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

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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DEDICATION

In accomplishment of an additional stage in my student's life, I want to dedicate this research project to my parents, for their support and dedication that they have given me during the whole process of my study; because without their support I could not have earned this title.

Jose Antonio Alvarez Zaruma

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José Antonio Álvarez Zaruma

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ABSTRACT

This study is about 'Students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms: An Ecuadorian case at four private high schools in the city of Azogues. The aim of this study is to research about the learners' listening comprehension difficulties in the EFL classroom.

The population consisted of 125 students from 2nd year of high school and five EFL teachers. The data-collecting instruments used were students' and teachers' questionnaire and a students' interview. The questionnaires focused on three main aspects: the listener factors affect listening comprehension, the speaker factors, and how does the listening passage hinder the students' comprehension. The students' interview contained 4 questions related to listening comprehension, difficulties in listening recordings, elements that hinder good listening and the reactions of the students when they do not understand an audio. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze the data gathered.

The results showed that classmates' behavior was the main hindrance to improve listening comprehension because it did not allow the oral message to be clearly understood.

Keywords: Listening comprehension, difficulties, listener, speaker, and listening passages.

RESUMEN

Este estudio es acerca de 'Percepciones de los estudiantes sobre las dificultades de comprensión auditiva en clases de inglés: Un caso de Ecuador' en cuatro escuelas secundarias privadas en la ciudad de Azogues. El objetivo de este estudio es investigar a cerca de las dificultades de los estudiantes tienen en la comprensión auditiva en clase de idioma inglesa.

La población consistía 125 estudiantes del segundo año de BGU y 5 profesores de inglés. Los instrumentos utilizados para la colección de datos fueron cuestionarios para estudiantes y profesores, y una entrevista a los estudiantes. Los cuestionarios se centraron en tres aspectos principales: el interlocutor, receptor y el mensaje oral. Mientras, las entrevistas contenían 4 preguntas relacionadas sobre comprensión auditiva, las dificultades para escuchar grabaciones, elementos que dificultan una buena escucha y las reacciones de los estudiantes cuando no entienden un audio. Métodos cualitativo y cuantitativo fueron usados para analizar los datos obtenidos.

Los resultados demostraron que el comportamiento de algunos compañeros en la clase fue un obstáculo para mejorar la comprensión oral, ya que no permitían escuchar el mensaje oral con claridad.

Palabras clave: comprensión auditiva, dificultades, oyente, hablante, y escucha de pasajes.

INTRODUCTION

Listening is one of the key ability in language acquisition. It is an important ability because without this skill, learners will not be able to understand or even communicate with others effectively; therefore, it is important for every student to feel that they can apply their listening abilities in order to understand what is said to them in the English language, whether it is in personal communication or simply watching something on TV or CDs or any other forms of communication means (Harmer, 2007).

The development of the current study focuses precisely on students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms: An Ecuadorian case at four private high schools of Azogues. The aim of this research is to investigate the learners' listening comprehension difficulties in the EFL classroom by answering three research questions: How do the listener factors affect their listening comprehension? Do the speaker factors interfere with the learners' listening skills? And how does the listening passage hinder the students' listening comprehension?

In order to achieve this goal some previous studies about the listening comprehension difficulties were analyzed and included.

An interesting study was conducted by Ulum (2015), this study took place at Hakkri University, Turkey, its purpose was to understand how elementary level EFL students perceive hearing problems in EFL courses.

In this study, the author found that the students find it difficult to comprehend the listening text when speakers speak with varied and unfamiliar accents. Students do not comprehend the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly. Also, the results showed that the listening skill was difficult to be developed for students taking part in the study. In addition, it was their poorest skill among the other language abilities.

It is important to consider an additional study made by Nowrouzi, et.at (2016), the research took place at three universities in Mashhad, Iran. The aim of this study was to test the level of EFL students' listening comprehension difficulties in the three main aspects such as perception, parsing, and utilization. To carry out this study the population was randomly chosen from three Mashhad, Iran universities.

As a conclusion, the authors stated that the present study found that Iranian tertiary level first year EFL students' listening difficulties could be classified into three varieties in relation to three stages of listening comprehensions such as perception, parsing, and utilization. Also, the

findings indicated that the main problems were distractions and missing or misperceiving sounds and words associated with perception, sentence for getting concerned with parsing, confusion about the main idea pertaining to utilization.

Finally, a relevant study was carried out by Putri (2016), it took place at MA NW, Narmada. The purpose of this study was to investigate students' common problems in listening and possible motives of those problems. In addition, this study was emphasized on the problems in listening as part of National Examination. At the end, the author concluded making three important recommendations for teachers and two for students. Firstly, students must increase their listening habits since listening is more difficult than any other ability. Secondly, students must improve their vocabulary and ask for some listening materials before going to the National Examination. Thirdly, students must practice both American and British pronunciations in the school lab and also the teacher must provide dictionaries with two different pronunciations. For teachers, encouragement should be given to students so that they can keep improving their listening skills and help with students' concerns. Also, they should provide some tips or strategies to the students in order to avoid students translating word by word.

The present research project will benefit principals, teachers and students of the participating high schools because the results of the research will allow them to identify the listening comprehension difficulties in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, the results of this study could be the base to find the new suitable methods or techniques in order to avoid hindrances for listening comprehension, and improve the listening skills in the EFL classroom of the participating high schools and the educational community of Ecuador in general.

CHAPTER I.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Many English language students have problems with listening comprehension and often this aspect is ignored. That is why it is important to emphasize the great impact it may have on the student's English learning, and because of this influence redirect it towards better learning strategies to facilitate listening comprehension. A thorough research was applied from books, internet and didactic guide in order to have a clearer idea of the topic being studied; hence, the topics being analyzed are the following: listening comprehension, elements of listening comprehension (the listener, the speaker, the listening passage, and the physical setting), listening difficulties for EFL learners (Listening Problems/ causes), and strategies and activities to develop listening comprehension skills. Besides, six previous studies related to the topic were analyzed and added. The current study mainly focuses on Students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classroom which will be presented below.

1.1. Listening comprehension.

Listening comprehension is one of the stages of communication when a person understands the message being conveyed by another. However, there are several strategies to activate this process to make it successful.

Listening is the ability that someone has in order to decipher audible information in which it is mainly listening material rather than the use of images to assist the message being conveyed. In most cases, the listening phase includes the decoding of that information and making it comprehensible (Li, 2013). Likewise, Nadig (2013) affirms that in order to understand spoken messages, it is required to follow several steps such identifying speech intonations, understanding of specific vocabulary and the grammatical structure of the listening text.

Ur (1984) states that there are two things that make it difficult for a learner to listen effectively which are: the teachers are not facing the students when they are speaking or do not make facial expression and body language while doing so; and, poor quality sound equipment.

Furthermore, there is an initial problem in Ecuador which is a lack of knowledge of the English language and inappropriate pronunciation. This can certainly affect many students in gaining the correct listening comprehension skills that are necessary for communication. Richard (2008) argues that for years college students have struggled to learn English as a second language and the problem is rooted in oral comprehension because the pronunciation of teachers is so flawed due to the fact that they do not know people who really speak in a certain real-life situation. Similarly, Steinberg (2007) states that listening is not simple than hearing, it

involves four phases such as identifying and joining, knowing and finding the meaning, recalling and answering. In addition, he believes that these important phases are often ignored by listeners at the moment of listening oral passage.

Brown (2007) states that if the teachers produce accurate pronunciation, the student internalizes linguistic information. This process is essential to take the first steps to master the English language.

Students perceive that they have trouble understanding the content being listened to because they simply do not grasp the instructions that are conveyed to them. Thomas-Collier (2003) points out that the reason students do not fully understand what they hear, or, are not able to speak outside of the classroom lies in their poor listening comprehension skills which, in turn, need to be seriously improved. Thomas-Collier adds that students have difficulty understanding what the teacher says, therefore making pronunciation is one of the factors that hinder good listening. So that, nonnative speakers would be able to develop their listening skills if their teachers spoke more clearly and effectively, using the correct pronunciation.

1.2. Elements of listening comprehension.

In the current section four elements of listening comprehension will be discussed: the listener, the speaker, the listening passage, and physical setting.

1.2.1. The listener.

Listening is the most difficult skill to attain when considering learning English, or, in fact, any other language. There are many different ways to pronounce a word and this can be very confusing for many people. Nevertheless, many authors say that listening is very necessary to learn any language, especially English and there are many ways in which a student's listening ability can be enhanced.

It is important to take into account that the listener must have skills to distinguish one word from another, how to pronounce properly and also know its meaning. Andrade (2006) notes that listening is the skill of hearing to get the meaning of spoken message, and he adds that the most important factors to consider into listening comprehension are identify accents, words intonations, syntax rubrics, and acquiring enough words in order to understand the oral text. The lack of one of these factors in the listening context could make listening be unsuccessful.

The listener faces many problems along the way which can be varied. Some authors such as Scrivener (2012) have also evaluated some factors that affect listening. An example, states that teachers have different ways to pronounce a word because they are not native speakers.

When students learn English from one particular teacher (one type of pronunciation which is inappropriate) and the following year he receives class from another teacher (which has different pronunciation), at that moment the students could feel very confused and they may never consider taking up English ever again. In this sense, Brown (2007) states and gives a solution to this specific situation. By writing and knowing the words beforehand has a far greater impact when practicing and engaging in a listening activity. Writing can be used as a tool in the process of helping listeners to understand the listening activities; also, it is a good way to increase the listener's ability in listening comprehension by practicing the pronunciation of certain words in their written form.

In the same regard, Richards (2008) explains that listening is essential to improve the understanding of English. He says that activities in the classroom must promote ideas that help listeners expand their current listening skills. And it is necessary to use the internet as a valid alternative to encourage this skill. Peterson (2010) reaffirmed these proposals and added that the listener is an important part of the process of learning to communicate in English.

Consequently, Celic (2009) recognizes the difficulties of the listener's to listen satisfactorily and become an excellent listener. He also gives importance to the teacher-student relationship. The work between professor – student is very important, because if the teacher uses strategies such as; songs, motivational games, videos, etc., to teach listening, the student will indeed have more freedom and less anxiety to understand the given contexts of the activity that is presented for listening at that given moment.

1.2.2. The speaker.

Alonso (2012) argues that speaking is one of the most difficult ability that includes developing a speech for audience with accurate intonation, articulation and tone. And also he says that speaking play important role of communication where the speaker speaks and the listeners ask questions; in fact, both of them are required to be precise in order to understand each other. Likewise, Harmer (2007) points out that teaching

speaking is very important in the classroom for three main aims: speaking activities allow students to interact with classmate in real time, interaction between students and teachers allow them use their ability to express and measure their capacity of language use and speaking activities will let students to become fluent speaker. Since, speaking plays important role in communication systems, Tuan and Mai (2015) believe that teachers have to support students to overcome speaking difficulties. They state that such difficulties are originated from 'performance condition', emotional aspects, listening skills, 'topical knowledge' and feedback throughout outputting tasks.

In fact, communication and language acquisition heavily depend on speaking skills. If you do not have good speaking skills, most assuredly you will not be able to communicate appropriately. One of the most important aspects to consider when there is a situation in which the speaker does not deliver the message effectively are the features that make it difficult to understand the oral message. There are speaker factors such as when they do not understand the pronunciation, the rate of speech which is being conveyed to them and much more. In this senses, Bygate (1987) believes that speaking is the most important ability that language learners must possess to communicate effectively in the EFL classroom. This is important to consider because it is also the speaker which has to convey a clear and concise message so that the receiver may understand and comprehend by applying good listening techniques (Taous, 2013, p.4-5).

The skill called "Speaking" is a very important part for the students because it helps them communicate with others effectively when it is necessary. In regard to the speaker, Peterson (2010) states that the internet is a powerful tool for students to develop their language skills when it comes to listening comprehension. In addition, the use of technology outside of the classroom can make students become more autonomous in their efforts to engage in conversation.

Additionally, in many social contexts, students try to apply what they already know in English, but unfortunately some do not do so well because of their poor listening skills. It is always easier to ask a question, but to answer it can be difficult for a student who has not mastered this skill. However, not every single student is at the same level. When considering the speaker, it is important that the speakers take into account the level in which listeners are going through. When the student is at the beginner's stage, they tend to be self-conscious of what they are going to say because they are first engaged in more

listening and comprehension activities rather than speaking activities. Notwithstanding, when the students are at a higher level of speaking, they can express themselves in a more relaxed way because they have increased confidence. The student which is at the developing level participates often in social interaction with their peers and produce longer phrases. Accent, intonation, inflection and stress are some features in which students find difficult to master when they are in the earlier stages of listening. Hence, it is crucial for a student to practice and implement the tools given by their teacher in order to gain more ability in the skill of speaking. When students have difficulty in differentiating intonation and accent when someone is speaking to them, it will be challenging for them to answer and assimilate well. According to Scrivener (2010) effective communication and interactions in the society is important; the speakers possess several skills such as enough exposure of vocabulary, syntax, word stress, accents, speech, and pronunciation (Asakereh and Dehghannezhad, 2015, p. 8-9).

1.2.3. The listening passage.

When a person listens to many different topics, he or she can try to understand all the information, but it will be difficult because it is necessary to have the knowledge of the new words and the pronunciation so that the message is understood. Besides, to pronounce words correctly only comes with constant practice; this can help to use many different forms of pronunciation but without changing the context. Furthermore, it is necessary to have some knowledge of grammar and good vocabulary before reading or listening to any passage within a text.

Harmer (2007) states that understanding requires good grammar, good reading and excellent vocabulary to get good results. This is where, inevitably, the incorporation of the listening passage is necessary. This element allows the student to make more progress.

Celic (2009) affirms that oral and written exercises are necessary, and are designed so that the teacher first captures students' interest. With written exercises, the learner can gain more perception to be able to improve his or her listening skills. Additionally, some variables have the ability to influence listening comprehension in students such as the active voice, message organization and certain individual perspectives which have a great effect on students' listening comprehension (Haslett, 1984)

Many different messages make a difference in listening comprehension. Many aspects such as the indistinct, explicit language, active voice, the way the information is organized, difference of perspectives, and anticipations of listeners have helped improve listening skills (Haslett, 2012).

Teachers have the duty to choose appropriate listening materials for listening activities in order to develop listening comprehension, teachers should, on the one hand, select oral texts that accurately reveal features of the English language and provide students with the necessary tools to understand every piece of text just as foreigners do (Buck, 2001). It is important to choose materials which can involve students in 'real life' conversations. (Bozorgian, 2012).

1.2.4. The physical setting.

The classroom is the place where all the students have the opportunity to improve their abilities. Gibbons (2002) states that the place where students can progress is in the classroom. Teachers need to use aspects or elements to generate a sense of belonging in the students so that they can learn effectively and with ease.

Additionally, another aspect that is considered to have a positive effect upon the students' listening abilities is appropriate ventilation and suitable temperature in the classroom (Haslett, 1984). All of this makes sense because if students are not comfortable they are going to feel anxiety and lose concentration which is necessary for listening comprehension. No matter what the changes are, if they are the correct ones, then appropriate listening comprehension can take place in students. The opportunity that the teachers take to make changes is utterly important and will have an impact on students and those changes will contribute to their overall learning (Brownell, 2016).

The surroundings are important to consider for the student to feel comfortable enough to pay attention to the audio tracks. On the other hand, sound levels and background noises are also elements that the teacher has to eliminate so the students can concentrate on the listening passages. All of these will improve effective comprehension (Ur, 1984).

Richards (2008) says that a classroom is an ideal place for listening and speaking practice, it is important that the environment is organized in such a manner that the students feel comfortable. For example, the teacher may include many different pictures

on the walls of relevant things from the students' culture and background, organize a carpet area so that they can relax and read. All these ideas can help make the area most suitable for learning and create in them the motivation to learn. Furthermore, Hedgcock (2010) adds that a good atmosphere in the classroom is highly important and necessary so that the students' attention is gained and learning is encouraged. In this way, students can engage effectively in listening and speaking activities because they feel no anxiety.

1.3. Listening comprehension difficulties for EFL learners (listening problems/causes).

The most common lack in the educational system are that the teacher's strategies seem to be ineffective; the strategies for listening passages are sometimes boring or simply inefficient, and the strategies used are not the appropriate ones.

Consequently, some of these difficulties will be discussed further below, so there will be an overview of what are the 'real' problems that students face when they are listening to conversations, programs, movies and listening passages on recordings.

Regarding to the potential listening problems Underwood (1989) states seven possible problems that affects students in listening comprehension process. These include the listener is unable to manage the density of speech, sometimes the words are not repeated for listeners, listeners do not have enough exposure of vocabulary, the listener usually do not understand the main point of the speaker, listeners may lack background information, listeners are not used to listen in foreign language and listeners may want to understand every words at the same time (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011). Likewise, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) point out six potential problems that hinder students from accurate listening comprehension these problems are: the quality of recorded material, cultural differences, accent, unfamiliar vocabulary, length and speed of the listening.

Hadi-Tabassum (2006) affirms that learning strategies should go in the same direction as students; their skills must be developed with accurate teaching methods to learn the language. The use of methods to learn English should be given to teachers and students because teachers look for teaching English in an easy way and the students want to learn English easily without problems such as having to overcome different pronunciation difficulties and different accents of speakers of other languages. Freeman (2004) states that listening difficulties that arise within a classroom are related to unorthodox methods and do not help students feel relaxed and instead creates a lack of interest for any engagement. When a professor uses unorthodox methods to teach English, students may feel overwhelmed by these

complicated methods which they do not understand. Some teachers may perhaps provide difficult listening passages that are not within their age or English level and, therefore hinder their listening development.

Ur (2012) states that discipline in class, review of tasks and constant practice is necessary because not doing these activities create more difficulties in learning and delay the students from learning especially when listening skills are compromised. Constant practice is necessary for learning a foreign language, especially English because Spanish speakers are not used to writing and speaking in English.

Hedgcock and Ferris (2014) agree with other specialists that there are many teachers that are not teaching pronunciation correctly; in fact, mispronunciations are not checked how something is supposed to be said or pronounced. These factors are problems for students learning the target language. Students have difficulties in this particular case because the teachers themselves have problems pronouncing correctly, and this, in the long run affects student learning and listening abilities.

When a student learns a new language, he or she needs to use new words, creative ideas and a constant change of phrases to improve listening.

1.4. Strategies and activities to develop listening comprehension skills.

Strategies to improve listening comprehension should provide a meaningful practice that allows the students attention.

It is vital for teachers to prepare students for listening comprehension because they may need it in their lives at some point. Strategies are the ones that will help to develop the target language if they are applied correctly (Ur, 1984). A strategy such as getting students to listen to cues while reading texts with images is suggested. Exposing students to short dialogues that require only brief answers is also a common strategy used when developing listening skills. Furthermore, listening to longer texts and also basing it for discussion will improve listening comprehension (Ur, 1984)

Some other strategies include: directed listening, retelling, solve the mystery, complete sentences, finish the story, nonsense sentences, which word doesn't belong and listen then do (Housel, 2001). These strategies help in different ways such as helping students to increase memory stability, critical thinking and listening skills.

However, another way in which students may improve their listening abilities is when teachers evaluate the classroom so that they find the problems that students are experiencing in their listening comprehension. Teachers need to find tools that help them solve those issues and improve the process for teaching English (Stevens, 2010). Therefore, it is also an important issue to consider, the author refers to this situation as something a student needs to take advantage of the information which the teacher provides, and then; the student should go home to improve it by practicing in order to enhance their knowledge.

Furthermore, for a student to be able to develop listening skills, teachers must be sure that the student knows the specific aims of study, be determined and have a sense of purpose which in the long run produces good habits and confidence. There are ways in which these listening abilities can be refined and this can be through audio- visuals where students can integrate both and learn through different stimulus at the same time as they are listening to any given passage. One way this could be done is by practicing listening in a quiet place for thinking and predicting (Wei & Liu, 2009)

Teachers need to use short phrases to explain the meaning of those expressions but only after they have predicted; moreover, the practicing of long and short phrases are needed so that the student improves in writing after their listening efforts. Nutall (2005) states that the process of moving from a single word to a more extensive vocabulary and practice requires that students and teachers create an atmosphere in which they think in English without much difficulty. Consequently, students need to receive a lot of single words or short phrases in their lessons to create long sentences and explain an idea easily.

Richards (2008) affirms that there is a difference between oral speech and written speech, and it can be determined by the processes of what is being said. Teachers need to use strategies to help students, for example, top – down strategies help students use their previous background knowledge to initiate their learning on a particular listening, speaking, writing or reading activity.

Chang and Lu (2013) state that the top-down strategy uses previous knowledge in understanding the meaning of the message and that listeners use their prior knowledge of the context and the situation to interpret what they hear and make use of this knowledge.

Brown (2006) asserts that the idea of knowledge is a part of the cognitive model of language that states when people hear or read; they tend to process the information with both top-down and bottom-up strategies. Top-down means using our previous knowledge and

experiences. The Top-down strategy is usually applied when students use their previous knowledge and experiences from their surroundings to learn English. When a teacher uses a conversation about food with students that are also familiar with food, they can easily understand the message, and the conversation will improve the student's knowledge.

Richards (2008) states that top-down processing refers to the use of background knowledge in understanding the meaning of a message, top-down processing goes from meaning to language, the background knowledge required for top-down processing may be previous knowledge about the topic of discourse, situational or contextual knowledge.

Rahimi & Katal (2012) note that metacognition is a strategy in which a person is aware of one's mental processes. They show that metacognitive learners who are conscious of the steps of what they are doing when they learn tend to be the most successful learners.

The metacognitive strategies are mental processes that help students to learn and to understand what they are saying and hearing, that strategy is one of the most successful ways to teach English; moreover, another point of view about this topic is given by Sun (2013) who states that metacognitive strategies are based on the notion of meta-cognition. According to Sun, metacognition refers to one's knowledge of his or her own cognitive processes and products and anything that is related to them such as learning-relevant properties of data or other useful information. Similarly, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) mention three types of strategies that helps students to overcome listening difficulties, these involve, cognitive strategy which is applied to get meaning and collect information, metacognitive strategy used to listen the oral spoken message carefully and socio-affective strategy used to encourage students not only to listen but also to interact positively.

In this sense, teachers need to know the students' metacognition skills which are basically the level of knowledge of a person such as when a student knows that he is a good writer (advanced level), but that he is not a good speaker (basic level), then the professor needs to evaluate all the students and look for a strategy to reinforce the weak points of his students.

Flora (2014) affirms that not all listening is the same; casual greetings, for example, require a different sort of listening capability than academic lectures and language learning requires intentional listening that employs strategies for identifying sounds and making it meaningful for them.

Teachers need to know that different listening lessons need different strategies because an academic lecture is more complex than a conversation between friends and professors. Teachers need to use helpful tools to teach students effectively. Furthermore, professors need to explain a very important fact; in this sense Tess-India (2015) says that when English students do listening activities, they should not be expected to understand every word that they hear, normally they should understand a few words. If they do not understand all the listening task, so in these particular cases, the professor must remind them to be patient.

Students should be patient because they can improve their skill by listening to passages and practice a lot in a much more effective way. One of the foremost important elements to consider when dealing with listening difficulties in students is to consider whether the goals and objectives are clear and understood by them. When they know what their aims are and how to proceed in order to achieve them, learning takes place and confidence is built (Wei & Liu, 2009).

Additionally, audiovisuals can be used to improve their listening comprehension as well as teaching them to use predictions before the listening is even implemented. At the same time, it is vital that the teacher makes sure that the environment is quiet and precise for students to stay focused. In order to avoid listening problems, one of the major points is for the teacher to be aware of how they are using the surroundings to teach English to their students, in other words, whether it is suitable. Furthermore, using extensive and intensive listening helps develop students' listening abilities, increasing their mental awareness, and language skills (Wei and Liu, 2009).

Another effective strategy is retelling. Retelling is a way the students can practice what they have already listened to. In this way, they will develop their auditory skills and be able to give details (House, 2001). Similarly, Andrade (2006) suggests some effective listening classroom activities for English language learners, these involve story telling which is used to engage students to interact in the class, drama for role-playing activity, dialogue for classroom interaction, listening music to articulate emotions, listening to the radio which allows to listen several radio programs, watching films which demands students to pay attention and listening on the telephone which pushes students to practice not only listening but also speaking.

As a part of this investigation, some previous studies related Students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in the EFL classroom were revised.

One of the studies was conducted by Hamouda (2013) this study aims to explore a broad vision and deep knowledge about understanding college students and how to face their EFL listening difficulties to be able to meet certain criteria. The study was conducted with quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, the instruments used in this study were: a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews. The result of the study was that students at the University of Qassim have several types of listening comprehension problems such as unfamiliar words, the length of the spoken text, the rate of speed, a variety of accents, lack of concentration and pronunciation.

The second research paper was carried out by Ulum (2015) this study seeks to understand an extensive view and in-depth comprehension of how elementary level EFL students perceive listening problems in EFL courses.

For carrying out this study the researchers have selected 50 voluntaries from three different classes. The methodology used to gather data was based on the use of a questionnaire and an interview. Data was analyzed and presented in the paper by means of descriptive statistics.

It was concluded that students who participated in the study were extremely frustrated as they encountered several problems in listening and comprehension activities since their teachers were not native speakers and were not pronouncing words correctly.

An interesting study was conducted by Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) the purpose of this study was to find out the influence of the strategies that could be helpful to improve listening comprehension skills. The study focuses on four main subjects such as the definition of listening and the importance of listening, the process of listening comprehension was reviewed and the use of comprehension strategies. An analysis was carried out essentially to master the problems of listening comprehension and teaching methods for listening in the classroom. The researchers reviewed some of the factors that influence English listening comprehension in students. As a main result, it was found that researchers evaluated students' skills and strategies to improve their listening comprehension; students did not have any idea of what to do in order to understand a conversation effectively. Therefore, it is the teachers responsibility to share their knowledge with students, perhaps the most valuable way to teach listening skills is that the teachers create an environment that encourages overall communication in which students can engage in listening activities and conversational dialogues.

The next study was carried out by Nowrouzi, et al (2016) the goal of this study was to examine the problems ESL learners face when engaging in listening comprehension activities. A questionnaire was used to detect any relevant problems in comprehension using three categories such as perception, parsing and utilization. The objective of this study was to find out the level of each one of these categories in which the student is having difficulty with.

The methodologies applied for gathering information were a quantitative method to answer the research question and survey to gather the data. And the main instruments used was a questionnaire about listening comprehension processing problems which contained 23 items and a five-point Likert scale (1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= usually, and 5= always)

The authors concluded that Iranian tertiary level first year EFL students' hearing difficulties can be classified into three varieties in relation to three stages of listening comprehension such as perception, parsing, and utilization. Also, the findings indicated that the main problems were the distractions and missing or misperceiving sounds and words associated with perception.

Putri (2016) conducted a study which purpose was to discover common listening difficulties that students face and the possible causes of these difficulties. This study also focuses on the level of difficulty on the listening part of the National Exam.

For this study, 111 participants were selected randomly and cluster random sampling technique from twelve grades. The main instruments used to gather data were tested and questionnaire, and the method used to analyze the data was descriptive quantitative.

The author concluded making some recommendations for students and teachers, the students' recommendations are: 1) Students must increase their listening habit since listening is more difficult than any other abilities, 2) the students must improve their vocabulary and ask for some listening materials before going to the National Examination, 3) students must practice both American and British pronunciations in the school lab and also the teacher must provide dictionaries with two different pronunciations. The teachers' recommendations are: 1) teachers must encourage students to keep improving their listening skills and help with students' concerns, 2) give some tips or strategies to the students in order to avoid students not to translate each word.

Finally, a study carried out by Hayati (2010), the aim of this study was to test the speed rate of students' listening comprehension by introducing them different listening materials. The students were divided into two specific groups where one of them had to listen to audios of the 'natural speed rate' and the other had to listen to much slower rates of speech. A proficiency examination called 'Michigan Examination for The certificate of Competency in English' was also administered to test the students' standard of English.

The conclusions of the study are stated as follows: students acquire effective listening skills when they are exposed to natural speech audios and to slow speech rate audios. The results also showed that there was a high sign of improvement when the natural speech was utilized rather than the slower rate. It was shown (through the tests compared to the pretests) that both techniques are proven to be advantageous for students on cultivating their listening skills.

CHAPTER II: METHOD.

2.1. Setting and participants.

This study was carried out with the participation of 125 students of second year of Bachillerato General Unificado (BGU) at Azogues private high schools. It is important to indicate that none of the schools from those four private high schools had good facilities and adequate equipment to teach English specially listening comprehension skills such as: a computer, headsets, microphones, overhead projector and speakers. The participants were 76 female and 49 male students and their ages range from 16 to 18 years old. Additionally, it is worth to mention that some students from those schools indicated that they have been attending private institutes twice a week after school since they were children in order to improve their level of English language skills in general. Therefore, it could clearly observe that those students who were taking private English course had a higher level of English knowledge especially in listening skills in comparison to others who were not taking an English course.

2.1.1. Procedures.

To gain some previous knowledge of the topic being researched, it was necessary to construct the literature review; for this purpose, it was very important to start gathering information related to the research topic. In addition, some relevant previous studies about the topic of investigation were revised and added.

The research was carried out through quantitative and qualitative methods. The principal instruments used in this study were: a students' and teachers' questionnaire, and a students' interview.

In order to conduct the field research, it was necessary to ask the principles of four schools for their authorizations to apply the data-gathering instruments. Finally, the instruments were applied to the students of 2nd year of Bachillerato General Unificado (BGU). The questionnaire consisted of three sections: The listener, the speaker, the listening passage. There was a first section which contained 9 statements, the second section was compound of 4 statements, and the third section was made of 5 statements. And the students' interview contained 4 questions respectively.

In the section of description, analysis, and interpretation of results the data obtained through the questionnaire and the interview were organized, analyzed, tabulated and presented in tables. The data gathered from questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. While, the data obtained from the interview were analyzed qualitatively only. In addition, the quantitative method was used to transfer the numbers into percentages. And the findings of the

instruments help evidence of listening comprehension problems that affect the EFL students of Azogues private high schools. Finally, some conclusions and recommendations about the findings obtained were developed to support the present study.

CHAPTER III: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.

2.2. Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results.

In this section, it is described the findings obtained from students' and teachers' questionnaire, and students' interview in order to find out students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms. The data gathered from the students' questionnaires were analyzed, and the percentages were presented in the tables below.

2.2.1. How do the listener factors affect their listening comprehension?

When considering factors that affect students' listening comprehension, it is important to understand that to start learning a foreign language is not always easy and can become quite tedious and frustrating. Moreover, it becomes more stressful when it involves listening to conversations, understand the message, sounds, and interpretation of the whole message being conveyed. In this sense, Underwood (1989) states seven possible problems that affect students in listening comprehension process. These include listener is unable to manage the density of speech, sometimes the words are not repeated for listeners, listeners do not have enough exposure of vocabulary, the listener usually do not understand the main point of the speaker, listeners may lack background information, listener are not used to listen in foreign language and listeners may want to understand every word at the same time (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

Table 1. The listener

Item N°	The listener	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always	Blank
		%	%	%	%	%	%
1	I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage	8	28	46	9	9	
2	I listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage	7	31	25	25	12	
3	I find it difficult to do listening activities because of my lack of knowledge of the English language	15	36	33	11	4	1
4	After my teacher stops the recording, I find it difficult to predict what will come next	11	34	25	20	9	1

5	I find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage	12	36	34	11	6	1
6	I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time	12	37	28	16	5	2
7	I feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage	30	19	22	16	10	2
8	I find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to me	30	33	23	7	6	1
9	I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud	16	22	34	16	11	1

Source: Student's questionnaire

Author: Jose Alvarez

The table above shows the findings gathered from the first part of the students' questionnaire about 'how do the listener factors affect their listening comprehension?' In regard to the first statement '*use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage*'; it was found that 46% of students confirmed that sometimes they use their experience and background knowledge. This result indicates strength for the purpose of understanding an oral message.

The first part of the teachers' questionnaire about 'how do the listener factors affect their listening comprehension?', the first statement refers to '*students use their experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage*'; the results show that 60% of teachers revealed that their students sometimes use their experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage. This fact confirms that teachers and students agree on the same statement being analyzed.

In regard to the students' interview, the majority of students had expressed that the listener factors that affect their listening comprehension are new vocabulary and the noise produced by some of their classmates. Regarding the use of previous experiences and

background knowledge to understand the oral messages, students and teachers agree that sometimes the students use this strategy. Though using previous experiences and background knowledge is a good strategy, many students apply it only sometimes. In this regard, Chang and Lu (2013) state that the use of previous knowledge to understand the meaning of the message, listeners use their prior knowledge and experiences of their particular context and situations to interpret what they hear. Therefore, based on the information gathered and analyzed here, it is evident that students are not using their previous experiences and background knowledge as often as they should in order to understand an oral message.

Statement number two of the research question one will determine if '*students listened to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage*'. In this sense, 31% of the students answered that they seldom listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage. This result confirms that there are flaws in regards to the comprehension of the oral message.

In the same sense, and considering teachers' questionnaire of '*students listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage*', it shows that 40% of teachers indicated that their students always listen to every detail to get the main idea. This fact confirms that teachers and students disagree on the same statement being analyzed. It is important to note here that teachers may perceive things differently from student's perception.

In regard to the students' interview, the majority of students revealed that the listener factors that affect their listening comprehension is the lack of vocabulary. This fact indicates that the students do not have enough knowledge of vocabulary to retain at least the main idea. Nevertheless, listening to every detail to capture the main idea is a useful technique, but the findings show that students rarely adopt it. In this regard, Thomas and Dyer (2007) point out that having enough exposure to vocabulary is very important in listening comprehension process because in English a word could have several meanings. In fact, the majority of learners are able to decipher just easy vocabulary words. According to the data obtained, it is clear that students do not have enough knowledge of vocabulary to capture the main idea of the oral message.

Continuing on with the development of the first research question, it can be observed that the third statement refers to '*I find it difficult to do listening activities because of my lack of knowledge of the English language*'. The results obtained show that 36% of students seldom find it difficult to do listening activities. This outcome indicates weakness for the purpose of understanding the oral message.

On the other hand, according to the teachers' questionnaire the results indicate that 60% of teachers responded that their students seldom find it difficult to do listening activities. This fact proves that students and teachers agree on the same statement being analyzed.

In relation to the students' interview, most of the students had affirmed that they do not have problems when engaging listening activities if the activities are easy, but if the activities are difficult they said that they take more time in figuring out the message being conveyed. This evidence revealed that students are not capable to do more difficult listening activities; therefore, they are urged to improve their English level as soon as possible. In this sense, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) suggest that listening tasks must be developed according students' level of English, such as easy listening texts for the beginner level of listeners and more complex ones for higher level listeners. Based on the data collected and analyzed here, it is clear that students do not have enough knowledge of the English language as they should. In fact, having advance knowledge of the English language is a huge advantage to do listening activities.

Moreover, regarding the first research question stated above, statement number four refers to '*the time when the teacher stops the recording. It was difficult to predict what will come next*', and the result has shown that 34% of students seldom find it difficult to predict what will come next, after their teachers stop the recording. This finding indicates strength for the purpose of predicting what will come next. In the same line, it is shown that 60% of teachers have revealed that their students seldom find it difficult to predict what will come next. This result affirms that teachers and students agree on the same statement being analyzed.

In relation to the students' interview, the majority of students had agreed that they do not really find it difficult to understand or even to predict what will come next if the listening passage is easy. This fact demonstrates that most of the students are able to predict what will come next. However, they still need to persuade to predict more complex listening passages. Hence, being able to predict what comes next is advance ability in the context of English language learning.

Consequently, it is important for the teacher to make sure that students are getting enough exposure to different strategies in order to strengthen these particular skills such as predicting. Direct learning is said to have a positive influence on their predictions (Housel, 2001), at the same time encouraging them to complete sentences so that when the time comes and they are required to predict, they will have enough knowledge and ability to achieve this. Thus, based on the data collected and analyzed here, it is evident that students need to improve their listening comprehension skill in order to be capable to understand the more complex oral passage and as well as predict what comes next.

Moving on with the analysis of the first research question, the fifth item focuses on: *'I find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage'*, and the results of the questionnaire showed that 36 % of students seldom find it difficult. This result shows strength for the ability to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage.

Based on the teachers' questionnaire the results indicate that 40% of the teachers believe that their students often find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage; in this sense, there was a disagreement between students and teachers.

In contrast to the students' interview, the findings show that the majority of students find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage; some students blame that it was because of the noisy environment they were immersed in which in their view limited them from listening and understanding satisfactorily to later be able to hold a simple conversation. Another reason was that the students did not understand the pronunciation of the recording therefore making it difficult for them to engage in any short communicative dialogue. Additionally, the students agree that they understand when the listening passage is easy, but when the listening passages are more complex, they find it difficult.

They have difficulties because their teachers do not explain the passage in an easy way for them to understand. Some students blame that sometimes there were too many colloquial expressions in the audios that the teacher put for them and they admitted to not knowing enough of this because they had not been exposed to these kinds of expressions beforehand, therefore hindering their speaking abilities. Regarding this, Azmi (2014) states three physical conditions that affect students from listening comprehension, these involve: the large numbers of students in the classroom where the students who sit in front listen the recording text better than those are sitting at the back rows, also the large number of students affects teachers from giving appropriate feedback, the noise produced outside the classroom disturbs students especially to those students who are sitting close to the window, the cold or hot weather might affects students from listening comprehension since it is stressful. Hence, based on the data collected and analyzed explored here; it is clear that students are not getting enough exposure, as they must get, in order to be able to hold not only short dialogue, but also more complex ones. The best idea in this situation could be to arrange students in groups for listening activities.

Continuing with research question one, the statement number six is associated with *'I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time'*, it is crucial that on the students' first time listening to a recorded message that they acquire a

significant amount of understanding to improve their listening skills. In this particular case, it was found that 37% of students seldom find it difficult which accounted for only a minority based on the number of students in the class. This finding affirms strength for the persistence of understanding of the message from listening for the first time.

While, the teachers' answer that 40% of them agreed that students often find it difficult to get the general message from a first listening. This finding proves that there is a disagreement on the responses provided by the teacher and on the same statement being analyzed.

In regard to the students' interview, it was determined that a majority of students find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message in the first listening and they blame it on their noisy classroom; and therefore, they cannot grasp the message clearly. Also, this is because the students do not have a clear idea of the listening passage, and they feel an overall boredom while in class. As a consequence, they do not improve their listening ability. In this concern, Putri (2016) states that learners' motivations play an important role in listening comprehension because the lack of learners' motivation could make students lose their concentration of what they are doing in EFL classroom. Consequently, based on the information gathered and evaluated here, it is evident that classroom arrangement is not adequate; besides, students are lacking of motivation to get general understanding of oral message from a first listening. In this particular situation the teacher should encourage students telling the purpose of the listening before playing the audio CD.

Moving on with research question one, in the statement number seven, it refers *'I feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage'*. Only 30% of participants responded that they never feel nervous or worried when they do not understand the listening passage. These results prove that a large number of students feel nervous and worried when they do not understand the listening passage. This outcome indicates weakness for the purpose of understanding an oral message.

Based on the teachers' questionnaire, the results indicate that 40% of teachers believe that their students often feel nervous and worried about not understanding the passage. This fact shows that teachers and students disagree on the same statement being analyzed.

Similarly, the results of students' interviews show that the majority of students feel nervous when they are not able to understand the message; they blame it on their teacher's incorrect pronunciation and the audio CD which contains different types of accents. At this point, Peterson (2010) reaffirms that the purpose or goals added to the listening passage are an

important part of the process of learning English language. So, based on the information analyzed and investigated here, it is obvious that students feel nervous and worried about not understanding oral message because their teacher pronounce words differently that the audio CD. In other words, students are not exposed to English variations such as American and British English accents which are different, so, the students need to be exposed to different accents in order to avoid confusions.

Following with the research question number one, statement eight refers to *'I find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to me'* if the students' initial reaction is a lack of interest in the passage, well, then it will be obviously difficult to understand it. The results show that 33% of participants seldom find it difficult and that a large percentage of students do not find difficult understanding even when the topic is not of their interest. This result indicates strength for the purpose of listening comprehension.

Regarding to the teachers' questionnaire the results indicate that 40% of teachers think that students sometimes find it difficult to understand a listening passage and this is because the topic is not of the student's interest. This statistic confirms that teachers and students disagree on the same statement being analyzed.

Meanwhile, according to the student's interview, the results show inconsistency where the majority of the students said that they find it difficult to understand the listening passage when the topics are not of interest for them because the students think some topics are boring, and therefore they demand more interesting topic such as: technology, smartphones, and as well as the computers. The fact is that the teacher is responsible for selecting the listening passage and it should be taking into consideration some learners factor such as age, level and preferences. In this regard, Hughes (2013) affirms that it is important to take into account the correct pronunciation, the morphology of words, creative ideas, and a constant booster of new words to be transformed into sentences. Hence, based on the information collected and analyzed here, it is advisable for teachers choose more dynamic and interesting topics in order to improve learners' listening abilities.

Statement number nine asked *'I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud'*, and the results show that 34% of students sometimes find it difficult to listen to recorded text. This result shows that for some students it is difficult to understand recorded passages because the people in the dialog speak too fast and relation with the way of the teacher speak.

According to the results of the teacher's questionnaire, the teachers have identified that 60% of their students often find it more difficult to listen to a recording than to the teacher

reading out aloud because the recordings have different accents or pronunciation, such as the UK and the USA. This information lets in evidence that teachers and students disagree on the same statement being analyzed.

In regard to the students' interview, it shows that students sometimes think that their teachers explain very well, because they understand more easily, but unfortunately sometimes the students think that the teachers speak too fast and their accents are different from the recordings. These facts reflected that students do not have knowledge of English accents, and therefore they find it more difficult to listen to the recorded texts. In this sense, Scrivener (2012) states that good listening is one of the steps to be successful in which teachers need to be able to communicate effectively and have different ways to pronounce a word since they are not native speakers. For that reason, and based on the information analyzed here, it is evident that students demand to teachers to teach them different accents in order to understand better the recordings.

2.2.2. Do the speaker factors interfere on the learner's listening skills?

In the table below, there is a description of the answers the students provided according to their own views to each question included in the questionnaire. The questions here related to the factors that interfere with students listening skills and it can be seen in the results that students do not have a variety of linguistic skills that could enable them to decipher any given listening passage.

Harmer (2007) confirms that every student must have a variety of listening skills, such as: distinguish paralinguistic clue, listen for specific information in order to comprehend the content of listening passage.

Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

Table 2. The speaker

Item N°	The speaker	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always	Blank
		%	%	%	%	%	%
10	I find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses	7	24	36	16	16	1
11	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly	9	31	28	20	13	0
12	I find it difficult to understand well when	7	22	34	19	19	0

	speakers talk too fast						
13	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents	6	26	34	19	15	1

Source: Student's questionnaire

Author: Jose Alvarez

These statements that were given to students were based on the research question "Do the speaker factors interfere on the learner's listening skills? ", the first statement to be analyzed is '*I find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses*', the information obtained shows that 36% of students sometimes find it difficult. This result indicates strength for the purpose of understanding the natural speech.

According to the teachers' questionnaire, it shows that 60% of teachers revealed that their students seldom find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses. This detail indicates that teachers and students disagree on the same statement being analyzed.

While, according to the students' interview, it indicates that the majority of them find it difficult and they believe it is because the teacher does not use technologies such as the internet to improve listening comprehension skills which was one reason they gave. The fact of it is that students have problems to understand native speaker's pronunciations because they usually speak too fast. In fact, it is difficult for speakers of other languages other than English to understand a foreigner's accent because of the rate at which they speak, intonation and the dynamics of language are others (Sasson, 2013). Hence, based on the data collected and analyzed here, it is evident that students have problems to understand the natural speech because they do not have a good language laboratory in the class in order to improve and overcome their problems.

Statement number eleven of the research question number two refers: '*I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly*', the results revealed that 31% of students seldom find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced correctly. This outcome indicates strength for the purpose of understanding the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly.

Likewise, according to the teachers' questionnaire, 40% of teachers think that the students seldom find it difficult to understand the meaning of the words which are not pronounced correctly. This data confirms that teachers and students agree on the same statement being analyzed.

In regard to the students' interview, it shows that some students do not have problems to understand the meaning of the words when the speaker does not pronounce clearly because in order to improve their listening skills they use technology in their homes. For example, students mentioned online games in English. However, other students affirm that they sometime are confused regarding to the pronunciation since they can only remember the new word's pronunciation just for a short time. In fact, using the Internet is a good strategy where students could learn how to pronounce correctly and identify if the speaker is or not pronouncing well. In this case, Peterson (2010) asked the following question: How can teachers help their students to be good listeners and overcome difficulties in listening comprehension? He answered that the use of the Internet is an excellent tool for students to develop their language skills, especially the listening comprehension skill. Thus, based on the information collected and analyzed here, it is evident that the student who take advantage of technology have better skill of listening comprehension than others who do not use as often as they should do.

Statement twelfth in question two asked '*I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast*'; it shows that 34% of students indicate that sometimes they do find it difficult. So, this result indicates strength for the purpose of understanding well when the speakers talk fast.

According to the teachers' questionnaire, 40% of teachers answered that their students often find it difficult. This confirms that teachers and students disagree on the same statement being analyzed.

In regard to the students' interviews, it indicates that when the speaker speaks too fast the most of the students do not worry about understanding the meaning of each word because they do not have time for it. Nevertheless, the students affirm that they understand only some parts of the speaker speech, in other words students understand in the general way. In fact, this strategy is good because the students avoid from wasting time. In this regard, Welling (2009) ensures that teachers must be better prepared to apply suitable teaching techniques in the EFL classroom. Consequently, based on the data collected and analyzed here, it is evident that students have problems understanding well when the speaker speaks too fast; however, students try to get the general idea instead of details which is good. In this case, it is good for teachers to simplify the text telling students to get only the important parts of the speech, such as: topic, main idea, and some key details.

Statement number thirteen in research question number two, it refers: '*I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents*' it was found that 34% of students have

answered that sometimes they find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents. This finding indicates strength for the purpose of understand variety of accents.

According to the teachers' questionnaire, it shows that 80% of teachers have revealed that their students always find it difficult to understand well when concern about a variety of accents listening texts. This evidence confirms that teachers and students disagree on the same statement being analyzed.

In regard to the students' interview, most of the students agree with teachers and admit that they feel confused regarding different accents used by the speakers in listening texts. And they believe that, this is because they do not have enough exposure of phonology, and grammar such as short and long pronunciations, articles, adjectives, etc. To support this, Cowan (2008) believes that students should have knowledge of grammar because it allows students to improve pronunciation of words. Thus, based on the data gathered and analyzed here, it is evident that students face difficult moments to understand speakers with a variety of accents because of the insufficiency of grammar exposure which is a fundamental part in the second language acquisition. In this sense, it is important that teachers focus not only in one accent of English, but also focus on different accents such as American, British, Australian, as well as on grammar rules.

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

The table below will precisely discuss and describe the answers the students gave based on this research question. It is an interesting research question because students focus on the listening passage to tell if they understand or not the message being conveyed.

Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

Table 3. The Listening Passage

Item N°	The Listening passage	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always	Blank
		%	%	%	%	%	%
14	Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with my listening comprehension	13	48	30	7	2	0
15	Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with my listening comprehension	15	32	39	9	6	0

16	The length of the listening passage hinders me to interpret the message	13	30	31	21	4	1
17	The content of the listening passage is abstract	11	42	23	16	6	1
18	The poor quality of the recording does not allow me to understand the listening passage	31	28	26	7	8	0

Author: Jose Alvarez

Source: Students' questionnaire

The table above shows the findings gathered from the third part of the students' questionnaire about 'how does the listening passage hinder the students' listening comprehension'. In regard to statement number fourteen which refers: *'vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with my listening comprehension'*, it was found that 48% of the students confirmed that the vocabulary used in the listening passage seldom interfere their listening comprehension. This result shows that there is strength for the purpose of understanding the meaning of vocabulary in oral spoken message.

According to the teachers' questionnaires, it indicates that 40% of teachers believe that vocabulary used in the listening passage seldom interfere their students understanding. This information confirms that teachers and students agree on the statement being analyzed.

Regarding to the students' interview, it affirms that most of the students do not have problems with vocabulary used in the listening texts, but except when the vocabulary are new or complex. It is because their level of English and vocabulary is low; therefore, they admit that if the vocabulary are new or complex they barely understand the listening text. To the same regard, Alqahtani (2015) argues that vocabulary knowledge is regularly observed as a serious instrument for L2 students because the lack of vocabulary knowledge will not help learners to communicate effectively. Hence, based on the data collected and analyzed here, it is evident that the new and complex vocabulary interfere students from fulfil listening comprehension. At this point the teacher should encourage students to learn vocabulary by using monolingual dictionary.

Continuing on with research question number three 'how does the listening passage hinders the students' listening comprehension?', statement number fifteen, which was focused on *'some grammatical structure in the listening passage interfere with students listening comprehension'*, it was found that 39% of students revealed that sometimes they find that

grammar structure 'in the listening passage' interferes them in listening comprehension. This fact proves strength for the purpose of the grammatical structure of understanding the listening passage. Likewise, according to the teacher's questionnaire, it shows that 40% of teachers believe that sometimes their students listening comprehension skills are affected by the grammatical structures in listening comprehension passages. This information confirms that teachers and students agree on the same statement being analyzed.

Regarding to the students' interview most of the students feel that grammar structure in the listening passage do not interfere unless the grammar structures are advanced because they feel confused. For example, they get confused with past perfect, present perfect, and future perfect and with other complex structures. In fact, having a good knowledge of grammar is crucial in the second language acquisition, especially in the listening comprehension; therefore, it needs to be assisted and evaluated by head teachers. In this regard, Scarcella and Orfoxd (1992) point out that EFL learners are required to have enough exposure of grammar in order to comprehend the oral message, and to be able to decipher words pronunciations and sentence structures expressed by speakers (Derakhshan, Khalili, & Beheshti, 2016, p. 180-181). Thus, based on the information gathered and analyzed here, it is evident that students do not have advance level of grammar exposure; however, it is evident that they have a basic level of grammar knowledge; consequently, they need to improve their grammatical structures in order to successfully understand the more complex listening passages.

Moving on with the statement number sixteen in the research question number three, it refers to '*the length of the listening passage hinders me to interpret the message*'. It was found that 31% of students responded that sometimes the length of the passage hinders them to interpret the message. This result indicates strength for the purpose of listening skills.

While, the teacher's questionnaire shows that 40% of teachers agree that their students seldom have the problem of understanding regarding the length of the listening passage. This fact indicates that there is a disagreement among students and teachers on the same statement being analyzed.

In regard to the students' interview most of the students affirm that the short message do not hinder from interpreting the message, except if the listening texts is long and complex, or when there are English accents variation. In addition, the students mentioned that when they have faced these problems they listen to the recording in small parts until they understand at least the main idea, and also they said that they take notes of the important parts of the message. In fact, this technique is good because by replaying a record for several times and

taking notes students will not improve only listening skills, but also their writing skills too. Celic (2009) states that oral listening and written exercises are necessary but they should be designed to have two important elements that draw the students attention and gives the expected result and do not create confusion. Hence, based on the information collected and studied here, it is evident that students are not capable to understand long and complex listening texts which contains accent variations. In this case the teacher should encourage students by providing a variety of listening texts according to their level and listing skills.

Continuing on with the research question number three, statement number seventeen refers to: *'the content of the listening passage is abstract'*, the result indicates that 42% of students seldom find abstract the content of the listening passage. This result indicates strength for the purpose of listening oral passage.

According to the teachers' questionnaire, it shows that 60% of teachers believe that their students seldom find abstract regarding the content of listening passage. This information states that teachers and students agree on the same statement being examined.

Also, based on the students' interviews, most of the students agree with the fact that the people who speak in the listening passage, based on listening transcripts and dialogues, speak too fast and that the vocabulary from the book and listening passage are different and the students believe that this is because they do not have enough knowledge of English in order to listening without problem. For example, they said that they are lack of phonology, vocabulary and syntax which are basic elements in the any English language classroom. In this concern, Cowan (2008) points out that EFL learning is complete and that nothing can be left out. What is really important in the lesson is pronunciation, vocabulary, knowledge of grammar, and interaction in the classroom so that students are exposed to these kinds of exercises on a regular basis. Thus, based on the data gathered and analyzed, it is evident that students do not have much problem when the listening passage is abstract; however, they face these problems when the listening passages are complex and when the speaker talks too fast. In this case, both students and teacher should pay especial attention in improving grammar rules, pronunciation as well as vocabulary.

Statement number eighteen is about *'the poor quality of the recording does not allow me to understand the listening passage'*; it shows that 31% of students responded that they are never affected by the poor quality of recording. Nevertheless, this finding shows that many students (the rest of the while percentage) may in fact believe that the poor quality does not allow them to understand the audio. This result indicates strength for the purpose of understanding an oral message.

Meanwhile, according to the teachers' questionnaire, it shows that 40% of teacher revealed that poor quality of recording seldom affect students from understanding the listening passage. This information reveals that teachers and students disagree on the same statement being analyzed.

Regarding to the students' interview, it indicates that the majority of students said that if the recording is poor quality they do not complicate because they simple replay the audio CD for several times until they understand the passage. However, the students believe that the low volume of speakers that the teacher supply make the recordings poor quality. Despite of living in the 21st century which is called the age of technology still there are some classrooms which do not have computers, smart board, multimedia systems and so on. And the quality of sound system also affects understanding of listening" (Azmi, 2014, p. 1-7). Based on the data collected and analyzed here, it is evident that the poor qualities of equipment do not affect much the understanding of the listening passage; however, it is clear that bad quality of equipment such as low volume speakers does affect listening. In fact, it is important that teachers should be aware when selecting and using high quality equipment in order to help students to understand the listening passage.

CONCLUSIONS

Students are not able to use previous knowledge and background skills like bottom up as a strategy in order to catch the main idea from an oral message; therefore, the consequence of not using this important listening strategy will not permit students to decode oral message, so the improvement of the listening abilities will be delayed.

EFL learners find it difficult to do listening activities because of their lack of knowledge in the English language skills; they do not understand the spoken message very well. Therefore, students do not feel able to do listening activities correctly; as a result of it, the students waste too much time trying to figure out how to decode oral messages.

Learners do not have sufficient ability of understanding natural speech messages which are full of hesitation and pauses; hence, the insufficient ability of listening natural speech will leave learners to be more confused, so the goal of understanding natural speech will not be met.

Students do not have enough exposure of listening to understand when the speaker speaks too fast; therefore, students are not fully capable to understand a spoken passage; as a result, the poor ability of listening will not help students understand the main idea of a spoken passage.

Learners are exposed to new and complex vocabulary as well as complex grammar structures used in the listening passage; consequently, these will not allow learners to clearly understand the listening passage as well as the listening activities.

Students do not have a good ability to get conveyed message if the listening passages are too long, especially when the listening passages are complex; as a result, the poor listening ability will not permit students to interpret longer or complex listening passages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Before coming out with the main topic of the listening passage teachers should encourage students to use their previous knowledge and background experience by asking questions about what they know about the topic that is going to be listened; in fact, it will help students not only to use their background knowledge, but also to have a general idea of the topic.

Teachers should select a variety of suitable and authentic materials that contains natural spoken messages; besides, the pronunciation of new vocabulary should be taught in advance; it will allow students to understand the natural speech, and to improve lexicon.

Teachers should pre-teach complex vocabulary that is useful for EFL students; in addition, teachers should encourage students to use an English-English dictionary where students can check up the definition of unknown words; it will help students to learn vocabulary in advance; hence, they will be able to understand further listening passages without problem.

Teachers should select listening texts that are not extended or complex for students' acquisition level; it will help students to understand the oral message fully and foster students' sense of completion.

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ANNEXES

ANNEXES 1



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

OPEN AND DISTANCE MODALYTY

ENGLISH DEGREE

STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE.

Dear student,

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 (X) in the box that best reflects your personal opinion.

The listener

Item No.	Statements	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening					

	passage					
2	I listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage					
3	I find it difficult to do listening activities because of my lack of knowledge of English language					
4	After my teacher stops the recording, I find it difficult to predict what will come next					
5	I find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage					
6.	I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time					
7.	I feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage					
8	I find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to me					
9	I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud					

The speaker

<i>Item no.</i>	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

<i>Item no.</i>	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

ANNEXES 2



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

OPEN AND DISTANCE MODALTY

ENGLISH DEGREE

ESTUDENTS' 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 porqué

El oyente ¿Por qué?

__El texto que escucha ¿Por qué?

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

ANNEXES 3



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja

OPEN AND DISTANCE MODALTY
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 (X) in the box that best reflects your personal opinion.

The listener

Items No.	Statements	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	Students use their experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage					
2	Students listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage					

3	Students find it difficult to do listening because of their lack of knowledge of the English language					
4	After you stop the recording, students find it difficult to predict what will come next					
5	Students find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage					
6	Students find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message the 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 record text that to my teacher reading aloud					

The speaker

No	Statement	Never	Seldom	Somotimes	Often	Always
10	Students find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pause					
11	Students find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly					
12	Students find it difficult to understand well when speaker talk too fast					

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

No	Statement	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
14	Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with students' listening comprehension					
15	Some grammatical structure in the listening passage interfere with students' listening comprehension					
16	The length of the listening passage hinders your students to interpret the message					
17	The content of the listening passage is abstract					
18	The poor quality of recording does not allow me to understand the listening passage					

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COLLABORATION