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Students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL  
classrooms: An Ecuadorian case

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN.

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*2017*

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Magister.

Eliana Ivanova Pinza Tapia

DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de fin de titulación: “Students’ perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties: An Ecuadorian case”, realizado por la estudiante Jenny Narciza Elizabeth Recalde Moran, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por lo tanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, marzo de 2017

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“Yo, Jenny Narciza Elizabeth Recalde Morán, declaro ser autor (a) del presente trabajo de titulación: “Students’ perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms: An Ecuadorian case”, de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Ingles, siendo la Mgtr. Eliana Ivanova Pinza Tapia, 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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## **Dedication**

My thesis is dedicated first of all to God who has been my guide and has given me the wisdom to achieve my goals and ideals thru all my life.

To my parents, who gave me life and taught me to be a good wife and exemplary mother. Also, to my brothers and sisters for all of the unconditional love that I always receive from them.

To my husband Juan Carlos, and my kids Erika and Juan Carlos, who are my life. They are the ones who give me joy and make me feel loved and respected. They encourage and support me on all the challenges that I want to pursue.

Jenny

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to investigate difficulties in listening comprehension that students have in the EFL classroom by answering the following questions: How do the factors of listeners and speakers affect their listening comprehension? How does the listening passage hinder the students' listening comprehension?

This research took place in five private high schools located in Quito. One English teacher was selected from each of the five schools. These five teachers were observed, surveyed and interviewed. In addition, one-hundred twenty-five students participated in this study and fifteen were chosen randomly to represent the sample. This group of students was interviewed and answered a questionnaire. Information was collected using class observation sheets, teachers' questionnaire, and students' questionnaire and analyzed through a quantitative and qualitative process.

According to the results, one of the major challenges affecting English students' ability to listen is the mixture of several accents such as American and British in their English material. It also showed that students are distracted by external noises in their surroundings. The lack of vocabulary is also a problem that students face during listening exercises. Finally, it was concluded that students are bored by the themes presented in their studies.

**Key words:** EFL classroom, factors, listening passage, private high schools.

## RESUMEN

El propósito del presente estudio es investigar las dificultades que tiene el oyente en la comprensión auditiva en la clase de Inglés contestando las siguientes preguntas: Cómo los factores del oyente y hablante afectan su comprensión y habilidades auditivas? Cómo el escuchar un fragmento en Inglés puede dificultar su entendimiento?

Esta investigación se llevó a cabo en cinco colegios privadas ubicados en Quito. En todas las escuelas secundarias fueron observados, encuestados y entrevistados cinco profesores de inglés. Además, ciento veinticinco estudiantes participaron en este estudio y quince de ellos fueron elegidos de forma aleatoria para representar la muestra, dichos estudiantes fueron entrevistados y aplicados cuestionarios. Información fue recolectada a través de: la hoja de observación de la clase, el cuestionario de los profesores y estudiantes. Los datos recogidos se analizaron mediante un proceso cuantitativo y cualitativo.

De acuerdo a los resultados, uno de los mayores retos que afecta la habilidad auditiva de los estudiantes de inglés es la mezcla de diferentes acentos como el americano y británico en su material de Inglés. También se demostró que los estudiantes se distraen por ruidos externos en el área. La falta de vocabulario es otro problema que los estudiantes tienen durante los ejercicios auditivos. Finalmente, se concluye que los estudiantes tienden a aburrirse con ciertos temas presentados en sus materiales de estudio.

**Palabras clave:** aula de inglés como lengua extranjera, factores, el paso de escuchar, escuelas secundarias privadas.

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this research study was to determine, identify, and analyze the difficulties that English learners have in their listening skills based on comprehension, accuracy, and fluency. This has been considered the most important skill in English language learning because it allows learners to understand what others say or want to express. Moreover, it has been analyzed that listening has a high importance in the academic field because students are interested in the acquisition of the language in order to apply it and further their studies. Additionally, it has been necessary to understand the factors that interfere with their listening skills and comprehension of the target language in EFL classrooms in Ecuador's public schools.

In order to achieve the purpose of this research, three of the most remarkable studies have been considered due to their importance in the study of listening as a skill in the learning of English.

Hamouda (2013) stated that listening skills are very important in acquiring understandable input, since learning does not occur without input. The characteristics of listening are the ability to recognize another message through sense, aural organs assigning a meaning to the message to understand it and it has been considered an important role in the communication process.

The same author mentioned that EFL learners have a lot of problems in listening comprehension because universities pay more attention to grammar, reading, and vocabulary but not to listening and speaking. Hamouda also considers that comprehending speech is a very difficult activity for students. Thousands of problems are faced by students when listening to a language. If teachers are expected to help learners improve their listening comprehension, it's vital that they comprehend the listening difficulties in understanding spoken passages and teach

their students effective listening comprehension strategies to be able to solve their listening comprehension problems.

Jafari and Hashim (2015) emphasized that more than 50 percent of the time spent in learning a foreign language is devoted to listening. EFL students need to learn and apply different strategies to improve their listening comprehension; however, there are some factors that make it difficult. In this regard, some studies have been conducted to identify the factors that may cause students' difficulties.

Another similar study was conducted by Fu (2014) but with a slightly different focus, which was to investigate the correlations between the college EFL learners' phonetic level and their listening comprehension. In this particular study, Fu found that there is also a relationship between the participants' listening ability and their comprehensive English level. He also found a similar relationship between the participants' phonetic level and their comprehensive English level.

Furthermore, the researcher concluded that the participants were poor in reading phrases. They also had great difficulties in dictating sentences, especially long sentences. Participants could write down the main idea or the exact short sentences, but they could not write down the long sentence. Finally, the participants were very poor in reading the minimum pairs and phrases but they did well in reading the two-syllabled word, polysyllables and sentences. This shows that the participants had become skilled at stress and pause which is vitally important.

Similarly, to find and improve listening skills just as in the previous research, it can be concluded that there is a wide emphasis around the fact that not only the strategies that students may acquire in order to learn efficiently are important but also different methods and strategies that can make a long, lasting effect on their listening.

Additionally, it is important to remark that there were not found any methodological limitation in this study. Finally, the present research study will provide excellent source of investigation and motivation for English researchers, teachers and students who want to improve their skills in English language.

## Chapter I: Literature Review

This section includes important topics which support the current research in a theoretical and bibliographical way. It helps to understand the concepts and also describes how the research is related to prior studies done before.

### *Listening comprehension*

Vandergrift and Goh (2012) consider that listening comprehension is an active process where listeners analyze what they hear and interpret it on the basis of their linguistic knowledge and their knowledge of the topic. Vandergrift and Goh also state that this process begins with the representation of what the speaker wishes to say and it is converted to words. Through the comprehension process, listeners construct a mental representation of their understanding of the message, with the end product retained in long-term memory.

On the other hand, Goh (2008) considers that learners become more self-regulated and self-directed in their efforts to improve their individual listening abilities through a metacognitive approach. The author believes that listening plays a significant role in people's lives, emphasizing listening from the four major skills and areas of language (listening, speaking, reading and writing) as a vital one.

Moreover, Chang and Read (2006) consider that foreign language students' listening comprehension is a difficult skill due to the limited knowledge of the language and their lack of experience hearing fluent natural speech in English. In addition, the authors believe that children should listen and respond to language before they learn to talk. When it is time for children to learn to read, they need to listen in order to learn and follow directions. Children also need to do the same in the classroom so they can retain the information received. At the beginning, learners generally have to listen to the words several times before they are able to recognize and

pronounce them. At the same time, listening can also help students build vocabulary, develop language proficiency, and improve language use.

Additionally, listening implies more than just hearing and perceiving a stream of sounds; it also requires comprehension of the speaker's intended message.

*Elements of listening comprehension: the listener, the speaker, and the listening passage*

In observing the elements of listening comprehension, it is important to take into account that the listener is a very important element of listening comprehension. The process view of listening has changed the role of the listener from someone who was thought to passively receive the spoken message to an active participant in the act, which means that in the classroom, students take responsibility for their own learning of how to listen. They employ a variety of strategies and skills, and discuss their effectiveness with their classmates. They rely on metacognitive abilities like developing self-awareness and prior knowledge to overcome difficulties and to look for additional opportunities to listen outside of class.

Equally important, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) mention the need of learners to control their listening in order to understand a conversation through real communication. Additionally, it was considered that students cannot rely on facial expressions and body language only to express themselves when interacting in a listening and speaking activity. They would miss the opportunity to communicate with the speakers as well. To approximate real-life and communicational listening experiences, students may be grouped or paired up to practice where showing understanding or incomprehension could take place by asking questions and agreeing or disagreeing with the speaker.

Furthermore, Nunan (2003) indicates that listeners need to consider their purpose and live the experience of listening for different purposes. Any discussion of listening tasks has to include

different types of listening. The most common type of listening exercise in different textbooks are based on listening for specific information. This usually involves catching concrete information that included names, time, and specific language forms.

Likewise, Fu (2014) emphasizes that phonetics and phonology, especially pronunciation, are the basis of listening and speaking. It has been found that phonetic problems have effected the students' English learning to a great extent.

Moreover, Numan (2003) considers that three components are involved in the production of speech: a conceptualizer, where speakers decide what to say and in which their thoughts will be expressed, a formulator, where thoughts are put into words and an articulator, this thought is transformed into overt speech, drawing on the syllabary to coordinate larynx, mouth, tongue, and lips in the verbalization process through inner speech. Speakers can verify whether the planned formulated thought is, indeed, what they want to say and is structured in the way they want to say it.

When considering texts, Vandergrift (2012) states that texts are created to be either read or spoken and sometimes listeners are not able to understand texts that are meant to be read. On the other hand, spoken texts enjoy a number of characteristics that can facilitate comprehension, if listeners are taught to capitalize on them.

The author additionally mentions that unplanned speech is more spontaneous in nature. It is often characterized in the form of incomplete sentences, hesitations and pauses of varying lengths, and fillers, as speakers search for the best word to express what they want to say. These results can be found in shorter idea units with frequent repetitions. Grammar errors may be present and the language is often colloquial, accompanied by reduced forms and assimilations.

Overall, these features make unplanned speech easier to comprehend because the



redundancy, fillers, pauses, and repairs give listeners more time to process the message. Speakers may also do self-repair: that is, change a word used or rephrase an idea in order to express the message more clearly and create the desired impression for the listener. As they rephrase, speakers may also add extra details, which often lead to strings of idea units that are not very cohesive and may make the message appear somewhat incoherent. Planned speech reflects more of the characteristics of written texts. These texts use complete sentences, giving more emphasis on content and condensing information into fewer words. As noted earlier, many of the features of unplanned speech (pauses, redundancy, and shorter idea units) can facilitate comprehension, particularly at earlier stages of language learning (Vandergrift and Goh 2012).

*Listening comprehension difficulties for EFL learners (Listening Problems /causes)*

Numan (2003) states that the moment when students listen to a passage, the message can be understood one word at a time. It is easier to catch the meaning of each individual word this way. The author also states that it is difficult for the student to understand the overall meaning of a passage while reading it, so he or she feels frustrated. In this case, it is better to interpret each individual part before you could make any sense of it when it is finished.

Furthermore, Bloomfield (2010) states that length, redundancy, and complexity of the passage affect the students' listening comprehension. Learners need exposure to and practice with natural sounding language. When learners talk about text difficulty, the first thing many mention is speed. Indeed, that can be a problem. A more useful technique is to simply put pauses between phrases or sentences. In effect the listening process is slowed down to allow the listeners to monitor their listening more closely.

Moreover, Vandergrift (2012) indicates that unplanned speech is more listenable. It is understood that texts must include pauses, false starts, rephrasing, and fillers. They provide

listeners with the chance to develop their own perception of word segmentation which is called text selection.

In addition, the authors also state that at the beginning stages of language learning, this would mean choosing samples of oral language that are less dense and more literate in nature such as dialogues and conversations, discussions and interviews.

Moreover, Nunan (2003) cites that learners need experience with different types of listening texts. When learners were listening in a second or foreign language, they not only had to process the meaning of what they were listening to, but also process the language itself. This can lead to an overload. If the task itself made the listening even more complex, the learners were simply unable to understand. In addition to the task, the text itself determines how easy or difficult something is to understand. Spoken language is very different from written language. It is more redundant, full of false starts, rephrasing, and elaborations. Incomplete sentences, pauses, and overlaps are common.

The author also expresses that there are some other variables like the number of individuals or objects that increase difficulty in listening. As an example, it is indicated that a recording with a male voice and a female voice is easier than one with two similar male voices or two similar female voices. Simple, specific spatial relationships are easier to understand than complex ones.

To demonstrate what hinders students in the listening process some other examples have been studied, cases such as: Recording giving directions, information like turn right at the bank is easier to understand than go a little way on that street. The information can be consistent with what the listener already knows such as listening to someone talk about a film you have seen is easier to understand than hearing the same type of conversation about one you have not seen.

This would be an example of individuals and objects being different to each other in conversation.

*Strategies and activities to develop listening comprehension SKILL*

Despite, Vandergrift & Goh (2012) consider that listening activities in many language classrooms focus on what the listeners listen and are asked to repeat what they have heard. Learners often have to show what they have understood or what they have not understood. They usually feel anxious about listening and responding in the correct way. In addition to anxiety, learners also face the challenge of not knowing how to listen when they encounter listening input.

Furthermore, Goh (2000) states that once learners begin listening, students are often expected to complete the listening task without any help along the way. Sometimes the spoken text does not normally allow the listener to slow it down or break it down into parts.

Equally important, Yagang (2012) adds that listening problems come mainly from one of four sources: the message to be listened to, the speaker, the listener, and the physical setting. On the message content, many learners find it more difficult to listen to a taped message than to read the same message on a piece of paper because reading material can be read as long as the reader likes. As an example, the author expresses that students who have been exposed mainly to formal English may not be familiar with words like stuff for material, guy for man, etc., as well as more kinds of slang. In spontaneous conversations people sometimes use ungrammatical sentences because of nervousness or hesitation, omitting elements of sentences or adding something redundant. This may make it difficult for the listener to understand the meaning.

The author also states the lack of sociocultural and contextual knowledge of the target language can present an obstacle for comprehension because foreign-language learners usually give more time to reading than to listening. In a physical setting, background noises on the

recording and environmental noises can take the listener's mind off the content of the listening passage and this could create distortion for learning.

In regards to listening strategies, Al-Jamal and Bataineh (2009) mention that listening strategies are techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input, and those are the following: Top-down strategies are listener based on the use of their knowledge of the topic to help them understand the topic while Bottom-up text are based on the listener's reliance on the combination of sounds, words and grammar that creates meaning. Listening comprehension tends to be an interactive and interpretive process in which listeners use prior and linguistic knowledge in deciphering messages. In addition, listeners can use metacognitive, cognitive and socio- affective strategies to facilitate comprehension and to make their learning more effective.

Moreover, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) consider that the listening comprehension strategies are: Cognitive strategies that are related to understanding and gathering input in the short term or long-term memory. Comprehension begins with data that has been received and data that has been examined.

Meanwhile, Nunan (2003) considers "Bottom-up vs. top-down processing" to be the distinction which is based on the way learners attempt to understand what they read or hear. With bottom-up processing, students start with the component parts: words, grammar, and the like. Top-down processing is the opposite. Learners start from their background knowledge.

It is not possible to replace bottom-up with top-down, and it would not be desirable to do so even if we could. We need to help learners integrate the two. This use of the top-down and bottom-up data is also called interactive processing (Peterson, 2001).

Clackson (2007) mentions that strategies are techniques or activities that contribute

directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input, also they can be classified by how the listener processes the input. Learners can plan which listening strategies will be the best in a particular situation and at the same time they can monitor their comprehension and effectiveness of the selected strategies. Students can be evaluated if they achieved their listening comprehension goals and if the listening strategies selected was an effective one. To extract meaning from a listening text, students need to figure out the purpose for listening, activate background knowledge of the topic in order to predict or anticipate content, and identify appropriate listening strategies. It was also mentioned that this selectivity enables students to focus on specific items in the input and reduces the amount of information they have to hold in short-term memory in order to recognize it. Students' comprehension improves and their confidence increases when they use top-down and bottom-up strategies simultaneously to construct meaning. Monitoring comprehension helps students to also detect inconsistencies and comprehension failures, directing them to use alternate strategies.

Equally important, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) state that they had analyzed four of the cognitive processes that come into play during the process of L2 listening comprehension: Top-down and bottom-up processing, controlled and automatic processing, perception, parsing, and utilization, and metacognition. These processes describe what listeners do during the act of listening, how they can do this efficiently, and how they regulate these processes. Listeners construct meaning by linking information from a listening text with knowledge stores in long-term memory, informed by their overall prior knowledge and life experiences. Top-down and bottom-up processes play a key role in all three phases of comprehension, and competent listeners use metacognition to regulate these processes to achieve successful comprehension.

In order to support the theoretical research, five previous studies have been taken into account based on the students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in the EFL classroom that will be mentioned below.

Hamouda (2012) conducted a study in order to investigate listening problems encountered by 60 first year English major students of Qassim University. Data was gathered by using questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: The first one contained 7 questions to collect subjects' English learning experience, the importance of their listening skills and their self-rated English listening proficiency level. Section two contained 35 different items grouped into five categories: listening material, linguistic aspects, lack of concentration, speaker, listener, and physical setting. The answers obtained were then recorded on a 4-point Likert scale which contains frequency verbs such as never, sometimes, often, and always. In this way, when the interview was done, it would measure the information that was received through the questionnaire. It would also attain data on how the listening difficulties affected comprehension, to obtain information about why the learners have difficulties in listening comprehension, and also to find out other listening difficulties that can affect the learners' listening comprehension. Every portion of data of the questionnaire and the interview was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, although just the interview was analyzed qualitatively. Therefore, Hamouda concluded that accent, pronunciation, speed of speech, insufficient vocabulary, lack of concentration, anxiety, and bad quality of recording materials and equipment were the major listening comprehension problems encountered by EFL Saudi learners of Qassim University. To improve this situation, it was suggested that teachers learn to adapt listening recordings and obtain better listening materials for students and to find better ways of

introducing techniques for listening activities. In this way, students' anxiety levels can be reduced therefore producing more positive results in English proficiency and listening strategies.

Another similar study was conducted by Tingyi Fu (2014) but with a slightly different focus which was to investigate the correlations between the college EFL learners' phonetic level and their listening comprehension. One hundred and sixty sophomores of Art and Science College of Yangtze University-China participated in this research. Several kinds of instruments were used in this study such as the collection of final scores of listening comprehension tests. Then, a phonetic test and a dictation test were given to the students. A tape recorder was used to do the phonetic reading and an MP3 was also used for the dictation test. A software program called SPSS (the statistical package for social science) was used to analyze the data collected during the whole process of analysis. Three steps were adopted to achieve final results of all correlations. The first step was to conduct a correlation analysis to investigate the relationship between the participants' phonetic test scores and their dictation test scores. The second step was to conduct a correlation analysis for investigating the relationship between the participants' final English scores and their English comprehension scores. The final step was to find if there were same or similar phonetic weaknesses of the participants and the weaknesses' influence on their listening ability.

All of the analysis above shows that the phonetic levels correlate with the listening ability, which can further correlate with the comprehensive English level. The overall conclusion that can be seen, is indeed, direct correlations between an EFL learner's phonetics ability and his listening comprehension. In this particular study, Fu found that there is relation between participants' phonetic level and listening ability. He also found out that there is a relationship between the

participants' listening ability and their comprehensive English level and a similar relationship between the participants' phonetic level and their comprehensive English level.

Furthermore, the researcher concluded that the participants were poor in reading phrases. The participants also had great difficulties in dictating sentences, especially long sentences. Most participants could write down the main idea or the exact short sentences, but they could not write down the long sentence. Finally, the participants were very poor in reading the minimum pairs and phrases but they did well in reading the two-syllable word, polysyllables and sentences. This shows that the participants had become skilled at stress and pause which is vitally important.

Similarly, to find and improve listening skills just as in the previous research, Motallebzadeh and Defaei (2013) carried out a research to find out the effect of Task-Based listening activities on the improvement of listening self-efficacy among 50 male and female Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The method used was quantitative. Data was collected through tests and questionnaires.

The Interchange/Passages Objective Placement Test (IPOPT) was used as an instrument which consisted of 20 listening items; 20 reading items; and 30 language use items. The scores were classified accordingly, placing each subject with a particular score between proficiency guidelines. Another particular instrument in this study was the Listening Self-Efficacy Questionnaire which included 20 items that assessed the listening self-efficacy of the participants. In using a questionnaire such as this one, the comparison of the participants' levels of listening comprehension self-efficacy was achieved before and after the treatment was applied.

The results indicate that the participants were rather consistent in relation to their listening self-efficacy. According to these results, task-based listening exercises in English classrooms do, in fact, affect Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension self-efficacy.



Consequently, Motallebzadeh and Defaei concluded that through the use of task-based listening activities, the development of learners' listening self-efficacy would be simplified and that it is far superior to the traditional method of teaching listening by simply asking and answering certain questions.

Correspondingly, another study was conducted by Jannejad and Shokouhi (2012) in which the main emphasis was also to see the effects and find solutions to listening comprehension problems. In this case, the study was to investigate the possible interactions of listening proficiency; second, to investigate the effects of learned strategies on listening comprehension and recall; to find out the possible problems encountered by EFL learners and compare this to the different listening abilities that learners have. The study involved 70 Iranian English learning students that were from the Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz in Iran. One of the classes was treated as the control group and the other as the experimental. At the very beginning, they were administered a TOEFL test to define their level of aptitude in the English language. Then the students were ranked according to their scores received on the TOEFL test.

There were four instruments that were used to gather the data; these included a pre-instruction assessment, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) self-report questionnaire, training sessions and think-aloud protocols, and post-instruction assessment.

The listening pre-test required students to listen to a number of authentic texts to validate comprehension by checking the correct choice of open-ended questions. The pre-test was given before the instruction began. The self-report questionnaire employed in this study was used to analyze the information that the students participated in. Ten training sessions were conducted on the experimental group; Twelve weeks later, the students were already mindful of how to observe

and find a way in which they could fill in the gaps in listening comprehension and recall. The results were compared with those obtained from the pre-tests and they were further analyzed.

There was an indication of no difference in mean scores of the pre-tests. Comparisons were made between the two groups (the post-instruction assessment and the pre-tests) for any differences. It was revealed that the experimental group achieved better than the control group and managed to get a satisfactory stance with the training sessions.

There were five challenging stages of listening which were recognized throughout the whole semester which were: the students quickly forgot what they heard; nearly all the subjects, said that they could not remember certain words and phrases they had just heard; they would understand what was being said while this was happening but found it difficult to recall and remember later; and, they stopped to think about unfamiliar words or the interpretation of a segment of text. These reports show a common denominator in listening which is that they show overlapping of the three phases of comprehension (perception, parsing, and utilization).

Jannejad and Shokouhi concluded that the higher level of strategy connects with language development in a positive way and that the student, who received clear instruction, overtook those that only had the implicit instruction. It may be that the longer the instructional treatments are, the more different the results that may be found.

Furthermore, Hsu, Hwang and Chang (2014) conducted a study to investigate the proposed questions that follow. What do the students pay attention to during the learning process? Does the proposed approach enhance the listening comprehension of EFL students in comparison with the conventional computer-assisted language learning approach? Lastly, what do the students feel about the proposed approach and the conventional computer-assisted language learning approach in terms of the usability, ease of use, and satisfaction with the

captions provided by the two approaches? In this study, the participants were thirty-eight freshmen from a non-language-related department of a university in Taiwan. Data was gathered through questionnaires and videos of the same language and length containing computer science information. For each video, a test was developed by three experienced English teachers, and was pronounced by two native English speakers. The two different tests were an auditory test and a listening comprehension test. In the auditory test, the students had to listen to real audio recordings, with the other test, it was done through a video where texts were presented. Both the test parts contained four multiple-choice items with a perfect score of 100. During the learning process, the students were told to push a button of that particular software whenever they did not understand the content they were listening to, at the same time, being given permission to consult a dictionary of unknown words in Chinese. In contrast, the experimental group learned in a different way. There was automatic filtering of the vocabulary while the unfamiliar words translated to Chinese were displayed when the video player was paused. It was considered that students were focusing more on the captions during the video and relied more on these to learn the new content. Likewise, in both groups, the test scores for the listening comprehension were higher than those of the comparison group. Therefore, it was shown that the experimental group had a better performance than those of the comparison treatment.

Hsu, Hwang and Chan concluded that for the eye-tracking data analysis scores showed a higher percentage than the ones that focused on captions, showing the great significance of providing effective captions in English listening programs. It was also shown that the students were able to be more attentive according to the new vocabulary compared with the captions when they were filtered.

A recommendation would be to follow advice from some researchers of several studies

that report that hiding words in captions allows students to be more attentive to the target words, which in turn creates a great source of benefit for the development of their listening skills.

Additionally, Rahimi and Katal (2013) conducted a study to examine the effect metacognitive instruction has on a student, comparing it to the effect of conventional teaching of listening (pre-listening, listening, post-listening), on EFL learners' metacognitive awareness of listening strategies, listening comprehension, and oral language proficiency. Thirty-five female and fifteen male students from intermediate English courses participated in the study. The control group included 17 female and 8 male students and the experimental group included 18 female and 7 male students.

The Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) was used to test the participants' metacognitive awareness and use of listening strategies. The questionnaire contained 21 items in which five factors were included such as problem solving, planning-evaluation, mental translation, person knowledge, and directed attention.

A TOEFL test was used to evaluate students' listening comprehension and oral proficiency which included 6 listening tasks with different naturalistic settings and topics. The oral test comprised of 6 speaking tasks with different styles.

The present study indicated a large difference between the control and experimental groups' level of listening awareness and perceived use of it. This meant that giving guidance to the students when they needed it, in terms of constructing meaning when they listen to elicitation, helps them greatly.

At the end of this research paper, Hsu, Hwang and Chang concluded that the findings of the study make it clear that metacognitive awareness of listening can produce achievements where the old, conventional way of teaching listening cannot.

Finally, it is concluded that there is wide emphasis around the fact that not only the strategies that students may acquire in order to learn efficiently are important but also different methods and strategies that can make a long, lasting effect on their listening skills. It is also clear, that this gives an overview of the real issues at stake when considering the student's individual learning experience.

## **Chapter II: Method**

### **Setting and Participants**

The research study was applied in five private high schools located in Quito-Ecuador. The participants were one hundred and twenty-five students in their second year of high school who were chosen at random and that represent the sample of the study. Additionally, five teachers from different high schools participated by giving their own criteria and applying their own expertise based on the problems they have found in the classroom in regard to listening activities and understanding.

### **Procedure**

In order to conduct this study, it was necessary to develop a deep research concerning the theoretical framework from different sources of investigation. Scientific information was reviewed and analyzed in order to write the literature review and demonstrate a credible argument for this research.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used, the qualitative data method provided to the researcher the description of the difficulties that listening involve students and their criteria.

On the other hand, the quantitative method was used to measure the percentage that is represented in tables. The data collection techniques included questionnaires and interviews forms that were completed during the process. The goal of the questionnaires was to obtain information on the students' opinion on the difficulties that they have in comprehensive listening in their English classes, including their difficulties as a listener and as a speaker.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections: the listener, the speaker, and the listening passage. The listener section was comprised of nine statements with five answers to each statement, which were: never, seldom, sometimes, often and always. The speaker section

had four statements and students were given the same answers to choose from. The final section, the listening passage, consisted of five statements and the same choice of answers.

For the field research, the participation of one hundred and twenty-five students who filled out the questionnaire was considered. However, only fifteen students were selected to be interviewed and they were picked at random. The interview was based on four questions. The first one consisted of yes or no options. In the second question, the students were asked about the factors that contributed to their difficulty in listening in the English classroom. The factor options given were the following: the students as listener, the text the students listen to, or the speaker who emits the message.

In the third question, the students were asked to explain the different factors that might be making their comprehension difficult. The fourth question was based on how students reacted when they failed to comprehend English.

The questionnaires were an essential tool of information in the research. These questionnaires were completed by five teachers who were chosen from each participating high school. Their questionnaires were based on their opinion and expertise about their students' listening comprehension difficulties in the EFL classroom.

Data collected from the students' and teachers' questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. In order to interpret the information, it was necessary to use percentages. Three tables were created, one for each element of listening comprehension, the listener which consisted of nine statements, the speaker consisted of four statements and the listening passage which consisted of five statements making it easy and clear to understand the findings and the relations among the variables, working without any sort of problem during the

application of these questionnaires. Some citations were also taken from the literature review to corroborate and argument the analysis.

Some interesting information was found in the students answers through their problematic based on listening tasks.

The process of analysis based on the students' and teachers' thoughts made it possible to draw some conclusions and aspects that hinder students in listening skills. Additionally, some recommendations were found in order to collaborate with teachers and students that will change the common application of listening comprehension in regular Ecuadorian high schools where this study took place.



## Chapter III: Results and Discussion

### Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

This section analyzes the information collected through questionnaires applied to students, which has been contrasted with the results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire, and students' interview done in the high schools. It has been displayed in three tables and it has been analyzed according to the factors concerning students and classrooms that represented the base of this academic study.

#### **How do the listener factors affect their listening comprehension?**

Rost (2002) defined listening as a complex process of interpretation based on listener's match and what they hear according to what they already know. The author also explains that listening helps learners to understand the world around them and is considered one of the most necessary elements in creating successful communication. In addition, Jafari and Hashim (2015) emphasize that listening is a channel for comprehensive input and more than 50% of the time where learners focus listening as a vital skill in a foreign language study.

**Table 1**

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
		%	%	%	%	%
1	I use my experience and background of the topic to understand the listening passage.	7.2 %	32.8%	44%	13.6%	2.4%
2	I listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage.	8%	35.2%	31.2%	22.4%	3.2%

3	I find it difficult to do listening activities because of my lack of knowledge of English language.	14.4%	28%	36%	19.2%	2.4%
4	After my teacher stops the recording, I find it difficult to predict what will come next.	7.2%	31.2%	40%	18.4%	3.2%
5	I find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage	14.4%	27.2%	34.4%	16.8%	7.2%
6	I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time.	10.4%	32%	36%	16%	5.6%
7	I feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage	16%	23.2%	32%	17.6%	11.2%
8	I find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest for me.	19.2%	27.2%	38.4%	13.6%	1.6%
9	I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud.	12%	29.6%	28.8%	21.6%	8.0%

Author: Jenny Narciza Elizabeth Recalde Moran

Source: Students' questionnaire.

According to the information based on the students' questionnaires, Table 1 demonstrates that one of the main factors that affects the students' listening comprehension is based on learners listening to a passage in the English language. From the one hundred twenty-five students, 44% of them said that students sometimes *use their experience and background of the topic to*

*understand the listening passage.* On the other hand, 32.8 % stated that they seldom do it. From the questionnaires done by the teachers, two of the five teachers mentioned that they noticed their students use their experience and background of the topic to understand the listening passage. The other two teachers mentioned that the students seldom do it. However, one teacher mentioned that a few students did not use their experience and background of the topic to understand the listening passage. This must be interpreted based on Vandergrift and Goh (2012) who indicated that listening comprehension is an active process where listeners analyze what they hear and interpret it on the basis of a student's linguistic knowledge and their knowledge of the topic as well.

However, 35 % of the students seldom *listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage.* In contrast, 2% sometimes listen to every detail to get the main idea. On the other hand, four of the teachers mentioned that students sometimes listen to every detail to get the main idea of the passage. Teachers argued that they are under the impression their students listen to every detail when they are listening to a passage in the classroom. Nevertheless, in the students' interview, seven students explained that their problem in listening was based on the lowest understanding of the language due to stress, intonation and pronunciation applied in the listening passage and it was not possible to identify all the details in the listening exercises. This is explained by Goh (1998) who found out that high-ability listeners used a strategy called fixation (repetition) that refers to paying a lot of attention to one small part of the spoken output in order to understand it. The subjects often do this by searching for the spelling or the meaning of a word. Goh also suggested that when ESL learners apply direct attention to the listening tasks, they have to maintain concentration as much as possible by listening to every word, and continue listening in spite of listening problems.

As evidence on the table, 36% of the students find it sometimes *difficult to do listening activities because of their lack of knowledge of English*. The majority of teachers considered that students have found problems with these sort of activities.

In regards to this, Richards and Schmidt (2010) considered that listening implied more than comprehension of the speaker's intended message. In addition to grammatical competence, listeners must deal with a lot of output from the speakers such as phonemes, words and grammatical structures.

Forty percent of the students argued that sometimes, *after the teacher stops the recording, it was difficult to predict what would come next*. It is essential to note that if students sometimes have difficulty in their listening activities, they would also have some problems trying to predict what would come next in a passage due to their lack of knowledge of the English language. Moreover, eight students from the students' interview corroborated that it was hard to predict what would come next because they could not understand the passage, due to the vocabulary used in the recording. Meanwhile, four teachers answered in their questionnaires that the students seldom find it difficult to predict what will come next after the teacher stops the recording. In this stage, teacher's and student's feedback agreed that all the activities designed with the recordings were not capable of teaching successfully due to student's lack of interest and awareness in developing strategies in order to understand and participate at the moment that the teacher stops the recorder.

According to the chart, thirty-four percent of English learning students found it sometimes *difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage*. At the same time, it is evident that four of the teachers agreed that seldom do students have problems during the development of these sort of activities. The criteria was agreed in both cases, the level of understanding and the

lower development of new strategies that English teachers should apply in the class and the level of students who participated in this research.

Based on the students' interview, students indicated that unfamiliar words and accents are the main reasons and causes of why sometimes they have problems listening to the passage, as well as having a short dialogue about it. Bloomfield (2010) noted that regional accents can impact the spoken message that is listened to and familiar accents are easier to understand than unfamiliar accents. Furthermore, Back (2001) mentioned that unknown vocabulary, unfamiliar topics, fast speech rate and unfamiliar accents are problems encountered in listening activities.

According to the students' questionnaire, 36 % of the students mentioned that sometimes *students have some problems understanding the message when listening for the first time*. However, it is an opposite situation when the observation class experienced several problems in understanding the message of the listening activity. Meanwhile, ten of the interviewed students expressed that the different accent used on the audio tapes represented the main reason why they could not understand the message when they listened to it for the first time. They felt they easily got distracted from the real message. On the other hand, teachers who answered the teachers' questionnaire noticed that students sometimes have difficulty in understanding the message the first time. As it was mentioned before, the reality of these results was set off through the participation of the students in the class. Teachers demonstrated that listening is not a simple skill that can be developed in a simple hour. It was necessary to repeat the activity several times in order to better explain the listening exercises; thus, tiring the students and making the class boring. Rost (1992) suggests that listening is critical in the language classroom because it provides auditory input for the learner. Learning could only begin when input can be understood at the right level; thus, the improvement of listening instructions deserves attention.

Another statement in table number one revealed that the percentage of students who sometimes *feel nervous and worried when they do not understand the listening passage* was 32%. Seven students interviewed answered that the worst feeling when they are doing listening exercises is when they have to fill in the gaps and those answers are wrong. The students additionally expressed that students feel nervous at the moment when the audio is not well understood. Nevertheless, three teachers in the teachers' questionnaire considered that students often felt nervous for their low English knowledge and lack of exposure of English listening.

According to Bingol, Celik, Yidliz and Mart (2014), when listening tests contained known words it was easier for the students to understand and catch their interest through motivation based on positive impact on their listening comprehension ability. Additionally, the authors mentioned that words could have more than one meaning if they are not used in their appropriate contexts, and the results could be confusing.

Thirty-eight point four percent of the *students find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to them*. In this stage, it was necessary to have an interview with some students in order to interpret clearly the main reason for these results. Five students mentioned that listening was hard to understand due to the difficulty of acquiring the meaning of phrases and new words. This result is confirmed by four of the teachers who agreed that students have difficulties in understanding listening passages. In the teacher's questionnaire, the teachers agreed that students seemed be bored by the audio material and lectures, which are based on different topics such as: culture, sports, and art. Unfortunately, not all of these topics appeal to the students. Teachers also expressed that sometimes it is necessary to have a short break time in order to keep the students' attention. If the listening passage is interesting for learners, concentration will be easier for them.

Consequently, students seldom find it *more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to their teacher reading aloud*. This is evidenced with 29.6% who agreed with these results. Students feel more comfortable when the teacher reads aloud instead of playing a regular audio. This is due to students preferring their teacher's accent because they listen and ask questions all the time instead of listening to audio material. In addition, three teachers considered that students prefer their teachers reading aloud instead of listening to a recorded text.

The difficulty of doing listening activities is based on student's lack of knowledge of the English listening lesson. For this reason, it is interpreted that students find it difficult to predict what will come next. The students have to use the background of the topic and make guesses to understand the passage. Additionally, students feel nervous when they have to listen to the passage more than two times. Listening passage material is sometimes considered boring for the students and sometimes too long. Finally, the information obtained from teachers interviewed agreed on the fact that students prefer teachers to read aloud instead of listening to a recorded text because the students are more familiar with the teacher's accent.

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

Hamouda (2013) cites that comprehending speech is a difficult activity for students. Learners face a lot of problems when they listen to a foreign language. When teachers are expected to help learners improve their listening comprehension, teachers must comprehend their listening difficulties in understanding spoken passages and teach them effective listening comprehension strategies in order to solve their listening comprehension problems.

**Table 2**

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
		%	%	%	%	%
10	I find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses.	6.4%	33.6%	32%	20.8%	7.2%
11	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly.	10.4%	21.6%	47.2%	14.4%	6.4%
12	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast.	8.18%	28%	28.8%	25.6%	8.8%
13	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents.	8.0%	28%	34.4%	21.6%	8.0%

Author: Jenny Narciza Elizabeth Recalde Moran

Source: Students' questionnaire.

According to chart number two, it is evident that 36% of students seldom find it *difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses*. English learner students answered immediately that most of the time that they have difficulties in understanding natural speech, due to the lowest knowledge of phrases and new vocabulary, even if the audio has some pauses during the exercises.



When students were asked if *they found English listening difficult to understand the meaning of words which were not pronounced clearly*, 47.2 percent of students expressed that sometimes they have found it hard to identify the real meaning of the words, due to the pronunciation of the audio played or the accent that their English teachers have. The participation of students in this stage was elemental because they manifested that the accent, slang and pronunciation in audios that come from North America and England are so different. On the other hand, 4 of the English teachers answered that most of the time students have difficulty understanding the meaning of the words even if they repeat the listening activity more than two times, and explained the meaning of the words. As Munro and Derwing (1999) stated, accented speech can lead to an important reduction in comprehension. Additionally, Goh (1999) supports speaker's accent as one of the most significant factors that affect listener comprehension. Goh adds that unfamiliar accents both native and non-native can cause serious problems in listening comprehension while familiarity with an accent helps learners' listening comprehension.

Twenty-eight point eight percent of the students who were surveyed in this study mentioned that sometimes *they find it difficult to understand when speakers talk too fast*. The students who participated in this survey explained sincerely that the problem begins when they cannot recognize what an English speaker says. Most of the students expressed that they do not understand each word clearly and they don't have time to understand it. One main problem is when the English language is spoken, the words are joined together. In the same way, four teachers mentioned in their questionnaire that students often find it difficult to understand when speakers talk too fast. This was concluded during the English class and their performance with the activities applied.

Finally, 34.4% of the students expressed that they find it sometimes *difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents*. Therefore, it is not so hard to see how understanding different accents can be very difficult as there are so many English accents, not only from the UK, but also from the United States, Australia, and other areas of the world. Most of the time English teachers who have a strong grasp of English speaking activities speak very quickly even they use expressions and slangs that students have problems understanding them. In these situations, teachers are asked to slow down and take their time to change their methodology. Four teachers mentioned in the questionnaire that different accents confuse the students when it is time to learn the right pronunciation. Two teachers answered that students often find it difficult to understand teachers accept that students do not understand at all, and their choice is more understandable because they try to change their usual fast speed in their classes.

Munro and Derwing (1999) expressed that English spoken with too heavy an accent can lead to an important reduction in comprehension. Goh (1999) cites that speaker's accent is one of the main reasons that affect listening comprehension. Unfamiliar accents both native and non-native can cause serious problems in listening comprehension. Buck (2001) indicated that when listeners hear unfamiliar accents, such as Indian English, for the first time after studying only American English, they will encounter a lot of difficulties in listening.

Accordingly, the main factors that interfere most on the learner's listening skills are these: Students find it difficult to understand the meaning of the words which are not pronounced clearly. Also, the speaker's accent that is unfamiliar is a hindrance in understanding the meaning of the words and leads to an important reduction in their comprehension. The other factor is that the students find it difficult to understand well when the speakers talk too fast; the students are not able to control how quickly a speaker speaks.

### How does the listening passage hinder the students' listening comprehension?

Numan (2003) stated that English can be understood one word at a time and that would be the easier way to process the meaning of each individual word. Moreover, Vandergrift (2012) indicates that unplanned speech is more listenable. Texts that include pauses, false starts, rephrasing, and fillers provide listeners with the chance to develop their own perception of word segmentation.

**Table 3**

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
		%	%	%	%	%
14	Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with my listening comprehension.	11.2%	37.6%	35.2%	16%	0%
15	Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with my listening comprehension.	10.4%	32.8%	39.2%	17.6%	0%
16	The length of the listening passage hinders me to interpret the message.	11.2%	32.8%	36.8%	17.6%	1.6%
17	The content of the listening passage is abstract.	15.2%	36%	34.4%	12%	2.4%

18	The poor quality of recordings does not allow me to understand the listening passage.	18.4%	32.8%	27.2%	16%	5.6%
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Author: Jenny Narciza Elizabeth Recalde Moran

Source: Students' questionnaire

According to table 3, item number fourteen indicates that 37.6 % of students *agreed on the fact that the vocabulary used in the listening passage seldom interferes with their listening language*. Meanwhile, 35.2% of students sometimes have the same problem. On the other hand, eight students from the group interviewed said that because they do not have high vocabulary knowledge, they ask their teachers for the meaning. Three teachers stated that the vocabulary used in the listening passage sometimes interferes with students' listening comprehension. They mentioned that most of the time speakers select words that listeners do not know. When the students listen to unfamiliar words, they think about the meaning of that word for a while, so they then miss the next part of the speech.

Teachers find it difficult to grade listening activities due to wrong use of vocabulary that can be seen in advance level. They find themselves too busy thinking about other things. This represents the most common reason why students might not recognize a word, including not distinguishing between different sounds in English. Other reasons are problems with sounds in word stress, or at the moment that changes when words are spoken together in natural speech

On the next statement 39.2% of students who participated in this survey mentioned that *sometimes have experienced problems with grammar structures in the listening passage that interfere with their listening comprehension*. It was evident in class that students had problems

identifying present perfect tenses and contractions in regular speech, and mostly with British accents where perfect tenses is more often used in speech. On the other hand, only three teachers argued that students have problems with grammatical structures that represented that grammar was based on linking phrases at the moment that speech is exposed through sounds and intonation. It is supposed to be pronounced in regular speech. These are common phenomena that make it difficult for students to distinguish or recognize individual words in the stream of speech. Graham (2006) said that poor grammar was one of the main factors that increased learners' listening comprehension problems.

Thirty-six point eight percent of students considered *that the problem in listening can be based on the length of the listening passage, which hinders them in interpreting the message*. The fact is found at the moment that students miss the whole meaning in speech having a conversation, the student tries to understand every word and the message is misunderstood.

Teachers mentioned that students are given good instructions in order to interpret the real message and most of the time the activities are considered very easy to accomplish in order to build up their confidence, such as identifying the topic which is the same in the passage.

Azmi Bingol, Celik, Yidliz, and Tugrul Mart (2014) mentioned that the student's language level was very important when they were listening to long passages and trying to remember what was said. In contrast, lower level students find it very difficult to listen to a passage that is more than three minutes long and complete the listening task. Short listening passages make listening comprehension easier for learners and reduce their tiredness.

According to the statement shown on table 3, there were 36 % of the students who mentioned that *the content of the listening passage is abstract*. Students expressed that listening materials must be according to the students' level, because each student is at a different level of

understanding. It is necessary to choose the appropriate listening activity because sometimes the activities in the English book are abstract. On the other hand, three teachers believe that the best way to avoid problems with abstract contents is that it should be necessary to practice with natural speech even if it is considered hard to practice. Nevertheless, the materials should progress step by step from authenticity that displays most of the linguistic features of natural speech to total authenticity, because the final aim is to understand natural speech in real life.

Finally, 32, 8% express that *they seldom have problems with the poor quality of recordings that do not allow them to understand the listening passage*, the quality of recordings and their background noise is another skill that does not easily transfer for English learners. Students experiment with diverse problems when their sources have been expired for more than 15 years. These problems were more common mistakes were found in recording tape to tape. Teachers believed that it is necessary to cut down on noise inside and outside the classroom in order to work in a better environment, the fact is that teacher's face diverse disadvantages at the moment of practicing listening activities, and the most repetitive problems is based on the old material that the inappropriate use or the technology that changes the correct sound of in listening activities.

Based on the results found in the current research, there are some specific factors that hinder students' listening comprehension. The most important one is the grammatical structures used in the listening passage which interfere with their listening comprehension.

## **Conclusions**

The overall conclusion is that the subject's ability to listen represents the most challenging skill when learning the English language. Both teachers and students are required to interact and develop with each other in order to improve their skills. The extensive time required for practice leads to a variety of emotions that include positive feelings of success and negative feelings of failure, thus, contributing to difficulties in listening for both students and teachers.

One of the major challenges affecting the ability of English students' to listen is the mixture of several accents such as American and British in their English material. This is exacerbated by English teachers that have studied one accent exclusively at their respective high schools and are unable to acknowledge the different accents found in their students' listening material contributing further to their students' inability to learn comprehensive listening skills and to properly pronounce the words.

It was found that students are easily distracted by noises in their surrounding environment. The problem also stems from the poor quality of the listening material and poor equipment used in the classroom.

The lack of vocabulary is probably the most remarkable problem that students face during listening exercises. They have a difficult time distinguishing between the various pronunciations of different English words and the coinciding changes in their meaning..

Finally, it was concluded that students tend to be bored by the various themes they are presented in their studies. They are unable to relate them and therefore are easily distracted, leading to their inability to improve their listening comprehension.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that listening has to be practiced in real communication in order to have the opportunity to interact in natural speech. Further, it is necessary to place a greater emphasis on pronunciation in students' English curriculum to improve students' vocabulary.

In addition, teachers should use different sources of listening which include accents from all over the world in order to adapt to the teaching style of the lesson books that are provided. However, when possible, it would be best to focus on one accent throughout the lessons. Also, it is recommended that teachers should interact with some other teachers before class, reading all or part of the tape script out loud in order to build up their ability to deal with different accents in the longer term.

Students should also pay attention to the speed and the intonation of the speaker and identify the points during the English class. Teachers should motivate their students to ask question at any time if they do not get the meaning of the audio material, or if they have any kind of problem that could occur in the listening activity.

The listening tasks should not be carried out with external noise or distracting sounds in the environment. It is sure to negatively affect listening comprehension. Teachers should consider it necessary to implement these activities in an English lab where noise can be limited and students can maintain their concentration. Additionally, teachers should use material and sources such as CD players and audio materials that are of better quality, so that they may get better results.

Also, it is recommended that the content of the listening materials must be according to the students' level. It is necessary to choose the appropriate listening activity and include more entertaining stories in audio materials and lessons like sports, stars, movies, art, etc.



Teachers should also help their students develop the sub skills of listening comprehension, such as listening for understanding particular information, listening for the main idea, explanation and inference, and listening for intended meaning. This can be done through different tasks and activities at different levels.

Finally, it is necessary to identify the six stages of the listening stages processes (hearing, attending, understanding, remembering, evaluating and responding) which will make English teachers and material designers aware of the listening problems which learners of English face. This will assist in the diagnosis of learners' problems, curriculum planning material design and supporting the implementation of a better approach to English learning in Ecuadorian schools.

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## **ANNEXES**

## ANNEX 1

### The Listener

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>
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, 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

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
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

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
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					

**THANKS FOR YOUR COLLABORATION**

ANNEX 1



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 utilizada 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	Frecuente mente	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 todos 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 (adivinar) la idea que continúa en el texto escuchado.					
5	Me es difícil 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**

<i>No.</i>	<i>Enunciado</i>	<i>Nunca</i>	<i>Rara vez</i>	<i>A veces</i>	<i>Frecuente mente</i>	<i>Siempre</i>
10.	Me es difícil entender lo que dice un extranjero que habla inglés porque titubea (duda) y hace varias pausas mientras habla					
11.	Cuando escucho me es difícil entender el					

	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.	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**

<i>No.</i>	<i>Enunciado</i>	<i>Nunca</i>	<i>Rara vez</i>	<i>A veces</i>	<i>Frecuente mente</i>	<i>Siempre</i>
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**

ANNEX 2



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA  
La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA  
TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS  
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:

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¡Gracias por su colaboración!

ANNEX 3



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**

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	Students use their experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage					
2	Students listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage					
3	Students find it difficult to do listening activities because of their lack of					



	knowledge of the English language					
4	After you stop the recording, students find it difficult to predict what will come next					
5	Students find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage					
6	Students find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time					
7	Students feel nervous and worried when they do not understand the listening passage					
8	Students find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of their interest					
9	I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud					

### The speaker

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>
10.	Students find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses					
11.	Student find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly					
12.	Students find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast					

13.	Students find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents					
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**The listening passage**

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>
14.	Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with students' listening comprehension					
15.	Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with students' listening comprehension					
16.	The length of the listening passage hinders your students 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					

**THANKS FOR YOUR COLLABORATION**