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

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN.

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DEDICATION

      I want to dedicate this thesis to God for the life and wisdom that He gave me to study and acquire the Bachelor's Degree. To my family, specially to my parents, brothers and sister-in-law who always have supported and encouraged me to fulfill this career.

María Grijalva

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CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Abstract

The theme of this research is: "Students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms: An Ecuadorian case", whose purpose is to determine factors that affect the listening comprehension skills.

This study was performed in a private high school in Guayaquil, and the sample is based on 5 teachers and 125 students, both males and females ranging from 16 to 17 years old.

The instruments for data collection were questionnaires for students and teachers, and semi-structured interviews. The gathered information was organized and tabulated to determine the factors that interfere with listening comprehension.

Based on mixed method research (quantitative and qualitative), the qualitative method was used to collect and analyze the information from the interviews; and the quantitative method was applied from the questionnaires to determine which were the most frequent negative factors that hinder the listening comprehension

Results from this research shows that lack of perception in the listening comprehension is evident in some students due to their lack of knowledge of the language in vocabulary, grammar structures and the speed rate of speech to comprehend various accents.

Key words: Listening comprehension, difficulties in EFL classrooms, students' perceptions

Resumen

El tema de esta investigación es "Las opiniones de los estudiantes sobre sus dificultades de comprensión auditiva en el idioma Inglés como lengua extranjera en el Ecuador", cuyo propósito es determinar los factores que afectan las habilidades en la comprensión auditiva.

Este estudio se realizó en un colegio privado en Guayaquil, siendo la muestra basada en 5 maestros; y 125 estudiantes, tanto hombres y mujeres promediando entre 16 y 17 años.

Los instrumentos usados para recolectar información fueron cuestionarios para estudiantes y profesores, y entrevistas semi-estructuradas, la información reunida fue organizada y tabulada para determinar los factores que interfieren en la comprensión auditiva.

Basado en los métodos mixtos de investigación (cuantitativo y cualitativo), el método cualitativo fue utilizado para recolectar y analizar información de las entrevistas y el método cuantitativo fue aplicado en los cuestionarios para determinar cuáles fueron los factores negativos que frecuentemente impiden la comprensión auditiva.

Los resultados de esta investigación demuestran que la falta de percepción en la comprensión auditiva es evidente en algunos estudiantes debido a su falta de conocimientos en vocabulario, gramática del idioma, y la velocidad del habla para comprender varios acentos.

Palabras Claves: Comprensión auditiva, dificultades en la comprensión del Inglés, opiniones de los estudiantes.

Introduction

Learning English is a process that requires the development of the four skills in order to accomplish a good communication. One of them is listening, which is an input skill. It also allows learners to comprehend what others say and to establish a conversation.

Currently, learning English is considered as a very important subject in the educational curriculum in Ecuador. For that reason, this study is focused on investigating and explaining the students´ perceptions about their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classroom, whose target is to know the factors that interfere with listening comprehension and find the best strategies to overcome those problems. For this purpose, three questions were stated: *How do the listener factors affect their listening comprehension? Do the speaker factors interfere on the learners' listening skills? How does the listening passage hinder the students' listening comprehension?*

A great number of studies about listening comprehension difficulties have been carried around the world. One of them was done by Makki (2012) at two language schools in Iran, This project was aimed to investigate if the vehicle of presentation (teachers / recordings) affects the listening comprehension of EFL learners. For this purpose, two variables were considered: listening to live passages read by teachers and listening to recorded passages played in a computer or any other device.

The findings of this study show no significant difference between the two variables, concluding that the vehicle of presentation is not a determinant factor that affect students' listening comprehension. In this way, according to Makki, the poor performance of the students on the test were due to they do not have a good listening comprehension skill because they do not have an enough exposure to the listening practices in their classrooms.

Another study was conducted by Su and Liu (2012) at some English language schools in Taiwan, whose purpose was to promote a balanced English learning process, covering the four language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking, with the goal of improving the English proficiency level in Taiwan. After analysing all the collected information, the authors found six listening problems that EFL learners had to face during this study: (1) Hardship to link the words heard to the meaning in time, (2) failure to grasp the meaning of the sentences even when they understand each word heard in the sentences, (3) mistaking one word for another that have a similar pronunciation, (4) inability to remember the words, phrases or sentences just heard, (5) incapability to break a long conversation into meaningful units, and (6) failure to integrate every word heard into a meaning.

To conclude, Su and Liu report that in EFL listening activities, it is very important that teachers provide their students with authentic materials. Therefore, the author noted it is crucial for learners to be aware about their own listening difficulties or weaknesses, this strategy will help them to learn from their mistakes and to overcome their listening problems.

Finally, a study carried out by Davies (2008), divided a listening strategy in three significant parts such as pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening stages, which according to the author they can make listening practice more interesting. This author gives an explanation about these three activities, one by one. First, during pre-listening activities the teacher should prepare students by reviewing vocabulary or asking questions about the text they are going to hear. Teachers must provide with the background knowledge necessary for their comprehension on the listening passage. In the second, while-listening activities, teachers can ask them to answer questions, to complete sentences or filling information in a chart. Other motivating activities are to listen for three pieces of information the first time students hear the recording, and tell the teacher about the attitude of the speakers after the second time they hear it. Finally, the post-listening is useful to help the learners to connect

what they have heard with their own ideas and experience. It aims to use the knowledge acquired from listening for the development of writing and speaking activities. Among post-listening activities are giving opinions, writing a similar text or doing role-plays. Moreover, the whole statement stated in this current paper do not represent all students' problems in listening comprehension.

This study can be used as a guide for English teachers and Institutions in Ecuador who want to apply better strategies in teaching English and help students to find ways to develop and therefore sharpen their listening comprehension. Besides, this study could be used as a contribution for other studies about listening comprehension difficulties in EFL.

Chapter I: Literature Review

This section explains the scientific information related to the listening comprehension difficulties in English Foreign Language (EFL). The subjects that are described in this study involve the following: listening comprehension, elements of listening comprehension (the listener, the speaker, the listening passage), listening comprehension difficulties (listening problems and causes), and strategies and activities to develop the listening comprehension skills.

Listening Comprehension

Just as in the mother tongue learning, English should start with an emphasis on listening, and then in speaking. Young learners need to start with a lot of listening practice and opportunities to listen to plentiful input, it helps learners not only to improve their listening skill, but also to foster the speaking skills.

According to Nation and Newton (2009), learners should start getting information by practicing listening because it is considered the prior skill among other skills that should be acquired at the early stage in the process of learning a foreign language since later the listening skill helps to develop the speaking skill. Regarding to very young children, they develop the listening skill by listening to their parents, siblings and teachers before they get a fluent speaking; in other words, listening is part of the natural communication process. So, listening is the skill that provide with the primary information for learners to build up the necessary knowledge that can be used later on to express thoughts and opinions.

On the other hand, Scott and Ytreberg (2011) mention that children develop the listening comprehension in a foreign language before reading. When the students start learning a foreign language, it is going through their ears mainly and what the students hear is their principal source of the language. This goes in hand by providing with much visual

back-up as possible through movement, mime, facial expression and through pictures. Consequently, when young learners start attending classes, at first they just listen to what the teachers say and later, they start speaking and reading.

Concerning the listening comprehension skill, Gueldenzoph (2014) states that some people make use of active listening by sensing, interpreting, evaluating and responding to what they listen; whereas, others perform passive listening that involves just listening to the words and not paying attention to the essence of the information. In fact, the author explains that to comprehend efficiently the received information, the listeners should understand not only the words as separated morphemes but also they have to recognize the main idea of the message.

In addition to the above statements, to improve the EFL listening skills, teachers should give more emphasis to the practice of listening by providing material of good quality (Pinter, 2015). It is important to plan various listening activities to the students to get familiar with the English language sounds. For this purpose, it is really necessary that students receive a lot of listening input from their teachers such as instructions, talks, tells stories, and so on; in order to make learners to get familiar with the terminology that the teacher uses and his/her pronunciation, getting as a result that students feel more confident at listening to the teacher.

It is evident that when learners practicing listening, they can absorb good intonation, pronunciation and stress of the words or phrases. These are important tools that the whole learner of a foreign language should develop along with listening. That is, getting good pronunciation is the key to be able to communicate effectively with others, especially with foreigners. People can improve their pronunciation either by listening to the way other people talk at real time or by listening to tapes, T.V. programs, shows, movies, and others (Harmer, 2012).

In contrast, Wilson (2011, p. 30) states that the "most oral data is not recorded and has no permanent record. It is based on spontaneous performance, an invisible ink that usually disappears from the memory within seconds". In this way, the author mentions that because listening takes place over time, not space, the gaps between words that exist in writing do not exist in speech, so the listener images theme into being. According to Wilson, the division of words from the flow of the speech can result a problem for the listeners.

It is worth of consideration to remember that once something has been said, then it is gone. If a person is reading, he or she can re-read something that he or she does not quite understand, but this is not possible when someone is listening a speech. That is why, when teachers are talking and the children are listening, it is necessary to mention things clearly and to repeat them (Scott and Ytreberg, 2011).

Elements of Listening Comprehension: the listener, the speaker and the listening passage.

"The communication process involves several variables, including the person who sends the information, the content of the information or message being sent, the channel or medium that the sender uses to deliver the message, and the person who receives the information" (Gueldenzoph, 2014, p.130).

The Listener

A person cannot be an effective communicator if he/she is not a successful listener. So, in the communicative process, the listening skill is of considerable importance because oral communication cannot be carried out without listening; it is due to the response of the person in the verbal communication mainly relies on the ability to understand the viewpoint of the speaker (Rizvi, 2006).

According to Herbert and LaMeau (2015), in the spoken communication an active listener puts enough effort to understand the message of the speaker; and then the speaker can

take the role of the listener and the listener of the speaker when the communication takes place. When two individuals have a conversation, there is not only a message exchange; there are also feelings which are conveyed through the speech between the listener and the speaker, but the listener not necessarily need to agree with the other person's point of view.

In order to identify some factors that hinder to be an active and successful listener, Fisher (2008) mentions that anxiety can affect the perception of the student in feeling capable of demonstrating competency in second language skills. Besides, learners can feel intimated to express themselves in both the social and academic domains of language due to students can view themselves as unequal to classmates when they have to perform in the English classrooms.

Additionally, considering the learning process, it is necessary take in mind that not all the students have the same ability to improve their EFL listening skills. In this way, Edge and Garton (2012) explain that some learners have the ability to pick up easily the language and if that person spend a lot of time with people who speak the English language, they develop first the listening and then the speaking skill without difficulty, but others do not feel comfortable learning a language only listening to native speakers, so they prefer attend to English classes since they want to learn the structure, the vocabulary, daily expressions, and so on. For them, following an English program is the best choice to learn a foreign language. In this context, the authors conclude that there are two ways for learners to acquire a foreign language, one way is subconsciously, this means when a learner can pick it up while he interacts with foreigners; the other way is when the learner studies consciously following an organized syllabus.

The speaker

According to Hamouda (2013), EFL learners have critical problems in listening comprehension because high schools give more attention to reading, grammar and

vocabulary. In addition, many textbooks have not been designed with the necessary activities to practice the listening and speaking skills in the classes and that is why teachers focus on other features of the language.

On the other hand, Stahr (2009) mentions the importance to keep in mind that spoken language has a real time acoustic nature. It can happen that some learners can recognize certain words in their written form; however, they cannot recognize when they listen the same words in a recorded text. This proves that if students make the effort to acquire with an extensive vocabulary knowledge, this will contribute to develop a good listening comprehension skill in English as a second language acquisition.

According to Pinter (2015), it is necessary to learn not only to speak a different language, but also to learn how to say things in order to avoid any misunderstanding in the message. Thus, the way as people address to others when speaking requires choosing the appropriate words or phrases to transmit the ideas in different contexts.

Listening passages

Listening to recorded information presents some disadvantages for the listeners because when they listen to a passage, they cannot go back and re-listen to the phrases or words that they do not understand as they do on a printed book. It means that if we are the listeners, we cannot decide how fast we are able to grasp the meaning of what is being spoken. That is why it is important that the listeners should be completely focused on when they are listening recorded passages (Scott and Ytreberg, 2011).

Nevertheless, the teachers have to take in mind that learners have different levels of attention span at listening to a passage. Some students can get behind on collecting the information they hear, others can be faster in understanding the details of what they hear; it depends on how much practice they have. In this way, Geranpayeh and Taylor (2013) points out that an audio recording, in a second language, requires hard working memory demands

upon a student who has limited exposure to the English language; in fact, the recording length has a negative effect at a high level of processing the information because if the recording is too long, the task is likely to be very complex to fulfill.

Regarding the difficulties related to the listening skill, Hasan (2000) points out that the length of the recorded texts are the most important factors that hinder the listening comprehension for English learners.

Listening Comprehension Difficulties

According to Lynch (2012), learners can be able to notice the problem to understand the listening passage such as background noise, lack of concentration and their lack of interest. It is important to keep in mind that these factors represent a serious problem in the performance of a student, which will prevent the students from carrying out with the activities of listening comprehension in an efficient way.

With reference to the listening difficulties, other previous researches demonstrate that there are various factors that affect the listening comprehension, one of them is a investigation carried out by Bingol, Celik,Yildiz and Mart (2014), which points out that physical conditions and lack of concentration constitute a huge difficulty in listening comprehension, for example, in large classrooms the students who sit in the back rows may not hear the recording as students who sit in front of the class. The same problem has the students who sit by the windows, the noise that comes outside can hinder them from listening to the recording clearly causing problems of concentration on some students. The same authors explain that the lack of motivation on students has a great impact on listening comprehension because it causes a challenge to keep the concentration in a foreign language learning classroom; much more if the students find the listening passage boring, they will easily lose their concentration.

Additionally to all these difficulties, Walker (2014) mentions that one of the important difficulties of listening comprehension is related to the pronunciation of the words that is

different from the way they are written in printed books. Due to the fact, that spoken language is totally different as the way of how it is written, the recognition of words that make the oral speech can generate some problems for students.

Chen (2005) also acknowledges that students have to confront different types of barriers as they try to carry out strategic knowledge into practice. He also mentions some listening problems as lack of control over the speed at which speakers speak, the listener's limited vocabulary, problems of interpretation. Thus, these are common problems that hinder learners from being able to complete the listening tasks.

The anxiety is another problem that students have to face on, this is because it has a deep influence on comprehension abilities. When students are worried that they will not be able to understand the message, they lose concentration on the listening activity and therefore are unable to fulfill the task in a correct way (Bloomfield, Wayland, Rhoades, Blodgett, Linck, and Ross, 2010).

Learners consider listening as the most difficult ability to learn. They realize the importance of developing this skill since they want to be able to understand a variety of second language songs, movies, general information on the internet. However, learners are aware of the difficulties they go through to develop this skill. As Vandergrit (2007) mentions that one of the explanations could be that the students are not taught how to learn to listen in an effective way. For example, there are certain listening activities from textbooks on choosing the correct answer. So, those kinds of activities do not help learners understand and control the process leading to comprehension.

According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012), the listening difficulties are produced due to the teachers have not given the same attention to the development of listening as reading and writing, for example, while learners are often taught how to develop a composition, they are seldom taught how to manage listening when practicing audio recordings. For them today,

learners are more exposed to more listening tasks than before; however, they have to struggle to fulfill these activities on their own with little assistance from their teacher. Regarding this statement, the authors determine that a possible reason for this situation is that many teachers do not know how to teach listening in an effective manner.

On the other hand, Edge and Garton (2012) argue that as the most of the students are given writing and reading activities in a daily basis and therefore they have difficulties to carry out listening activities. For example in writing, learners can go backwards and forwards at will, whereas a spoken text is usually only there for the moment that is probably why listening is the skill that learners often find the most difficult. It constitutes a disadvantage because the students' ears are not trained to listen to passages since students are often focused on developing the reading and writing skills and do not put into practice the listening skill.

Strategies and activities to develop listening comprehension skill

According to Lynch (2012, p. 25) the strategies to develop the listening skill can be "cognitive-used to make sense of what we hear; metacognitive – used to plan, monitor and evaluate our understanding and socio-affective – strategies which either involve other people in our efforts to understand".

Similarly, Wilson (2011) states that there are three groups of strategies: cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective. Cognitive which allows the students to complete tasks; meta-cognitive which are linked to learning; and socio-affective that involves the interaction with other people. Wilson adds that teachers can teach the students to use these strategies. For example in tests, the teacher can encourage students to make predictions, asking about the information what is missing, asking to take notes of what they listen to or spend time in a conversation with others. As well, students can make use of different strategies related to any task they need to carry out.

Considering the strategies for improving the listening, Khan and Karim (2014) explain that listening activities can be divided in three types: pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening. In the pre-listening stage a teacher can start with a discussion to know the learners' viewpoints about a certain topic in order to activate their world knowledge about the topic. While-listening involves activities which have been carefully selected allowing students to develop specific listening skills. Post-listening implies learners share the information they obtain in the listening passage in an extensive discussion.

Likewise, Davies (2008) mentions that pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening stages can make listening practice more interesting. During pre-listening activities the teacher prepares students by reviewing vocabulary or asking questions about the text they are going to hear. Teachers should provide with the background knowledge necessary for their comprehension on the listening passage. For while-listening activities, teachers can ask them to answer questions, to complete sentences or filling information in a chart. For example, these activities follow three steps: the first time students hear the recording, second the students tell the teacher about the attitude of the speakers, and in the third step they have heard it again and complete the tasks. The post-listening is useful to help the learners connect what they have heard with their own ideas and experience. It aims to use the knowledge acquired from listening for the development of writing and speaking activities. Among post-listening activities are giving opinions, writing a similar text or doing role-plays.

Concerning the activities to develop the listening comprehension skills are the ones that involve movement or miming actions, in which children enjoy physical activities, these can be carried out while listening to the teacher's instructions (Scott and Ytreberg, 2011). And according to this author, these activities are important to include in the lesson plans since teachers want students to enjoy the activities while they are learning. It is also worth of notice

that the children who do physical movement are more motivated and they are able to retain the vocabulary or phrases.

Similarly, Pinter (2015) mentions to provide children with plenty of listening practice. Many young learners' course books initially recommend mainly activities which require nonverbal responses from learners. One example of such task could be to listen to stories or songs and mime the actions instead of producing the language. This activity is good to follow because teachers do not need to be too demanding on students who are just starting to get a grasp of English language.

Furthermore, Linse (2005) points out a method called Total Physical Response (TPR) which allows young learners to respond to oral instructions. Learners are expected to respond non-verbally to orders before they are supposed to speak. This method offers some advantages. First, it uses the visual, the hearing and touchable learning channels. So, the learners are able to watch, listen and practice themselves the respective commands. Second, this method allows to teach learners to follow instructions and listen attentively, two necessary abilities for a favorable outcome. TPR activities can be used with songs and finger-plays.

Other activity that involves students to practice listening could be taking notes of main ideas from recorded messages, and filling in blanks to complete the lyrics of songs that students are listening at that moment. Those activities are engaging since most of the students would like to work with their favorite songs, which will make the class more entertaining. (Harmer, 2012).

Additionally to these activities, Herrel and Jordan (2012) point out the steps of communication games as strategies to develop listening comprehension. That is why teachers have to model the way the game is played having one or two students involved in the game; organizing the groups and making sure to assign a fluent English speaker in each group;

moving around the classroom providing support. After the game, teachers can ask the students to share their experiences. Communication games are good tools to have students practice listening and speaking.

Additionally to all those strategies aforementioned, Jiang (2009) points out that prediction is an elemental strategy for using previous knowledge to understand a listening passage. The learner can get an idea about the type, purpose and outlook to provide a foundation to accomplish a good understanding of the listening text. The skill of prediction depends from the world knowledge and from the language background, and how much one knows about the topic of the listening passage. Jiang suggest that "the initial stage of the training program for developing the predictive skill should concentrate on getting the students to become aware of their own prior knowledge and to use this prior knowledge as their basis for prediction and comprehension" (p. 94).

Finally, National Capital Language Resource Center (2004) mentions two more strategies: the top-down strategy in which the listener uses to activate background knowledge of the topic, helping the listener to interpret and anticipate what comes next; while in the bottom-up strategy, the listener is able to listen for specific details in a passage. When the students are able to infer the content of a listening activity with the help of pictures, information about the topic, it is when top-down strategy comes into place; whereas, the bottom-up strategy comes into place, when the listener is able to recognize words and pronunciation.

In order to provide scientific support to the Literature Review, it has been considered relevant to take into account six academic studies related to listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms.

The first study was conducted by Maboud and Khodabandehlou (2015), whose purpose was to investigate the impact of speech rate on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners'

listening comprehension ability. For this purpose 60 learners of English at a language institute were asked to participate in this study, who were assigned into two groups, control and experimental. The instruments used to collect the data were a pre-test that included 20 questions and a post multiple-choice test of 50 items.

To start the investigation both groups of students sat for a pretest, which was a listening comprehension test. The objective of this test was to evaluate the learners' initial subject knowledge of listening comprehension skill. After that, the experimental group received treatment based on speech rate but the control group only received the traditional way of teaching. Both groups took 7 lessons and at the end of the course they sat for the posttest of listening comprehension. The outcomes of this last test reported a great difference among students' mean score in their pretest and posttest; especially in the experimental group that received treatment based on speech rate. To conclude, the authors stated that learners' listening comprehension improves more when they are provided with a good speech rate.

The second study was done in the city of Tehran, Iran by Hazrat and Hessam (2013). The purpose of this investigation project was to identify the impact of oral and written pushed output as two types of vocabulary preparation on listening comprehension, active and passive vocabulary learning. The sample for this study were 41 Iranian EFL students between the ages of 16 to 24. And the instruments used to collect the data was a student questionnaire, as well as a listening test and a writing test.

The results of this research determined that the vocabulary learning through oral pushed was more effective than vocabulary learning through written pushed output which were focused on analyzing the listening comprehension ability and active vocabulary learning. On the other hand, the outcome show that there was no difference among vocabulary learning through oral pushed output and vocabulary learning through written pushed output in terms of their effect on passive vocabulary learning.

In conclusion, the authors explain that the effectiveness of oral output to improve active vocabulary, as determines the statistics in the active vocabulary test, may be the product of the powerful role of the phonological memory for word learning.

The third study was conducted by Su and Liu (2012) at some English language schools in Taiwan. Its purpose was to promote a balanced English learning process, covering the four language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking, with the goal of improving the English proficiency level in Taiwan. After analysing all the collected information, the authors found six listening problems that EFL learners had to face during this study: (1) Hardship to link the words heard to the meaning in time, (2) failure to grasp the meaning of the sentences even when their understanding each word heard in the sentences, (3) mistaking one word for another that carries a similar pronunciation, (4) inability to remember the words, phrases or sentences just heard, (5) incapability to break a long conversation into meaningful units, and (6) failure to integrate every word heard into a meaning.

To sum up, Su and Liu determine that in EFL listening activities, it is very important that teachers provide their students with authentic materials. Therefore, the author highlighted that it is really necessary for learners to be aware about their own listening difficulties or weaknesses, this strategy will help them to learn from their mistakes to overcome their listening problems.

The fourth study regarded in this paper was carried out by Nowrouzi, Tam, Zareian and Nimehchisalem (2015) in Khorasan Razavi, Iran; being the objective of this research to analyze the EFL listening problems that Iranian students have to face when listening recorded information or speeches in English. To achieve this, 100 students from four institutes of language were asked to participate in this project. In order to facilitate the process of investigation, the listening problems were organized and analyzed regarding three variables: perception, parsing, and utilization. The findings showed that the most predominant difficulty

was about the "perception", in which were include problems of distraction, missing or misperception of sounds and words. The second category that recorded a high percentage was related to "utilization", whose problem was the difficulty to understand the main idea of the listened passages. Finally, the problems about the variable "parsing", such as chunking difficulties and problem to talk about the information listened previously, marked the lowest level of occurrence.

As a final point, the authors give an advice to the teachers and institutions involved in the process of teaching English as a foreign language and say that the material developers, syllabus designers and EFL teachers should pay specific attention to the learners' listening problems in order to helps to the students to recognize their own listening difficulties and apply good strategies to overcome those problems.

The fifth study was done by Makki (2012) at two language schools in Iran, which was aimed to investigate if the vehicle of presentation (live and canned) affect the listening comprehension of EFL learners. Indeed, the instruments used to gather the data were two listening tests, one to each type of listening activity (live and canned). For this purpose were analyzed two variables: listening to a live passages read by teachers and listening to recorded passages played on the computer.

In order to carry out this project, the participants were separated in two groups of language learners, who had the same English level of proficiency.

And as a result, this study show no significant difference between the two variables, concluding that the vehicle of presentation is not a determinant factor that affect to students' listening comprehension. That is, according to Makki, the poor performance of the students on the test is due to they do not have a good listening comprehension skill because they do not have an enough exposure to listening practices in their classrooms.

The sixth study was carried out by Li, Cheng and Kirby (2012) in three cities of China: Dongguan, Guangzhou and Xian, whose purpose was to investigate the relationship between English listening comprehension and English phonological awareness in Chinese English-immersion students. To accomplish this, 95 students from English immersion programs were asked to participate in this study.

The findings of this research found that English phonological awareness (PA) played an important role in the development of English listening comprehension. PA is a good indicator to evaluate the listening comprehension due to that this aspect deals with speech sounds and helps listeners discriminate different and varied phonological representations related with the oral language input.

In order to explain better this statement, the authors give an example and say that the "phonological representation derived from listening to the spoken word /meik/ would result in the word "make" being recognized by the listener, after which the listener will retrieve the meaning of this word and further process the sentence in listening comprehension" (p. 58).

Chapter II: Method

Setting and participants

      The study was performed in the city of Guayaquil. The participants were 125 EFL learners and 5 English teachers of one private high school. In fact, all the students who participated in this project were selected randomly from 5 different second year senior English classrooms.

Procedures

      The first step to carry out this study was to collect scientific information about the following items: listening comprehension, the elements of listening comprehension (the listener, the speaker, and the listening passage), the listening comprehension difficulties (causes and reasons), and the strategies to develop the listening skills.

      Additionally, useful data from previous studies from researches done around the world were collected to support the importance of listening skills and to demonstrate the difficulties that EFL learners have to face to comprehend the speeches.

      The methods applied in this study were quantitative and qualitative procedures. The qualitative method was used to collect data from a small number of individuals so that the participants' views were obtained. On the other hand, the quantitative method was used to collect the numeric data from a large number of people using to collect responses based on checking boxes on questionnaires.

      For gathering the data, one private high school was selected in order to carry out this research. Instruments used for this research were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. A sample of 125 EFL learners put a tick in the box that best reflected their opinions on each statement of the questionnaire. Three students per classroom were selected randomly to response semi-structured interviews, in which the technique of note-taking was

used to collect extra information with relation to the listening comprehension difficulties. Besides, five teachers were selected to answer the teacher´s questionnaires regarding to the teacher´s perception about the EFL listening comprehension difficulties in the Ecuadorian classrooms.

As a matter of fact, the instruments used to collect the data are students and teachers questionnaires, and a semi-structured interview. Starting with the first instrument employed in this study which is a student´s questionnaire that contains eighteen items in Spanish, this is divided in three sections: the first section contains nine statements related to the listener´s factors that affect the listening comprehension, the second section contains four items related to the speaker´s factors which may interfere in the learners' listening skills, and the third section includes five items related to the listening passages. The second instrument employed in this study is the teachers´ questionnaire, which contains the same items as the students' questionnaire but focused on gathering the teachers' perception. And, the third instrument is a semi-structured interview designed to obtain the opinion of the students about their listening comprehension problems in their classrooms, and besides, to triangulate the information that was obtained through the questionnaires.

When the teachers and students questionnaires and the whole interview sheets were collected, the data gathered is organized in excel tables to be quantitative analyzed. Moreover, graphs are created in order to identify what are the most frequent factors that affect to the listening comprehension. The outcomes obtained from the student's questionnaires are related to the results obtained from the interview sheets; and also the teachers' questionnaires are used to reinforce and contrast the results. The data is analyzed, described, and interpreted regarding the factors that may interfere to understand successfully a listening passage according to student´s perception.

Furthermore, this study is focused on finding out different strategies and activities which can be applied by the learners in or outside the classrooms to improve their listening comprehension in English as a foreign language.

This investigation work is an attempt to identify and analyze the factors that affect to the listening skills and their implication in communicative competence. All the listening difficulties found in the process of this research are described and interpreted by answering the following questions: First, *how do the listener factors affect their listening comprehension?* Second, *do the speaker factors interfere on the learners´ listening skill?* Third, *how does the listening passage hinder the students´ listening comprehension?*

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

The analysis of this section was conducted by taking into consideration the gathered information through the surveys and interviews, and besides, applying the quantitative and qualitative methods; being its main objective to determine the factors that hinder the EFL listening comprehension and find strategies to overcome those listening difficulties.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis

How do the listener factors affect their listening comprehension?

A person cannot be an effective communicator if he/she is not a successful listener. That is, in the communicative process, listening is considered the most important skill due to the oral communication cannot be produced without an effective listening comprehension, because the reply in the verbal communication mainly relies on the ability to understand the viewpoint of the speaker (Rizvi, 2006).

Table 1

Item no.	Statement	Never %	Seldom %	Sometimes %	Often %	Always %
1	I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage	8,80 %	29,60 %	50,40 %	9,60%	1,60%
2	I listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage	8,80 %	32,80 %	41,60 %	12 %	4,80 %
3	I find it difficult to do listening activities because of my lack of knowledge of the English language	9,60 %	36 %	38,40%	12,80 %	3,20 %
4	After my teacher stops the recording, I find it difficult to predict what will come	14,40%	28 %	34,40 %	17,60 %	5,60%

	next					
5	I find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage	24 %	28 %	28,80 %	16 %	3,20 %
6.	I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time	15,20 %	37,60 %	27,20 %	18,40%	1,60 %
7.	I feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage	33,60 %	22,40 %	21,60%	14,40 %	8 %
8	I find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to me	39,20 %	27,20 %	21,60 %	8,80 %	3,20 %
9	I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud	24 %	27,20%	28,80 %	12,80 %	7,20 %

Author: Maria Grijalva

Source: Students' Questionnaires

According to the data shown in table 1, in reference to the research statement #1,

focused on determining if *the EFL learners use their experience and background knowledge*

of the topic to understand the listening passage, the results define that 50,40% of the students

sometimes use their background knowledge to help themselves on the listening passage.

However, it is worthy to notice that only a minimum number of students (1,60%) remark that

they *always* use this background knowledge when listening to oral information; this

represents a very small portion of the students.

This indicator shows that the range of understanding about listening comprehension is

in the middle; this means that this ability does not represent a big problem to the EFL

learners, and according to an interviewed teacher, this can be overcome by the students only

by practicing listening which would help learners to accomplish a full comprehension of the

listening passages.

In addition to this perception, based on the interviews from students, they mentioned that the teacher helps them to activate previous knowledge from their memory, for instance, the teachers often make use of good questions to allow them to recall information that is related to the topic of the listening text. This strategy aids learners to improve their listening skill and achieve an ample comprehension of the English language.

On the other hand, in the teachers' questionnaires, it is observed that students *often* use their background knowledge in listening comprehension. This group of students is a bit higher in comparison with the results in the students' questionnaires. What is more, the information obtained from the interviews shows that most of the students try their best to relate to the words recognized within the listening passage. In this line, Buck (2002) says that it is necessary to acquire knowledge of the language and the ability to put into practice that knowledge in order to process language at the right time.

As a matter of fact, in the students' interviews, the ones who possess advanced listening comprehension skills mentioned that they like to watch movies or listen to English music in their spare time, and that this strategy has served as an aid to build up large English vocabulary which in turn enables them to relate to the listening material played in the classroom. In addition, one of the teachers cited that the background knowledge serve as a stepping stool for students and facilitate their ability to relate to the information played in class. In other words, according to a previous research, there is even another benefit that produces the background knowledge; it helps the listener to explain what it is heard, for then to expect the information that will come next (The National Capital Language Resource Center, 2004).

Regarding the research statement #2, in table 1, focused on explore if *the EFL learners listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage,* it shows that 41,60% of the students reported that they *sometimes* listen to every detail in order to recognize the main idea

of the listening passage.

On the other hand, the students' interviews reveal that the most of the learners catch better the information when they listen to the audio the second time; being only a minimum number of students, 8,80%, who report that they *never* listen to every detail of the recording information because they are always focused on catching the information in general form and no word by word, but they just represent a small portion of the students that participated in the survey. In this context, one of the interviewees, who remarks the option *never,* explains that he has a wide knowledge of word terminology and a strong capability to comprehend any type of spoken information in English, which allows him to comprehend the main ideas of listening texts without difficulty.

With respect to the teachers´ perception, they argue that the most of the students *sometimes* use the strategy of trying to understand phrase to phrase to comprehend the oral information, and besides, the teachers consider that this ability allows students to learn more vocabulary and obtain the general idea about what is being said and understand the relevant messages that the speaker transmit. This strategy, according to a teacher who participated in this project, helps learners to keep active and enable them to fulfill the listening activities and increase the listening skills.

About this item, Flohr and Paesler (2006) propose that teachers should advice their students to develop an ability of expectation. That means that the learner takes time to get an idea of what is going to be said and expect to hear significant information in a conversation. This will help the listeners to follow the main ideas in order to grasp the real messages that the speaker tries to transmit.

As a next point, considering the research statement #3, in table 1, displayed to analyze if *the EFL learners find it difficult to do listening activities because of their lack of knowledge of the English language,* the outcomes show that 38,40% of the students *sometimes*

have problems with the listening activities due to their lack of knowledge of the English language, as well as a similar number of participants, 36% answered that they *seldom* have this type of difficulty when listening oral communication. By adding these two percentages, it is possible to identify that 74,40% of students expressed some degree of difficulty in doing the listening tasks. It is worth mentioning that only a short number of students, which is 3,20%, *always* have difficulties in completing the listening activities, this shows that a very small amount of students are not be able to manage the listening activities.

Overall, the interviews show that most of students have problems carrying out the listening tasks. It might help students to notice that the cause of their difficulties is a gap in their own knowledge (Lynch, 2016).

Likewise, based on teachers' questionnaires, it can be noticed that students have not been able to build up a good listening skill to understand the spoken English language through the years of schooling. This may be attributed to some possible causes: inappropriate teaching, poor school attendance, emotional problems, and so on. As well, another teacher argues that students need to acquire a better knowledge of English language to be able to carry out the listening activities.

The next research statement #4 in table 1, is exposed in order to investigate *when the teacher stops the recording, students find difficulty to predict what will come next,* the results show that there are 34,40% of students who *sometimes* find it difficult to predict the information that comes next when the teacher stops the recording.

In contrast to the results of the teachers' questionnaires show that among the 5 teachers 4 of them state that the students *often* have problems to predict what will come next when the recording is stopped. In addition, according to the students' interviews, they mentioned to have major problems to predict what will come next.

According to the National Capital Language Resource Center (2004), the activity of predicting is also known as the top-down strategy, which help students to activate a set of expectations in order to interpret the information he or she hears and then anticipate what will come next. On the other hand, about this subject Nation and Newton (2009) mentions that the learners use what they have already learnt of the context to predict what they are going to listen. So, if a student is able to infer the upcoming information, the student will be much more likely to discern it and comprehend it well. This will provide them enough confidence to carry out the listening task successfully.

Regarding the research statement #5, in table 1, focused on investigating whether *the EFL student find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage,* this demonstrates that 28,80 % of the students feel that they *sometimes* find difficulties in holding a short dialogue after listening to a passage.

On the contrary, the results from the teacher's questionnaires show that 3 among the 5 teachers ,who participated in this study, determine that a great number of students *always* find it difficult to hold a short dialogue about the topic of the listening passage which is heard in the classroom; however, according to the results obtained from the students' questionnaire only 3,20% of the students *always* have problems in holding a short dialogue after listening to a passage, being only a very small number of students in comparison with the others who do not seem to have difficulties.

This may be attributed to the fact that most oral data is based on spontaneous performance, and the information can be easily forgotten from the memory within seconds (Wilson, 2011). As well, this author explains a strategy to overcome that problem and says that for improving this indicator it is important to review the vocabulary before listening to the audio. For example, the teachers can write the new vocabulary on the board, and ask students to repeat those words in order to learn the pronunciation and meaning; then, after the

students listen to the recording, the teacher should encourage learners to participate in a short dialogue using their background knowledge and the vocabulary learned in class.

The research statement #6, in table 1, focused on whether *EFL students find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time*, the results show 37,60% of students *seldom* have difficulties to understand the message for the first time. It is worth of notice that 27,20% of them selected the option *sometimes*. However, based on students' interviews, they mentioned to have significant problems to understand the recording and they have to ask the teacher to play the audio again. In contrast, among the 5 interviewed teachers 4 of them reported that a great number of students *often* have difficulties to understand the message, as a result teachers have to play the recording more than one time.

According to Wilson (2011, p.28) points out that "most students can only cope with a limited amount of input. Every time they listen, they need to process language at the same time as receiving more language". He adds it is difficult for students to try to understand what has been said, when more input is constantly arriving.

On the other hand, Xu (2011) considers that "spoken discourse has very different characteristics from written discourse, and these differences can add a number of dimensions to our understanding of how we process speech (p.161). Xu acknowledges spoken discourse can strike the learners as considering very fast. He also suggests that students must be prepared to assimilate the words heard in the listening passage and adjust to the speaker's rate of speech.

In the research statement #7, in table 1, regarding to the assumption that *EFL learners feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage,* the findings reveal that 33,60% of students said that they *never* get worried when they do not understand the listening passage, and the second most relevant percentage marks that 22,40% of students *seldom* feel anxiety when they cannot complete the listening task. However, according to the

teachers' perception, the students are *sometimes* worried when they do not understand the passages and feel anxiety.

With respect to previous studies, a certain amount of anxiety is beneficial in order to carry out the listening activities; however, large amounts of anxiety or worry can be damaging because the learners may feel stressed out and the high level of anxiety may really prevent them from understanding to the listening passage. In other words, anxiety is a common part of the process of learning a second language, which affects the learners' self-esteem and their feeling of being capable and competent in second language skills. Namely, when L2 students do not understand the L2 listening passage, it can generate anxiety in some of them (Fisher, 2008). In terms of this assumption, Edge and Garton (2012) explain that once a recorded text is played for a moment, students may find listening comprehension difficulty since they may have problems understanding a word in the pronunciation and meaning, and as a result, they get anxiety. In fact, if the students feel nervous over unknown words, they can miss the main point of a message.

The research statement #8, in table 1, is focused on examining whether *the EFL learner find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to them*, the results show that 39,20% of the students report that they *never* find the listening passage uninteresting. But, the teachers disagree with this response because when students have to do a listening task about uninteresting topics, they show lack of enthusiasm and motivation to complete the listening activities due to that type of topics which do not catch the attention of the students.

In this way, according to Wilson (2011), if the students consider the information appealing, they will strive to listen attentively, which helps to EFL learners to improve their listening skills because they are emotionally and intellectually connected to the information that they are receiving in that moment. Nevertheless, Bertin, Grave and Narcy-Combes (2010)

31

claim that the students should not be focused on listening passages only about certain topics because the most successful learners of a foreign language are those who have a good rapport for the people who speak about different topics, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with the society that in which the language is used.

With reference to the research statement #9, in table 1, that is focused on identifying whether *the EFL students find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to their teacher reading aloud*, the results show that 28,80% of students *sometimes* have more problems with listening to the recorded text than to the teacher reading aloud. However, based on the interviews, most students said that they have to ask the teacher to play the audio more than one time or ask for explanation of what they did not understand in the recorded text.

In contrast, teachers affirmed that most students *often* present more difficulties to comprehend the recording information than the passages read by the teacher. Along the same line of perception, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) explain that this may be attributed to the fact that students are not usually taught how to manage their listening skills while the recording is being played due to they are taught to develop different language skills.

In addition to this perception, based on a study conducted by Makki (2012) which was aimed to investigate if the vehicle of presentation (listening a live passages read by a teachers and listening a recorded passages) affect the listening comprehension of EFL learners, this demonstrates no significant difference between both variables, in which the author concludes that the vehicle of presentation is not a determinant factor that affect to students' listening comprehension. That is, according to these authors, the poor performance of the students on the listening activities is due to they do not have good listening comprehension ability because they do not have enough exposure to the listening and speaking participation in real life conversations.

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

There are different individual factors related to the speaker that can interfere with the learners' listening comprehension such as background knowledge, meta-cognitive strategies. It also involves features of oral text as the speed of delivery, the varied accents, the information density, the clearness in the pronunciation. All these factors has a relevant impact on the way students can carry out listening tasks (Bloomfield, Wayland, Rhoades, Blodgett, Linck and Ross, 2011)

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	8 %	23 %	32 %	24,20 %	12,80 %
11.	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly	7,20 %	16 %	35,20%	22,40 %	19,20 %
12.	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast	14,40 %	28 %	28 %	21,60 %	8 %
13.	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents	8 %	31,20 %	28 %	24 %	8,80%

Author: Maria Grijalva

Source: Students' questionnaire

*A*ccording to the results presented in table 2, in reference to the research statement # 10 that is aimed to examine whether *the EFL students find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses,* this shows that 24,20% of students chose the option *often* and 12,80% marked the option *always* giving a significant total of 37% of

students who find difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation. In contrast, only 8% of the students selected the option *never* with respect to this item.

In relation to the teachers' questionnaires, the students *often* find it difficult to understand natural speech. This statement is in accordance with the outcomes gotten from the students' interviews where they recognized to have major problems to understand people who pause when speaking.

In addition to this perception, a teacher gives her opinion about this subject and also explains that an useful strategy to overcome this problem is encourage to the students get immerse in listening to natural speeches, which can be done in the following ways: first, interacting with real people and foreigners who speak using different accents, and not get accustomed to listening to only the same speaker or the same type of recordings all the time.

In like manner, in reference with a study done by Sheils (1993), to develop the aptitudes and approaches necessary to cope with natural speech, the students need to be introduced to authentic sounding texts on a planned basis, and that their confidence can be developed by good choices of texts and anticipatory activities, for example, brief passages should be played in the early stage because the cognitive and linguistic content should be in accordance with the level of students

Furthermore, in terms of hesitations in spoken texts, Buck (2011) says that hesitation is a common aspect of natural speeches, in which there are involved periods of silence, or when the speaker uses fillers such as "uh", "um", which can lead to misperception in the students. Thus, the author defines that it is evident that the pauses and hesitation produced by the speakers can present a major comprehension difficulty to non-native speakers who are listening to natural speech.

In the research statement #11, in table 2, regarding the assumption that *the EFL learners find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced*

34

clearly, the results show that 22,40,% of students picked the option *often* and 19,20% of them

chose the alternative *always* find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not

pronounced clearly. Adding these two percentages gives a considerable total of 41,60%.

These results are in agreement with the perception that the majority of teachers

reported that their students *often* present troubles to comprehend the oral information due to

the pronunciation is not clear. Moreover, the most of the students who participated in the

interviews also declared that they have problems understanding words which are not

pronounced clearly. In this line of thinking some student said "some English teachers are not

native speakers and pronounce certain words incorrectly, it causes problems for us because

we do not learn the pronunciation of the words correctly, and understanding to native speaker

who speak using contractions is difficult and sometimes impossible to understand".

Indeed, if the learners have difficulties in understanding words, it is due to they have

not learned certain phonemes well, and as a consequence they will not be able to grasp the

whole idea of the listening passage; further if the speaker do not pronounce the words clearly

the students get confused (Ur, 2013).

The research statement #12, in table 2, considering the assumption that *the EFL*

learners find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast, the outcomes show

that 21,60% of students chose *often and 8%* marked *always* giving a total of *29,60% of*

students who face challenge to understand well when speakers talk too fast.

 Likewise, the teachers agreed with the selection students choose on the surveys.

Most of the students in the interviews explained that they *always* find it difficult to understand

people who speak too fast.

When a teacher was asked to give her opinion about why this problem appears and

which would be the possible solution for this, she answers that this type of difficulties may be

produced because each person has an accent according to the nationality, for example

Americans speak different from British and Australian people, and so on. So, she recommends training the listening ability and understanding the speeches when the words and phrases are articulated fast, the learners should look for opportunities to talk with native speakers, but if it is not possible, they should listen to varied recorded information and watch TV programs in English; so students can gradually adapt their listening to the speed of native English speakers. Furthermore, it is essential to acquire a large lexis in order to get a better comprehension. But, if learners do not take extra time to review words and increase their vocabulary, it is impossible that they progress in understanding people who talk fast.

Regarding the problems related to the speed of delivery, Ur (2013) claims that the students absolutely encounter certain challenges in listening comprehension since they lack control over the speed at which the speakers speak. However, students need to be aware that speakers can speak at different speech rates. He recommends training the faculty of listening at home by using different audio and visual resources.

Analyzing the research statement #13, in table 2, exposed in order to investigate whether *EFL learners* find *difficulty to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents,* the findings show that 24% of students chose the alternative *often* and 8,80% marked the option *always*. In addition, the majority of students mentioned in the interviews they found difficult to comprehend varied accents. Additionally, these outcomes are identical from the teachers' perceptions, who reported that the students *often* struggle to understand speeches in which speakers use varied accents.

Furthermore, unfamiliar accents can hinder listening comprehension. For example, if a student has been used to the American accent, but then he/she travels to England, the learner could possibly has problems to understand the British accent. In the same way, Ur (2013) defines that many students become accustomed to the accent of their teacher, this can be challenging when they need to listen to someone else with a different accent. Students

36

could mistakenly conclude that other accents are incorrect; however, there are no wrong
accents, simply accents difficult to comprehend. Certainly, the students need to be able to
understand an English accent spoken by a person who is not a native English speaker. Finally,
the author conclude that it is important to realize that listening to people in real world is very
different as to listening in the recordings, that is why the students have to get contact with
foreigners.

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

Listening to recorded text is considered very difficult for students who have not
developed their listening skills. Unlike reading material printed in a book, where a person can
re-read the text, students cannot go back to the text they do not understand in a recording.
They cannot decide how fast they are able to grasp the meaning of what is being spoken. It is
essential that students pay complete attention to what they are listening to (Scott and
Ytreberg, 2011).

Table 3

Item no.	Statements	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
14.	Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with my listening comprehension	22,40%	36,80%	28,80%	12%	-
15.	Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with my listening comprehension	20%	38,40%	34,40%	6,40%	0,80%
16.	The length of the listening passage hinders me to interpret the message	18,40%	4,80%	33,60%	40,80%	2,40%
17.	The content of the listening passage is abstract	16,80%	32%	37,60%	10,40%	3,20%

18.	The poor quality of recording does not allow me to understand the listening passage	49,60%	22,40%	17,60%	8%	2,40%

Author: Maria Grijalva

Source: Students' questionnaires

In the research statement #14, table 3, is focused on examining whether the *vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with the learners' listening comprehension,* the outcomes define that 36,80% of the students considered that the vocabulary *seldom* interferes with their listening comprehension. Then, 28,80% of students marked the option *sometimes*, this shows that there is still a problem with this factor.

These percentages disagree with the results obtained from teachers' questionnaires, they mentioned the vocabulary used in the listening passage *often* interferes with students' listening comprehension. Besides, the interviews done by the students showed that the students have a hard time understanding the words in the listening passage.

One of the teachers defines that the vocabulary is the basis to speak and understand the verbal information, so if students have a short lexis, they will have problems to develop activities related to the four abilities; reading, writing, listening and speaking. In support of this perception, Richards and Renandya (2002) consider that nowadays vocabulary has become an important component in language proficiency because without an adequate knowledge of vocabulary, students cannot be successful in their listening comprehension tasks.

Regarding to the research statement #15, in table 3, focused on analyzing if *the grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with the students' listening comprehension,* it is noticed that 38,40 % of the students *seldom* have problems with the grammatical structures. In addition 34,40% marked the option *sometimes.* Moreover, in the

interviews, the students do not mention that the grammatical structure would represent a big problem for them.

However, comparing these results with the teachers' response, there is a great difference because the teachers recognized that some students *sometimes* have problems to comprehend a listening task because they do not manage some grammatical structures, so it hinders the listening comprehension. What is more, some participants were aware about the importance of grammatical rules in relation to listening comprehension. One interviewee expressed "English grammar is difficult to understand and put into practice that is why, I have problems to comprehend various sentences". Additionally, one of the teachers argues that it is evident that some complex grammatical structures "often" generate troubles to comprehend the listening passages.

In the research statement #16, table 3, regarding to the assumption that t*he length of the listening passage hinders students to interpret the message,* the results shows that 40,80% of the students expressed that the length of listening passage *often* hinders them to interpret the message, and another significant number of students (33,60%) marked the option *sometimes* about this assumption. But, the teachers were more demanding with respect to this matter and considered that the students *always* have problems with the length of the passage.

Additionally to the whole analysis, Pinter (2015) highlights that the type and length of the text in listening can lead to problems to the foreign language learners; that is why teachers should include the listening practice gradually, for example, the author recommends that students should listen to brief passages at the beginning of the school program, then the amount of what they listen can be increased in a smooth way.

The research statement #17, in table 3, focused on the assumption that *if the content of the listening passage is abstract it causes difficulty to interpret the message*, the results state that 37,60% of the students are *sometimes* affected by abstract listening passage in their

39

listening comprehension. The responses from the teachers are within the same parameter as the students' response, and the students, who participate in the interviews, also point out that they have a problem when the content is abstract.

Along the same lines of thinking, Geranpayeh and Taylor (2013), propose that the abstract constructs are indeed more difficult to process than concrete ones because of their lack of imageability.

From the students' perception in table 3, regarding the research statement #18 considering the hypothesis that *the poor quality of recording does not allow students to understand the listening passage,* it can be observed that 49,60% of the students mentioned that the poor quality of recording *never* hinders their ability to understand the listening passage. Moreover, based on the students' opinion, it is also observed that this statement falls in the *never* frequency. Therefore, both students and teachers make it clear that the recording quality does not affect their ability to comprehend the listening passage.

CONCLUSIONS

A frequent factor that affects students to carry out the listening tasks is due to a deficiency in their own knowledge. This can happen due to students are often dragging learning gaps from previous academic school years.

Learners also demonstrate problems in grasping a general understanding of the message when listening to recorded extracts or having a conversation with another person for the first time. This can generate anxiety on some students.

Since the students are not exposed to a native English atmosphere, they often find difficulties in performing listening activities. These listening activities are what help them to master the language, as well as get more acquainted with the language. Thus, they lack self-confidence and anxiety increases.

Other factors that hinder comprehension when listening to a recorded text are those aspects produced by the speaker such as unclear pronunciation of words, speeches full of hesitation and pauses, speech velocity and varied accents.

The length of the listening passage was considered a common factor that makes it difficult for students to understand the message. The longer the recording, the more difficult is to understand. On the other hand, they find much easier to comprehend their teacher's speech rate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EFL teachers must be aware of the gaps in English language some students carry out. That is why it is important to provide a thorough explanation of them. Then, students can practice oral exercises with a particular topic such as the comparatives. Then, learners are ready to comprehend a listening passage related to that topic.

Teachers can plan jigsaw listening activities. Students can work in small groups, they listen to different tapes, all of which are about the same thing as a witness reports after an accident. Then, students are asked to assemble all the facts by comparing notes. In this way, they may find out what actually happened and find out a mystery.

Furthermore, teachers should invite native English speakers to the classroom so that learners have a chance to interact with them. This will help them to get familiarized with natural hesitations and accents. Teachers should also plan role-plays activities on topics according to students' interests. This provides the opportunities that students to interact with their partners.

It is recommendable that teachers ask students to watch a movie at home where students would take notes of the parts they would not understand. In next class, the teacher could help students to clarify the information. Besides, the teacher should bring additional audio tracks to have students practice listening where speakers vocalize with pauses and varied accents.

In addition, if teachers realize that some listening passages from the textbooks are longer; teachers can adjust the activity. For example, asking students to listen for specific information and writing down the names of the people and the activities that they are performing.

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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 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 escuchoen 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	Frecuente mente	Siempre
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 escucha

No.	Enunciado	Nunca	Rara vez	A veces	Frecuente mente	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 extension del texto que escucho en inglés me impide interpreter 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 INGÉS

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!

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

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					

		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
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

Item no.	Statements	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always

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					

Thanks for your collaboration