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**Students' Perceptions on their Listening Comprehension Difficulties in EFL Classrooms: an Ecuadorian Case**

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

AUTHOR: Vargas Mosquera Lidia Susana

DIRECTORA: Lisset Vanessa Toro Gallardo

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**Aprobación del Director del Trabajo de Titulación**

Magister

Lisset Vanessa Toro Gallardo

DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración:

El  presente trabajo de fin de titulación: "Students' Perceptions on their Listening Comprehension Difficulties in EFL Classrooms: an Ecuadorian Case", realizado por Vargas Mosquera Lidia Susana, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por lo tanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, 3 de septiembre,  del  2016

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**Declaración de Autoría y Cesión de Derechos**

"Yo Vargas Mosquera Lidia Susana declaro ser autora del presente trabajo de fin de Titulación: "Students' Perceptions on their Listening Comprehension Difficulties in EFL Classrooms: an Ecuadorian Case", de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo Lisset Vanessa Toro Gallardo directora del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

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Autor: Vargas Mosquera Lidia Susana

Cédula: 1712193513

**Dedication**


  This thesis is dedicated to my beloved children: Natanael, Benjamin and Jeremiah Calle. My fervent wish is that they can understand that it is never too late to achieve success and that even though difficulties might be found along the way, we can always overcome them. I hope that my example is a motivation for them. This document is also dedicated to my husband Daniel Calle, who has been a constant source of support and encouragement.

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Susana Vargas

# Contents

# List of tables/graphs

**Abstract**

This research is about students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in the EFL classrooms. It presents an Ecuadorian case study aiming at identifying the problems that EFL students face when developing this skill. The research was conducted in four private schools located in the Valley of Tumbaco-Quito, and the sample selected was 125 (16-18 years old) sophomore students, and 5 teachers.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The quantitative method was used to analyze the data collected through the different research instruments. The qualitative one, on the other hand, was used to describe the main aspects related to the perceptions of both students and teachers about the development of listening comprehension.

The research instruments and techniques applied to gather information from the participants were an 18-question students' questionnaire, and a questionnaire to teachers. Additionally, a students´ interview was used. The results show that the main difficulties affecting the students´ listening comprehension are the lack of knowledge about the English language, the topic of the listening passage, the speakers' accent, and the use of complex grammar structures in spoken language.


**Key Words**: EFL, difficulties, students, listening comprehension.

**Resumen**

La investigación aborda elementos relacionados con la percepción de los estudiantes sobre las dificultades en la comprensión auditiva en las aulas de inglés como lengua extranjera. La misma presenta un estudio de caso ecuatoriano con el objetivo de identificar los problemas que los estudiantes de inglés enfrentan al desarrollar dicha habilidad. La investigación se condujo en cuatro colegios privados ubicados en el Valle de Tumbaco-Quito, y la muestra seleccionada fueron 125 estudiantes de segundo año de bachillerato de edades comprendidas entre 16 y 18 años y 5 profesores.

Se emplearon métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos. El método cuantitativo se empleó para analizar los datos obtenidos mediante los diferentes instrumentos de investigación. El cualitativo, por otra parte, se utilizó para describir los aspectos esenciales relacionados con las percepciones de los estudiantes y profesores acerca del desarrollo de la comprensión auditiva.

Los instrumentos de investigación empleados  para recoger información ofrecida por los participantes fueron un cuestionario de 18 preguntas para estudiantes y un cuestionario para profesores. Adicionalmente, se empleó una entrevista a estudiantes. Los resultados muestran  que los factores fundamentales que afectan la comprensión auditiva de los estudiantes son el escaso conocimiento de la lengua y el tema del material auditivo, el acento de quien habla y el empleo de estructuras gramaticales complejas en el discurso oral.


**Palabras Clave**: Inglés como lengua extranjera, dificultades, estudiantes, comprensión auditiva.

## Introduction

English is nowadays one of the most used languages around the world, so the need to develop skills in this language is a current demand for those who are not native English-speakers. Consequently, EFL teachers have focused their attention on the integrated development of the four major skills of language. However, some skills have received more attention than others in the English teaching-learning process.

Despite the increasing importance in major meetings and events, one of the neglected skills for years has been listening comprehension. Thus, there is a need for teachers and researchers to find new ways in which this skill can be taught in the foreign language classroom. Different types of processing should be integrated so that the teaching of listening comprehension provides learners with opportunities to pay a closer attention to the ideas they hear rather than focusing on the language structure and characteristics (Cope and Kalantzis, 2012). As a result, identifying the main problems the students face while encountering with the English language can certainly improve the way in which listening skills are treated in the classroom.

This research takes as starting point the necessity to find out the reasons why students fail to comprehend the language they listen to, using their own opinions about their learning of listening comprehension. Therefore, the study is aimed at investigating the learners´ perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in the EFL classroom.

In order to accomplish the above stated objective, some research questions were set. These questions were intended to identify the listener factors affecting the students´ listening comprehension in the foreign language, as well as determining whether the speaker factors interfere on the students` listening skills, and how the listening passage hinders their listening comprehension.

Previous research has been conducted in this area. An example is the study conducted by Graham (2006), who explored several issues related to students´ perception of listening, listening beliefs, metacognitive beliefs, and metacognitive knowledge in foreign languages. The main findings of this study indicates that teachers, who wish to help their students, address the problems they experience while listening, should explore the reasons why learners are unsuccessful in listening comprehension.

Nowrouzi, et al (2015), on the other hand, conducted a study in an attempt to examine EFL learners' listening comprehension problems. The conclusions stated by this authors offer a categorization of EFL learners' listening problems, which refer to: perception, parsing, and utilization. This classification is in correspondence with the phases and stages for listening comprehension. Other findings of this study show that the most dominant problems encountered by students while developing listening comprehension are distraction and misperceiving English language sounds.

The present research will be useful for teachers and institutions who intend to improve the way in which students are taught listening comprehension, taking the main findings presented as main bases for planning listening activities. Additionally, it will be useful for students who are teachers-to-be, so that they can anticipate the main listening problems their future students may face while learning the language, and look for the best strategies to help them improve this skill.

This research also provides the bases for future investigations in the field of skills development, such as reading comprehension, so that other problems may be identified depending on the context in which the EFL teaching process takes place.

**Literature Review**

Relevant literature in the field of listening comprehension development is reviewed in this section. This review focuses on general aspects about listening comprehension, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), based on previous studies related to the topic and information compiled in different books about language teaching methodology. It presents the author´s analysis about listening comprehension elements, EFL learners´ difficulties in listening comprehension, and some strategies and activities EFL teachers may use to develop this language skill in the classroom, as well as a review of previous studies related to the research topic.

**Listening Comprehension**

Listening is one of the most vital language skills for communication and has been widely studied by many linguists and pedagogues. Research has shown that around 45 per cent of the time adults spend communicating involves listening (Siegel, 2015). Furthermore, according to Richards and Burns (2012), listening has been playing an important role in everyday international settings, testing, business, and communication.

Buck (2001), Field (2008), and Vandergrift (2010) have pointed out that even when listening is a major human attribute, it still has been rarely consciously acknowledged, especially because it has an ephemeral and hidden nature. In fact, very often the only time in which many people acknowledge their capacity to listen is when they are not able to hear something (Anderson and Lynch, 1988; Lynch and Mendelsohn, 2002).

Despite the social, academic and financial importance of listening, however, it is very neglected to second positions, and typically taken as a skill that is developed naturally. As stated by Nunan (1998), Flowerdew and Miller (2005), Field (2008), and Nation and Newton (2009),

listening is often ignored in both social interaction and classroom learning in general, as well as in foreign language classrooms.

In this sense, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) have added that listening has had a place in the language classroom for about 50 years, and that the listening activities conducted over this period of time have changed. These authors point out that over the years; listening instruction has been text-oriented, communication-oriented, and learner-oriented.

In text-oriented and communication-oriented instruction, the emphasis is mainly on comprehension; that is, recognizing and understanding different components of a listening input, which include individual sounds and phonological features, as well as key words and phrases.

In the learner-oriented approach, on the other hand, Vandergrift (2004, 2007) and Goh (1997, 2008) propose a metacognitive approach to teach listening in a more integral and holistic way. This metacognitive approach pays attention to what learners can do to help themselves listen better when engaging with aural input.

Furthermore, Brown (1997) noted that listening instruction had been also very influenced by other skills pedagogy in the 1950s and 60s, especially by writing and speaking pedagogy, even when the activities and tasks used for listening were developed for a purpose of comprehension. Generally, learners had to discriminate sounds, answer comprehension questions based on a listening passage or take dictation of written passages. Thus, instead of learning how to listen accurately, listening activities were focused on the accuracy of learners' comprehension.

There is an actual need for systems of instruction that integrate multiple modes of processing (Cope and Kalantzis, 2012; Anstey and Bell, 2006), so that the teaching of listening comprehension gives learners opportunities to focus on ideas, rather than simply focusing on

language. Emphasizing on building comprehension of complex ideas is crucial to listening development.

For Graham and Santos (2015), listening is certainly a complex skill which involves several domains. Thus, considering the mental processes people go through when they listen (from a cognitive perspective), it is frequently argued that listening comprises three main processes: perception, parsing, and utilization. The first process, perception, refers to matching what is heard to recognizable sounds and syllables, while parsing refers to establishing a grammatical structure that puts those sounds and syllables together while trying to identify words that might fit those grammatical holes. The last process involved in listening, the utilization, refers to imposing meaning onto what is heard by connecting the parsed speech to background knowledge (Anderson, 1995; Graham and Santos, 2015).

Background knowledge is one of the most significant concepts relating to listening comprehension. The images for the lexical concepts listeners invoke when they are in a listening comprehension situation are based on their background knowledge of the situation topic (Gernsbacher and Kaschak, 2003; Rost, 2006).

Comprehension is possible only when there is a degree of expectation before listening, given the fact that listening implies paying attention to multiple channels, not only the oral channel; so that all sources of knowledge with which meaning is constructed  are taken into account (Rost and Wilson, 2013). Listening then involves attending to contextual features. Some of these features are the setting, the people involved and their relationship, the objective of the listening event, its formality degree, and whether speech is disseminated in a face-to-face mode or whether there are technologies of communication involved (Graham and Santos, 2015).

For Cross (2011) and Gruba (2006), the listener should attend to various layers of input in both live face-to-face communication and multimedia text processing, which include verbal and non-verbal systems, as well as the physical contexts in which communication takes place. That is, in real listening, the listener has to process large amounts of information at the natural time of speaking and make complex configurations of mental representations while listening. This gives listening four main orientations that were stated by Rost (2011). These orientations are: the receptive orientation, constructive orientation, collaborative orientation, and transformative orientation.

The receptive orientation refers to receiving what the speaker really says which means that listeners need to catch what the speaker says, get the speaker´s idea, decode the speaker´s message, and unpack the speaker´s content. Besides, listeners have to harvest what is in the speaker´s mind, develop the selective process of attending to, hearing, understanding and remembering aural symbols, and receive the transfer of images, impressions, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and emotions from the speaker.

In the second orientation, on the other hand, listeners have to construct and represent meaning through figuring out what is in the speaker´s mind, and finding something interesting in what the speaker is saying. They have to find out what is relevant for him/her as a listener, reframe the speaker´s message in a way that´s relevant to him/her, understand why the speaker is talking to him/her, and notice what is not said.

The collaborative orientation of listening deals with negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding to communication, while the transformative one refers to creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy.

In foreign languages listening instruction, earlier reviews have called the attention to the critical role of two types of processing, that is the bottom-up and top-down processes in comprehension. These processes are essential to go through the different listening orientations stated above.

Listeners use top-down processes when they use context and previous knowledge about the topic, culture, and other schema knowledge that forms part of their long-term memory in order to build a conceptual framework for comprehension. On the other hand, listeners use bottom-up processes when they construct meaning by addition, progressively combining increasingly larger units of meaning from the phoneme level up to discourse level features.

For the above mentioned processes to take place, a listening comprehension situation usually demands the presence of different elements that are necessary in communication. Thus, there is usually a need for a speaker (whether a human being or a recorded material), a listener, a listening passage, and a setting. These aspects are reviewed in the following epigraph.

**Elements of Listening Comprehension: the Listener, the Speaker, and the Listening Passage**

As stated before, different elements are required in a listening comprehension situation, such as a conversation, for example. A conversation is defined by Slugoski and Hilton (2001) as an orderly jointly managed sequence of utterances produced by at least two participants who may or may not share similar goals in the interaction. This definition, according to Worthington and Fitch-Hauser (2015), highlights the importance of all parties involved in the interaction working together to manage the sequencing of the speakers´ words. A conversation, as an example of a listening comprehension situation, requires appropriate responding on the part of the listener(s). In other words, the listener must remain engaged in the interaction and respond either verbally or nonverbally in a way that is appropriate for what was said.

The *listeners*, as one of the key elements of listening comprehension, focus on semantic clues that can be encoded in memory quickly. There are two types of listeners. According to Vandergrift (2003), more successful listeners use significantly more "comprehension monitoring", since they are more likely to question their "elaborations" of what they thought they understood. Less successful listeners, on the other hand, use more "translating". In a study conducted by this author, Vandergrift, he concluded that these findings contribute to "an emerging model of a skilled listener" (Vandergrift, 2003 p. 463) who is in "control of the listening process" (Vandergrift, 2003 p. 485). Furthermore, successful listeners resist the pressure to translate, and chunk larger units of meaning into propositions.

In contrast, Goh (1998) considers that higher ability listeners (successful listeners) use greater number of strategies, particularly metacognitive ones. An additional finding of this author´s research seemed to be listeners' ability, or willingness, to keep on listening and not be distracted by unfamiliar words. Hwang (2003) states that this type of listeners uses more "selective attention", "prediction", and "contextualization", while less proficient listeners (less successful listeners) misuse their prior knowledge in favor of listening comprehension. One of the reasons why an unsuccessful listener may be overusing the "translating" or underusing the "comprehension evaluation" strategies is precisely because they have "an inadequate linguistic base" (Vandergrift, 2003 p. 480).

Listeners´ phonetic ability should be considered in terms of sound articulation and speech perception. The aptitude for comprehending accented speech differs in native and non-native listeners. Munro (2011) and Szpyra-Kozłowska (2014) consider that successful communication depends on the abilities and efforts of both speaker and listener. Listeners with certain experience, previous knowledge, and maybe a good aptitude may be more successful than others

at comprehending the speech in a foreign language. The opposite will happen if the listener has limited sociocultural, factual or contextual knowledge of the foreign language, which turns into an obstacle for listening comprehension.

Another important factor in listening comprehension is the *speaker*. According to Rothman et. at (2006), research has shown that speakers are mostly sensitive to facial expressions and eye gaze. Thus, if listeners engage in appropriate responses, whether in a verbal or nonverbal way, conversations flow easily.

Hüttner (2009) proposes a dialogic conceptualization of fluency which involves the co-construction of discourse; since many foreign language users, including EFL speakers, have smaller repertoires of fixed colocations and formulaic sequences than native speakers, and do not speak quickly and without pausing. One of the main components of Hüttner´s conceptualization refers to adjusting one's language to contextual conditions, and using interactive strategies such as repeating and paraphrasing previous words to keep conversation running smoothly. Thus, Mauranen (2006) reports frequent speaker repetitions, paraphrases, comprehension checks, and spontaneous additional explanations, clarifications, and both proactive self-repairs  and retroactive interactive repairs , as well as requests for clarification on the part of interlocutors.

Repeating something that has just been said may mean that the speaker is trying to look for some time to organize his/her own discourse, which highlights its important role in the co-construction of dialogue. Repetitions, false starts, rephrasing, self-corrections, elaborations, tautologies, and apparently meaningless additions is a natural feature of speech and may be of a great help to the listener.

Another element that plays an important part in listening comprehension is the *listening passage*. Qian and Li (2014) argue that among the multiple variables that intervene in listening

comprehension, the sample of the speech that is chosen, the familiarity of the speaker´s accent and the rate of speech can be found. EFL learners usually perceive listening texts as very fast at the beginning of language learning, even when it is spoken at a normal speed, or at a very slow speed. Graham (2006) reported that one of the main problems learners encounter in listening is precisely dealing adequately with the delivery speed of texts. Additionally, Griffins (1990) and Zhao (1997) state that some studies have also found that a slower rate of speech significantly enhances foreign language learners´ comprehension of the listening passages.

According to Tsagari and Banerjee (2016), listening passages have different types of complexity. In the case of *Linguistic Complexity,* for example, the listening task difficulty is associated with a wide range of linguistic features of the listening passage. These characteristics include phonological, lexical, syntactic, and discourse features (Révész and Brunfaut (2013). Lexical complexity, in particular, seems to be related to listening task difficulty. At the same time, greater listening task difficulty is associated with higher lexical density of listening texts.

*Text types* are another type of complexity that is related to the listening passage. Schohamy and Inbar (1991) found that when exploring the effect of text type on listening test scores (on an oral-literate continuum); passages which were more oral in nature were better understood by a group of secondary school EFL listeners. However, it is important to remark that the passages differed in genre, and also showed many differences in other features such as linguistic complexity and explicitness.

Finally, real interaction comprises the organizational frame, immediate physical setting, the participants, and the unfolding text or dialogue. The organizational frame is referred to as the background context in which the immediate social encounter takes place. The immediate physical

setting includes the specific time, location, objects, and their arrangement (Gee, 1999 and Latour, 2005).

According to Haslett (2013), the text or dialogue itself is formed by the successive order of utterances made by each participant, which include interruptions, overlaps, hesitations, and so forth. When a listener is not able to see the speaker's body language and facial expressions, it is more difficult for him/her to understand the speaker's meaning. Relevant aspects about the physical context are:

- background noise, either on the recording or in the environment, which can distract student's attention;

- listening material on tape lacks visual clues and body language, including facial expressions, and

- unclear sounds resulting from bad quality recording.

On the other hand, the physical setting of action is part of the context, which has a specific meaning depending on the character of human activities.

The aspects described in this epigraph are all elements related to listening comprehension. However, some of them can seriously affect comprehension, and make students have problems while developing the skill, some of which will be addressed in the next section.

**Listening Comprehension Difficulties for EFL Learners (Listening Problems/Causes)**

Listening comprehension difficulties in a foreign language have their origins in one or more of several areas, which include: adjusting to a new sound system (Goh, 2000); the rapid speed of speech factors in the foreign language (Lynch, 2009), ineffective listening strategy use (Hasan, 2000); and social-affective factors (Wolvin, 2010). These problems lead many EFL learners to name listening as the most difficult of the four main language skills (Renandya and Farrel 2011).

Besides the above mentioned factors, Siegel (2015) has summarized some others that certainly affect the degree of success of EFL learners; that is, obstacles that EFL listeners face during the listening comprehension process. These factors are:

- Temporal distractions

- Negative reactions to speakers

- Inability to discern the spoken form of words they know in citation form

- Inability to parse the speech stream into appropriate meaningful chunks

- Inability to recognize structural speech markers

- Inadequate comprehension of an overall message despite understanding individual words

Attention failures when an unfamiliar sound sequence is perceived is another major cause of difficulty in EFL listening. EFL learners make an attempt to process unfamiliar or unexpected sounds, which puts greater stress on them as they encounter and recover from frequent lapses of this nature. This, in Rost´s (2006) opinion, leads to communication breakdowns, to debilitating effects on motivation to continue listening (Graham, 2006), and to undue reliance on inferring processes (Field, 1998).

According to Wolvin (2010), native listeners also experience problems in listening comprehension, especially when listening only for facts rather than overall meaning, and wasting the advantage of thought speed over speech speed. Thus, listening barriers are not exclusive to EFL listeners.

Speech rate is a common problem for EFL listeners, although Rost and Wilson (2013) consider that difficulties are present not so much because of speed itself, but because the EFL listener is not prepared for fast speech phenomena.

Strategies and activities must be taking into account in order to achieved effective listening comprehension. These are analyzed in the next section.

**Strategies and Activities to Develop Listening Comprehension Skill**

Listeners use mental actions to construct meaning from text. These activities are usually referred to as listening strategies or listening skills. A listening strategy is defined by Rost and Wilson (2013) as a conscious attempt to improve one´s listening comprehension or listening task performance. These authors have also identified some categories of active listening strategies that may serve as bases for listening comprehension development in EFL learners. Although students may use particular strategies during the listening process, they become more active -mentally and physically- and more engaged to language learning when they plan, direct attention, monitor, evaluate, infer, elaborate, collaborate, and review in a listening task.

Furthermore, Lynch (2009) states that apparently learners who explore, develop and adopt learning strategies will often perform slightly better on specific listening tasks than those who do not. At the same time, learners who consciously adopt strategies to improve also make more sustained evolution towards overall proficiency (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012; Cross, 2009; White, 2008; Ushioda, 2008; Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari, 2010).

On the other hand, Brown (2011) has referred to cognitive strategies as the ways students organize their own learning, and has also highlighted various cognitive strategies that are used for listening. Among these strategies, he refers to:

- taking notes

- guessing words in context

- using knowledge of language such as grammatical structures, stress, intonation, discourse markers, and individual words; particularly to fill in gaps in comprehension

- using schemata and knowledge of the topic to predict what will be heard, and to predict what is next

- using knowledge of the situation and context to narrow down possible meanings

- making links between prior knowledge and the topic

- making inferences

- making use of non-verbal cues in conversation

The importance of some of the above mentioned strategies have also been recognized by Rost (2002), and stated by Brown (2011), who considers necessary to pay attention to teachable strategies for listening comprehension. The strategies Rost (2002) refers to are:

- Predicting information

- Inferring

- Monitoring comprehension

- Clarifying/asking for clarification

- Responding to what has been heard in an interactive situation

- Evaluating how well you have done

These strategies overlap with the ones described by Brown (2011) so that listeners may become more independent, efficient and successful in listening comprehension. Other authors, like Goh (2008) argue that meta-cognitive strategies improve listening comprehension. This author further claims that their use makes students more confident and more motivated towards listening. Nonetheless, she urges a move from thinking about meta-cognitive strategies in isolation to thinking about the larger issue of metacognition and metacognitive knowledge (understanding the nature of listening), and strategy knowledge (knowledge of when to apply strategies).

The revised literature about listening comprehension development, its elements, difficulties, and strategies and activities allowed the researcher examine previous studies related to the topic. The main objectives, methodology, and findings of each of the studies reviewed are presented below.

The first study was conducted by Graham (2006) aiming at exploring several issues related to students´ perception of listening, listening beliefs, metacognitive beliefs and metacognitive knowledge in foreign languages. The methods used included characterizing the context and participants. The study was conducted with a total of 595 students who took part in the questionnaire section, and 28 of them were interviewed. All high schools involved in The University of Reading's Initial Teacher Education Schools Partnership for foreign languages were invited to take part in the study (plus one college) and 10 institutions agreed to do so.

The 28 students who were interviewed were chosen to give a broadly balanced sample in terms of gender, year group, and predicted and achieved examination results. Students were selected in consultation with their teachers and based on their questionnaire responses.

The instruments applied included a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The *questionnaire* was developed from one used in an earlier major study of UK Year 12 students (Graham, 1997) and incorporated elements adapted from Chan (1996) and Williams and Burden (1999). It was carried in two pilot stages, in which a different group of students completed the questionnaire with the researcher, commented on its clarity and their understanding of the wording used.

The *semi-structured interview* program was drawn up after an initial analysis of the questionnaire data, focusing on significant themes that emerged. The themes included: students'

beliefs about why they had been successful or unsuccessful in the particular skill area they had

identified, and how they believed they used strategies when approaching these skill areas.

The main findings obtained through the study raised a number of issues regarding the

teaching of listening comprehension. For teachers who wish to help their students address the

problems they experience, an essential first step is to gain insights into learners beliefs about

foreign language listening. In order to do so, the teacher should plan activities that include both

bottom-up and top-down processes so that the learner becomes more proficient  perceiving the

listening input. This author also concluded that an important starting point would be exploring the

reasons why learners are unsuccessful in listening comprehension, so that maladaptive

attributions can be highlighted and initial steps can be taken.

The second study was conducted by Stepanovienė (2012), aiming at investigating the

difficulties university students experience in regard to listening comprehension and comparing

differences between high and low ability listeners in relation to the perceived difficulties with

listening comprehension.

The subjects in this study were 118 undergraduate law and police activity students enrolled

in the faculty of Public Security at Mykolas Romeris University. Participants were selected based

on their scores on a listening comprehension test and were randomly assigned to two groups: (1)

high ability listeners who obtained 80 percent or more in the listening comprehension test and (2)

low ability students who obtained less than 60 percent in the listening comprehension test. The

aim of the division was to compare the different problems in listening comprehension.

A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were the research instruments used. The

researcher gave questionnaires to more than 120 students and could complied 118 completed

questionnaires. Interviews were carried out on the same day, and the research results were statistically analysed.

After analysing the student answers, it was evident that students perceive they have a moderate level of difficulty in understanding legal English texts. The participants agreed with the following statements: (1) legal English collocations is a major obstruction to understanding; (2) they can understand what they listen to if they are familiar with that topic; (3) they can understand what they hear if information is made explicit; (4) the topic being spoken about is one factor that affects listening comprehension; (5) redundancy in texts helps them to comprehend; (6) rate of delivery affects listening comprehension; (7) anxiety and stress are the factors that the respondents face with when they listen to legal English texts; (8) rhythm affects listening comprehension; (9) interaction with the speaker makes comprehension easier; (10) anxiety is one factor that respondents feel when they listen to English texts.

Each student was asked to rank 10 most important items related to listening comprehension, so that the difficulties related to this skill development were categorised into different items that were actually elicited from the students' responses to open-ended questions beforehand. The results proved that students face many difficulties including rate of delivery, vocabulary, phonological and syntactic reduction, and degree of redundancy. The rate of delivery and recognition of vocabulary are the major factors affecting low ability listeners understanding of spoken English.

Yu-gi Chao (2013) conducted another study in order to investigate non-English major college students´ listening performance and listening problems on the GEPT Listening Comprehension Test at the intermediate level.

The methodology described includes the participants, instruments, and the results and discussion. The participants in the study were 75 non-English major college students. Nonetheless, seven of them did not complete the questionnaire or hand in the listening test sheet, so their data was considered as invalid. Thus, finally, 68 valid data were analyzed, including 37 students from the College of Technology and 31 from the College of Education.

The instruments applied in the study included a listening comprehension test and a listening problem questionnaire. The listening section of the GEPT test at the intermediate level was adopted to determine the participants´ listening proficiency. Each section contained 15 questions for a total of 45. All of the test items were the multiple choice type. Part A was the picture description, Part B was question or statement response, and Part C was short conversation. As for scoring, the scoring list was adopted from Talovich and Liu (2006).

The main results and discussion of the listening problem questionnaire used in the study were based on the six categories specified by Lotfi (2012). The questionnaire had two sections: the background information and the listening comprehension problems. The listening comprehension problems included six factors: Process Factor (Item 1 to 12), Task Factor (Item 13 to 15), Input Factor (Item 16 to 25), Listener Factor (Item 26 to 35), Affect Factor (Item 36 to 39), and Context Factor (Item 40 to 41). Responses to each item were on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 for ―strongly disagree to 6 for ―strongly agree.

In order to answer the first research question, descriptive statistics and the independent-samples t-test were used to analyze the data of the listening comprehension test. The findings showed that the listening problems college students encountered were mainly from input factor and listener factor. College students considered that easily forgetting the content, long listening texts, not knowing which strategy to use, unclear pronunciation, and unfamiliar intonation

patterns are the most difficult listening problems. These findings were not different from Chien´s (2007) findings in which English majors considered text factor and listener factor as their primary obstacles. In Teng´s (2002) study, however, most technical college students selected stimulus factor and speaker factor as their major problems in listening.

The general conclusions of the study show that most freshman college students failed to pass the GEPT intermediate level Listening Comprehension Test. Their performance decreased from Part A to Part C. Additionally, the main listening problems all college students recognized were input factor and listener factors, which include easily forgetting the content while encountering new words, and long listening texts, as well as not knowing which strategy. Besides, there were significant differences in listening problems perceived by students from the college of Education and students from the college of Technology. Students from the college of Technology described greater listening problems than those from the college of Education.

A number of pedagogical implications were suggested as results of this study. First-year college students listening comprehension is still under the standard of graduation threshold, which may be due to the fact that they take English courses for only three hours per week in each semester. Apparently, they need more specific instruction in listening to improve their listening ability.

Hamouda (2013), on the other hand, made an attempt to explore a broad view and in-depth knowledge about the understanding of how Saudi college students in EFL context face listening difficulties. This study was aimed at:

1. Identifying the Saudi students' perception to the importance of studying listening comprehension

2. Knowing how and when the students have the opportunity to listen to English

3. Finding out kinds of listening comprehension problems encountered by English students at Qassim University

4. Providing some suggestions for the teacher to help his students overcome these listening comprehension problems.

Sixty first-year students majoring in English language and translation at Qassim University participated in this study with an age range of 20-22 years old. It was carried out during the First semester of the 2012/13 school year. The courses offered to the students include a listening component; they sometimes listened to audio cassettes and watched VCD's in English. Before starting their university education, all of the students had to take the placement Exam, which consists of multiple choice test items mainly focusing on reading, grammar and translation. Speaking is tested indirectly and listening is not included at all since oral skills are not the testing focus in the placement Exam.

In order to conduct the study, the author followed the following procedure.

The study was carried out with quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview with the subjects were the instruments used in this study.

The questionnaire was used to get information about the difficulties the students faced in EFL listening while taking the listening course at Qassim University. It was designed after a review of the literature (Boyle, 1984; Yagang, 1994; Hasan, 2010; Underwood, 1989; Rubin, 1994; Yagang, 1994; Dunkel, 1991) about factors that influence listening comprehension.

It consisted of four sections. Section one included 11 questions to collect learning experience of EFL learners, ways of practicing listening skill, the importance of listening skill and their self-rated listening proficiency level in English. Section two consists of 4 items dealing

with the evaluation of the instruction of skills taught during their high school education. Section three consists of 5 items regarding how and when the students find the opportunity to listen to English. Section four included 51 items grouped into five categories: listening material (11 items), linguistic aspects (13 items), lack of concentration (6 items), speaker (6 items), listener (11 items), psychological category (6 items) and physical setting (10 items). The 4-point likert scale (never, sometimes, often, and always) was used to record of the answers.

The initial draft of the English Listening Comprehension Problems questionnaire consisted of 41 questions, and it was given to four experienced teachers to ensure the validity of the questionnaire; all of them with experience in the field of teaching listening.

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively, while the data obtained from the interview were only analyzed qualitatively. As a result, the listening problems that affected the EFL learners of Qassim University were identified.

The main conclusions stated by Hamouda (2013), argue students at Qassim University encounter various kinds of listening problems in learning comprehension such as unfamiliar words, the length of the spoken text, speed rate, a variety of accents, lack of concentration, and pronunciation. Also, some suggestions that could be used by teachers and students to face listening comprehension problems include adapting and improving listening materials, and improving teachers' classroom techniques. As for students, on the hand, they can reduce their own difficulties by improving English proficiency, and improving listening strategies.

The fifth study reviewed was developed by Chen (2013), and it was focused on raising students' awareness of their listening problems and strategy use so as to guide them to employ effective strategies for listening tasks and in turn to empower them to take charge of their own learning about EFL listening when they leave the EFL classroom. This study also focused on

examining learners' perceived listening problems as they developed their strategy use during the course of strategy instruction.

The main methodology described includes 31 EFL college students who enrolled in a course entitled "English Listening Practice" at a technological college in Taiwan. They had previously learned English in school contexts for at least six years, and their English proficiency ranged from high-beginning to low-immediate level. Participants had not studied abroad before, nor were they attending additional English classes besides this class. The strategy instruction was integrated as an extension of the listening curriculum, which focused on participants' listening and learning to listen.

The data collection was developed through the use of questionnaires and reflective journals. A listening strategy questionnaire and a listening problem questionnaire were applied. The survey for listening strategies and listening problems was conducted both before and after the listening strategy instruction. This study focused on students' changes in listening problems as they developed their listening strategies, therefore the results of the listening problems questionnaire were mainly discussed.

The subjects participating in the study were required to keep reflective journals about their EFL listening learning activities fortnightly over the fourteen-week intervention period. Students were asked to reflect on and evaluate how they had tried to comprehend the input and what listening problems they encountered while they were listening right after completing their listening tasks. Participants were also asked to complete the same listening task for each of their reflective journals so that the data collected was consistent. Reflective journals were considered to be useful to help students reflect on and evaluate their listening problems as they tightened their strategy use.

There were two ways in which participants' reflective journals were analyzed. First, the listening problems that participants reported were quantitatively coded. Then, journal entries were analyzed qualitatively to understand the problems and the nature of strategy use reported by students.

The incidences of participants' listening problems from these three sets of reflective journals were coded in independent transcripts by the researcher and then compared with those coded by another researcher. The results of the pre-test and post-test of listening problem questionnaires showed that students were better able to deal with their listening problems, especially more on lower-level of processing problems than higher-level ones after the listening strategy instruction. Moreover, students' changes of perceived listening problems over time indicated that, as students heighten their strategy use, they were better able to solve their superficial listening problems, but meanwhile they encountered in-depth or higher level listening processing problems.

The findings of this study showed that strategy instruction (e.g., modeling and discussions in class and self-reflections outside class) positively empowered students with problem-solving abilities, so that they were better able to harmonize their strategy use, listening problems, learning progress and other individual factors. Finally, strategy instruction also strengthened students' self-directed learning abilities and helped guide them toward autonomous learning in listening comprehension.

Nowrouzi, et al (2015) conducted another of the previous studies reviewed. This study is an attempt to examine the Iranian tertiary level EFL learners' listening comprehension problems in the three listening components: perception, parsing and utilization.

The data were collected from Iranian tertiary level first-year EFL learners (n = 100). The subjects were selected randomly from three universities in Mashhad, Iran. They were 70% female with minimum and maximum ages of 19 to 23, and their major was English.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire, called the Listening Comprehension Processing Problems Questionnaire (henceforth LCPQ). The detailed information about the validation and the developing process of LCPQ has been presented in Nowrouzi, Tam, Nimehchisalem, and Zareian (2014). The instrument was developed based on the related literature and theory (e.g., Anderson, 1995; Goh, 2000; and Liu, 2002), and was then validated by a panel of experts (n = 7) and field-tested on a sample representing the main respondents of the present study. The final questionnaire had 23 items and a five-point Likert scale (1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= usually, and 5= always).

The questionnaire was administered to 100 EFL learners to determine their listening comprehension problems. Before administrating the questionnaires, the students carried out a listening activity so that they could base their responses to the questionnaire on a real listening task (Vandergrift et al., 2006). The importance of the study was presented to the students by one of the researchers at the beginning. Furthermore, the related questions to LCPQ raised by the students were answered by her. Then, the LCPQ were administered among the respondents to be accomplished.

Descriptive statistical methods like frequency, percentage, means, and standard deviations were followed for analyzing the data using SPSS (Version16). In this study, the author states that 33rd percentile was regarded as the cut-off point between 'low' and 'moderate' levels of listening problems. The 67th percentile was considered the cut-off between 'moderate' and 'high' levels. As a result, a mean of 1.65 (upon 5) or below was considered a 'low' level of listening problems;

a mean ranging between 1.66 and 3.35 was regarded as 'moderate'; and finally, a mean of 3.36 or higher was reported as a 'high' level of listening problems.

The main conclusions of the study were stated taking into consideration the analysis of the data collected through the listening comprehension problems questionnaire. This findings show that Iranian tertiary level first-year EFL learners' listening problems can be categorized into three types, which are consequently in relation to the three phases of listening comprehension: perception, parsing, and utilization. The most dominant problems encountered were distraction and missing or misperceiving sounds and words related to perception, chunking difficulties and sentence forgetting concerned with parsing and confusion about the main idea pertaining to utilization.

This study also has pedagogical implications. The results show that the participants who took part in the study have almost equal problems in the three categories determined. That is, in foreign language listening courses perception, parsing, and utilization problems should be emphasized equally. Equally important areas of difficulty, such as pragmatic and discourse problems can be neglected because of the primarily significance of perception and parsing problems. Material developers, syllabus designers and foreign language teachers should pay particular attention to learners' utilization problems. The author suggests that further research is required to explore the strategies that foreign language learners use to deal with their listening comprehension problems.

**Method**

*Setting and Participants*

In order to carry out this research, the author selected four private high schools located in the Valley of Tumbaco, City of Quito, Ecuador. The participants who represented the sample were 125 sophomore students and 5 teachers. The students' age ranged from 16-18 years old. The reasons why these students were selected to be part of the sample in this study is because all of them have been studying English for at least 4 years, a common feature they share which may be valuable for arriving to conclusions about the factors affecting their listening skills.

*Procedures*

In order to conduct this study, a review of scientific information was developed. The main literature reviewed was related to the students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, previous studies associated to the research topic were also consulted, so that the following themes were addressed: the importance of listening, the listener, the speaker, the setting, the passage, the listeners' problems/causes, and strategies and activities that teachers can apply in order to develop listening comprehension skills in their classrooms. Different reference sources such as books and journals were also used to find relevant information during the whole process.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used; the qualitative method allowed the author determining the main factors that made listening difficult for students. On the other hand, the quantitative method was used to measure the results in percentage, which were gathered and presented in a table form in each of the cases.

The instruments used to collect the data were a survey (students' questionnaire), a student's interview, and a teachers' questionnaire. The survey (questionnaire to students) is a powerful tool

to collect data allowing the researcher to describe characteristics of a large population.  In the specific case of this research, it was useful to gather information from a large group of students in a short period of time. On the other hand, the student's interview consisted in open-ended and closed-ended questions in which students were able to answer yes/no questions, and express their opinions and feelings about the topic. Moreover, the teacher´s questionnaire gave the author the possibility to explore and analyze the teachers´ insights about their students' listening comprehension difficulties, from a teacher perspective.

Twenty five students of each classroom were asked to answer the questionnaire composed of 18 questions regarding their difficulties as listeners, the problems they have to understand the speaker, and what they consider affects their understanding of the listening passage. In order to get the most accurate information from the questionnaire, a short recorded English conversation was listened to by the students before they completed the survey.

Although, this was not suggested by the university, the researcher decided to ask some specific questions to a group of 25 students.  These questions were related to the difficulties encountered when they are asked to hold a dialogue related to a listening topic they listened to in a passage, and their feelings about it.

Additionally, to obtain extra useful information for this study, the student's interview was applied to 3 students of each classroom. This interview had four questions; two of them were open-ended and the other two were closed-ended. Finally, the teacher's questionnaire was applied to the teachers who taught in the selected classrooms. In the questionnaire, teachers had to express their opinion about their students listening comprehension difficulties.

The surveys and interviews were designed by the UTPL (English Department) and completed by the participants who took about 10 minutes to answer them. These instruments

(survey and interview) were applied in a four-day period of time. The questionnaire was anonymous which gave the students the confidence to answer the questions honestly; therefore, valid answers were collected.

The information obtained from these instruments was useful to know the students perceptions about their listening comprehension difficulties. Once the data was collected, it was organized and tabulated to obtain the results of the research. One table was created for each research question, which results were described, analyzed and interpreted based on theoretical background described in the literature review.

Finally, this research answers three main questions about the listener and the factors that affect their listening comprehension; the speaker and the factors that interfere with the learner's listening skills, and how the passage being listened to hinders students' listening comprehension. All of these aspects were present in each of the instruments applied.

## Results and Discussion

### Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

In this section, the researcher presents the analysis and interpretation of the results obtained from the date collection. The answers from the students' and teachers' questionnaires and the students' interview are discussed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The most relevant percentages will be taken into account in order to arrive to accurate conclusions.

**How do the listener factors affect the students´ listening comprehension?**

Listening is one of the most vital language skills for communication and has been widely studied by linguistics and pedagogues (Siegel, 2015). Listening comprehension is a complex process; therefore, the role of the listener is vital in order to understand the meaning of the message. Furthermore, for Graham and Santos (2015), listening is certainly a complex skill which involves several domains, and one of these domains is related to the listener.

As stated above, the listener is one of the key elements of listening comprehension. There are two types of listeners. Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010) consider that more successful listeners use significantly more "comprehension monitoring", since they are more likely to question their "elaborations" of what they thought they understood. Less successful listeners, on the other hand, use more "translating".

Accordingly, in the following table the researcher highlights many difficulties that can affect the listener's ability to comprehend what is said. All of these factors were determined from the student's perceptions.

**Table 1**

| Item no. | Statements | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage | 5.6% | 27.8% | 49.8% | 10.4% | 6.4% |
| 2 | I listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage | 6.4% | 17.6% | 24% | 42.4% | 9.6% |
| 3 | I find it difficult to do listening activities because of my lack of knowledge of English language | 12% | 25.6% | 8% | 22.4% | 32% |
| 4 | After my teacher stops the recording, I find it difficult to predict what will come next | 12% | 19.2% | 34.4% | 24.8% | 9.6% |
| 5 | I find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage | 13.6% | 26.4% | 32% | 19.2% | 8.8% |
| 6. | I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time | 8% | 30.4% | 35.2% | 20.8% | 5.6% |
| 7. | I feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage | 22.4% | 26.4% | 14.4% | 22.4% | 14.4% |
| 8 | I find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to me | 24% | 24% | 31.2% | 19.2% | 1.6% |
| 9 | I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud | 12% | 20% | 6.4% | 25.6% | 36% |

Author: Lidia Susana Vargas Mosquera
Source: Student's questionnaire

An analysis of how the factors mentioned above affect the students´ listening skills is presented below. All of them are expressed from a listener´s perspective.

*I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening*

*passage*

The results obtained from the interview to students show that 49.8% of them sometimes use their experience and background knowledge to understand the listening passage. This survey was answered by sophomore students in private schools who have been studying English for at least four years; most teachers make the assumption that these students know basic vocabulary in English which increases the amount of prior knowledge they have about certain topics. Also, the listening passages used are selected by the teacher based on the students' prior knowledge. It is well-known by teachers that learning is influenced by both the students' prior knowledge and the new contents they are taught.  Therefore, using what students already know about the topic to activate their background knowledge is in fact a positive aspect when students develop their listening skills.

Similarly, in the teacher's questionnaire; 3 out of 5 teachers answered that their students use their background knowledge in order to understand a listening activity. Moreover, the student's interview revealed that 8 students do not have problems understanding English because they use their prior knowledge, especially the vocabulary, in order to provide meaning to what they listened to.

Background knowledge is one of the most significant components related to listening comprehension. The images for the lexical concepts listeners invoke when they are in a listening comprehension situation are based on their background knowledge of the situation topic (Gernsbacher and Kaschak, 2003).

*I listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage*

English learners usually pay especial attention to what they are listening to (videos, songs, news, movies, audio books, etc.). The results of the survey show that 42.4% of the sample often pays attention to every detail of the listening passage in order to get the main idea.  This may be

attributed to the fact that some students consider English as a difficult subject.  As it was revealed in the students' interview, 7 out of 15 students mentioned that they find English difficult because they do not understand what is said. Therefore, they have to pay a close attention to every detail to get the main idea.  Students also stated that their vocabulary was limited. In other words, the knowledge they have about the topics of the listening passages is not enough to complete the listening activities. Thus, it is more difficult for them to try to attach meaning to every detail when they listen to them.

 Whether the listener pays closer or little attention to the listening passage, it is worth mentioning that the strategy or sub skills they use for developing listening skills will help them understand the passage.

In accordance to the students' answers, most of the teachers interviewed stated that their students often listen to every detail to try to understand the main idea of the passage presented. Listening for detail and main idea are two of the sub skills necessary to have a global understanding of the listening material. The amount and kind of information students need to listen for, however, is influenced by the listener reason for listening (Spratt, Pulverness & Williams, 2011).

*I find it difficult to do listening activities because of my lack of knowledge of English language*

The lack of vocabulary and knowledge of the English language structures can certainly decrease the level of proficiency in students' performance while developing listening skills. The learning of a language demands constant acquisition of vocabulary and structures so that comprehension can take place and the message is not misunderstood.

In regard to the fact that learners of EFL find difficult to do listening tasks because of their

lack of knowledge about the language, 40 students out of 125 (representing the 32% of the sample) stated that they always find it difficult to do listening activities because they do not know enough structures or vocabulary so that they can understand the spoken language. In contrast, only 8% of the interviewed students stated that they sometimes have difficulties comprehending the listening passage.

On the other hand, two of the teachers interviewed believe that students sometimes find the listening activities difficult, while two others consider that students often do not find easy to understand the spoken language because of their lack of knowledge about it. This may be attributed to the students´ inability to parse the speech stream into appropriate meaningful chunks (Goh, 2000), so that comprehension can occur.

As stated by Munro (2011) and Szpyra-Kozłowska (2014) successful communication depends on the abilities and efforts of both the speaker and the listener. Listeners with certain experience, previous knowledge, and maybe a good aptitude may be more successful than others at comprehending the speech in a foreign language. The opposite will happen if the listener has limited sociocultural, factual or contextual knowledge of the target language, which turns into an obstacle for listening comprehension.

*After my teacher stops the recording, I find it difficult to predict what will come next*

The students´ perceptions towards predicting what comes next after the teacher stops the recording show that 34, 4% of the students sometimes find it difficult to do. This may be attributed to the fact that they do not know enough vocabulary related to the topic, as it was highlighted by some of the students.

The parameter "often", included in the multiple choice answers provided in the questionnaire, was selected by 24.8% of students, who stated that they cannot often predict what

will come next in an audio. This probably happens because of the fact that they consider the topics of the listening passages are not of their interest. Additionally, most of the teachers interviewed (60%) agree with the fact that sometimes students are not able to predict what comes next in a recording.

Predicting is one of the listening strategies that have been recognized by Rost (2011), and stated by Brown (2011), who considers necessary to pay attention to teachable strategies for listening comprehension. In this sense, predicting information will help the listener focus the attention on important clues that lead to the general listening comprehension of the passage.

Furthermore, predicting what comes next in a listening passage is part of the top-down strategies. That is, when listeners use top-down strategies they use context and previous knowledge about the topic, culture, and other schema knowledge that forms part of their long-term memory in order to build a conceptual framework for comprehension, and predict what comes next (Rost, 2011).

*I find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage*

Having the students speak about the topic of a listening passage in a foreign language is not an easy task for the teacher. Usually students refuse speaking in the foreign language unless they have understood everything that was said and have enough knowledge about the topic.

The students´ responses about holding a short dialogue after they listen to a passage in English show that, 32% of them sometimes cannot speak in a dialogic form after they are exposed to the passage. On the other hand, 26.4% of the sample considers that they seldom have difficulties holding a dialogue about the topic of a listening passage they have been exposed to.

These results show that the majority of the students do not usually have problems in speaking to each other about the topic of a given listening passage. However, 8.8% of the sample

stated that they always find it difficult to hold a dialogue and speak about the particular topic they are exposed to in a listening passage. In other words, we can conclude that the number of students who are not able to hold a short dialogue after listening to the passage in English is small.

The previous statement may be attributed to both the knowledge of limited vocabulary and little knowledge of the topic. However, while holding a conversation as part of the post-listening task, students may feel afraid to make mistakes while speaking, depending on the situation; which can be another key factor that might be affecting the small amount of students who always find it hard to hold a dialogue after listening to a material.

Accordingly, the teachers who were interviewed consider that sometimes their students find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after they are exposed to the listening passage. Specialized literature recognizes language production as one key component in order to show comprehension of both written and oral language.

Responding to what has been heard in an interactive situation; that is, through a dialogue between at least two people, is another listening strategy that has been identified by Rost (2011) and Brown (2011). Listening is a receptive skill, and receptive skills give way to productive skills, if teachers have students produce something, then the teaching will be more communicative (Saricoban, 1999), which is the ultimate goal of language learning. It is through the development of productive skills such as speaking that a listener can react to communication and demonstrate comprehension. Thus, the fact that the students can engage in a dialogic situation about the topic of the listening passage they have listened to is a key element in order to show progress and proficiency in listening skills development.

*I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time*

In real listening situations, the listener has to process large quantities of information at the time of speaking and make complex configurations of mental representations while listening.

According to researchers, comprehension is possible only when there is a degree of expectation before listening, given the fact that listening implies paying attention to multiple channels, not only the oral channel; so that all sources of knowledge with which meaning is constructed are taken into account (Rost and Wilson, 2013).

Based on the previous observations, it can be concluded that listening is not an easy task for beginners. The students who were surveyed already had some prior knowledge of the language; and yet the survey revealed that 35.2% of the students sometimes do not get a general understanding of the message when they are listening to an audio for the first time.

Furthermore, 30.4% of students stated that they seldom find it difficult to understand a listening message at first. These results can be interpreted as a positive aspect in terms of listening comprehension development in the students.  In other words, it seems that spoken English in these specific high schools is being understood by a large group of students. However, we must note that there was a group of students (5.6%) who added they always have problems trying to get a general understanding of the message when they listen to passages for the first time.

To the question: 'what do you do when you do not understand the audio that you listened to in your classroom?' 12 interviewees answered that they simply deduct the content because they do understand the majority of the listening material. Others, on the other hand, added that they would ask the teacher to repeat the audio, look for help from their peers, or just ask for translation. A smaller amount of the interviewees, however, stated that they would let the teacher know they do not actually understand what has been said in the passage.

Additionally, the teachers who were interviewed consider that their students sometimes are not able to understand the listening passage the first time they encounter with it. This is in correspondence with the results obtained from the students´ perceptions, and probably stems from the fact that the students who represent the sample for this study have been exposed to English from at least four years.

It is the teachers' task, however, to provide the students with exercises containing general information questions that they should be able to answer after they listen to the passage for the first time (Saricoban, 1999). As stated by the previous mentioned author, these questions should not require application or inference from the information contained in the listening exercise, which is ideal for later stages of the listening skills development or for advanced students.

*I feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage*

According to the students' responses, the table comprising the results of this section shows that 26.4% of the participants seldom feel nervous and worried when they do not understand the listening passage. On the other hand, the parameters "never" and "often" show equal results (22.4%), and 14.4% of the sample considers that they always or sometimes get nervous or worried when they do not understand the listening passage. If we add the results from the options "never" and "seldom", we can conclude that 48.8% of the sample does not feel nervous or worried when they do not comprehend what they listen to. This may happen due to the fact that most students who were surveyed had previous experiences in learning the language and feel more confident while comprehending the spoken language.

Most of the teachers interviewed, however, stated that the majority of the time their students feel nervous and worry when they do not understand the spoken language, which is not in total correspondence with the results of the survey. This might happen because the students

39

may feel anxious when they listen and do not realize that anxiety makes them look nervous.

After reviewing a study conducted by Stepanovienė (2012), who investigated the difficulties university students experience in listening comprehension, and having analyzed the students' answers to the survey, it is evident that students perceive they have a moderate level of difficulty in understanding English discourse. The participants in the study conducted by Stepanovienė (2012) agreed, among other issues, with the fact that anxiety is one factor that listeners feel when they listen to passages in EFL, since they do not have control of the situation or language that is going to be used by the speaker. In fact, nervousness and worry could be a barrier for some students when they are trying to understand what they are listening to.

*I find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to me*

In this question, 1.6% of the interviewed students answered that they always find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of their interest. In contrast, 24% of the students said that they never have problems understanding the passage, mainly because the content of the passage is relevant to them. Besides, there was a significant amount of students (31.2%) who sometimes have difficulties understanding the passage.

The teachers´ beliefs during the interview show that they consider their students often have problems to understand the listening material, which is closely related to the topics they cover. In that sense, teachers should become aware that it is their responsibility to try to find the best passages for the students to listen to, especially after they have profiled the students´ interests and needs.

These perspectives may arise from many different factors, which are mostly related to the motivation students have towards listening to the spoken language. Harmer (2007) states that motivation is the most valuable reward that students could have for increasing their knowledge in

English. Accordingly, all the learners in the classroom do not have the same type and level of motivation (Daskalovskaa, Gudevab & Ivanovska, 2012). Some learners may have a very strong motivation to learn the language, others may have a weaker motivation, and yet others may have no motivation at all.

Nevertheless, motivation is not static and it can change in both directions. In that sense, teachers can help learners sustain their motivation for achieving their long-term goals by focusing on short-term goals. In the case of listening comprehension, teachers should focus on activities that allow the learners see the progress they have in the development of the skill which will motivate them to continue to work hard in order to improve it.

The students´ interest in regard to the topic of the listening passage influences their motivation to listen and to try to attach meaning to the spoken speech. One key element to getting a better understanding of spoken English is to listen to materials that interest the listeners, or get involved in an interactional communication process that is relevant to them. If the opposite happens, students will get bored and lose interest in the listening activity, which consequently lead to ineffective listening behaviors and incomprehension or miscomprehension of the material. A lot of English learners have trouble understanding the language because they do not like what they listen to; therefore, their interest decreases.

*I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud*

The results show that 36% of the participants always find it more difficult to listen to a recording than to their teachers. It is widely known that people get used to the accent, pitch of voice, manners, etc. of the people they are in contact with. When students listen for the first time to their English teacher they might not understand him or her completely but eventually they will get used to him or her.

On the other hand, when the teacher brings to the classroom an audio, learners have trouble understanding what native English speakers say because they use connected speech, slang, fixed expressions, etc. The results from the survey also show that a considerable amount of the participants (25.6%) often find difficult understanding a recorded text than understanding their teacher when he/she reads aloud, which can be considered as a negative point when students are trying to develop the skill of listening.

Two teachers who were interviewed consider that their students often find it difficult to understand a recorded text, while other two stated that their students sometimes do. Some of the reasons why students find it hard to comprehend the passages played in a recorded form are highlighted by the interviewed students themselves. These reasons include:

- The language used by the speakers in a recorded passage is fast and uses many unknown words.

- There is a lot of hesitation in the recorded passage, which makes it harder to understand.

- The pronunciation in the recorded passage is not clear.

- The quality of the recording is not good.

- The accents used by the speakers in many of the recorded passages are different, and that makes comprehension more difficult.

- The recorded passages are sometimes above the students' level (they use complex grammar).

The language that teachers use in the classroom, on the contrary, is most of the time adjusted to the students´ comprehension, which makes it easier for them to understand what they say. According to Thanajaro (2000), teachers try to simplify structures and vocabulary,

pronounce the language very clearly and in various ways facilitate comprehension artificially. This is perhaps the main reason why students find understanding recording materials harder than understanding the teacher´s speech in the foreign language classroom.

After analyzing the perception of the students in regard to the listener within the listening process, it can be concluded that the main factor that impedes students to comprehend the spoken language is related to their lack of knowledge about both the language and the topics of the listening materials. The fact that the students are not able to recognize the words they listen to so that they can respond to communication is the main reason why they have problems understanding the main ideas, predicting what comes next, and speaking about the topic of the passage; which subsequently leads to demotivation and lack of interest in the development of the skill.

Also, students referred that they find it more difficult to understand a recorded text than to the teachers reading aloud, which is a factor associated to the use of connected speech, slang, fixed expressions and other forms of language that are used in a recorded listening passage. This happens because teachers usually adjust their classroom language to make students comprehend what they are saying.

**Do the speaker factors interfere on the learners' listening skills?**

Communication is bidirectional. For communication to take place there always have to be a speaker and a listener.  The role of the speaker, whether in real life situations or in class-prepared situations; is essential for the listener to engage in communication. Thus, understanding the speaker factors that may interfere on the learners' listening skills is crucial for teachers to redesign the way in which they teach the skill.

According to Mauranen (2006), speakers usually use frequent repetitions, paraphrases, comprehension checks, spontaneous additional explanations, clarifications, proactive self-repairs and retroactive interactive repairs, requests for clarification on the part of interlocutors, and hesitation. The role of some of those aspects from the students´ perceptions is presented in the following table.

**Table 2**

| Item no. | Statements | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. | I find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses | 9.6% | 25.6% | 27.2% | 28% | 9.6% |
| 11. | I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly | 7.2% | 32% | 29.6 % | 23.2% | 8% |
| 12. | I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast | 5.6% | 28% | 37.6% | 24% | 4.8% |
| 13. | I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents | 4.8% | 24% | 28% | 30.4% | 12.8% |

Author: Lidia Susana Vargas Mosquera
Source: Student's questionnaire

Repetitive hesitations, unclear pronunciations, the speed or rate of speech, and the varieties of English existing in today´s world are some of the factors associated to the speakers in the listening process. An analysis of the main opinions expressed by the students who were surveyed in the research includes the aspects described below.

*I find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses*

According to the results gathered in the table above, hesitation and pauses hinder students from understanding natural speech. The results show that 27.2% of the students sometimes experience problems understanding the speech which is full of hesitation and pauses. Twenty

eight percent of the sample, on the other hand, referred that they often experience this kind of problem while listening to English speakers, whether they are native or not.

Most of the teachers interviewed ( 3 out of 5) also agreed with the fact that their students sometimes find it hard to comprehend the language when there is a lot of pausing or hesitation. Moreover, in the student's interview most students agreed that hesitation do not allow them to clearly understand the message that is being conveyed.

However, specialized literature considers that when the speaker repeats something that he/she just said, it may mean that he/she is trying to give himself/herself some time to organize his/her ideas; that is, he/she is probably trying to covey the  meaning in a clearer way. Thus, contrary to making language harder to understand by the listener, what the speaker might actually be doing is making pauses and hesitations that allow the listener better comprehend his/her speech. Hesitation is part of ordinary speech (Thanajaro, 2000).

As well, repetitions, false starts, rephrasing, self-corrections, elaborations, and apparently meaningless additions are natural features of speech and may be of a great help to the listener.

*I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly*

Becoming familiar with the reduced sounds present in the English pronunciation is a key element to understanding the spoken language. Thus, it is essential for teachers to make sure their students can properly recognize the reduced sounds in the foreign language, so that their listening skills development become more effective and accurate.

In the survey applied to the students, 32% of the sample stated that they seldom understand words in English when they are not pronounced clearly. Additionally, 29.6 % of the students consider that they sometimes have problems understanding words that are mispronounced or pronounced with a reduced sound, which is a characteristic of some English accents.

The teachers believe that most of the time their students have problems in this aspect which coincides with the students´ perceptions. The mispronunciation of a word or words leads to misunderstanding. Moreover, 10 out of 25 interviewed students added that they strongly face this problem while trying to develop their listening skills, and that the misunderstanding caused by the mispronunciation of words makes them fix wrong pronunciation patterns of the language that affects their learning.

It is a widely accepted fact that when students have difficulty in understanding the oral speech they may have frustration, which leads to poor performance in communication and loss of attention. In language learning it is important to be knowledgeable on grammar and vocabulary as long as they are produced and pronounced correctly. However the grammatical mistakes the speakers make, it is possible to understand the speech with the correct pronunciation (Cakir, 2011), so it is the teachers' responsibility to plan listening skills activities that provide students with the possibility to avoid communication breakdowns caused by mispronunciation.

*I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast*

The rate or speed of speech in the foreign language has always been a serious issue for the students when they are listening. In the Ecuadorian context this issue is commonly present in most of the EFL classrooms, unless the group of listeners are students who are used to listening to real language at a normal speed.

In the high schools selected for the research, students are not able to recognize the words they hear in the foreign language if they are spoken at a normal stream of speech. According to the results in Table 2, speed of speech often brings about a problem in students´ listening comprehension. The 24% of participants state that they often find difficult to understand when the speaker talks too fast, and a 37.6% refers that they sometimes face this problem.

A natural talk of a native speaker or a good English teacher can be very fast for second language learners. For this reason, teachers usually speak clearly and slow enough so that the students can understand the full message. In the teacher's questionnaire, 4 out 5 teachers believe that talking too fast is one major problem that impedes students' listening comprehension. This might be because when EFL listeners experience difficulties in understanding a message, they usually complain that the language is spoken too fast.

Qian and Li (2014) argue that among the multiple variables that intervene in listening comprehension, the sample of the speech that is chosen, the familiarity with the speaker´s accent and the rate of speech can be found. EFL learners usually recognize listening texts as very fast at the beginning of language learning, even when it is spoken at a normal speed, or at a very slow speed. Graham (2006) reported that one of the main problems learners encounter in listening is precisely dealing adequately with the delivery speed of texts. Additionally, Griffins (1990) and Zhao (1997) state that some studies have also found that a slower rate of speech significantly enhances foreign language learners´ comprehension of the listening passages.

*I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents*

When students have no exposure to different accents listening comprehension in the foreign language can be affected. The results related to this issue in language learning show that 30.4% of the sample surveyed often experience this problem. On the other hand, 28% of the students added that they sometimes face this kind of issue. Students in Ecuadorian high schools mostly learn English with non-native speaker teachers, whose first language is mainly Spanish. As a consequence, most of these teachers speak English with a Spanish intonation and rhythm.

Listeners tend to get familiar with the accents they mostly listen to; for instance, if a student has in the first semester a British teacher who uses language with a native accent, the

student will get used to the British accent. On the other hand, problems will arise, if the same student in the next semester has a Hindu teacher of English who utters words with a completely different accent. In that sense, some of the students who were interviewed clearly stated that accent can cause relevant difficulties in listening comprehension, while the interviewed teachers added that their students sometimes find difficult comprehending different accents in EFL. Even when most people prefer to have teachers who are native speakers of English, Graddol (2007) remarks that native speaker accents may seem too remote from the people that learners expect to communicate with; and as teachers, native speakers may not possess some of the skills required by bilingual speakers, such as those of translation and interpreting. Exposing the learners to different varieties of English, however, will help them comprehend the language more effectively.

In conclusion, the amount of hesitation and pausing in speech, and the variety of English accents used for communication are the main factors that hinder students to comprehend the spoken language in regards to the speaker. The results show that the highest percentages of students who find it difficult to understand the language refer the cause is associated to constant stops and hesitation made by the speaker, and the incapability to understand English speakers who come from different contexts where, consequently, the accent is not the same.

As well as the factors related to the listener and the speaker, those that have to do with the listening passage teachers use to develop listening skills are also addressed in this section of the research.

**How does the listening passage hinder the student's listening comprehension?**

The listening passage plays an important role in listening comprehension. According to Tsagari and Banerjee (2016), listening passages may have different types of complexity. The

linguistic complexity is associated with a wide range of linguistic features of the listening

passage while the lexical complexity seems to be related to the listening task difficulty. These

aspects are fundamental for the EFL learners to develop listening comprehension effectively.

**Table 3**

| Item no. | Statements | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. | Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with my listening comprehension | 11.2% | 28% | 36% | 23% | 1.8% |
| 15. | Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with my listening comprehension | 9.6% | 28.8% | 36% | 16.8% | 8.8% |
| 16. | The length of the listening passage hinders me to interpret the message | 14.4% | 24% | 40.8% | 13.6% | 7.2% |
| 17. | The content of the listening passage is abstract | 10.4% | 34.4% | 36% | 12.8% | 6.4% |
| 18. | The poor quality of recording does not allow me to understand the listening passage | 15.2% | 28.8% | 32.8% | 14.4% | 8.8% |

Author: Lidia Susana Vargas Mosquera
Source: Student's questionnaire

The use of both appropriate vocabulary and grammar according to the students´ level of

language in the passages is a major task for teachers of EFL. The perception of these aspects

from both the learners and teachers perspectives is presented below.

*Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with my listening comprehension*

Table 3 shows that 36% of the participants sometimes face problems with unfamiliar

vocabulary presented in a listening passage. For instance, if a dialogue is about medical issues,

most students might have problems understanding the topic because it might include phrases,

words, or terms which are not familiar to students, such as medical equipment names. If the

listening passage is full of terminology students find hard to understand, then comprehension is

going to be a total failure. However, it is important to remark that during the pre-listening stage

the teacher is supposed to prepare the students (teach new words, or expressions that students will

need for the new lesson) for what they are going to listen to in order to avoid significant problems while listening.

The results also show that 28% of the sample surveyed considers that the vocabulary used in the listening passages seldom interferes with their listening comprehension. Another 23% adds that the lexis used in the passages often interferes with their understanding of the spoken language. In addition, the teachers' surveyed state that some of their students sometimes have issues with the vocabulary used in the listening materials, which makes unfamiliar vocabulary a problem for them.

On the other hand, the students who were interviewed consider that unconventional and complex words make difficult for them to understand the content of the listening passage.

Another key aspect that needs to be considered in regards to vocabulary complexity in the listening passages is that, along with grammar, vocabulary tend to be more colloquial and much more/less formal than what the student may be accustomed to, which makes potential confusion because the students are not familiar with the lexis used. According to Bloomfield et al (2010), an obvious factor that can influence comprehension of a spoken passage is the overlap between the listener's vocabulary knowledge and the vocabulary of the passage.

*Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with my listening comprehension*

The grammatical structures are a barrier for learners. In the table above, 36% of students stated that they sometimes have problems with grammar structures, which interferes the listening comprehension process. On the other hand, 38.4% of the sample surveyed considers that they seldom or never have problems with this issue while developing the listening skill.

50

In a small conversation/interview with a group of 25 students, they mentioned that third conditionals and reported speech structures are a central problem to them while listening. The teachers also agreed that often most students have difficulties understanding advanced grammar structures that are used in listening materials, which  leads to confusion due to the fact that students try to provide meaning to a message by analyzing words one by one.

The fact that the grammatical structures in the foreign language affect listening comprehension too much in the students may be attributed to the presence of compound tenses in English, and the predominant use of the passive voice over the active one. Thus, the great variety of lexicological aspects English speakers use interfere listening comprehension at a high level in foreign language learners.

In a study conducted by Hamouda (2013), this author also concluded that complex grammatical structures interfered with the learners' listening comprehension. In his study, the great majority of the students agreed on the fact that difficult grammatical structures affected their listening comprehension most of the time. This author also refers that this fact is in contrast with what has been defined as a difficulty in listening comprehension that is partly caused due to the structural component of the text the students listen to.

*The length of the listening passage hinders me to interpret the message*

The length of the listening passage is certainly an aspect that teachers of English should address from a pedagogical point of view. It is not possible for a language learner to be attentive to a listening material that is too long, since that may cause temporal distractions that will impede the comprehension to take place (Lynch, 2011).

During the research process, 40.8 % of the students who were surveyed stated that the length of the listening passage sometimes hinders them to interpret the message. In contrast, 24%

of the participants added that they seldom have problems with the length of the material hindering them to comprehend. Most of the teachers interviewed, on the other hand, agree with the fact that sometimes their students have issues with the length of the listening passage, which is in correspondence with the students' perception of the problem.

The fact that most of the students feel that sometimes they face problems with the length of the listening material may be associated to the previous exposure to English they had in previous years of study. Thus, their attention and concentration while listening may be a result of the confidence they feel while listening to the foreign language.

There are, however, several reasons why an increased amount of information in a passage may affect the EFL learner listening comprehension. First, foreign language learners often fixate on information they have failed to comprehend, investing additional effort in trying to understand what they missed (Goh, 2000). The more information in a passage, the more likely it is that the listener will miss some of the greater amount of information that relies on the understanding of earlier material.

*The content of the listening passage is abstract*

In regard to how abstract the content of the listening passage is, 36% of the students surveyed agreed on the fact that this issue sometimes hinders their comprehension while trying to attach meaning to the spoken language. In addition, 34.4 % of the sample stated that they seldom face problems while listening due to the abstractness of the content of the listening material they have access to. In contrast, 2 of the teachers interviewed added that their students often have problems related to how abstract the content of the listening passage is, which is in correspondence with the perception of 12,8% of the students surveyed.

Abstractness of a spoken text is defined by Brown and Yule (1983), who along with static and dynamic texts consider abstract texts as a category of spoken texts classification. For these authors, an abstract spoken text is the one that focuses on someone´s ideas and beliefs rather than on concrete objects. In that sense, teachers should provide the students with the input they need according to their level and main difficulties, which will increase their performance while listening to a passage which content is totally abstract. For the above mentioned authors, one of the factors that can make one language text more complex than another is the number of important and potentially confusable elements it contains, which is a distinguishable characteristic of abstract texts.

*The poor quality of recording does not allow me to understand the listening passage*

A major aspect in listening comprehension is the quality of the language the listener is exposed to. That is, if the teacher uses a recorded passage, he/she should make sure that the sound quality of the material is good. If, on the contrary, the listening comprehension process is taking place in a face-to-face communication setting, then the speaker should make sure he/she is correctly pronouncing the words, and using the appropriate verbal and non-verbal cues to convey meaning.

In either case, the better the quality of speech is, the better understanding the learner will have of the language he/she is listening to. In this sense, 32.8% of the students surveyed consider that the poor quality of the recorded material sometimes does not allow them to understand the listening passage. Additionally, 28.8 % of the sample argues that their listening comprehension is seldom affected by the quality of the listening recording.

The teachers´ opinion in this respect is not in accordance with the students´ perceptions of this issue, since for them the quality of the recording truly affects their students listening

53

comprehension. Forty percent of the teachers interviewed consider that their students always have bad listening comprehension performance due to the poor quality of the materials used. Another 40% of them stated that their students´ listening comprehension sometimes is affected by this problem, while only 10 % of the teachers think that the students seldom have problems in listening comprehension depending on how good the listening recording is.

The poor equipment is somehow an obstacle to students in listening. The problem is mainly present when the quality of the tapes or disks teachers use in the foreign language classroom is not optimal. This may happen because the cassette may be recorded while there are noises around or it has been used for such a long time that the quality is worn out. Teachers should avoid noises coming from the outside when developing a listening activity, and make sure the materials they use for listening comprehension development are in good quality conditions.

In summary, the main factors hindering the students´ listening comprehension problems in regards to the listening passage are the presence of complex grammatical structures, and the poor quality of the materials. These two aspects showed the highest percentages of students who stated that they always have problems to understand the spoken language in a listening activity. If a student is not able to recognize the grammar presented in the passage, he/she will fail at comprehending the content of it and at responding to communication.

## Conclusions

The majority of the students lack of knowledge about both the English language and the topics of the listening passages, which does not allow them to make use of what they already know about the topic to activate their background knowledge when developing their listening skills.

Most of the students´ perceptions about the speed of speech used in English revealed that the language that teachers use in the classroom is most of the time adjusted to their comprehension level, which makes it easier for them to understand what has been said.

Hesitation and pausing negatively affect the students´ development of the listening skill because when EFL learners listen to a message with constant interruptions and hesitation, they experience comprehension breakdowns that most of the students in the study described as troublesome to understand natural speech.

The accents associated to different variations of English cause relevant difficulties in the students while trying to attach meaning to the spoken language for comprehension to take place. Most of the participants in the study often experience this problem, which is corroborated by the teachers who were interviewed.

Listening passages in which complex grammatical structures are used interfere on the students´ listening comprehension most of the time. This leads to confusion when the students try to provide meaning to every word they listen to. The majority of the students considered that they sometimes face this issue in the language classroom, which affects their performance in listening comprehension.

Poor quality of the recorded materials usually hinders the students understanding of spoken language while engaging in a listening activity. Correct and clear pronunciation of the language,

along with external sound reduction, according to this research results, can benefit the students

when trying to comprehend the language they are exposed to.

## Recommendations

English language teachers need to increase the development of pre-listening activities that provide the students with access to background knowledge about both the language and the topics of the listening materials they are using in the classroom.

The listening passages used for language learning should be carefully selected by teachers trying to use materials that are in correspondence with the students' level. The language in the passage should be graded so that students can better comprehend what they hear.

Teachers should give the students access to language that is used in the natural context; that is, students should be exposed to real language so that they can get used to the presence of hesitation and pausing as part of the communication process. In this sense, further research may be conducted related to the use of authentic listening materials to develop listening skills.

EFL teachers should use listening materials with a wide diversity of language variations for the student to develop listening skills; that is, students should have access to different accents and fixed expressions that are common to particular English-speaking contexts, so that comprehension becomes more effective.

Further practice on grammar should be provided by teachers so that students can communicatively learn the complex structures that characterize speech in English, such as the use of the passive voice.

The listening passages that are used in the classroom should follow some selection criteria so that clear pronunciation, reduction of background sounds and other factors that affect the listening process do not hinder the students' comprehension goal. Further research should be conducted to determine the criteria for listening passages selection.

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**Annexes**

**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA**

**La Universidad Católica de Loja**

**OPEN AND DISTANCE MODALITY**

**ENGLISH DEGREE**

**STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE**

Estimado estudiante,

La presente encuesta tiene como objetivo obtener información para conocer cuál es su opinión sobre **las dificultades que usted tiene para escuchar comprensivamente en las clases de inglés**. Cabe señalar que esta información será utilizadas con propósitos académicos exclusivamente; por lo que, le solicitamos comedidamente contestar el siguiente cuestionario:

**Instrucciones: Marque por favor la opción de frecuencia que más refleje su criterio (UNA SOLA RESPUESTA POR NÚMERO).**

**Dificultades como oyente**

| *No.* | Enunciado | *Nunca* | *Rara vez* | *A veces* | *Frecuentemente* | *Siempre* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | No entiendo el tema que escucho en inglés y por ello debo usar mi conocimiento o experiencia previa sobre el mismo. | | | | | |
| 2 | Me es difícil entender lo que escucho en inglés y por ello debo escuchar los detalles para entender la idea principal. | | | | | |
| 3 | Tengo dificultad en hacer las actividades del texto que escuché en inglés por la falta de conocimiento del idioma. | | | | | |
| 4 | Después de que el profesor pausa la grabación, me es difícil predecir | | | | | |

| No. | | Nunca | Rara vez | A veces | Frecuentemente | Siempre |
|-----|---|-------|----------|---------|----------------|---------|
| | (adivinar) la idea que continúa en el texto escuchado. | | | | | |
| 5 | Me es fácil mantener un diálogo corto en base al texto que escuché en inglés. | | | | | |
| 6 | Es difícil para mí tener una idea general del texto después de la primera vez que lo escuché en inglés. | | | | | |
| 7 | Me siento nervioso y preocupado cuando no entiendo el texto que escuché en inglés. | | | | | |
| 8 | Me es difícil entender el texto que escucho en inglés porque el tema no es de mi interés. | | | | | |
| 9 | Me resulta más difícil comprender en inglés el texto grabado que el texto leído en voz alta por mi profesor(a). | | | | | |

## Dificultades con el hablante

| No. | Enunciado | Nunca | Rara vez | A veces | Frecuentemente | Siempre |
|-----|-----------|-------|----------|---------|----------------|---------|
| 10 | Me es difícil entender lo que dice un extranjero que habla inglés porque titubea (duda) y hace varias pautas mientras habla. | | | | | |
| 11 | Cuando escucho me es difícil entender el significado de las palabras en inglés porque el que habla no las pronuncia claramente. | | | | | |
| 12 | Me es difícil entender lo que escucho en inglés porque quien habla lo hace muy rápido. | | | | | |
| 13 | | | | | | |

| No. | Enunciado | Nunca | Rara vez | A veces | Frecuentemente | Siempre |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Es difícil para mí entender lo que escucho en inglés por las diferentes formas de pronunciar de los hablantes. | | | | | |

## Dificultades con el texto que escucho

| No. | Enunciado | Nunca | Rara vez | A veces | Frecuentemente | Siempre |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | El tipo de vocabulario utilizado en el texto que escucho en inglés no me permite comprender el tema. | | | | | |
| 15 | Las estructuras gramaticales que hay en el texto que escucho en inglés interfieren con mi habilidad de escuchar comprensivamente. | | | | | |
| 16 | La extensión del texto que escucho en inglés me impide interpretar el mensaje. | | | | | |
| 17 | El contenido del texto que escucho en inglés es abstracto. | | | | | |
| 18 | La mala calidad de las grabaciones de los textos que escucho en inglés en el aula no me permiten comprender el mensaje del tema. | | | | | |

## GRACIAS POR SU COLABORACIÓN

**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA**
**La Universidad Católica de Loja**

**MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA**
**TITULACIÓN DE INGLES**
**CUESTIONARIO DEL ESTUDIANTE**


**STUDENTS' INTERVIEW**


1. ¿Cree Ud. que le es difícil escuchar comprensivamente en inglés dentro del aula?


Si ( )             No ( )


¿Por qué_____


_____




2. ¿Cuál de los siguientes elementos cree Ud. que dificulta su habilidad de escuchar grabaciones

en inglés en su aula?

Usted como oyente                              ( )

El texto que escucha                           ( )

El hablante (quien emite el mensaje)           ( )

¿Por qué_____

_____

3. ¿Según usted, qué factor(es) hace(n) que escuchar grabaciones en inglés en su aula sea difícil? Mencione al menos tres por cada elemento y el por qué

El oyente ¿Por qué?

_____

El texto que escucha ¿Por qué?

_____

_____

El hablante (quien dice el mensaje) ¿Por qué?

_____

_____

4. ¿Qué hace Ud. cuando no entiende el texto de la grabación en inglés que les hace escuchar su profesor en el aula?

_____

_____

APUNTES EXTRAS DE LA ENTREVISTA EN RELACIÓN AL TEMA:

_____

_____

_____

¡Gracias por su colaboración!

**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA**
**La Universidad Católica de Loja**

**OPEN AND DISTANCE MODALITY**
**ENGLISH DEGREE**

**TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE**

Dear teacher,

The aim of this brief questionnaire is to obtain information concerning *your opinion about your students' listening comprehension difficulties in the EFL classroom.*

The following information will only be used for academic/research purposes. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible based on the following criteria.

**Instructions:** place an (X) in the box that best reflects your personal opinion

**The listener**

| Item no. | Statements | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage | | | | | |
| 2 | I listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage | | | | | |
| 3 | I find it difficult to do listening activities because of my lack of knowledge of English language | | | | | |
| 4 | After my teacher stops the recording, | | | | | |

| | | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | I find it difficult to predict what will come next | | | | | |
| 5 | I find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage | | | | | |
| 6. | I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time | | | | | |
| 7. | I feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage | | | | | |
| 8 | I find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to me | | | | | |
| 9 | I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud | | | | | |

## The speaker

| Item no. | Statements | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. | I find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses | | | | | |
| 11. | I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly | | | | | |
| 12. | I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast | | | | | |
| 13. | I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents | | | | | |

**The listening passage**

| Item no. | Statements | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. | Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with my listening comprehension | | | | | |
| 15. | Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with my listening comprehension | | | | | |
| 16. | The length of the listening passage hinders me to interpret the message | | | | | |
| 17. | The content of the listening passage is abstract | | | | | |
| 18. | The poor quality of recording does not allow me to understand the listening passage | | | | | |