of listening and if the operation comes out to a successful listening 'better listening' and a 'successful interpretation' from the part of the student. From the part of the teacher, our interest is on the way he introduces his lectures and the way he activates his student's knowledge of the world.

1.3. Listening Processes (The Bottom-up and the Top-down strategies)

Second language listening comprehension means arriving at a reasonable interpretation of what someone has said. This interpretation is a construct, at levels from the linguistic to the conceptual level. Perception, memory, and imagination seem to be related. So comprehension, in some sense, is supported by memory and is in some sense a memory process itself.

In listening comprehension process two main types of knowledge are involved. Both linguistic knowledge and non-linguistic knowledge are important, or let us say, indispensable. The linguistic knowledge is of different types, but among the important types or fields we have phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics, and grammar. The non-linguistic knowledge is the knowledge about the topic, about the context, and knowledge about the world. We cannot say that the non-linguistic knowledge is used in listening because it is used in comprehension that requires a high mental work. Many questions arose concerning this type of knowledge; one question will be our focal , it is: how this knowledge works or how it is applied to the incoming sounds. Two views give us a good demonstration about how non-linguistic knowledge works; these views are: the bottom-up and the top-down processes (Anderson & Lynch, 1988: 02)

In relation to this point of view Vandergrift (1999) stresses that there are two alternative ingredients in listening comprehension. Listeners use 'top-down' processes when they use prior knowledge to interpret or to decode the speaker's discourse. Prior knowledge can be knowledge of the topic, the listening context, the values, the culture or other information stored in short-term memory and then, through a period of time, in long-term memory as schemata. Listeners use content words and contextual aids to predict and interpret. On the other hand, listeners also use 'bottom-up' processes when they use linguistic knowledge to understand the

meaning of a message. They build meaning from lower level sounds to words to grammatical relationships to lexical meanings in order to arrive at the final meaningful message. Listening comprehension is not either top-down or bottom-up processing, but an interactive, interpretive process where listeners use both prior knowledge and linguistic knowledge in order to get the speakers ideas. The degree to which listeners use one process rather than the other will depend on their knowledge of the language, familiarity with the topic or the purpose for listening. For example, listening for gist involves primarily top-down processing, whereas listening for specific information, as in a weather broadcast, involves primarily bottom-up processing to understand every teeny detail.

In our research our focus leads us to follow the "top-down" view. In a real and an academic situation where FL learners are not familiar with the vocabulary items used by the speaker, the top-down process is required. If the listener uses well his knowledge about the topic, then he will get the speaker's intended meaning in addition to the acquisition of new vocabulary items.

Nunan (1997) stresses that in the alternative top-down view the listener actively constructs (or, more accurately, reconstructs) the original meaning of the speaker using incoming sounds as clues. In this reconstruction process, the listener uses prior knowledge of the context and situation within which the listening takes place to make sense of what he or she hears. Context of situation includes such things as knowledge of the topic at hand, the speaker or speakers, and their relationship to the situation as well as to each other and prior events.

One can understand that in "the top-down" view listener exploits the non-linguistic indicators to get the speaker's meaning. However, the understanding that"the top-down" process gives a boost to the listener to make him move from the unknown to the known is not

quite exact. The most appropriate point of view is that this process is an alternative among other alternatives, and it helps the learners to exploit what he already knows and what surrounds him to end by a meaningful text.

While designing curriculum, designers must take into their account what students have in mind, in terms of knowledge of the world, to build on it their objectives and the elements to be developed during the course. This is not only the duty of the curriculum designers, but also the duty of teachers who must evaluate the knowledge of students to make it by their sides especially in listening tasks.

1.4 The Shared Knowledge

Murcia and Olshtain say:

"An outsider may not necessarily get the implied meanings from simply listening to the exchange. When a communicative exchange occurs among strangers, the physical environment often supplies the contextual factors that may be necessary.

For discourse where context is not readily available (written texts or formal speeches), those interpreting the discourse have to rely more heavily on the text itself and on their prior knowledge. Relevant prior knowledge can create the appropriate context within which it is possible to understand and properly interpret the discourse" (2000: 12).

In a communicative context both participants do not rely on their linguistic competence, but also on what they share as knowledge, values, mutual interests etc. The absence of this shared knowledge put obstacles between the listener and the speaker's intentions. Problems at the level of this data-line cause a communicative break down and vice versa.

When there is no joint production of text, as in written texts or monologues, there is no immediate or on-line adjustment. The bridge between the two parties (listener and speaker) is built, only, on intentions from the part of the speaker and interpretations from the part of the

listener. The basis of this exchange is a specific knowledge stored somewhere in the mind of both of them.

In a communicative exchange, both participants rely on their prior knowledge, which may or may not be shared by them. In such real situation, this shared knowledge is an existing knowledge. As a result of that, shared knowledge is perhaps most important for everyday communicative exchanges. When such exchanges take place between participants who stand on a common ground, they rely on their shared knowledge. (Marianne Celce-Murcia & Elite Olshtain, 2000: 11).

Someone who has no idea about the actual American policy has little chance to understand the inaugural address of the president "Barack Obama" for instance. These ideas about the topic are shared knowledge which can be present or absent between the speaker and the listener. This specific knowledge plays the role of "data-line" or the catalyst of the communication par excellence.

Widdowson (2007: 54) claims that communication is always a matter of negotiating some kind of common agreement between the parties in an interaction. The first-person party, the speaker (P1), formulates a message by drawing on systemic and schematic knowledge and the second person party, the listener (P2), brings similar knowledge to bear in interpretation. Communication is effective when the two parties have a common ground, or let us say if there is some convergence between the two. For more illustration Widdowson represents the convergence between P1 and P2 in the following diagram:
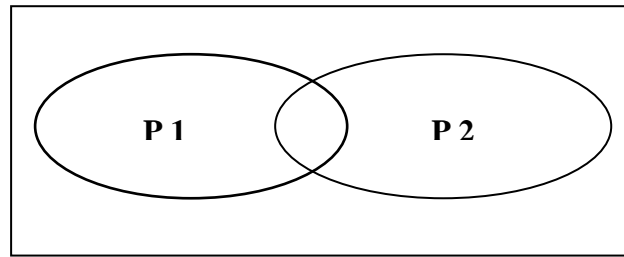
Figure 01.

How much convergence is achieved in the communication will naturally depend on there being a measure of correspondence between P1 and P2 knowledge. Thus problems might arise if P1 uses items of language outside P2's linguistic competence, or refers to an ideational framework that P2 is unfamiliar with. Where the communication is enacted through the immediately reciprocal interaction of conversation, such problems can be resolved by negotiating meaning "on-line": P2 can ask for clarification, or look for additional information, or let the problem pass in the hope that it will be solved when the conversation develops, seeking perhaps to steer the interaction towards that end. P1, if sensitive to the problem, may try to resolve it by subsequently elaborating on the message, or reformulating it in different terms. (ibid, 2007: 54).

Listening and speaking are the two major parts of the "give and take" principal in oral communication. In that principle the shared knowledge plays the role of a mediator between the speaker and the listener and the role of catalyst of the communication. Thus, the speaker and listener are supposed to negotiate to stand on a common ground in communication.

Anderson and Lynch say that:

"Generally, people who share knowledge of a topic will tend to speak faster, run the words together more and be far less distinct when speaking to someone who has less background knowledge, they will tend to speak more slowly and with much clearer enunciation" (1988: 05).

The convergence between the speaker and the listener is the platform of the communication. The more shared and active knowledge they have, the less time they will spend in communicating their ideas.

1.5 The Background Knowledge

Familiarity with topics creates motivation in the classroom. Knowledge that has been acquired through a period of time is stored in the long term memory. So, whenever the learner feels that he needs this knowledge he will refer to it. Among the main sources of the background knowledge previous experiences represent predominant one. In accordance to what we have said, the influence of the background knowledge on the learner's interpretation is related to the activation of this knowledge.

George Yule (1996) states that previous experiences help us to interpret new experiences. The most general term for a pattern of this type is a schema (plural, schemata). The schema then is a pre-existing knowledge structured in memory. This pre-existing works as reference whenever we need (85).

Brown and Yule (1983) for instance, describe schemata as an organized background knowledge which leads us to predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse. The listener based on his background knowledge will operate under the influence of seven areas: speaker,

listener, place, time, genre, topic, and context. In order to make a link between new information and his background knowledge, the listener follows two main principles: the principle of analogy, i.e. things will be as they were before, and the principle of minimal change, i.e., things are as like as possible to how they were before (the listener focus on similarities between new information and his past experiences). (249)

The background knowledge has been described as the keystone of listening comprehension. It is what someone has acquired through his daily life experiences and incoming information which are stored in memory (long-term/short-term memory).

1.6 The Influence of Background Knowledge on Listening Comprehension

While listening to any records or watching a TV programme or even having a lecture, ideas are received by the hearer and sent by the speaker. Context in such situations is the umbrella of that transfer. Language is the mean of this transfer; the speaker in that situation if the contact is an on-line one, he tries always, via his words using his face and body and even the whole context , to the mind of his audience. And if the contact is an off-line one or just a record for learning purposes the instructor aims at, via his introduction in the beginning and his explanation at the end and putting them under comfortable conditions, improving specific skill and reaching several goals. Introduction is the best way to put the hearer inside the topic to be discussed and to make the hearer familiar with the ideas to be communicated. Of course the way of introducing is very important and the evaluation of the best way to decide on the effective way.

In the same context Moses states:

"Students learn more effectively when they already know something about a content area and when concepts in that area mean something to them and to their particular background

or culture. When teachers link new information to the student's prior knowledge, they activate the student's interest and curiosity, and infuse instruction with a sense of purpose."(2003)

In our research our focus will not be on the recognition of words the speaker aimed at; and specifically on the speaker's intended meaning. This latter according to Lynch (2009) is related to two processes which are linked. The link between perception and interpretation does not mean that they are equal at the level structure i.e., interpretation is the level above perception. In everyday English we tend to use 'comprehension' and 'interpretation' to mean different things: 'comprehension' implies a straightforward process of understanding, 'interpretation' suggests a process in which the listener has to do more mental work in order to get what the speaker mean by what he is saying in accordance to the listener's knowledge. That is why we talk about text 'open to interpretation' but not texts 'open to comprehension'. (44)

We can simply make a boring topic an interesting one for the learner. In listening tasks interest and motivation should be present. The problem here is a great one because the teacher must keep silent while his students are listening to the records or to any speaker. The beginning would be a best time to put his learner in a comfortable atmosphere and to provide them with the necessary knowledge to interpret correctly the ideas to be communicated. This introduction will play the role of reference and the clear and strong reference is, the less time and energy you'll spend at the end of the listening task, Sometimes it is too hard to change interpretations already done by the learner taking into account many factors and especially psychological ones (hesitation, introverts learners). In relation to this idea Moses says that:

"Students learn and remember new information best when it is linked to relevant prior knowledge. Teachers who link classroom activities and instruction to prior knowledge build on their students' familiarity with a topic and enable students to connect the curriculum content to their own culture and experience"(2003).

Background knowledge is a source of information. Basics of this typical knowledge are our academic learning and especially on our everyday life experience. The importance of that knowledge in FL acquisition makes it affect the students' interaction with the learning material. If teachers succeed in drawing a link between new information and the students' prior knowledge, the learning will be better.

Conclusion

The shift of the listening skill from passive to active skills gave it a great importance in language teaching; but importance can do nothing by itself. Many teachers do listening comprehension in an arbitrary way in which the listener is left alone without neither the sufficient knowledge nor the efficient techniques of deciphering what they have received.

Second language listening comprehension means arriving at a reasonable interpretation of what someone has said. This interpretation is a construct, at levels from the linguistic through the conceptual. Memory, imagination, and perception seem to be related, so comprehension, in some sense, is supported by memory and is in some sense a memory itself. Typically, studies of prior knowledge and second language comprehension have investigated listening with texts presented by single speakers. Discussion, however, presents a form for second language listening that has not been fully investigated, and yet, may require content prior knowledge and listening skill on the part of the language learner. Given that prior knowledge for rhetorical form influences reading comprehension, it may be supposed that knowledge of the discussion form might likewise influence second language listening comprehension and would be worth investigating.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EXPERIMENT

Introduction

Listening as a receptive skill is given precedence in the process of teaching/learning foreign languages, and it does not need theoretical concepts as it was indicated in the previous chapter. To work on such sensitive skills in the process of TFL, one should go through a practical scientific experiment. This is the purpose of the second chapter which is divided into two parts; the first part includes a test devoted to gaining some evidence of the strong relationship between the listening skill and the background knowledge i.e., between listening-understanding and background knowledge. Additionally, this part is shaped by the analysis of the test results using the t-test as the most appropriate statistical method to investigate this area of research; such analysis will attempt to answer the starting point research questions and to confirm my hypothesis. The second part of this chapter will present some of the limitations of this study that have been identified and some pedagogical implications which could be of some interest for teachers of listening comprehension in order to focus on factors of listening skill improvement.

Part One

Data Collection and Analysis

2.1. Population

The experience took place in May 19/2009 with students of first year Master of English language. Our respondents are postgraduate students of English. They have been studying English for four years. Therefore, they get a lot of exposure to the spoken language and to listening tasks as well.

2.1.1. Choice of the Sample

Selecting a sample is indispensable in order to conduct a research. Our sample is thirty two (32) students from a total population of about 220 students of first year Master of English language. Our subjects are postgraduate, English Language Sciences, in Mentouri University of Constantine. The sample population is of were absent for unjustifiable reasons. The sample includes students from both genders, aged between twenty one (21) and twenty five (25) years old.

2.1.2. The Research Tools

The research design of this dissertation is based on data collected from a test. The major objective of using the test is to diagnose how much the listening comprehension improvement is related to the background knowledge and its activation. Consequently, the test would be highly reliable in the completion of this investigation.

2.2. The Test

The test was administered to thirty two (32) students. The sample population was divided into two groups of sixteen (16). Sixteen (16) students represent the control group and the other sixteen represent the experimental group. A warm-up session has been taken by the experimental group as a treatment. This later lasts 10 minutes; it is mainly inspired by a videotaped speech the students will watch. In fact, the warm-up covered the main parts of the speech and activated the students' prior knowledge of the topic. Contrary to the experimental group, the control group will not be submitted to the warm-up session; and they will watch directly the videotape. When coming to the test itself, after watching the video, the students were provided with the listening comprehension questions in written form; and with the following instructions:

-they must not write their names on the papers,

- the amount of time allocated to each question is three (03) minutes,

-they must not go beyond the answers' space.

The students answer the six questions one by one. The examiner reads the question loudly, explains the difficult words if needed then asks the students to start answering and so on and so forth.

The scale of scoring students' answers was as follow:

-Correct answer: two (02) points.

-Wrong answer: minus two (-02) points.

- No answer: zero (00) point.

2.2.1. The Administration of the Test

On 19th May 2009 the test was given to thirty two (32) first year Master students "Language Sciences" option at the department of English Language in Mentouri University of Constantine. The choice of postgraduate students was based on their proficiency in listening. It should be born in mind that most of the studied modules are of a lecture's type rather than dictation or other types. The test took place after the oral expression session.

2.2.2. The Description of the Test

First, we have chosen a videotaped speech of a native speaker of English, and the first criterion was an up-to-date topic. The second criterion was that the language used by the speaker ought to be of a highly educated form and of a slow rate. The videotape was the inaugural address of the American president "Barack Obama" delivered on 20th January 2009; this speech lasted twenty two (22) minutes. The videotape was played only once.

The most important step in the test is the warm-up section. The warm-up takes the form of introduction; and its major objective is to activate the students' prior knowledge and to build a data line between them and the speaker. This introduction lasted ten (10) minutes. It was a summary of the whole speech in addition to some information about the speaker.

The test contains six (06) questions each of which is related to a central theme of the discourse. Besides, the students answered the test anonymously for the sake of some objectivity during the analysis. Some of the questions are open-ended, this is to make the students express themselves and to make them react in an analytic way. Some questions were made in an indirect way to examine if students use their prior knowledge effectively. This procedure aimed to put the listener in an authentic atmosphere providing him with the concise information and making the

process of understanding as if it were a genuine situation. The comprehension questions are as follow:

Question N° :01

President Barack Obama said:" ….we will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people."

-What did he mean by leaving Iraq responsibly?

Question N°: 02

President Barack Obama said: "…….America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace."

-Has the president practical steps to bring peace to our world? Are they fruitful?

Question N°: 03

President Barack Obama said: "……a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some".

-To whom Mr. Obama referred by 'some'?

Question N°: 04

President Barack Obama said: "Our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred…."

-What is this far-reaching network? What are the procedures to be followed by Mr. Obama to reach this network?

Question N°: 05

President Barack Obama said: "On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord".

-It is clear that the new president represents the hope but who represents fear? And why?

Question N°6:

President Barack Obama said: "…but this crisis has reminded us that without a watchful eye, the market can spin out of control…."

-What did he mean by watchful eye? If he meant a controlled market, to what extend the markets will be controlled?

2.2.3 Statistic Analysis

Students of the experimental group have had an introduction about the topic they listened to; whereas the control group listened directly to the videotape. Participants answer the listening comprehension questions about the video; and data collected from 32 participants answers, were analyzed using a t-test for independent group method. The t-test is the appropriate statistical method which can help us to know the effect of the independent variable (background knowledge) on the dependent one (listening comprehension). Tables (01) and (02) represent the students' scores per question:

Experimental Group Subjects	Question1	Question2	Question3	Question4	Question5	Question6
01	2	-2	-2	2	2	-2
02	-2	2	2	2	2	2
03	2	2	2	2	2	2
04	2	2	2	2	2	2
05	2	2	2	2	2	2
06	2	2	-2	-2	2	2
07	2	2	-2	2	2	-2
08	-2	2	2	2	2	2
09	-2	2	2	-2	2	2
10	-2	2	2	-2	2	-2
11	2	2	-2	2	2	-2
12	-2	-2	-2	2	-2	-2
13	-2	2	2	2	2	2
14	2	2	2	0	2	2
15	2	2	2	2	2	2
16	2	2	2	-2	2	2
N=16	T=8	T=24	T=12	T=14	T=28	T=12

Table (01): The Test Marks with the Sums of each Question (The Experimental Group).

T: Refers to the rate of learners' scores.

N: The number of samples.

Control Group Subjects	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6
01	-2	2	-2	-2	-2	-2
02	-2	-2	-2	2	2	-2
03	-2	2	-2	2	2	-2
04	-2	-2	2	2	-2	-2
05	-2	2	2	-2	2	-2
06	-2	-2	-2	2	-2	2
07	2	2	2	0	2	-2
08	-2	-2	-2	-2	2	-2
09	-2	2	2	-2	2	-2
10	-2	0	-2	-2	-2	-2
11	-2	-2	-2	0	2	-2
12	-2	2	-2	-2	-2	-2
13	-2	-2	-2	2	-2	-2
14	-2	-2	-2	2	-2	-2
15	-2	2	0	-2	2	-2
16	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	0
N=16	T=-28	T=-2	T=-14	T=-4	T=0	T=-26

Table (02): The Test Marks with the Sums of each Question (The Control Group).

What we notice from tables 01 and 02 is that there is a difference of scores between the two groups. One can easily notice that the majority of experimental group answers are positive. Compared to the EG answers, the majority of the control group are negative. The following graphical representation will help us make a distinction between the two groups' marks:

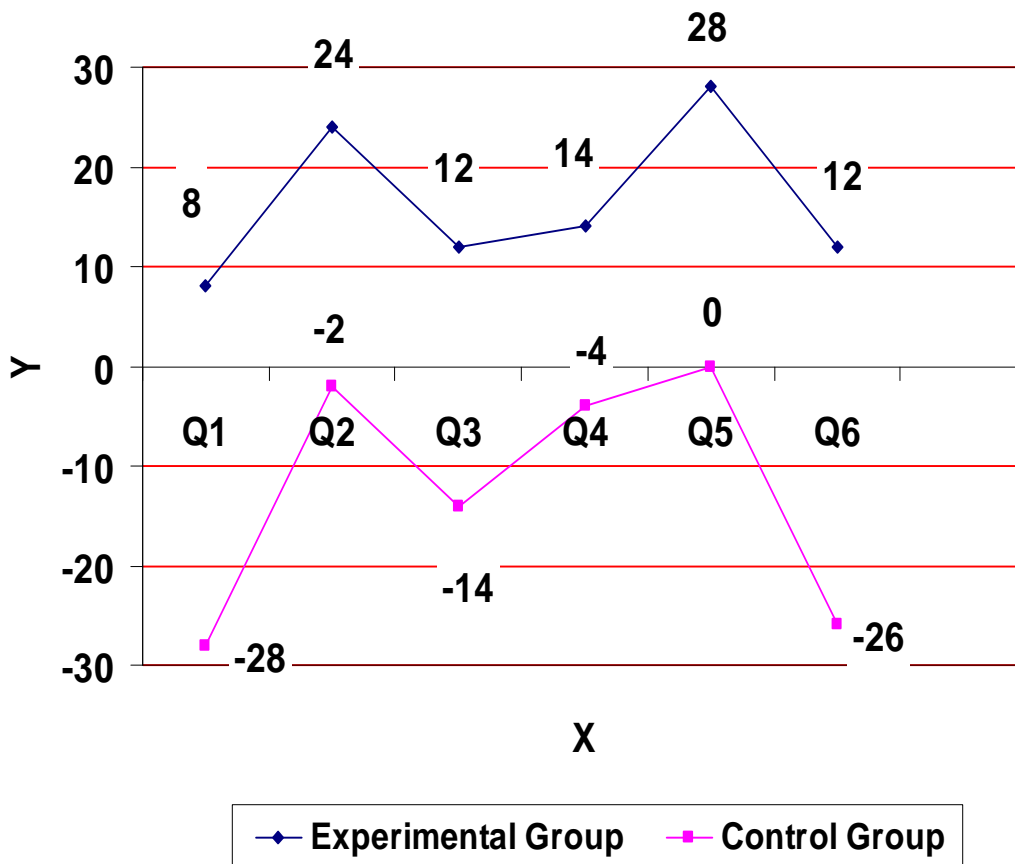**Figure (02): Graphical Representation of the Total Scores for each Question of the two Groups.**

The numbers on the left, along the (y) axis, represent a scale of scores from (-30) to (30). The (x) axis is reserved to the six comprehension questions from question number one (Q1) to question number six (Q6). The numbers above, below, and on the zero line are sums of the six questions scores for the two groups.

What we can observe from the graphical representation (01) is the difference between the two groups. With the experimental group all the questions have positive total scores. However, concerning the control group, almost all the questions have negative sums. Comparing the results of the two groups, this indicates that the background knowledge has an influence on second language listening comprehension. This influence is the only interpretation of this big difference between the two groups' responses; especially if we know that those students have the same academic level and are from the same specialisation.

Experimental Group		Control Group	
Score	Frequency	Score	Frequency
-2	23	-2	64
0	01	0	05
2	72	2	27
	N=96		N=96

Table (03): Frequency of the Scores

Table 03 is drawn to make a view from another side. At this stage, we would like to make a comparison between the two groups in terms of answers category. This comparison is illustrated graphically in figure (02) and figure (03). Statistics of table (02) indicated that EG subjects performed better than those in CG. This was on the basis of correct answers repetition in EG "72" times; and wrong answers repetition"64" times.The next graphical representations will illustrate more, through numbers, the results of table (02) .

Rate of Answers
The Experimental Group

1,04%

23,96%

☐ Correct
   Answers
■ Wrong
   Answers
☐ No Answer

75%
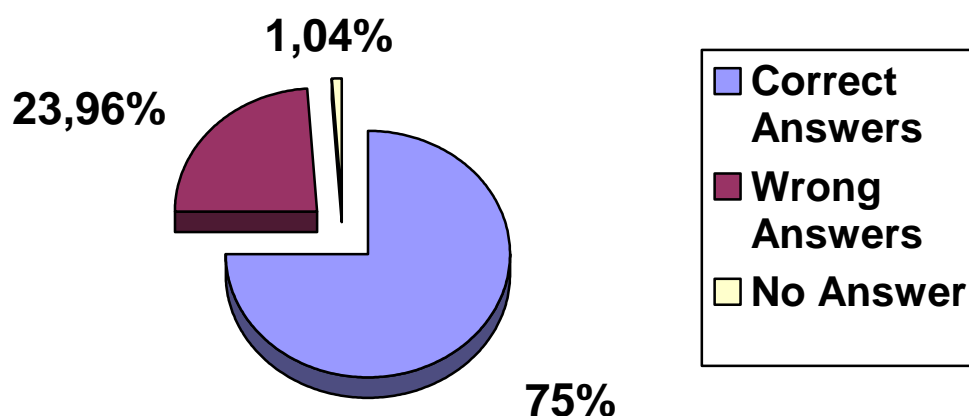
Figure (03): Percentages of Test Answers (the Experimental Group).

As the graphical representation (02) reveals, the percentage of the correct answers in the experimental group is the highest (75%) compared to the wrong answers (23.96%) and the answers left (1.04%). In other words, the subjects of (EG) achieved the maximum amount of speakers meaning. So, the logical interpretation of figure (02) is that the students of that group grasp the speaker's intended meaning.

Rate of Answers
The Control Group
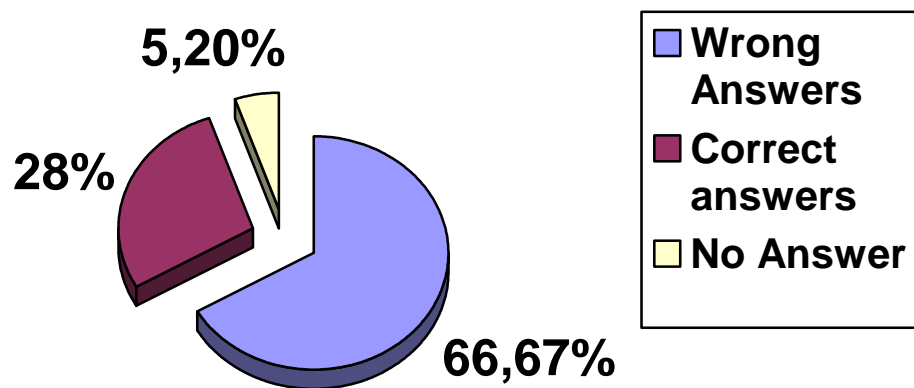
Figure (04): Percentages of Test Answers (the Control Group).

As the graphical representation (03) reveals, the percentage of the false answers in the control group is the highest (66.67%) compared to the correct answers (28.12%) and the answers left (5.20%). This high percentage of the control group's wrong answers means that subjects of (CG) failed in understanding the speaker. Simply, one understands easily that the communication collapsed between the speaker and students of (CG).

Experimental Group		Control Group	
	X		Y
01	0	01	-8
02	8	02	-4
03	12	03	0
04	12	04	-4
05	12	05	0
06	4	06	-4
07	4	07	6
08	8	08	-8
09	4	09	0
10	0	10	-10
11	4	11	-6
12	-8	12	-8
13	8	13	-8
14	10	14	-8
15	12	15	-2
16	8	16	-10
N_a=16		N_b=16	

Table (04): Students' Marks

The minimum score obtained by the experimental group subjects is "-8", while the maximum score is "12". The minimum score obtained by the control group subjects is "-10", while the maximum score was "0". What we can observe in table 03 is that the majority of (CG) marks are negative; contrary to the (EG) marks which are all positive except one.

2.2.4 Results and Interpretations

This study involved statistical analysis of students' responses. To investigate research questions that look inside the effects of prior knowledge in second language listening comprehension, students' responses on the listening tasks were analyzed using t-test for independent groups. The t-test was run to see if there was any significant difference between the experimental and control groups; and its results were as follow:

The calculation

1stCalculation of the means:

$\bar{X} \longrightarrow the\ mean$

$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$ / N: the number of the students per-group

$\bar{X}_1 = \frac{\sum x_1}{N_1}$ / $N_1 = 16,\quad \sum X_1 = 98$

$= \frac{98}{16}$

$\boxed{\bar{X}_1 = 6.125}$

$\bar{X}_2 = \frac{\sum x_2}{N_2}$ / $N_2 = 16,\quad \sum X_2 = -74$

$= \frac{-74}{16}$

$\bar{X}_2 = -4.625$

2nd calculation of the variances: S_1^2, S_2^2

45

- S_1^2: the variance of the first group

- S_2^2: the variance of second group

The formula is: $S^2 = \frac{\sum x^2}{N} - \bar{X}^2$

So:

$$S_1^2 = \frac{\sum X_1^2}{N_1} - \bar{X}_1^2$$

$$= \frac{1060}{16} - (6.125)^2$$

$$\boxed{S_1^2 = 28.8}$$

$$S_2^2 = \frac{\sum X_2^2}{N_2} - \bar{X}_2^2$$

$$= \frac{644}{16} - (-4.625)^2$$

$$\boxed{S_2^2 = 18.86}$$

3rd calculation of the level of significance "t":

$$t\,(n_1 + n_2 - 2) = \frac{(\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2)\sqrt{(N_1 + N_2 - 2)(N_1 N_2)}}{\sqrt{(N_1 S_1^2 + N_2 S_2^2)(N_1 N_2)}}$$

$$t\,(30) = 6.07$$

4th calculation of the degree of freedom "df"

$$df = N_1 + N_2 + 2$$

$$df = 34$$

Using statistical table (the table is in appendix3) for 34 degree of freedom the value of 't' required is (2.7). As the observed 't' (6.07) is greater than (2.7) then we confirm the alternative hypothesis which means that background knowledge and its activation have an influence on listening comprehension.

All the results mentioned above confirm that the background knowledge and its activation have a great influence on (SL) students' listening comprehension. Now, one should go back to the hypothesis expressed at the beginning of the dissertation and check how far it is confirmed or disconfirmed by the results of the test.

In sum, the findings of the study confirm our hypothesis and come out with a conclusion that the experimental group had a better performance as compared with the control group in listening comprehension, and this better performance in the listening test is the result of the background knowledge activation.

2.3. Discussion of the Findings

This study found evidence that prior knowledge helps second language listeners understand spoken texts. When we as teachers of language and learners of language have thought about second language listening comprehension, it has been within a framework of two assumptions: that prior knowledge of the topic of an oral text is important for comprehension and that second language listening is very generalizable among text types.

Listening to a speech is the same as listening to a short lecture. Experience in topics helps the listener understand when he finds himself alone in front of a torrent of speakers' ideas and new vocabulary items. Even if the speech was delivered at a rate of "132" words per minute, which is "moderately slow", it will be difficult for an L2 to interpret inputs clearly.

The activation of the background knowledge can pave the way to a fast and correct interpretation.

Participants who reported being familiar with the topic understood more of the videotaped address than participants who did not. Why familiarity with topic would make any difference in trying to understand a videotaped monologue? It would be expected that having prior knowledge of the form in which ideas are developed by the speaker would have an effect on second language listening. So, in our context, background knowledge about the American president (Barack Obama) and his policy makes the students understand him better.

Finally, supplying the learners with background knowledge provides them with the necessary information to facilitate comprehension of an unfamiliar topic. Our findings are consistent with the results of previous studies carried out on the effects of topic familiarity on listening comprehension. The findings show that listening comprehension can be improved by providing appropriate instructions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has established that background knowledge and topic familiarity is an essential factor in the comprehension of unfamiliar texts. Taking this a step further, being familiar with the listening topic would aid the comprehension, where being unfamiliar with the listening topic would hinder the comprehension. It is hoped that these findings would serve as a guide to teachers, curriculum planners as well as text book designers to gear their materials and classroom activities towards a more effective approach to the teaching and learning of the listening comprehension.

Part Two

Pedagogical Implications

Prior knowledge in this study was broadly conceived as knowledge of the topic being presented by a speaker and heard by listeners. The study found that background knowledge and familiarity with topics were significant aids to listening comprehension. Furthermore, this study came to be a witness of the strong relationship between listening comprehension and the prior knowledge. This important relation should not be ignored. Teachers and their students should pay particular attention to the development of the listening skill and to the development of familiarity with some topics. The findings of this study have implications for practice and for further research and have limitations to take into account for future researches. These implications and limitations are discussed below.

2.4. Pedagogical Implications

Teachers have to re-evaluate their methods and start to recognize that they have to concentrate on the listening process rather than the listening test results. The first implication of this study is that topic familiarity is an important aspect in listening comprehension. The background knowledge that students bring with them helps them perform the listening task more successfully. This knowledge helps the learners match new information with what they already know about the topic. Teachers should prepare learners for the listening stage.

Another implication of this study is that teachers must do more than just provide learners with linguistic knowledge. New information that is acquired should be put into

practice. Thus, learners should be provided with the opportunity to use language for communication in a meaningful context in the class.

The main advice that we would like to give to instructors of oral expression especially is that they must choose texts with familiar topics. Thus, instructors are supposed to exploit the known to make their learners move to the unknown i.e. teachers must start with enlightened spots to enlighten the dark ones. Rost (1994) advocates listening instruction that accounts for the learner's interests and that "accretes" knowledge or develops it in a "spiral" pattern. Listening instruction should build upon what the student knows and is interested in (105).

The techniques of prior knowledge activation are several; introduction is one of these techniques. Introduction before listening to records gives learners the opportunity to restore what they already know about the topic even before attempting to listen to additional content. Rost (1994) argues that listening should centre on what the listener needs to do, not what the instructor needs to convey. Working with students to clarify why they are listening to something and helping them to organize what they know about it will help them understand a variety of L2 texts. (105)

Rivers and Temperley (1978) recommend beginning listening instruction with games as simple as "Simon says…" or using Total Physical Response (TPR) to help students begin to perceive a message in the sound (76). When beginning to work towards segmenting the speech sound into pause units, among other techniques they recommended were using dictations, or using a "backward build up technique," in which students practice with sentences by learning the ends of the sentences first and building backwards towards the beginning, so they move to the known language from the new language (ibid 78).

The focus of this study on comprehension of a videotaped speech of a native English speaker serves to mark a stress on the academic listening. Monologues are the mainly used type of pedagogical records and the most available in the era of media. Instructors might follow the advice of Lund and use transcripts to aid listening, but not while listening. Lund (1991) suggests listening, clarifying details if needed with a transcript, and then listening again with the goal of comprehending at a higher level (202).

With the increasing availability of computers and digital audio editing programs, teachers and materials developers could provide students with opportunities to hear authentic speech not only presented at the actual rate, but at a slower or more rapid rate with pitch distortion controlled for, so the speech still sounds realistic. Teachers could record short discussions or conversations or speeches and present them to their students at artificially slow speeds and then at increasingly rapid speeds to allow their students to develop their listening skill. This technique may serve the teacher as a knowledge activator.

Strategy training can also help students deal with authentic speech. Mendelsohn and Rubin (1995) provide guidance for instructors on how to teach their students strategies for determining the setting, interpersonal relationships, mood, and topic of a listening text (141). Extra linguistic clues might be used; students, could, for example, preview a video clip with the sound turned off so that they could focus on the setting, the speakers, and their body language. Students should be explicitly taught strategies for predicting what they might hear, such as listening to a newscast in their L1s in order to predict what they might hear in a newscast in their second languages (ibid 145).

The lack of active knowledge about the topic leads to less participation after listening to records. So, this lack of topics' knowledge creates less convergence between the speaker and the listener and the teacher as a mediator as well, the unavailability of convergence may break

the chain of communication. The warm-up is crucial in the process of learners' integration with the content to be delivered. Teachers could encourage students to match opinions with speakers and then make predictions about what might be said next. This study implies that being familiar with the listening topics will help students understand what they hear. Teachers, then, should prepare students for this kind of listening.

Some teachers simply ask their students whether they have knowledge of a topic or not. This type of questions before a listening comprehension task can mislead the teacher; while asking this question, teacher must take into his account several psychological features of his learners such as introverts' personalities. So, provide your students with the necessary information which tend to refresh their memory taking the ignorance of your students for granted.

2.4.1 Limitations of the Study

As with any study, this one has limitations and implications should be interpreted in light of these limitations. Limitations arise intrinsically from the kind of study conducted, as well as from how the study was conducted. This is an experimental study and has inherent design limitations. First, participants in the study performed the listening tasks in only a 50-minute time span. An examination of listening comprehension over a longer period of time might provide different results. Second, the current study is a quantitative study, yet quantifying processes that are mental, and are therefore not directly observable, has inherent limitations. Taking a qualitative or mixed-methods approach would provide a different view of listening tasks.

It was better to work on undergraduate students, because results of this study will be guided to improve the listening skill at intermediate acquisition. But, in the place where this

study had been carried out, students of first and second year listen to a videotape of native speakers occasionally instead of intensively. As a result of all these factors, we prefer to work with more elaborated students at the level of their listening competence and listening training.

We face many problems concerning the availability of multimedia rooms. In addition to that, we have faced many obstacles such as the sonar system and using the data-show system without any possibility of switching of the light. Those difficulties might have an influence on our study and on future studies if responsibles do not take into their accounts those difficulties.

Finally, the results of this study imply that teachers need to spend more time to introduce their lectures or any video material. The evaluation of what is known by learners concerning the topic is a crucial element. We focus in our study on monologues as a source of texts, but not the only source of spoken texts. Records of monologues and of different kinds of discourse are interesting to work on, not only because of its influence on improving listening skill, but also because it is the dominant way of teaching and giving lectures especially in advanced levels. Lectures given in an arbitrary way can not show explicitness for the students, but if the lecturer exploits well the prior knowledge, he will make the latter a mediator to reach a better and fast understanding.

Conclusion

The present chapter as it is divided into two main parts, each one of them discusses central points. Part one is devoted to the analysis of the data collected through the test and the substantial discussion of the results. Part two is allocated to the pedagogical implications to suit the subject matter of this study. This latter has established that background knowledge and topic familiarity is an essential factor in the comprehension of unfamiliar texts. Taking this a step further, being familiar with the listening topic would aid the comprehension, where being

unfamiliar with the listening topic would hinder the comprehension. It is hoped that these findings would serve as a guide to teachers, curriculum planners as well as text book designers to gear their materials and classroom activities towards a more effective approach to the teaching and learning of the listening comprehension.

General Conclusion

This study, examines second language listening comprehension in listening tasks setting in terms of prior knowledge of the topic, listening skill, and prior experiences and their influence on the listening comprehension. The listening skill is found to be a significant predictor of successful listening comprehension on the tasks in this study. Experiences with topics are also found to be a predictor of success in listening comprehension in listening settings. While not ignoring other scholarship stressing the importance of prior knowledge in second language listening, teachers and students should work to develop the listening skill, particularly in the area of understanding rapid speech. Furthermore, teachers should ensure students participate in whole-class discussions and develop techniques for listening in this context. Among other themes, scholars should continue to examine the role of prior knowledge of topics in various listening situations such as listening tasks, and how this may affect comprehension. The most efficient comprehension is when the listener uses what he already knows about the text and the least amount of surface information from the text to achieve the maximum amount of meaning. As far as our results are concerned, active background knowledge improves listening comprehension. After all what we have said, the results of this research go hand in hand with our research hypothesis. Henceforth, we can say that there is a *positive association* between **prior knowledge** and **listening comprehension**.

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APPENDIX I

Question N° :01

President Barack Obama said:" ….we will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people."

-What did he mean by leaving Iraq responsibly?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Question N°: 02

President Barack Obama said: "…….America must play its role in ushering in a new era of

peace."

-Has the president practical steps to bring peace to our world? Are they fruitful?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Question N°: 03

President Barack Obama said: "……a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of

some".

-To whom Mr. Obama referred by 'some'?

………

…………………………………………………………60………………………………………………………

Question N°: 04

President Barack Obama said: "Our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred…."

-What is this far-reaching network? What are the procedures to be followed by Mr. Obama to reach this network?

………

……

Question N°: 05

President Barack Obama said: "On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord".

-It is clear that the new president represents the hope but who represents fear? And why?

………

……

Question N°6:

President Barack Obama said: "…but this crisis has reminded us that without a watchful eye, the market can spin out of control…."

-What did he mean by watchful eye? If he meant a controlled market, to what extend the markets will be controlled?

…………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………

APPENDIX 2

The experimental group takes the following introduction:

Barack Hussein Obama was sworn in as the 44th president of the United States on January, 20, 2009. The son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas, he is the first African-American to ascend to the highest office in the land.

Obama's suggestion that he might rule with optimism rather than with fear is a welcome one. One of the hallmarks of the Bush Administration will always be the fear used to rally Americans to respond to 9/11 and then the fear used to convince Americans to support wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Barack Obama has said that all these wars were based on lies.

This "far-reaching network" is what got us into quagmires in Afghanistan and Iraq and what led America to torture and arbitrarily and indefinitely detain countless humans. It was led to warrantless wiretapping and massacres committed by mercenary corporations like Blackwater. And, it is what led to the looting of the U.S. treasury. America does not have to fight the "far-reaching network." It should consider how it can *defeat* it by not resorting to militarism and violence.

His first major speech on foreign policy was delivered on April 23, 2007 to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. He identified the problems that he believes the current foreign policy has caused, and the five ways the United States can lead again, focused on "common security", "common humanity", and remaining "a beacon of freedom and justice for the world":

- "Bringing a responsible end" to the war in Iraq and refocusing on the broader region."
- "Building the first truly 21st century military and showing wisdom in how we deploy it."
- "Marshalling a global effort" to secure, destroy, and stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction."

- "Rebuild and construct the alliances and partnerships necessary to meet common challenges and confront common threats," including global warming."
- "Invest in our common humanity" through foreign aid and supporting the "pillars of a sustainable democracy – a strong legislature, an independent judiciary, the rule of law, a vibrant civil society, a free press, and an honest police force."

Following the 9/11 attacks, Obama was an early opponent of Bush administration policies on Iraq, when many democratic leaders supported the congressional joint resolution authorizing the Iraq war. Now president Obama tends to insure a smooth and honourable retirement of U.S military troops from Iraq.

The economy is the focal point of President Obama policy. He was among those who were asking for a partial control on US markets.

APPENDIX 3

df	0.10	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.001
31	1.70	2.04	2.45	2.74	3.63
32	1.69	2.04	2.45	2.74	3.62
33	1.69	2.03	2.44	2.73	3.61
34	1.69	2.03	2.44	2.73	3.60
35	1.69	2.03	2.44	2.72	3.59
36	1.69	2.03	2.43	2.72	3.58
37	1.69	2.03	2.43	2.72	3.57
38	1.69	2.02	2.43	2.71	3.57
39	1.68	2.02	2.43	2.71	3.56
40	1.68	2.02	2.42	2.70	3.55
Top	Level of Significance for a Directional Test				
	0.05	0.025	0.01	0.005	0.0005
	Level of Significance for a Non-directional Test				

Résumé

Les recherches effectuées à ce jour sur la didactique de la deuxième langue (compréhension auditive) étaient basées principalement sur les notions pré acquises lors du processus d'écoute dans une situation discursive. Ces recherches ont révélé que les apprenants de la langue seconde se retrouvent confrontés à des situations diverses durant lesquelles ils se doivent de comprendre le message communiqué par le locuteur dans un contexte académique, dans une salle de classe ou par un mass média. Notre étude propose l'hypothèse selon laquelle les notions pré acquises et la familiarisation des thèmes pourraient être un support non négligeable lors du processus de compréhension d'un discours oral. L'étude explore l'effet des prés acquis sur la compréhension auditive. Deux groupes de Master I ont pris part à cette étude. Le premier qui a effectivement subit l'expérience a reçu un traitement sous une forme de familiarisation au thème et à l'activation des prés acquis, suite à quoi il lui a été projetée une vidéo d'un horizon inaugural émis par le président américain Barack Obama. Le deuxième groupe a servi de témoin. Le teste de la compréhension auditive a été exposé aux deux groupes (le groupe témoin et le groupe expérimental). Les résultats de ce teste ont confirmés notre hypothèse.

الملخص

ركزت الأبحاث سابقة في تدريس اللغة الثانية في الفهم السمعي على دور الخلفية المعلوماتية عند الاستماع إلى نصوص قدمت من طرف أكثر من متكلم واحد. على الرغم من هذا، فقد يصادف متعلمي اللغة الثانية عادة حالات أين يجب أن يفهموا ما يقوله أحد المتكلمين، سواء في الصف، في سياق أكاديمي، على شاشة التلفزيون، أو وسائل الإعلام الأخرى. إن فرضية هذه الدراسة تريدا ثبات أن الخلفية المعلوماتية عن المواضيع قد تساعد على فهمها وان الألفة مع هذه المواضيع من شأنها دعم فهم الخطاب. لقد كشفت هذه الدراسة تأثير الخلفية المعلوماتية على الفهم السمعي. لقد شارك في هذا البحث قسمين من السنة الأولى ماستر لغة انجليزية (علم اللغة) حيث تلقت المجموعة التجريبية بعض المعلومات العامة عن الموضوع المستمع إليه ثم شاهدت شريط فيديو للرئيس الأمريكي باراك أوبا في خطابه الافتتاحي. كما تم اختبار الفهم السمعي لكل من المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعة المرجعية. في النهاية أكدت نتيجة الاختبار فرضية البحث.