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

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to God because he has guided my steps and my thoughts every day. I also dedicate this research work to my mother because she supported me to study and obtain my bachelor degree.

Paul Ullaguary

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I would like to thank to the professors of Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja for their academic support and guidance during my career.

Paul Ullaguary

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This research is about students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms. Its purpose is to find out the factors that affect their listening comprehension. The methods used were quantitative and qualitative. This research was conducted in two private high schools from the city of Machala, Ecuador. The sample consisted of five English teachers and twenty five students from five different classrooms of two private high schools, whose ages were sixteen years old. The techniques used were student' and teachers' surveys, interviews to three students of each classroom and note taking. The instruments used were questionnaires.

The results of this research show that the lack of knowledge of English language, the problem to understand speeches when they are full of hesitation and pauses, and the varied accents used by English speakers have been considered the main factors that cause listening comprehension difficulties to EFL learners.

Keywords: listening comprehension, learners, difficulties.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación es sobre la percepción que tienen los estudiantes en la comprensión auditiva dentro del salón de clases. El propósito de esta investigación fue descubrir cuáles son los factores que afectan su comprensión auditiva. Las metodologías utilizadas fueron cuantitativas y cualitativas. La investigación se llevó a cabo en la ciudad de Machala en dos colegios particulares. La muestra consistió de cinco profesores de inglés y veinte y cinco estudiantes por paralelo de los dos colegios escogidos. La edad de los estudiantes fue de 16 años. Las técnicas utilizadas fueron encuestas a estudiantes y profesores, entrevistas a tres estudiantes de cada salón de clases y apuntes extras. Los instrumentos utilizados fueron cuestionarios.

Esta investigación demuestra que la falta de conocimiento del idioma inglés, el problema para entender discursos cuando están llenos de pausas y la variedad de acentos usados por el hablante han sido considerados los principales problemas que causan comprensión auditiva en los estudiantes dentro del salón de clases.

Palabras claves: comprensión auditiva, estudiantes, dificultades.

INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is an important skill that students need to develop to grasp texts and conversations. In addition, listening provides input that is very significant for the acquisition of a second language in general and the development of the speaking skill in particular. As listening is an important skill in the learning of a foreign language and as it is not an easy skill for students to develop, it is necessary to carry out an investigation based on students' perception on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classroom. This study is aimed on students' perception on their listening comprehension difficulties by answering to the following questions: 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?

Much research on this topic has been carried out around the world. One study is the one conducted by Butt, Sharif, Nasser-ud Din, Hussain, Khan, and Ayesha in 2010. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of teaching experience on English language teacher's perceptions of learners listening comprehension problems. The results of this study conclude that as compared to in service teachers, pre-service teachers presume that English language learners experience listening comprehension problems less frequently. In this research there were no limitations.

Another interesting study has been done by De Brito (2015), whose main goal was to examine the effects of listening comprehension on English Language Learners' (ELLs) writing performance while taking notes. It was found that students face various difficulties when taking notes, citing speech rate and different range of accent as the main problems. The limitation that

the researcher found was the impossibility to observe a lecture-type classroom where students could be exposed to a note taking activity and eventually compare their notes.

Finally, Mulyaningsih conducted a study in 2011. Its main purpose was to know students' ability to make inference in listening comprehension and to know the factors that influence students' difficulty in making inference in listening comprehension. This study concludes that the students had difficulties to make appropriate inferences from the utterances in listening comprehension. The limitation that this author found was that the majority of the students had problems in making inferences.

The present research is intended to help English teachers, principals to determine the factors that hinder to the students the listening comprehension in the classroom.

The most significant limitation found in this research was related to the few amount of private high schools visited taking into consideration that there are a lot of them in Machala, so they may not represent all students' problems in listening comprehension.

CHAPTER 1

Literature Review

This section presents the topics considered to build the literature review and some previous studies, which are going to support this research. The topics included are the following: listening comprehension, elements of listening comprehension: the listener, the speaker, the listening passage and the physical setting, listening comprehension difficulties for EFL learners (Listening Problems-causes), and finally strategies and activities to develop listening comprehension skill; the detailed information is presented below.

Listening comprehension

Comprehension is sought by contemporary theories to be an active process; it is the identification of what certain written and spoken pieces of communication mean (Richards and Schmidt, 2010).This indicates that comprehension is the ability to apprehend whatever is listened to or read about.

Vandergrift (1999) stresses that listening comprehension is a complex, active process in which the listener must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary, and grammatical structures, interpret stress and intonation, retain what was gathered in all of the above, and interpret it within the immediate as well as the larger socio cultural context of the utterance. Vandergrift also claims that listening comprehension is a dynamic process that requires from the learner an active role; it comprises a number of skills each of which requires strategic training over a period of time.

Moreover, Hogan, Adlof, and Alonzo (2014) state that listening comprehension refers to the ability to understand texts. These authors also claim that, good listening comprehension involves building a comprehension of single words and sentences in a story. Besides, Kendeou, Lynch, van den Broek, Espin, White, and Kremmer (2005) point out that listening comprehension draws on the same speech process used to comprehend language via text, but it is free of the cognitive demands of having to decode text. In this way, listening comprehension can be conceptualized more in general as one´s ability to understand what one hear, not only in the service of reading comprehension, but for other purposes such as understanding a story told at the dinner table or building a mental model while watching a cartoon on television. This ¨listening¨ expertise has been developed since our birth, well before formal perusal instruction begins.

Further, Bhardwaj (2009) states that listening comprehension is the ability to understand the message communicated orally. On the other hand, Gottlieb (2016) affirms that listening comprehension is generally the first step in acquiring language. Since students most likely have greater comprehension or receptive language, it is advantageous for teachers to have a grasp of the extent to which their students can process and understand oral language.

Moreover, Poursehin and Ahmadi (2011) state that listening comprehension is the process of understanding speech and it concentrates on role of linguistic units such as phonemes, words and grammatical structures and the role of listener's anticipations, the situation and context, previous knowledge and the subject. Additionally, Ling (2015) affirms that listeniing comprehension is a complicated information processing capability. To improve the student's listening ability, teachers should help them to solve the biggest obstacle, that is, the indirect speech.

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Furthermore, Volkmar (2013) argues that listening comprehension encloses the numerous processes involved in the comprehension of texts and making perception of a spoken language for a foreign speaker. These include recognizing speech sounds, understanding the meaning of individual words, and understanding the syntax of sentences in which they are presented to the learner. Volkmar also argues that listening comprehension can also need the prosody with which remarks are spoken (which can, e.g., change intended meaning from a statement to a question) and making relevant inferences based on circumstances, real-world knowledge, and speaker-specific attributes (e.g., to what details the orator has access and about what he/she is probable to be talking). For longer stretches of language or conversations listening comprehension further involves significant memory, which demands keeping route of casual relationships expressed inside the discussion.

Additionally, Richard and Schmidt (2010) define listening comprehension as the process of understanding speech in a first or second language. The study of listening comprehension processes in second language learner focuses on the role of individual linguistic units such as phonemes, words, and grammatical structures as well as the role of the listener´s expectations, the situation and context, background knowledge and the topic. Similarly, Rizvi (2005) indicates that listening comprehension is the act of understanding an oral message. Being a complex process that involves perceiving and interpreting the sounds correctly as well as understanding the explicit and implied meaning of the oral message, listening comprehension includes several skills and sub-skills. These skills include scanning, prediction, speech decoding, comprehending, and oral discourse analysis. The first two skills are similar to scanning and prediction in reading comprehension. Scanning is the ability to locate specific information in a conversation, speech, or presentation whereas prediction means guessing what will happen in the future. Speech decoding

is integral to listening comprehension. It involves sound perception and recognition, word recognition and accent recognition. Comprehending a verbal message involves the ability to identify the central theme. Oral discourse analysis is the process of identifying relationships among different units within the speech or oral message. It includes critical skills, attitude analysis, and inferential analysis.

Likewise, Seel (2011) defines listening comprehension as the ability to recall and understand the information, which is presented orally. In addition, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) state that listening comprehension is regarded theoretically as an active process in which individuals concentrate on selected aspects of aural input, form meaning from passages, and associate what they hear with existing knowledge. In contrast, Goh (2000) notes that listening comprehension is neither top-down nor bottom up processing , but an interactive, interpretive process where listener uses both prior knowledge and linguistic knowledge to understand the message. The frequency in which listeners use one process or the other will depend on their knowledge of the language, familiarity with the topic, or the purpose for listening. For instance, listening for gist involves primarily top-down processing, whereas listening for specific information, as in a weather broadcast, involves primarily bottom-up processing to comprehend all the desired details.

Besides, Hamouda (2013) defines listening comprehension as an interactive process in which listeners are involved in constructing meaning. Hamouda states that listeners comprehend the oral input through sound discrimination, previous knowledge, grammatical structures, stress and intonation, and the other linguistic or non-linguistic clues. On the other hand, Nadig (2013) states that listening comprehension are the various processes of understanding and making sense of spoken language. These involve knowing speech sounds, comprehending the meaning of

individual words, and understanding the syntax of sentences in which they are presented. Nadig, also points out that listening comprehension can also involve the prosody with which utterances are spoken, and making relevant inferences based on context, real-world knowledge, and speaker-specific attributes.

Further, Mulyaningsih (2011) states that listening comprehension is more than only hearing what other people say correctly. This is because in listening comprehension the listeners have to understand the linguistic meaning and connect it to their previous knowledge of content if the learner gathers the elements before mentioned they can give a response. Indeed, Kersner and Wright (2015) note that listening comprehension includes the ability to understand spoken language such as following instructions, or understanding descriptions or stories.

Elements of listening comprehension: the listener, the speaker, the listening passage and the physical setting.

The listener

The listener is one of three elements of listening comprehension. According to O'Toole (2012) the listener in this process involves asking permission to supply the information at that time, so listening comprehension requires a clear declaration of the purpose and importance of the information. This easy preparation potentially relaxes the learners and makes sure that they listen to and focus upon comprehension the information; for this reason, it is important to set up if they know anything about the particular topic, event or procedure. Establishing their existing knowledge can be an appropriate point at which to begin presenting the information because this not only demonstrates respect, but also provides an opportunity to establish the accuracy of their previous knowledge. The discussion of their existing knowledge may also expand interest and

increase the concentration of the listener. In contrast, according to Lynch and Mendelhson (2002, p.6) ¨the listener has a crucial part to play in the process of listening, by activating various types of knowledges, and by applying what he or she knows to what they hear and try to understand what the speaker means¨

Moreover, Seel (2011) states that the listener usually has little control over the speech rate of the message, which is moving along the auditory canal. In many cases, the listener does not have the possibility to rewind what has been heard early. In this process, the listener has to listen to retain information first in the short-term memory, which serves as a temporary storage for processing the received message, integrate it with incoming input, and adjust comprehension of what was heard with references to the new information. All these steps impose a heavy cognitive load on working memory. On the other hand, Buck (2001) states that in the complexity of the listening process, the listener must use a wider variety of knowledge source, linguistic and non-linguistic, to interpret rapidly incoming data.

Likewise, Lynch and Mendelsohn (2002) point out that the listener uses top-down and bottom-up strategies to achieve effective comprehension of spoken language, and a key factor in succesful listening is the individual's ability to integrate information gathered via top-down and bottom-up strategies. In contrast, Machackova (2009) points out that the listener in the process of listening comprehension depend on background knowledge to interpret what the speaker is talking about. The listener depends on what they know in order to make sense of what is heard.

 The speaker

The speaker is the second element in listening comprehension. Harsch, Vock, Rupp, and Koller (2008) state that the characteristics of the speaker and their linguistic utterances impact on

the degree to which effective listening comprehension can occur in essential ways. For instance, age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, occupation, educational level, and first language of the speakers influence the manner in which they speak including the structure of their utterances.

In addition, Koo (2007) claims that speakers learn the sound patterns as they hear and say words and the acquired comprehension of the sound patterns affects their phonological behaviour in turn. Additionally, when speakers are perceiving and producing speech sounds these are biased towards those that occur in contexts that come behind the sound patterns of their language.

Listening passage

Smyth (2008) points out that listening passage incorporates modeling into the instructional process by having the student listening to a passage before reading the passage alone. Moreover, Ur (1984) says that it would seem a good idea to present a listening passage in class, where the teacher can give students some information about the content, situation, and speaker (s) before they start listening.

Physical setting

According to Haslett (2013), the physical setting includes the specific time, place, objects, and their organization to develop an activity**.** In physical setting learners are influenced by four factors: goals, their relevant knowledge base; emotions (i.e., feelings and values about the interactional activity, other participants, and the like); and their interactional expertise. In addition, Law and Eckes (2007) explain that the physical setting is where the interaction takes place profoundly. The physical setting can be the classroom, the laboratory's language, the playground, and the principal's office. How the speakers interact with one another can change from setting to setting. Although, Hasan (2000) points out that the noise in the physical setting,

including background noises on the recording and environmental noises, can take the listeners'

mind off the content of a listening passage.

Listening comprehension difficulties for EFL learners

Listening comprehension is a complex process. According to Azmi, Celit, Yildiz, and

Tugrul (2014), there are a lot of difficulties that learners may encounter in the listening

comprehension process and the purpose is to be aware of these problems and to try to solve them.

In addition, Goh (2000) states that there are ten problems on listening comprehension and they

are classified based on a cognitive model of Anderson that consists of three phases as perception,

parsing and utilization. He found five problems in the perception phase: (1) students did not

recognize the words they know; (2) the learners neglected the text part when thinking about the

meaning; 3) students cannot chunk the streams of speech; (4) learners missed the beginning of

texts; and (5) students concentrate too hard or were unable to concentrate. Goh also states that in

the parsing stage three problems were found: (1) learners quickly forget what they heard; (2)

students were unable to form a mental representation of what they heard; (3) learners did not

comprehend following parts of the input. Finally, in the utilization phase two problems were

found; (1) students understood the words but not the intended message: and (2) listeners were

confused about the main idea.

Moreover, Walker (2014) expresses that one of the serious problems of listening

comprehension is related to the pronunciation of words that is different from the way they appear

in print. Due to the fact that the spoken language varies to the form of the written language, the

recognition of words that make the oral speech can create some difficulties for students. In

addition, Walker also states that sociolinguistic elements of listening, such as the student´s

cultural background and the student' s knowledge of the cultural background of the foreign language can also play a significant part in the student´s comprehension of the verbal discourse. Likewise, Renandya and Farrel (2011) state that feature of spoken language such as natural speed, intonation, the blurring of words boundaries and the fact that speech must be processed in real time can all be problematic for learners.

Besides, Chang and Roebl (2011) point out that L2 listening difficulties come from the text, listener, speaker and task. Additionally, Yang (2011) divides listening comprehension problems into five categories: text, listener, listening process, speaker, and task. On the other hand, Hamouda (2013) claims that EFL learners have crucial problems in listening comprehension because universities pay attention to grammar, reading and vocabulary. Listening and speaking skills are not important parts of many course books or curricula and teachers do not seem to pay attention to these skills while designing their lessons.

In addition, Ruggiero (2003) states that listening problems can be due to the fact that our mind can receive and process ideas faster than the speaker can send to the listener. Whenever the mind gets a little overwhelmed with so many concepts and aspects, it keeps on thinking in the native language in order to get the idea in the target language. Additionally, instead of listening to the speaker's words, the listener thinks about their clothes or hairstyle, or looks outside the window and observes what is happening there. Or perhaps the speaker's words elicit an unrelated memory and it is slipped to what earlier time and place. Whenever the speaker realizes that his/her mind is wandering, drag it back to the task. Likewise, Underwood (1989) states that discourse markers used in formal situations might be clear to listeners, but in informal situations, signals such as gestures, loudness, or change of pitch are very confusing for second language learners.

In the same way, Birch (2014) supports that discrimination of English language phonemes, especially vowels can be problematic for EFL and ESL because most languages have fewer vowels than English does. There are also some consonants sound in English that can cause discrimination difficulties because they are uncommon: the initial sounds in this, thin, ship, and the final sound in sing. In addition, Machackova (2009, p12) states that "a great number of students believe that listening is the most difficult skill and they start to panic when they hear the word listening or see a CD player. On the other hand, students who learn from what they hear, usually achieve better results at listening". She identifies a list a common problems that students face in the classroom during the listening classes. They are as follow: 1) Problems with pronunciation; 2) Problems caused by the lack of control of a speaker's speech speed; 3) Problems caused by the inability to get thing repeated; 4) Problems caused by the listeners' limited word stock

Moreover, Hamouda (2013) claims that the factors that facilitate or hinder listening are speech rate, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Furthermore, Al-Thiyabi (2014) puts forward some frequent problems of learners as well as reasons blocking their listening comprehension skill such as hasty speaking, unknown words, and weird pronunciation, adding that such problems are severe and ought to be overcome to enhance learner's listening competency level. In addition, Hasan (2000) affirms that unfamiliar words, difficult grammar structures and the length of the spoken text are the most important message factors for listening problems. In terms of speaker factor, it was revealed that "clarity" was the main cause of EFL listening difficulties. Also lack of interest, the demand for full and complete answers to listening comprehension questions were the two main difficulties encountered by EFL learners.

Additionally, Nowrouzi, Tam, Zareian and Nimehchisalem (2015) state that distraction and missing sounds or words linked to perception, chunking complications and sentence dismissing from mind in the process of analysis, also bewilderment about the main idea related to utilization are the first coming problems in listening comprehension. Furthermore, for Mishra and Muralikrishna (2007) most of the problems that listeners have are caused because of the discrepancy in their speeds of talking and listening. These authors explain that every human being can speak 120 to 150 words a minute on average; however, the brain is capable of processing 500 to 700 words a minute. Mishra and Muralikrishna also say that most of the brain is lazy when a person is just listening. As a result, the listening becomes partial and selective. Often again, instead of listening and trying to understand what the other speaker is saying; the person gets more involved in forming our counter-arguments. In addition, Underwood (1989) explains that in listening even a slight break in attention can interfere with comprehension. When the topic of the listening passage is interesting, it can be easier for listeners to concentrate and follow the passage.

Furthermore, Hedge (2005) divides the listening comprehension problems into two as internal and external. Internal problems can be listed as the lack of motivation, high level of anxiety, lack of knowledge of the topic under discussion and unknown vocabulary of what is being heard. On the other hand, external problems are related to listeners' failure in understanding because of the speakers' characteristics and environmental noises. According to Luchini (2009), there are also other external factors which can be a real obstacle for aural comprehension in terms of phonology like the diversity of speakers' accents, the substitution, omission, and addition of certain sounds and differences. In addition, the length of listening taped-texts, the low quality of the recordings, the distance between the students and the tape

recorder and the lack of knowledge of some listening strategies, which also hinder comprehension.

Lastly, Cutler (2012) argues that the specialization of listening to the native language also causes difficulties for the second language (L2) listener at levels above the phoneme and words. Segmenting continuous speech draws on procedures specialized for the native language, its rhythm, and its phoneme sequence probabilities and constraints; these may be counterproductively applied to speech input in the L2. Cutler says that idioms and casual speech processes of the L2 also cause trouble, as can prosodic structure, syntax, and sentence semantics. These difficulties and those arising from phonetic and lexical processing, accumulate, so that effective comprehension can be substantially impaired. Extralinguistic factor adds further difficulty. Voice recognition is easier in the native language. For instance, an understanding speech in a noisy environment is notorious for causing difficulty for L2 listeners. However, there are also some rays of hope; thus, native listening specialization can sometime offer a compensatory benefit in a second language and with experience, it is possible to improve L2 listening in many dimensions.

Strategies and activities to develop listening comprehension skill

Listening strategies are techniques or activities that contribute directly the recall of listening input. Concerning to listening strategies, Rost and Wilson (2013, p. 244) define "listening strategies as any conscious plan that a learner uses to improve his/her comprehension or listening performance. Listening strategies that are used by individuals operating in their first language (L1) are not always used in L2".

Then, some strategies and activities to develop listening comprehension that will help learners to develop this skill are explained below.

According to Hai-Jew (2014), listening strategies help learners improve their listening results. Besides, Azmi et al (2014) express that there are three types of strategies in listening comprehension. They are cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective. These strategies can be changed based on the level of learners. Azmi also explains that cognitive strategies are related to understanding and gathering input in short term memory or long term memory for later use. Comprehension begins with the received data that is examined as consecutive levels of formation and a process of decoding. Cognitive strategy is a problem-solving method that learners apply to deal with the learning activity and facilitate the learning of knowledge.

An interesting strategy for developing listening comprehension skill is metacognitive strategy. According to Richards (2008), metacognitive strategies are conscious or unconscious mental activities that perform and executive function in the management of cognitive strategies.These are assessing the situation, monitoring, self-evaluating and self-testing. For instance, for metacognitive planning strategies, listeners clear the aims of a listening task and apply specific features of the aural language input that make easy the understanding of aural input. Also, Gilakjany and Ahmadi (2011) claim that metacognitive strategy is a kind of self-regulated learning which contains the attempt to plan, check, monitor, select, revise, and evaluate. In addition, Azmi (2014) states that in the metacognitive strategies students are aware when listening the text. In this strategy, learners learn how to plan, monitor, and evaluate the collected information from the listening part. Finally, Hardan (2013) describes metacognitive strategies as techniques that can be managed by the learners to have control over their learning through planning, monitoring, evaluating and modifying.

Another strategy is Socio-affective Strategies. According to Vandergrift (2003), socio-affective strategies are techniques that listeners use to cooperate with others, to check and verify their comprehension, and to reduce their apprehension. This strategy ensures and promotes positive emotional reactions and perspective of language learning.

In addition to these strategies, Carrel (2007) has emphasized the role of note-taking strategies in listening comprehension, and they have demonstrated that learners can successfully improve their listening comprehension by using such strategies under the advices of an instructor

Moreover, Moreno (2015) explains that top-down and bottom-up strategies are also common strategies for developing listening comprehension. Peterson (2001) states that top-down processing is a process driven by listener's expectation and comprehension of the circumstances, subject, the nature of text, and the nature of word and bottom-up processing as a process triggered by the sounds, words and phrases which the listener hears as he or she attempts to decode speech and assign meaning**.** In addition, Hancock and Brooks-Brown (1994) explain that top-down strategies incorporate knowledge of the world in a general way and subject familiarity in particular, while bottom-up strategies typically focus on word recognition.

Another activity to develop listening comprehension is narrow listening, which was proposed by Graham and Santos in 2015. This strategy involves repeated learners' exposures to different sources of oral input around a topic chose by themselves. Those oral texts are supposed to have been previously selected by learners themselves, and it is expected that interest in the topic, repetition, and lack of pressure will provide listeners with language that can be understood without the help of other people.

In addition, Goodwin and Sommervold (2012) propose another activity which is discussion panels, where students research a topic from a variety of perspectives. Roles could include a university, the city mayor, or the general public. Each member of the discussion panel has to answer a structured list of questions about a topic since their own perspective. Depending on the class age group and dynamics, a variation might be to have the class at large ask questions of the panel members. Ask a member of the "audience" to be a reporter for the class newspaper and document the event. Members of the audience could represent other interests around the topic or help cover the event for the class newspaper, blog or podcast.

Linking final sounds is another activity proposed by Gilbert (2012). For this author, linking practice helps to develop listening comprehension since words in word groups typically run together and are linked as much as possible to keep the group together. In addition, this kind of practice helps students concentrate on the particular sound being studied. Another good use for linking practice is to select any difficult sound such as /I/. For instance, sometimes it is difficult to combine "tell" with a word that begins with a vowel, like "everybody". It should sound like "telleverybody". The reason this approach can help with a troublesome sound is that it may be easier for students to say this sound at the beginning of a word rather that at the end. Another activity suggested by this author is student pair work. In this activity pair-work practice is particularly important, as it gives the learners a great deal of realistic interactive speaking and listening; pair work offers the immediate feedback. Moreover, it places more responsibility for learning where it belongs to the student. While students work together in pairs, the teacher can circulate among them, giving help on a more personal basis. To provide variety, the pair work activities can be used as a listening exercise, with the teacher playing the part of Student A and

the whole class playing student B. Alternatively, one student can be Student A and the rest of the class can be Student B.

In the following paragraphs, five studies that have been conducted in different countries will be included in order to have a better understanding and knowledge on this topic.

The first study is the conducted by Al-Thiyabi (2014). The purpose of this study was to identify students´ needs and problems in term of listening skills. The methodologies used by the researcher were quantitative and qualitative. The finding manifests that more than half of the participants express their urgent need to learn how to take effective notes and how to ask for repetition or clarification in English. This research concludes that students need to identify different accents and pronunciation due of students' teachers' background. In addition, a paramount need is learning and using new and different vocabularies and terminologies. The limitation found in this study was the number of participants only 104 out of 2000, so they may not represent all students' needs therefore it is difficult to include more numbers in the analysis and impossible to include all the students.

Capan and Karaca conducted a study in 2012, whose purpose was to examine the relationship among gender, education level and language anxiety, specifically associated with two major language skills i.e. listening and reading. The researchers used the quantitative and qualitative methods. An important result in this study was the finding that there was a positive correlation between foreign language reading anxiety and listening anxiety levels. The higher one's reading anxiety was the higher listening anxiety he/she had. The relationship between these two different types of anxiety was attributed to the fact that both were receptive skills by nature. This study reported that foreign language reading anxiety and listening anxiety were two

correlated patterns. As the common point between the two types of anxiety is related to comprehending a message on the target language, it can be easily said that the lack of comprehension, or the fear of lack of comprehension, is a factor aggravating learners' anxiety level. A limitation of this study is connected to the particular nature of the sample group. As English majoring students are probably more motivated to attain advanced level of proficiency in all skills, the finding only reveals about such concerns of English major students. Thus, the particular sample in this study restricts the generalizability of the findings. In this regard, it can be better to replicate the study with more participants studying at various departments.

Another important study was conducted by De Brito (2015) whose main goal was to examine the effects of listening comprehension on English Language Learners' (ELLs) writing performance while taking notes. For this research De Brito used the quantitative and qualitative methodology. The results of this research lead to the conclusion that there aren't many materials and/or strategies among ELLs to improve their listening and writing. It was concluded that during the note taking process students could perform better if they were exposed first to any teaching material like a power point or a hand out to improve their understanding and to assist their notes, therefore making the organization and presentation of the lecture clear to the students. The limitation that the researcher found to the study was the impossibility to observe a lecture-type classroom where students could be exposed to a note taking activity and eventually compare their notes.

A fourth study was conducted by Mulyaningsih (2011). Its purpose was to know students' ability to make inference in listening comprehension and to know the factors that influence students' difficulty in making inference in listening comprehension. Quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used into this research. The result of the study showed the ability

of students to make inference in listening comprehension. Overall, the analysis indicated that majority of the students had problem in inference. This research concluded that the students had difficulty to make appropriate inference from the utterances in listening comprehension. This study did not have limitations.

Finally, Musa, Lie and Azman conducted a research in 2012. The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that contribute to low or limited English literacy achievement among learners. The researchers used quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The result obtained in this research points out that a general pattern of dissatisfaction among students, educators, policy makers, and the public regarding the teaching and learning of the language. This research concludes that an improved English language curriculum that operates on reflecting learning pedagogy would encourage learners to become independent and critical learners, in line with the current trends in language learning. Another conclusion was that the teaching of English in the classroom that emphasizes note-learning and the mastery of specific language skills that are tested via examinations should be revised. This study did not have limitations

CHAPTER II: **Methodology**

Setting and Participants

This research was conducted in two private high schools from the city of Machala, Province of El Oro, Ecuador. Twenty five students were chosen from five different classrooms and five English teachers to answer the questionnaire. Students belonged to second year of high school. The students' age was sixteen years old. The English level of most of the students was intermediate. In one of the high schools all the students were women and in the second one the students were mixed.

Procedures

The first step of this research was the collection of the scientific data; in this step, it was possible to look for information on papers and books focused on listening comprehension. Once the information was collected, it was paraphrased and cited in the Literature review section. The main topics researched were the followings: listening comprehension, elements of listening comprehension, listening difficulties for EFL learners, and strategies to develop the listening skill.

Once the literature review was built, the field research was carried out. For doing so, it was necessary to visit two private high schools in order to ask for permission to the principals to carry out the surveys. After the researcher obtained the permission, twenty-five students from five different parallels of the second year of senior high school were asked to answer the questionnaire in both private high schools, also five teachers were asked to answer the questionnaire. Besides, three students from five different parallels were interviewed. So the main instruments used for data collection were questionnaires for the students and teachers. The

questionnaires for the students and teachers consisted of eighteen questions. The techniques used were surveys to the teachers and students, interviews (three students per classroom), and note taking.

Once the data was collected, it was organized and tabulated. After that, three tables were created, one for each element of listening comprehension. The first table, which referred to the listener, consisted of nine statements. The second table, which referred to the speaker, consisted of four statements. The third table, which referred to the listening passage, consisted of five statements. Later, each table was described, analyzed and interpreted; it was also supported with teachers and students' opinions from the questionnaire and interview applied as well as with citations taken from the literature review.

At the end, conclusions and recommendations were built based on the gathered findings.

CHAPTER III: Description. Analysis and Interpretation of Results

The analysis of this chapter was conducted by taking into consideration the answers given in the questionnaires and interviews applied to students and teachers. The results obtained from these instruments were tabulated in percentage and the analysis and interpretation is presented below.

How do the listener factors affect their listening comprehension?

The listener is one of the three elements of listening comprehension. According to O'Toole (2012), the listener in the process of listening comprehension, asks for permission to supply the information at that time, so listening comprehension requires a clear declaration of the purpose and importance of the information. Besides, the listener plays an important role within the classroom because he or she interacts with the speaker; additionally, if the speaker has good listening comprehension, the class will be successful.

TABLE 1

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.	1.6%	34.4%	42.4 %	15.2%	6.4%
2	I listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage.	10.4%	25.6%	34.4 %	20.8	8.8

3	I find it difficult to do listening activities because of my lack of knowledge of English language.	14.4%	24%	42.4 %	14.4%	4.8%
4	After my teacher stops the recording, I find it difficult to predict what will come next.	11.2%	27.2%	37.6%	16%	8%
5	I find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage.	13.6%	29.6%	30.4%	20%	6.4%
6	I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time.	12.8 %	30.4 %	31.2%	19.2 %	6.4 %
7	I feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage.	12 %	23.2 %	27.2 %	20.8 %	16.8%
8	I find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to me.	30.4 %	41.6 %	19.2 %	5.6 %	3.2 %
9	I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud.	18.4 %	29.6 %	28 %	18.4 %	5.6 %

Author: Paul Ullaguary

Source: Students' questionnaire

Moreover, the statements below are aspects related to the listener.

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

Statement number 1 shows that many students (42.4%) sometimes use their own experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage. It means that this aspect does not cause any listening comprehension difficulty. In fact, it was noticed that student's background knowledge of a topic has a positive influence in improving listening skills because through it students could put in practice what they knew with the new information they

were listening in the classroom. This result is in accordance with Hasan (2000), who has suggested that associating newly heard information with prior knowledge is a powerful and very frequently used way to guess the meaning of a listening passage.

The results obtained from students about statement number 1 were similar with the results gathered from teachers (80 %) because most of them claimed that their students sometimes use their experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage. It might be attributed because students have learnt some words about the topic previously. In this concern, Alidoost, Paknejad, Mehr, Toulabi, and Nokarizi (2014) point out that having background knowledge is a key feature of any kind of listening materials, so language learners that want to improve their listening comprehension should have greater exposure to two kinds of listening materials: target cultural texts and international target culture texts.

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

Statement number 2 shows that 34.4 % of students sometimes listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage. In addition, in the interviews applied to students, it was found out that some of them agree that the speaker speaks too fast in each listening passage and, for this reason sometimes they cannot get the main idea of the audio at the first time, so they need to pay attention to every detail to achieve the activity successfully. Based on the aforementioned, it can be said that it is not easy for students to get the main idea of a passage without considering every detail.

 In this concern, Scrivener (2005) explains that listening for details is an important skill to listen to a passage, which impacts positively within the ability of listening; in addition, it allows

students identify the important parts of a message to convey and discard the detail that is not important and relevant.

Regarding teachers, it was found out that 40% of them said that students often and sometimes listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage. This might happen because the topic is new for students or due to students' low English level.

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

The result of item number 3 shows that 42.4 % of students sometimes find difficulties to do listening activities because of their lack of knowledge of the English language.

The lack of knowledge of the English language negatively affects in the process of listening comprehension because it hinders to comprehend what the speaker is talking about. In addition, this lack of knowledge also hinders the students' performance of their tasks at home.

Teachers also agree that their students sometimes find it difficult to do listening activities because of their lack of knowledge of the English language. This may be attributed because some students never obtained good grades in their last courses or because they did not like this subject and for this reason they do not study and do not show interest to get good grades. In addition, some student indicated that they ask their classmates or the teacher for help to perform the task due their lack of knowledge of the language. In this regard, Murray and Christison (2010) claim that many students think that English is only a school subject and they do not see its significance for their prospective employment to work with multinational or national companies where English is employed and for this reason they do not learn English.

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

Statement number 4 shows that 37. 6 % of students find it difficult to predict what will come next, after the teacher stops the recording. This may happen due to students' poor English level.

The results obtained from students agree with teachers answer since they also claim that after they stop the recording, students most of the times have problems to predict what will come next. It happens maybe because students could not understand the previous passage, so it is difficult for them to make predictions. In this regard, Hasan (2000) states that the problem is believed to be caused because students tend to have the habit of listening word by word. So students do not focus on any particular cues that may help them predict what will come next in the passage.

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

Item number 5 shows that 30.4 % of students sometimes find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after they have listened to a passage.

It is important to remember that using short dialogues in the classroom positively influences the students' learning process because they have the opportunity to develop the ability to talk and communicate with their classmates and teachers. However, students do not feel comfortable at performing this activity.

Teachers confirm this result since they claim that students sometimes find difficulties to hold a short dialogue after they have listened to a passage. They believe it might happen because of the students' lack of vocabulary or appropriate words to construct the dialogue; or, probably, because they feel nervous to speak in front of their classmates. This fact is confirmed by Ur

(1989), who states that the difficulty in listening performance is partly due to the provision of irrelevant tasks that demand the skills of reading, speaking and writing rather than the skills of listening.

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

In this statement, it was found that 31.2 % of students sometimes find difficulties to get a general understanding of the message at the first time. This result demonstrates that it may probably be the reason for students to have listening comprehension difficulties.

Concerning teachers, it was found that they agree with the fact that their students sometimes find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time. This is mainly because students do not know many words from the listening passage, or the teachers do not previously explain in an appropriate way about the topic they will learn. In the interview applied to students, most of them said that in the passages played in the classroom the speaker talks too fast, which hinders them to get a general understanding of the message at the first time. Brown (1994) points out several linguistic sources which make listening difficult for the first time: 1) the use of colloquial language and slang; 2) the use of reduced forms; 3) the prosodic features of the English language; and 4) strange accents.

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

According to the students' responses, statement number 7 shows that 27.2 % of them sometimes felt nervous and worried when they did not understand to the listening passage. This aspect causes students' listening comprehension difficulties.

Nervousness significantly influences on listening comprehension in a negative way. Rivers (1981) declared that the necessity of developing listening skill in a foreign language (FL) is an essential element in the act of communication. However, this skill usually produces anxiety on students.

The results from the statement aforementioned agree with some of the teachers (60%) answers since they claim that students sometimes feel nervous and worried when they do not understand to the listening passage. Teachers argue that it happens because the students cannot control their feelings and emotions or because learners feel uncomfortable or do not like the new topic. In this concern, Vogely (1988, p. 68) explains that "listening comprehension anxiety can undermine speech production because, in order to interact verbally, the listener must first understand what is being said"

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

Motivation and interest are also important factors in understanding the topic of the listening passage. Statement eight shows that 41.6% of students seldom find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest for them. This result demonstrates that the topic of the listening passage does not cause difficulties in understanding the spoken text; it may be because students like the topic chosen by the teacher.

Concerning teachers, it was found out than 60% of them said that students sometimes find it difficult to understand to the listening passage because it is not of interest for them. This may happen because the teacher did not give an appropriate explanation about the listening passage and the importance that it has, or also because the types of listening exercises are always the

same; therefore, students feel bored because of the repetition of exercises patterns; another reason is because the students do not perceive the classroom climate as supportive.

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

Item number 9 shows that 29.6 % of students seldom find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to his or her teacher reading aloud, which means that this aspect does not affect students' listening comprehension

Moreover, using recorded texts is a useful activity that allows students listen to the speaker in a clear way. By using this resource, students can ask their teacher replay the recording to understand the passage.

On the other hand, 60 % of teachers said that students often find difficulties at listening a recorded text than to their teacher reading aloud. This may be because students do not pay attention to the listening passage or because the quality of the recorded text is bad. In addition, in the interviews applied to students, most of them said that the internal noise within the classroom caused by the air conditioner sometimes hinders them to understand to the recorded text. Regarding this problem, Yagan (1994, p. 192) says that "unclear sounds resulting from poor quality environment can interfere with the listener's comprehension.

To sum up, statement number four which refers about difficulties to predict what will come next after the teacher stops the recording is the one that mostly influences on students' listening comprehension because learners prefer to focus in every word and not in specific cues or words that may help them predict what will come next.

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

The speaker is the second element in listening comprehension. Koo (2007) claims that speakers learn the sound patterns such as they hear and say words, and the acquired comprehension of the sound patterns affects their phonological behaviour in turn. Moreover. Harsch, Vock, Rupp, and Koller (2008) state that the characteristics of the speaker and their linguistic utterances impact on the degree to which effective listening comprehension can occur in essential ways; for instance, age, gender, ethnnicity, nationality, ocupation, educational level, and first language of speakers influence the manner in which they speak including the structure of their utterance, which often contain several repetitions and redundancies.

Table 2

The speaker

Item No	*Statements*	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
10	I find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses.	8%	26.4 %	38.4 %	17.6 %	9.6 %
11	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly.	12	30.4 %	31.2 %	19.2 %	7.2 %
12	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast.	12.8 %	27.2 %	37.6 %	15.2 %	7.2 %
13	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents.	12 %	28.8 %	35.2 %	19.2 %	4.8 %

Author: Gianny Ullaguary

Source: Students' questionnaire

After having a clear idea about the speaker, it is necessary to start analyzing the aspects related to this topic.

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

Statement number 10 shows that 38.4 % of students said that sometimes they find difficulties to understand natural speech which is full of hesitations and pauses. This result indicates that this aspect may create listening comprehension difficulties on students. In fact, natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses negatively affects the process of listening comprehension because the listener cannot understand to the listening passage. Hesitations and pauses in spontaneous speech cause perception problems and comprehension errors for non-native speakers (Hasan, 2000). In addition, Buck (2011) affirms that hesitation that slow down the speech rate do aid comprehension for L2 listeners, and this applies to both filled and unfilled pauses, as long as the listener recognises these as fillers, then comprehension can be adversely affected.

Besides, teachers (80%) and students (38.4%) agree with the fact that it is difficult to understand natural speech, which is full of hesitation and pauses. This might be because students lose the main idea of the passage when the speaker hesitates and pauses the speech. In the surveys applied to students, most of them said that the teacher sometimes hesitates and pauses when he/she is speaking. For this reason, they sometimes do not understand to the whole passage. About this aspect, Harmer (2001) states that when people speak, they often hesitate, repeat themselves, say things that are ungrammatical and change their mind halfway through a sentence. So, the teacher's tasks when teaching listening is to train students to understand what is said in conversations in order to get them to disregard redundancy, hesitation, ungrammaticality and to be conscious that some speakers change their minds.

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

Results in statement number 11 confirm that 31.2 % of students sometimes find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly.

Words that are not pronounced clearly by the speaker might affect to the listener in a negative way due to (his/her) auditory comprehension for the target language. Based on this, it is important that the teacher pronounces them in a clear and understandable manner for the students and/or audience in a classroom setting. Wong (1993) argues that the importance of pronunciation is even more distinct when the connection between pronunciation and listening comprehension is considered.

On the other hand, 40 % of teachers said that students often find difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly. This may be because the teacher does not know how to pronounce some words from the passage. Students also said that often they do not understand to the passage because the teacher did not pronounce it in a clear way. This result is consistent with Ur's declaration (1984), who states that if a word is pronounced differently from the way it was said when it was learnt, the listener may not recognize it as the same word, or may even miss its existence completely.

I find it difficult to understand well when the speaker talks too fast.

Statement number 12 shows that 37.6% of students sometimes find difficulties to understand well when the speaker talks too fast; this causes students listening comprehension difficulties.

In addition, when the speaker talks too fast in the classroom, it negatively affects students because they cannot internalize the message. For this reason, it is important that the speaker does

not speak too fast, but in an appropriate speed; similarly, it is important to consider students'

level. In this concern, Hayati (2010) points out that the speed to deliver the words is one of the

greatest obstacles to understand to the listening passage.

Teachers also confirm this result since 40% of them claim that students sometimes find

difficulties to understand well when the speaker talks fast. This may be because some teachers

have a good English knowledge and they speak too fast or because the audio is not based on

students English level. Underwood (1989) says that many language learners believe that the

greatest difficulty with listening comprehension, as opposes to reading comprehension, is that

listener can not control how quickly a speaker speaks.

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

Statement number 13 demonstrates that 35.2 % of students said that they sometimes find

it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents. This result shows that it

may be a reason to have listening comprehension difficulties.

To talk with varied accents negatively affects in the process of listening comprehension

because learners most of the time feel confused and they do not know what accent should be used

when they start a dialogue. In addition, listeners must consider the sounds, accents, intonations,

and tones of the speakers, which can all affect the message greatly. According to Goh (1999),

unfamiliar accents both native and non-native speaker can cause serious problems in listening

comprehension while familiarity with an accent helps' learners listening comprehension. Besides,

Munro and Derwing (1999) express that accented speech can lead to a greater reduction in

comprehension. Finally, Goh (1999) mentions that a speaker' s accent is one of the most

significant factors that affect listening comprehension.

It was also found that 60% of teachers said that students often find difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents. Probably, it is because teachers learned English with native and non - native speakers, or because the students have become accustomed to the accent of the same teacher since they are in the school. In this regard, Yagang (1994) states that listeners have the tendency to get familiar with the accents which they mostly listen. If listeners are exposed to standard British or American accents, they will face problems in understanding other accents. In addition, Buck (2011) indicates that when listeners hear an unfamiliar accent such as an Indian English for the first time after studying only American English, they will encounter critical difficulties in listening. This will certainly interrupt the whole listening comprehension process.

In conclusion, statement number 12, which is about difficulties to understand well when speakers talk too fast, is the one that influences mostly on students' listening comprehension. It is because the teacher speaks too fast; for this reason, students cannot internalize the message listened in the classroom.

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

The listening passage is the third element for an appropriate listening comprehension. Smith (2008), claims that listening passage incorporates modeling into the instructional process by having the student listens to a passage before reading the passage alone. Listening passage plays an important role on listening comprehension because it allows the learners to develop the ability to listen.

Table 3

The listening passage

Item No	Statements	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
14	Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with my listening comprehension	22.4 %	33.6 %	36%	5.6%	2.4%
15	Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with my listening comprehension.	24%	33.6%	24.8%	16%	1.6%
16	The length of the listening passage hinders me to interpret the message	19.2%	40%	28%	8.8%	4%
17	The content of the listening passage is abstract.	23.2%	32.8%	28%	14.4%	1.6%
18	The poor quality of the recording does not allow me to understand the listening passage.	49.6%	28.8%	9.6%	8.8%	3.2%

Author: Gianny Ullaguary

Source: Students' questionnaire

Additionally, the following statements are factors related to the listening passage:

Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with my listening comprehension

Statement number 14 indicates that 36 % of students sometimes find that the vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with their listening comprehension. This result demonstrates the low knowledge on vocabulary students have, which is a reason for facing listening comprehension difficulties.

In this concern, it can be said that vocabulary that is unknown by students negatively affects them because they cannot understand to the whole listening passage. In this regard, Hennings (2000) states that vocabulary is a key factor not only in reading, but also in listening comprehension. Hennings goes further when he argues that students with limited vocabulary have

few building blocks with which to construct meaning and gaps exist, which makes construction of meaning difficult.

It was also found that 40 % of teachers said that sometimes the vocabulary used in the listening activities interferes with students' listening comprehension. This may be because their limited English vocabulary or the vocabulary used in the listening passage is an academic advanced one. Butt, Sharif, Nasser-ud-Din, Hussain, Khan, and Ayesha (2010) state that the major problem hindering listening comprehension is that the students' vocabulary is too limited to understand the message.

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

The use of long and complex grammatical structures can make it hard for non-native speakers to understand to the listening passage. Statement number 15 shows that about 33.6 % of students seldom believe that some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with their listening comprehension. The results point out that grammatical structures not often cause problems to students.

On the other hand, 40 % of teachers said that students sometimes think that some grammatical structures in listening passage interfere with their listening comprehension. It may be because students did not learn some gramatical structures previously and they are more focused on improving pronunciation.

It is a fact that grammatical structures that are not according to student' level negatively affect in the listening comprehension process because grammar plays a crucial part in grasping and expressing spoken language (e.g. expressions) since learning the grammar of a language is

considered necessary to acquire the capability of producing grammatically acceptable utterances in the language (Corder 1988). For this reason, it is important to have a good grammar knowledge to improve listening comprehension.

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

Statement number 16 reveals that 40 % of students seldom believe that the length of the listening passage hinders them to interpret the message. This result clearly shows that teacher chooses passages considering the appropriate length in order to avoid students' listening comprehension difficulties.

In addition, when the passage is too long, it may cause memory problems or even fatigue and this would distract listeners' attention from grasping the meaning of the texts; as a result, learners may miss the rest of the text due to a lapse in concentration (Hasan 2000, p.143). For this reason, it is important to implement short dialogues in the classroom.

On the other hand, 40 % of teachers said that the length of the passage hinders their students to interpret the message. It is probably because attention is lost and important details are missed when long passages are played. Regarding this aspect, Azmi, Celik, Yildiz, and Mart (2014) state that the level of students can have a significant role when they are listening to long passages and keep all information in their minds. It is very difficult for lower level students to listen for more than three minutes and complete the listening task.

The content of the listening passage is abstract.

Statement number 17 reveals that 32.8 % of students indicate that the content of the listening passage is seldom abstract; this result indicates that teachers use appropriate listening passages.

On the other hand, it was also found that 100 % of teachers said that sometimes the content of the listening passage is abstract for their students. Teacher also indicated that some students may face problems at comprehending this information may be because they have not developed the ability to think in a critical way. Regarding this aspect, Korzybski (1958) pointed out that language can be very general and abstract at one end of a continuum, or it can be quiet specific and concrete at the other end.

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

Statement 18 shows that 49.6 % of students never have had problems with the recording due to its poor quality. This result shows that recordings played in the classroom are in good conditions.

This result is confirmed by teachers (40%) who claim that the poor quality of the recording seldom allow their students understand the listening passage. It may be because the recordings were from high quality. The quality of the sound system can impact the listening comprehension of learners (Azmi, Celik, Yildiz, and Mart 2014).

Finally, it can be said that statement number 14, which refers to vocabulary used in the listening passage, is the one that influences mostly on students' listening comprehension. It is because the low knowledge on vocabulary students have.

CONCLUSIONS

Students cannot hold a short dialogue with the information previously listened. It happens whether students' lack of appropriate words to hold a dialogue or due to students' low English level.

Nervousness and worries affect students when they listen to a passage. Nervousness and worries within the classroom are consequence of the lack of warm-up activities before starting the class and also due to students' low English level.

Students cannot understand the listening passage when the speaker talks too fast. It was noticed that when the students were listening to the passage they asked the teacher to repeat the passage again because the speaker talked too fast and for this reason they could not understand to the listening passage.

Mispronunciation of words clearly affects students' listening comprehension. In fact, when the speaker does not pronounce the words clearly, it affects in a negative way in the listening comprehension process because some words in English have a similar pronunciation so it confuses to students.

Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with students' listening comprehension; it happens because some vocabulary from the audio passages was unknown for students, which demonstrates students' limited vocabulary.

Students are not familiarized with listening to audio passages with varied accents; this aspect highly affects to students' listening comprehension because they are accustomed to listen to their teacher' accent in order to get the main idea or details from the audio.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is necessary to avoid the use of long passages in English classes; in this way, the teacher will avoid students' tiredness and boredom.

English teachers should use passages with different language accents (such as British, American, or Canadian English) in the classroom in order to get students accustomed to different English accents.

Teacher should increase the background knowledge of the students by asking them to draw a list of unknown words while they are listening to the passage. In this way, they will increase their vocabulary.

Pre-listening activities should be used in the classroom before starting the class because it prepares students for what they are going to hear in the listening passage and helps them to reduce anxiety caused for listening to a foreign language.

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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 saber cuál es su opinión sobre **las dificultades que usted tiene para escuchar comprensivamente en la clase 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 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 dialogo 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 tema que escucho en inglés porque el tema no es de mi interés.				
9	Me resulta más difícil comprender en inglés el texto grabado que el texto leído en voz alta por mi profesor (a)				

Dificultades con el hablante

No.	Enunciado	*Nunca*	*Rara vez*	*A veces*	*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 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 mi entender lo que escucho en inglés por las diferentes formas de pronunciar de los hablantes					

Dificultades con el texto que escucho

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

GRACIAS POR SU COLABORACIÓN

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

TITULACIÓN DE 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 el aula?

Usted como oyente   (   )

El texto que escucha   (   )

El hablante (quien emite el mensaje)   (   )

¿ Por qué _____

_____

3. ¿Según Ud. que 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. Que hace usted 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

_____

_____

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

OPEN AND DISTANCE MODALITY

ENGLISH DEGREE

TEACHER´S QUESTIONNARIE

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 the best reflects your personal opinion.

The listener

Item no.	Statements	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	Students use their experience and background of the topic to understand the listening passage					
2	Students listen to every detail					

Item no	Statements	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
	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 massage 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

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

Item no.	Statements	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
13	Students 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 students´ listening comprehension					
15	Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interferes 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