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Students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL
classrooms

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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Loja, marzo de 2017

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God and my family. I appreciate their support and help through the process.

Gabriela

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Gabriela

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ABSTRACT

The present study exposes the principal factors that are involved in learning and teaching English as a second language and the difficulties that the process involves. The title given to this study is Students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms: An Ecuadorian case. The purpose of the research is to find the problems that students perceived as a barrier to English listening comprehension. The research involves some factors like the listener, the speaker and the listening passage, which directly influence in the process. The research took place in two private high schools in Carcelén in the north of Quito. The data was gathered quantitatively by administering surveys to five English teachers and to 125 students in the second course of Baccalaureate (2BGU). Qualitative information was also gathered, with the use of interviews, where 25 students could express their feelings about their perception in the listening comprehension. Also, notes were taken about teachers' comments which support or contradict the students' answers.

The data analysis showed the results which differed between teachers and students. Most of the students feel that they have a high level of listening comprehension of the passages; However, the teachers thinks that students still face difficulties while listening to the passage.

Keywords: Listening, comprehension, problems, perceptions, students

RESUMEN

El presente estudio expone los principales factores que están inmersos en el aprendizaje de un segundo idioma. La explicación de cómo los estudiantes perciben dificultades en su comprensión auditiva en las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera: Un caso ecuatoriano es el tema a investigarse. El propósito es encontrar los problemas que los estudiantes perciben como una barrera para comprender lo que escuchan en inglés, la investigación se lleva a cabo revisando tres factores; la persona que escucha, la persona que habla, y el contenido a ser escuchado, ya que todos estos influyen directamente en el proceso. La investigación tomó lugar en dos colegios particular en Carcelén al norte de Quito, los datos fueron recolectados cuantitativamente por medio de encuestas a 5 profesores de inglés y a 125 estudiantes de segundo año de bachillerato, además se realizaron entrevistas a estudiantes y toma de notas de comentarios de profesores para obtener información cualitativa. Los resultados o datos contrastados de profesores y estudiantes proveen evidencia del buen nivel de entendimiento del idioma inglés como segunda lengua tanto grabadas como hablada por sus maestros, por otro lado, la falta de interés por parte de los alumnos en algunos temas o situaciones lleva a los estudiantes a no comprender lo que escuchan y así perjudicar su rendimiento académico. Los profesores recomiendan a los estudiantes esforzarse más y mostrar interés en las clases para mostrar una mejora significativa

Palabras claves: Escuchar, comprender, problemas, percepción, estudiantes.

INTRODUCTION

Around the world, English is recognized as a powerful language. A lot of money is invested in English education in many countries for many reasons. Speaking English gives access to better professional opportunities, makes travelling easier, and allows to learn about new cultures.

The present research comes up considering that students find many difficulties understanding spoken English, reason why this study have been titled Students perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms: An Ecuadorian case. Focused in the listening area. This is a topic that tries to identify the main problems that students have in the acquisition of listening skills, since it is an important strand but the most nonexistent in English Ecuadorian courses. The study's objective is to understand what students think or perceive about their learning in the listening comprehension process.

The UTPL is looking out for the welfare of the community through their students to find problems and give possible solutions that can be used in the future for education to correct some flaws that affect the system of education around the world. This study is important to compare the level of listening in private schools, and it can be used to consider the level in public schools and regulate the aspects that are favorable to teach in a restored and productive system. The Ministry of Education in Ecuador needs to acknowledge that students spend 12 years at schools receiving English classes, however, they are not good communicators, this means that something is not working well and for that reason, it is necessary to change some items in the curricula to get better results.

English courses or classes often fail because they give priority to writing skills and activities that are focused only on grammar or translation while giving students little opportunities to speak. According to Selma and Selen (2010), the use of the four skills is crucial and the combination creates a positive effect on students' learning process. The same way we learn our mother tongue should be used to learn a second language. The first step of learning a new language is the quiet period where a child listens to the language without responding. With time and exposure to the language the child learns to speak. After approximately five years of listening and speaking the child learns to read and write. In our daily life, we spend most of the time on listening to someone and speaking to someone, so English classes should also focus on these skills

According to Safarali and Hamidi (2012), listening is one of the most important skills because it is used to solve problems by understanding them first. If the listener cannot interpret what the speaker is saying, the message will not be conveyed clearly. Even when is so important in everyday life listening and speaking skills are not a focus in primary school or in high schools. Listening is an important skill in the educational process since it is easier to remember information by listening than by reading (Luo, 2008).

Previously studies hold a relationship with the present study, where the principal matter is the listening comprehension. Kurita's (2012) is a study where the author wanted to provide effective instruction by investigating many others researches. The author concluded that the use of metacognitive knowledge improve significantly the listening comprehension.

Another related study it was presented by Hwang, Huang, Shadiev, Wu & Chen (2014), where the authors investigate how the use of technology contributes in the listening

comprehension. After a students' training using mobile technology in listening activities, the authors concluded that technology facilitates EFL in specific activities, and also motivates students to practice by themselves.

The study presented by Hamouda (2013) was also focused in listening comprehension. The researchers collected information from students in Saudi Arabia to understand the students' perception in the listening comprehension. After an English course, the students received some questionnaires to express their perception. The author concluded that the listening skill is the weakest skill learned, the skill could be better changing learning techniques and practice listening in the class.

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section includes information about the importance of listening when learning English as a Foreign Language. Most of the courses in schools or institutions dedicate the most amount of time to learning grammar, reading, and writing to the detriment of listening and speaking skills. Moreover, the combination of the four strands creates better results in language learning. Listening plays an important role in communication since it is the most frequently used language skill in everyday situations. “As it is said that, of the total time spent on communicating, listening takes up 40-50%; speaking 25-30%; reading 11-16%; and writing about 9%” (Mendelsohn, 1994, p.9). Furthermore, listening is the last taught strand in schools but the most used in everyday life, for that reason learners prefer to communicate in the mother tongue and use the second language when there is a requirement of the teacher.

Hsu, Hwang, Chang, & Chang (2013) explained this study in which The Ministry of Education in Taiwan is trying to give more importance to listening first, even in elementary schools, followed by reading or writing. Since listening is an essential part of the language learning process Abbas & Mohammad (2011) indicate:

English must be taught as a tool for communication. It is now widely accepted that students’ listening ability must be at the core of teaching practice, and it is the area in which teachers need to concentrate their own efforts to improve their teaching. This is a significant challenge for English teachers; however, it is crucial in the development of English language communicative competence. The purpose of this approach is to improve the students’ English overall linguistic capability and oral and aural competence. (p. 978)

For English learners listening is the weakest skill according to the Examination Education System (EES). The learning system is focused on the examination-oriented strategy it is called “dumb English” by an English educator in China (Wang, 2009).

To listen well according to Rost (2013) it is when the listeners have the ability to decode the message, to apply a variety of strategies and interactive processes to make meanings and the ability to respond to what is said in a variety of ways, depending on the purpose of the communication.

People have different reasons to learn the listening skill, for example most teenagers want to understand the lyrics of their favorite song, professional people would like to understand the vocabulary used in businesses terminology inside of their companies and others just want to increase knowledge in a new language to travel or learn new cultures.

There are some people that understand and write correctly in new language, but do not talk because they feel nervous about making mistakes and feel not confident with their knowledge of the language.

Over the development of this study, some topics are going to be included to understand important concepts that are part of the theme such as: Listening Comprehension, Elements of Listening Comprehension, Listening difficulties for EFL learners and Strategies to develop the listening skill.

Listening Comprehension

Good listening skills are important for students, since they can absorb correct pronunciation and tone of voice according to the context and situation. Harmer (2011) states that to reach a high level of language understanding it is necessary to speak and listen well,

these two cannot be separated. Students are used to listening to their teacher's voice, however, it is advisable to be exposed to more than one voice and more than one context or situation.

Learners should take into account that there are variations in English accents like the American English and the British English, besides the regional varieties in a same country.

In the book, "Kinds of Listening", Harmer (2011) refers to two categories of listening: intensive and extensive. The extensive listening is the practice of the listening for pleasure, the use of a CD player or DVDs where students enjoy listening because they can choose it according to their personal likes. On the other hand, there is intensive listening, which is different since students have to practice it in order to study and develop their listening skills and it is usually shared or imposed by the teacher in school. The teachers are responsible for deciding what kind of audio to share, it can be recorded which is the most common resource used, or face to face listening that can be done by the teacher or by a visitor with authentic speech and appropriate content.

According to Safarali & Hamidi (2012), listening takes an important place in learning any foreign language because it is essential to solving problems via dialog. Listening is the natural pioneer to speaking; the early stages of language development in a person's first language are dependent on listening (Nation, 2009). Barclay (2012) agrees with Nation stating that listening is the primary channel how people acquire information. Learning skills effectively require systematic instruction, an array of experiences for practicing listening, and an ability to integrate cognitive, auditory and visual cues to figure out a message. The influences of listening develop the abilities to speak, write and read that is why this strand is fundamental in the personal and academic success (Worthington, 2012).

It is really important to understand the message to pose a conversation and to improve communication. It is a hard job for teachers to teach simultaneously the language, the correct pronunciation and at the same moment to motivate students to talk.

People's listening skills affect their ability to understand others. This affects relationships and work, at school, at home, in the community, and one's ability to integrate into society (Brownell, 2013). Without skills and knowledge of how words work, communication cannot be effective. The use of language alone is not enough; the words need order and the correct intonation to notice sarcasm or a joke (Edwards, 2012).

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

Listening is the natural precursor to speaking. With the natural method children acquire their first language, a child needs instructions on how to read and write but not in how to listen or speak since this skill is naturally acquired. Listening is a requirement to learn a language, so the listener has to build up the pieces of language listened and gradually be able to articulate coherent phrases and thoughts. The listener should find a source of native conversation and listen to real topics and experience realistic issues.

The listener is not necessarily a passive receptor. There are two ways of listening: One-way listening and two-ways listening. When the learner gets information by one-way listening it means that is able to listen and understand the information. This information can come from audio tapes, news on TV, note voice and others. Two-ways listening is when the listener is ready to interact, get the information, process it and answer it.

The listener also has two processes the bottom up process that refers to collect the message piece by piece to understand the meaning or top down process which is when the listener goes to the full parts of the information and relates each other using the previous learner experiences to give it sense and create a context of what the message contains (Nation & Newton, 2009).

Listening was traditionally seen as a passive process by which the listener receives information conveyed by a speaker. Up-to-date models of listening are more active and have an interpretative process in which the message is not static but is created in the interactional space between participants. The most familiar model in communication should be the sender, receiver, message, feedback and noise. It is vital to know that the message that is being sent is going to be received correctly.

There are some factors that affect listening comprehension such as: cognitive, language, speaker, contextual, and demographic factors. The cognitive factor is focused on around intelligence, curiosity, interference or the ability to concentrate. The language related factors include reading comprehension and correct English usage.

The discernment of sounds may be conceptualized into three phases: Reception, perception and sensation. The reception is when people receive a new acoustic signal that comes to the ear and travels to the midbrain; then, the second phase, the perception is when the auditor detects and interprets the signal; the last phase, the sensation when the auditor replies to the signal after interpret the audio (Rahmatian & Armiun, 2011).

On the other hand, the cognitive process in comprehension is what is happening constantly in the listener's mind; for most adults, the comprehension is quick, unconscious

and unproblematic, although it looks easy, comprehension includes countless sub-processes. The main task is to get information of what has been heard and use it according the necessities and the context. This means that different strategies will be used in everyday stuff or technical conversations to understand what is heard. It is important that the listener understands the topic of the speaker so he or she can be able to fill in the gaps if necessary. (Just & Carpenter, 2013).

The listener needs to recognize the purposes and the listening objectives. Furthermore, it is essential to recognize the speech or topic and hold it in the short-term memory. It is crucial to determine the type of speech if it is a monologue, interpersonal dialog or transactional dialog. Also, it is important to identify the context of the speaker, the location, the purpose and the content of the message so that the listener can interpret, respond if necessary, and/or agree with the speaker.

Sometimes the listener associates exact information with past experiences. This allows the listener to store specific information as long-term memory. To represent listening we can find four stages: comprehending, understanding, determining and developing. During the listening process exist four types of listening performance: intensive listening, responsive listening, selective listening and extensive listening.

Intensive listening is the perception of phonemes, words and intonation. The listener is able to differ the sounds and identify two different words such as dance and danced. Responsive Listening is interactive listening when an answer is expected such as greetings, questions, and commands. The listener needs to prove the understanding giving an answer or following instructions. Also, the listener can ask questions to clarify what was

heard or confirm the information requested. Selective listening is the process of scanning a large discourse in order to remember certain information that can be retrieved later such as dates or places. Another example is when people select information to share with other people such as doing a summary of news on TV, the episode of a series or a fairytale. The listener selects general ideas avoiding the specific details. The kind of listening called “extensive listening” develops a top-down understanding where it is possible to understand and remember lectures, listening conversations, comprehend messages and purposes including the details. The listening comprehension is clear and easy to reproduce with other people.

Microskills and Macroskills are also important features that represent the skill of listening.

When the listener dominates microskills in listening, he or she is able to differentiate sounds in second language, the learner also is able to keep information in the short time memory and recognize stress, rhythm, intonation in words and phrases like recognizing if it is a question or a fact. In microskills features the listener can paraphrase by reducing the amount of words, to interpret word order and meaning such as say red car instead car red. The listener can also process speech, recognize pauses and connections. The listener is competent in identifying verbs, nouns, articles and the order of a sentence. Also, the listener can diagnose cohesive devices in spoken discourses and realize if something is incoherent.

The second feature is macroskills, which means that the abilities are better or deeper in comparison to the microskills. The listener understands the communicative functions among participants; the listener realizes the situations and goals of the conversation or speech. Also, the listener is able to deduce situations using real-world knowledge and predict outcomes. The

listener is capable of gathering connections among topics and deducing causes and effects. Another macroskill is to be able to interact by supporting ideas and realizing if there is any new information. The learner uses body or kinesthetic movements showing security to express ideas and understand a topic. For a student who dominates Macroskills is not difficult to understand non-verbal clues and guess meaning of the words in their context (Brown, 2010).

The speaker as an element in listening comprehension process is the person that transmits a message or information to the listener. The tone and the rhythm of the speaker may vary according to the audience and to what the speaker is trying to accomplish. Speakers apply different tones of voice to convey instructions, give suggestions, share ideas, or even to tell secrets. Some situations require more advanced vocabulary, higher level of maturity and social context. Listening and speaking are interrelated. According to Nation and Newton (2009) the speaker is the person who transmits a message, it means that is really important that this person uses correct pronunciation, good tone, intonation and stress in sentences. If teachers present recorded videos, it is fundamental to check the quality of the audio to avoid intermissions. Also, the audio needs to be free of interruptions to facilitate the listener's job.

According to Rost (2013) "Second language acquisition (SLA) research has made great strides in clarifying the important role of understanding spoken input and the function of Listener-initiated interaction in language development" (p. 4). The speaker notices the effective understanding from the listener if there are some signals like the correct proximity, posture, lip setting, and facial expression. With these signals the speaker knows if the spoken content is understood. (Shams, Salwa, Elsaandany, & Kamel, 2008). The speaker linked

factors including speaker effectiveness, audibility, and admiration. The contextual factor is related to interest or importance of the subject and place comfort. The demographic factor includes the listener gender, occupation or academic achievement (Worthington, 2012).

The speaker chooses the structure and the discourse. We can find five categories in oral production. First, the imitative category, which is the ability to parrot back words or phrases is not useful to interact in a conversation. It is used for practicing the pronunciation of words and keep them on the short-term memory. The second category is Intensive. In this category it is important to demonstrate competence in grammatical uses or prosodic like intonation, stress and rhythm in simple sequences. The third category is Responsive that includes interaction between the other person in very short conversations, using requests or commands. The fourth one is Interactive, which is pretty much the same as responsive but with more length and complexity, and the conversation can coexist among more than two people. It can be put into practice in social environments or just to exchange specific information. The fifth and last category is called Extensive in which the speaker has to share information extensively such as in meetings, monologues, storytelling or any speech.

As in the listener skills, oral reproduction has a list of Macroskills and Microskills for speakers. Students with well-developed microskills have the ability to do the following with ease: produce phonemes, language stress patterns, and fluent speech. They can also stress words, summarize long sentences, self-correct oral speech, use correct tenses, use correct sentence structures, and express themselves in different grammatical forms. The macroskills in the speaker include the use of appropriate communicative functions. This means that the speaker has to modulate according to goals. If the speaker is having a face-to-face

conversation it is necessary to use the correct styles, vocabulary, facial expression, body language and nonverbal cues along with the spoken content. The speaker needs to express links and connections among ideas and demonstrate feelings in conversations. The use of examples is a good resource to express appropriately the information. It is also recommended to emphasize key words to interpret the meaning and realize if the partner's understanding is clear (Brown, 2010).

Another element of listening comprehension is the listening passage. It is referred to the content to be transmitted. The fragment needs to be chosen accorded to the age of the students or according students' interest. When the passage is hard to understand, the students get frustrated which provokes difficulties to communicate. When the students learn a new language, the listening passage needs to increment gradually the grammatical structures to develop the listening abilities (Osada, 2004).

Listening difficulties for EFL learners (Listening Problems)

The teachers in general, should consider the multicultural or individual characteristics in every student. Classroom activities should respect learners' beliefs. If teachers want to influence students' listening behavior they need to know students' beliefs. Some important features that the teachers have to take into account when planning lessons are the age to coordinate appropriate topics and games, the aptitude of students, to identify the specific talent; the mother tongue that can affect in the treatment of mistakes, to consider the academic and educational level to determine academic contents; the reason for learning to know what they want to achieve (McDonough, Shaw, & Masuhara, 2013). Listening is involved in an active process in which speakers and listeners act in real time and demand a lot of processing

of the new language. When students cannot interact like in the case of using recorded audios it presents difficulties for the listener, they have no control on what is coming next. Some problems in students are related to the affective variables related to listener characteristics (Lofti, 2012). Some teachers have forgotten the importance of listening and do not pay attention to it, they do not teach or assess listening. Meanwhile students seem to learn listening and not listening comprehension; this means that students understand words but missing full sentence meanings (Osada, 2004). Some teachers feel that a well-managed classroom is one that is always silent; moreover Dowson (2003) argues that:

“Whether pupils were learning through speaking and listening or learning about speaking and listening, silent classrooms were no longer prized once it was realized that talk might sometimes have a greater role to play in the development of learning than silence” (p.90).

On the other hand, students did not agree on creating listening competency, expressed by (Worthington, 2012).

Learners that have learned using the Grammar Translation method demonstrate inadequate production of language (Abbas & Mohammad, 2011). Some of the problems found in Listening comprehension are the lack of time that students have to practice listening skill or interaction in the second language, this is attributed the use of translators creating inappropriate structures in the language. Teachers need to make more effort to include listening activities in the curricula and keep students concentrated on listening.

Since listening is not a passive process, it demands a lot of effort from the learners. The listener has to be able to decode sounds, then create a nexus and link words to phrases. Then

the listener must create sentences and interpret complete texts and understand a global meaning, all this process can be reached with a lot of exposure (Abbas & Mohammad, 2011).

Some students struggle with listening learning and communication. Teachers have to address the problems creating a rich learning environment, well-focused on specific information in the appropriate moment. It is advisable to differentiate the necessities and offer strategies to every student. If the students cannot talk in public it is valuable to start by interacting in pairs, then in groups and finally in the whole class. Another issue is the lack of concentration in children and the lack of interest. A teacher needs to catch their attention and motivate them to follow stories, follow instructions, and give responses (Edwards, 2012).

According to Shrosbree (2011) the lack of motivation or unfamiliarity with the foreign language usually disappoint students. Hamouda and Shrosbree (2012) affirm that the principal problem in listening is related to the bad pronunciation of the speaker. Some other aspects include variety of accents, speed of the speech, poor vocabulary, lack of concentration, bad quality of recorded audios, and anxiety. In Saudi, when the process of listening English as a Foreign Language is hard to students, teacher look for to understand the difficulties that students are having to offer help. For teachers, the students' listening comprehension is priority. Gilbert (2012) affirms that the listening comprehension has a lot of in common with the correct pronunciation. Most of the students get nervous when talking because they feel pressure from the teacher to speak perfectly. This creates a tense learning environment, which generate silent students. The use of activities to improve the listening comprehension, and reduce the anxiety such as doing dictation or working in pairs help students to develop their listening skills. These activities help reinforce skills the students need to improve. Another

way to motivate listening comprehension is to find a purpose like remember interesting history, understand procedures, learn important dates, find examples, support ideas in a debate or the capacity to solve problems (Palmer, 2014).

When people misunderstand messages the conversations falters. To listen appropriately it is essential to make a lot of effort and dedicate time to exposure in the second language. Listening comprehension does not refer to understanding of every single word, but there are some words that are necessary to figure out the context. The listener needs concentration and feels relaxed, considering that with anxiety the students lose the confidence and perform poorly. Students cannot comprehend the English spoken language or the content of the lesson because students do not understand structures, there is lack of concentration and different language background (Hamouda, 2013). An evidence is needed to explore learners' perceptions on their experiences since listening cannot be seen precisely.

Stated by Goh (2000) some learners have difficulties in perception, they have problems recognizing familiar words, or they have troubles remembering the meaning and they quickly forget what have heard. Hamouda (2013) agrees with Abdolmahid (2010) who claims that some factors that cause problems in Listening comprehension are the speech rate, lexis, phonological features, background knowledge and some others like lack of exposure to the new language, text structure and syntax or lack of interest and many other difficulties like unfamiliar topics or unfamiliar accent. A study made by Hasan (2000) found that unfamiliar words create demanding grammatical structures and laborious measurement of spoken text.

Strategies to develop the listening skill

According to Sabinus (2013) the use of videos contribute with the language learning, is an important activity to work in class to foster cognitive, affective, motor and interpersonal skills and keep students concentrated. Also, videos provide paralanguage that help students to interpret the text deeply (Safari & Hamidi, 2012).

Hardison (2005) indicates the importance of allowing the use of real life visual and audio presentation in class to increase validity in learning English and realism language. Chapple and Curtis's (2000) have further reported that videos not only help learners improve their listening comprehension, but also promote their confidence in speaking English, in particular, for those who are not native English speakers, such as EFL students. Hsu and Chang (2010) agreed on that the use of technology gives a contribution to education, mobile devices help improve the English listening competence.

Some studies have confirmed that the use of audiovisual material is effective on listening and reading comprehension. The use of videos provides visual information, give visual and aural stimuli, videos also support students understanding since students can confirm what they see with what they listen at the same time (Hsu, Hwang, & Chang, 2014). The use of videos in teaching English as a Foreign Language has become famous in education, the use of a visual channel leads to increased comprehension for listeners (Wagner, 2010). The students feel better while selecting their own materials, they are interested in deciding what and how to learn, the selection of material should not be a decision of the teacher only (Sheema, 2014). On the other hand, some students perceive troubles figuring out

what the video says because of the speed and unknown vocabulary and get confused with the subtitles (Smidt & Hegelheimer, 2010).

Students need to understand variety of scopes, they must recognize paralinguistic clues such as intonation, in order to understand temperament or connotation, and they also need to understand specific information such as address, numbers and general information as social interaction. There are some listening principles that teachers need to use in classrooms to create a better listening environment. Teachers need to encourage pupils to listen as often and as much as possible; students need an exact time to listen variety of conversation or records audios. Also, the teacher needs to be patient and repeat the audio, words or sentences as many times as the students need. It is important that the teacher helps students to be ready to listen to these means to give a previous idea of what is the topic about. Teachers need to encourage students to understand the meaning of the topic and talk about it. The understanding can be proved by asking students to express if they agree or not with the content giving a critique or an approval (Harmer, 2011).

To develop listening skills is necessary to keep contact with the language, Harvey-Smith (2013) suggests the use of debates, which will help students to become better listeners, since both teams should interact.

Spoken texts contain variety of pronunciation features for example pronunciation of the same phonemes by the same speaker in different context and dialect that help students to figure out new changes in listening (Rost, 2013). Some activities used are oral cloze where students listen to part of a story and they should guess what is coming next, picture ordering in which students listen to a description and have to order the images according the described

events. In the same way, Chapple and Curtis (2000) say that videos help learners to improve their listening comprehension as well as promote confidence when speaking EFL. Another strategy that can be useful is to include the use of physical activities during listening comprehension, which will increase the task performance allowing the students to be attentive and to reduce distracting effects. The ability of listening from learners rise with the practice and a combination from hearing, understanding, remembering, interpreting, evaluating and responding.

Practice as much as possible will contribute to the listening learning process. It is a learner decision to find an environment where the second language is used. An effective listener is also worried about teachers' behavior and decisions, because, students depend on teachers to assist the learning process. The teacher's feedback is really important for a person that really wants to learn, follow teacher recommendation support the learning process (Brownell, 2013), Children who cannot understand a message seem to be lost and carry problems with social interaction. Edwads (2012) provides some strategies to learn listening effectively as using clear and simple structures, doing verbal routines, using commands, repeating information, using body language, focusing on intonation. When the students have poor listening skills, the teachers can use some strategies like: giving a purpose of listening, creating eye contact, informing children in advance about the activity and the topic of the listening passage, reducing distractions, and showing individualized check to keep them concentrated.

The materials used in a listening lesson should be authentic and as natural as possible like an everyday speech. There are three points that teachers need to keep in mind. First, to be

careful with the students' comfort, try to use texts, audios or topics with contents according to their level. Second, the instructors should evaluate and compare the students' level comprehension with the difficulty of the book or resources used in class. The third point is to base the classes on researches and strategies where metacognitive instruction improves less skilled listener performance (Bozorgian, 2012). Researches have suggested that teachers need stimulate students to interact, instead of avoiding physical movements. Including body language and physical movement in school give benefits and positive effects on confidence. (Devender, 2012).

A couple of listening strategies include communication strategies, for example making predictions before listening, also learning strategies which embrace learning by independent listening such as doing negotiation and listening for pattern.

Some studies have been carried out in order to support the necessity of listening in scholars. The following six studies are a theoretical support to the present research:

Selamat & Sidhu (2011) study had as a proposal to find out the students' perceptions toward a metacognitive strategy instruction as a tool to improve listening comprehension abilities. To develop this study, the investigators have used questionnaires and semi-structures interviews to 34 students coursing the first semester in a public college who have taken a metacognitive instruction program in Malaysia. For the students in first semester it was a big challenge English lectures understanding. In the metacognitive training program, the students used some strategies like summarizing, identify problems, planning, comprehension monitoring and self and peer evaluation. The items in the questionnaire were related to five

metacognitive factors linked with listening strategies. The interview included experiences in learning new strategies of metacognitive instructions.

The questionnaire showed up that 47% of the students think that listening is a tough skill to learn compared with reading, writing, and speaking. On the other hand, in the interview some students expressed that it is harder to them learn speaking. The students perceive that before the metacognitive program it was hard to be concentrated while lectures. For most of the students the metacognitive activities training was helpful improving their listening skills. Researchers concluded that listening skill is more demanding than reading, writing or speaking.

The second study carried out by Kurita (2012), had as a purpose to recognize how the second language learners understand spoken English or fail to understand it. The methodology of the study was to review variety of researches to provide effective listening instructions. To develop this process, the researcher clarified the listening comprehension course and the importance of students knowing their own learning process. Also, the researcher discussed the implications of teaching a second language for comprehension such as anxiety problems, use of metacognitive instructions, vocabulary instruction, proficiency learners and others. In the development of this research, it was required to explore the implications of the teacher in the listening process comprehension as well as in the listening process acquisition. To conclude, the researcher exposed the importance of metacognitive knowledge as well as lexical knowledge to improve listening comprehension and reducing anxiety. The use of adequate vocabulary, as well as the teachers' interest to exposure students

in the second language listening and not just spoken, and to give motivation to advanced learners, encouraging them to learn by themselves independently.

Bidabadi & Yamat (2013) put forward a study to research how Iranian female learners listen to their texts in classrooms, and their perception about the use of metacognitive strategies. This study was carried out in a freshman university in the west of Esfahan, Iran. 84 Iranian female students with around 18 years old participated in this study. To develop this research the authors combined qualitative and quantitative information. The data was gathered with the use of questionnaires and semi-structures interviews. With this information, the researcher could know the students' perception about the use of metacognitive instruction. The interviews took around 35 minutes to be conducted and the students were able to speak in their own language. The principal topics of the investigation were evaluation, personal knowledge, direct knowledge and problem solving. According to the answers the Iranian women use more direct knowledge that is a method of enquiry to find solutions to problems.

Learners expressed that the use of pre-reading, multiple-choice questions were helpful to understand the listening task. Also, the students were motivated because they felt prepared. This study indicated that students try hard to keep their concentration to avoid difficulties when listening to transcripts. The researchers of this study concluded that female freshman university learners used direct knowledge strategies. The use of metacognitive strategies was needed to develop skills in classroom and was essential to improve English listening. English learners needed to listen to texts as many times as they demand, since it was not their first language and it was harder to understand contents.

Hwang, Huang, Shadiey, Wu & Chen (2014) support mobile technology to learn a new language. According to the authors of this study the use of technology helps to learn a language in an essay way, reduces students' stress and facilitate communication. The aim of this study it was to investigate the students' perceptions about activities supported by mobile technology. The participants to this study were 33 fifth-grade students with around 10 or 11 years old. The students were trained before the process of learning with mobile devices. The researchers used a questionnaire survey to know the student's perceptions about learning English with electronic devices. The students also received a pre-test and a post-test to measure their proficiency. In this research the students had to work with 6 learning activities supported with mobile systems. The first activity was vocabulary repetition where students could see in the screen of the mobile device some words and repeat over the day. They could also record their voices and listen to them later. Another activity used was role-play, where two students interact and record the audio. The next activity was you speak, then I speak; it is similar to role-play, in this case students can record more than two voices to have variety of accents. Another activity included brainstorming, photos and words. The idea is see a picture and select words according it. The last activity was photos voice and words. In this activity, the students relate a picture with a word, then, students read a sentence, which is recorded to practice later. During the interview the students answered questions about their experience using the study and their point of view about using the mobiles. As a result, most of the students were pleased about the system saying that the activities were helpful, since was possible to practice all day. The study revealed that the pre-test had lower results that the post-test. As a conclusion, the researchers found that the use of mobile technology facilitates

the EFL learning process through the use of specific activities; the technology motivates students and skimps time in the listening process.

Researchers think that the number of students to this study is too small, so it is important to expand this study later. Meanwhile the students should continue using electronic devices to learn English on the school as well as at home to explore different situations.

The fifth study implemented by Hamouda (2013) it was focused also in the listening comprehension skills, it was a research developed in Saudi Arabia. The study was carried out using questionnaires and interviews as methods to data collection. The participants were 60 students who took a listening course before. The participants were from first year in College in a range of 20 to 22 years old. The study tried to find the difficulties in listening comprehension that Saudi present. The aims of the study were: to understand the perception of the students' English comprehension, to know the opportunities that the students have to listen to English, to find the problems that the students perceive and provide some solutions to this listening problems. The research questions were: How important the students perceive learn listening comprehension? How and when the students listen to English? How can teachers help students in their listening comprehension problems?

The questionnaire had 71 questions information about difficulties that students have when they listen to English. The questions included categories like listening materials, physical setting, and lack of concentration. The questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively with low answer scores, demonstrating that most of these students get bored when practicing listening comprehension activities. The students' perspective was that their level of English is

poor; it was difficult to them to comprehend listening too. There were items the students perceive like problems including: difficult grammatical structures, length of the listening texts, fatigue, anxiety, unfamiliar words or topics, complex sentences.

To conclude, it was said that listening skill is the weakest skill put into practice. Students of Qassim, a Saudi university, had numerous problems in listening comprehension, which can be improved by changing the teacher's techniques and practicing listening.

The study developed by Lofti (2012) tries to find the learner's' beliefs in English language listening comprehension by creating a reliable questionnaire. To develop this study the researcher collected information from 650 EFL students, four professional language translators and English teachers. The learners were coursing college in an Islamic University in Tehran. While the study was done, the students were also taking a listening course. The students had to answer a questionnaire created by experts on listening courses. The method for developing the questionnaire it was to follow the standards to develop valid and reliable questionnaire, including relevant literature on the second language. Five categories were included: text, task, listener, speaker and process. 30 students were asked to answer in a short paragraph their perspective about listening comprehension problems. The questionnaire was translated into the students' mother tongue to provide reliable answers. The created questionnaire included 6 factors that correspond to the major listening problems: Process, input, listener, task, affect and context. The author concluded that some questionnaires do not have valid information, and it is hard to recognize what learners think about the listening problems. The questionnaire created in this study gives reliability and validity of learners' beliefs.

The previously presented studies, and the present study, should be taken into account to prepare the possible improvements in the scholar curriculum according the students' necessities such as time to interact or implement technology in the classroom. All the progress should be done based on real problems.

CHAPTER II: METHOD

Settings and Participants

The present study was carried out in two high schools in Quito the Capital of Ecuador, specifically in Carcelén an urban and well located area, one of the private schools providing a good quality of equipment and English native speakers' teachers. The second school was private too but with fewer benefits such as technology or foreign teachers.

The population immersed in the study included five English teachers, 3 of them were Latin and the other 2 teachers were English native speakers. 2 male teachers and 3 female teachers; all of them with more than ten years' experience as teachers in different schools and high schools.

The participants in the surveys were 125 students in total, most of them Ecuadorian, others from some countries around Latin America. The students were around 16 and 18 years old.

The population of these 5 parallels coursing 11th grade (2 BGU) were students prepared to take IB exams, so their English level was advanced.

Procedures

The first step to develop this topic was to review the literature that had information about this study student's perceptions on their listening comprehensions difficulties in EFL classrooms: An Ecuadorian case. To do the research, it was necessary to look over some journals and understand the processes of investigation. The instruments used to research the students' perceptions were surveys and interviews. The delivered surveys included 18 identical questions to teachers and students, the only difference was found in the language, since the surveys were taken in Spanish to the students and in English to the teachers; the 18

questions included in the survey were divided in three sub-topics: the listener, the speaker and the listening passage.

The first subtopic “the listener” incorporated nine questions related with the difficulties that students have as listeners, the second subtopic “the speaker” exposes four possible problems caused by the bad pronunciation or intonation guided by the speaker at the moment of giving spoken information; and the last subtopic “the listening passage” that state five possible problems related to the contents to be heard by the students.

The interviews and the surveys results were used to answer the investigation questions: How do the listener factors affect their listening comprehension? Do the speaker factors interfere on the listeners’ listening skills? And how does the listener passage hinder the students’ listening comprehension?

The methods used to acquire the information were both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative method was used since the process included tabulations and data gathered from surveys; on the other hand, the qualitative method was reflected with the use of interviews, which are not statistical but it gives a huge contribution to answer the hypothesis.

The Excel tool was helpful to measure the results. To analyze the results qualitatively, the students’ highest scores were compared with teacher’s answers associating the results and comparing the differences in the answers.

CHAPTER III: DISCUSSION

Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

This section includes some facts of how the comprehension by listening can be positively or negatively affected. Thanks to the collaboration of teachers and students in a couple of high schools in Quito the study could be developed. The use of surveys and interviews showed the students' perceptions. These instruments were administrated to teachers and students to understand their perception about what is affecting the students' listening comprehension. This section, analyzes the students perceptions on the graphs concentrated on three important elements that influence directly the listening process: the speaker, the listener and the listening passage.

How do the listener factors affect their listening comprehension?

The listener is the person who receives the message (Gardner, 2001). The following factors are directly related to the listener; the results have been gathered from students and teachers who answered some questions associated to their principal problems of listening English in class.

Table 1

<i>Item</i>	<i>Statements</i>	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
<i>no.</i>						
1	I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage	32%	38%	19%	7%	4%
2	I listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage	38%	24%	19%	12%	7%

3	I find it difficult to do listening activities because of my lack of knowledge of English language	45%	28%	15%	6%	6%
4	After my teacher stops the recording, I find it difficult to predict what will come next	26%	34%	25%	8%	6%
5	I find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage	42%	33%	12%	8%	6%
6.	I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time	41%	29%	22%	4%	4%
7.	I feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage	40%	28%	16%	10%	6%
8	I find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to me	30%	30%	23%	10%	7%
9	I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud	38%	29%	16%	10%	8%

Author: Erika Zambrano Vera

Source: Student's questionnaire

According to the first statement in the table above, *I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage* the results showed that: 38% of the students agreed that they just seldom use their experience to understand new contents, it means that the lack of background knowledge can interfere with the new listening topic acquisition, since it is necessary to think of what students already know to be able to compare, contrast or get help when listening the new information. However, the teachers disagree with the students, since they think that always or often the students use their

background knowledge to understand what they are listening to. Only 4% of the students agree with teachers expressing that they always use the background knowledge.

Students do not always use the background knowledge, it is easy for them to understand the listening passage. On the other hand, the teachers disagree saying that students always use the background knowledge. This may attribute to the way that the teacher or students interpreted the survey's question. Students think that they never use previous knowledge when listening something new, but teachers know that unconsciously the students have to relate new contents with contents learned in the past. The students express in the interview that they do not use background knowledge since they understand all the contents exposed by the teacher. It is important to use the experience from background knowledge since it helps the learner to understand easily what the teacher is talking about. Nation and Newton (2009) say that there are Bottom up process in which the learner collect the information piece by piece to understand globally and Top down process where it is possible to understand by using previous learning. The students are avoiding the Top down process since they don't use previous learning but teachers think differently, they realize that it is absolutely necessary to use information previously learned. Students always need to use the background knowledge about the subject or the new topic, on the contrary, if the students do not use it will be difficult to understand new contents.

The second statement in the students' interview was *I listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage*. Examining the answers, 38% of the students have reflected that they never listen every detail, this can be an important cause to students that have problems listening comprehensively. On the other hand, teachers say that students just seldom

use every detail to get the main idea, this means that both teachers and students have a similar response and just 7% of the students listen to every detail in a listening passage. It is recommendable to listen to every detail not to miss any kind of information like dates, places or small but useful data. According to the answers gathered in the interviews, the students do not have problems with the listening passage but with the recorded audios. Students prefer to listen to their teachers' voice. In this case the students use Top down process proposed by Nation and Newton (2009). Listening to some details and putting it together to find the principal idea is what students do. The teachers agree with this answer saying that students just seldom listen to all the sentences in the audio, so students don't understand every vocabulary or grammatical structures, they combine both to understand the final message. A weakness in the students is to listen to some parts of the listening passage. There is a lot of missing information when the attention is partial turning the interruptions into a hinder to the listening process. Although the contents are understood, the students are not becoming good listeners.

According to the next statement *I find it difficult to do listening activities because of my lack of knowledge of English language*, in these schools, almost the half of the students with 45% never find difficult to understand what they are listening to, they have a high level in English, especially in listening skills, the students are used to talk and listen to the second language. According to student's information, they are able to understand the grammatical structures without difficulty. Lack of knowledge in the second language is not a problem to students' listening comprehension. They can understand the audios or talks in class when they are concentrated. Just a small number of students 6% in the 'always' square find listening

difficulties. The teachers are close to the majority students' answer, since teachers say that students seldom find difficult to understand what they need to listen to, either in person or videotape. The students express in the interviews that it is easier for them to understand face to face conversations than recorded audios. A good strategy for teachers is that students listen to topics according to what they already know, according to their academic and educational level and interest (McDonough, Shaw & Masuhara, 2013). It is recommendable to find a way to learn using attractive activities to students, without feeling frustration or misunderstanding the meaning, using contents already learned to avoid defeat in the students. According to the participants in the study, the lack of knowledge in the second language is not a hinder to most of these students.

In this section of the interview it was found that, *After my teacher stops the recording, I find it difficult to predict what will come next*: most of the students think that they seldom find difficult to predict what is coming with a 34%, so the students have few moments where they can't predict what is coming, the teachers agree with students, saying that just seldom or sometimes the students struggle with predictions. In the interviews the students express that if they have listening problems it is because of the bad quality of audios, and for their understanding it is necessary for them to ask the teacher repeat more than once. This means that the students possess the Macro-skills; according to Brown (2010) macro-skill means to be able to know the outcomes, infer connections, deduce cause and effect, and infer if there is new information. This is not a problem to these students in their listening comprehension. The students can understand what is coming next or at least to give a different ending by associating with what they had already heard. To predict what is coming next in a recorded

audio helps the teacher to prove the understanding. Just a few students confirm problems interpreting and guessing what can possibly come next, the students with these kinds of issues are concentrated on understanding every single word, that's why it is difficult for them associate the words together and interpret what is coming on, or to think about the end. Lack of concentration or bad quality of audios can be a hinder to students predicting the listening passages.

The present statement *I find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage:* gave as a result that with a 42% in the 'never' chart these students do not have troubles holding a dialogue after the listening to a passage. The answers of all the teacher surveys agreed on 'seldom' this means that teachers and students disagree. According to teacher, is not easy for students to start a dialog about the listened topic. The students' English level is appropriate to their grade. 11th grade is a course with high expectations in listening and speaking skills. In these schools, students are able to interact about what they hear. According to Nation and Newton, (2009) the listening and oral reproduction are related. There are five categories in oral production the first one is imitative which makes reference to saying words and pronounce them correctly just like babies; the second one is demonstrating, where the learner shows grammatical competences and good intonation; the third category is interaction and response, the learner is able to have a conversation, understand the meaning and give an answer; the fourth category is interactive and responsive, as well as third category the learner is able to have a conversation but with more complex topics . The last category is called extensive, it is used in meetings and speeches, where the person needs clear understanding of the language as well as dominion of contents to persuade the audience. The students can

interact and response so they are in the fourth category. The students in the interviews expressed that it is easier to them to talk with native speakers, sometimes they have Hindu teachers and it is difficult to keep a conversation.

The surveyed students find themselves on the third category, able to understand and give answer but sometimes turns hard for some students to interact. Talking comprehends an important tool to teachers since they can notice the level of understanding of the students. Sometimes a hinder to students is the different accent, but usually they can have a conversation after the listening passage if they paid attention to it.

According to the option in the survey *I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time*: Students are able to understand the message with the first listening, 41% of the students never have issues understanding the message and just the 4% cannot find the meaning having always problem with the understanding. On the other hand, teachers vary with their answers by saying that sometimes or often the students find difficult to understand the message at the very first time. Teachers say that it is a weakness in the students but with repetition they can understand and then interact with the passage. According to Warner (2010) using video combined with audio help students that have problems with listening. The learner can relate both and find the meaning easier associating what is on the screen. On the other hand, if the students have problems understanding the message it is necessary to repeat as many times as the students need. The students express in the interview that if they have problems understanding the listening passage they ask the teacher to repeat the passage or ask for the word or phrase that they misunderstood. Repetition is a good strategy to students understanding or re-checking what

they listen to in the audio for the first time. A hinder to students can be attributed to the noise of the place. It is easier to understand if the place is quiet.

Giving an answer to the following statement *I feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage*: it was found that the 40% of the students are never worried when they do not understand the listening passage. It seems that students always understand the passage. On the other hand, teachers express that students often are worried when they don't understand the passage. According to the students' interview they are not nervous because the teachers give them support by repeating. This change can be noticeable while taking exams, since students have just three times to understand the listening passage. A Harmer (2011) advice is to motivate the students to listen to as much as possible and repeat the passage as many times as necessary. It is appropriate that teachers provide confidence to the students. If students are nervous they can also feel frustrated about their learning. In this study nervousness is not the cause for having listening problems in students since they are not worried and when they do not understand the listening passage the teachers support the student by repeating the passage.

Checking the answer of the following question *I find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to me*: there is a tie between never and seldom with 30% in each one, moreover, to all the teachers surveyed, the students, sometimes find difficulties caused by the lack of interest. Some possible solutions to avoid students' lack of interest are: giving a purpose listening, creating eye contact, using body language or finding authentic and interesting materials. Students spend around eight hours in school and this can turn classes into becoming tedious. Keeping students active and focused on all the classes

requires strategies from teachers, especially listening to long speeches. Some good strategies are the use of warm ups, games or rewards, this can motivate students to work and collaborate. It is also explained by students in the interviews that they prefer interesting topics. When students are not interested they do not understand because they do not want to listen to attentively. This is one problem in the listening process and a weakness in learning. It is important that students are attentive and, also it is appropriate that teachers keep them focused on topics according to the age or interest. A hinder created by this group of students is the lack of interest, if the students do not want to pay attention it is hard to the teacher to keep them concentrated (Edwards, 2012).

The last question in the first part of the surveys *I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud*: expresses that, 36% of the students have never found difficulties in listening to a recorded tape, this means that they do not have issues with listening to the teacher or a recorded audio. On the other hand, the teachers disagreed saying that the students often have problems with recorded passages. This is because the students are used to listen to the teacher's voice including teacher's accent, dialect or intonation. According to Harmer (2011) students need to vary the context, taking into account the American and British English, and their variations and motivate students to intensive and extensive listening combining personal and educational interests. The students in these schools have a good level of English. One of the principal problems is that students are used to the teachers' voices, this is a hinder to listen to English in any environment. This means that they can have some issues with listening to topics out of the classroom or recorded tapes. This is reflected in the teachers' surveys and the interviews with the students. Although most

of the students in the surveys say that they do not have problems, unfortunately, with all this mentioned above, the reality is different since teachers express that sometimes the students face listening difficulties. The lack of recorded audios is a weakness in students learning, teachers must implement the use of recorded audios to vary the accents.

To sum up, the students have problems with recorded audios, thinking about what is coming next in a passage and with the lack of interest when listening. Moreover, these results come from teachers, who notice the problems.

Do the speaker factors interfere on the listeners’ listening skills?

The speaker is the person who shares a message (Nation & Newton, 2009). The following graph presents the answers of the students and their perception according the speakers job.

Table 2

<i>Item</i>						<i>Always</i>
<i>no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Someti mes</i>	<i>Often</i>	
10.	I find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses	36%	36%	13%	8%	7%
11.	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly	32%	40%	16%	4%	8%
12.	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast	33%	42%	14%	3%	9%

13.	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents	31%	38%	18%	5%	9%
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Author: Erika Zambrano Vera

Source: Student's questionnaire

According to the results obtained in the first question of the second interview *I find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses*: There is a tie in the options of never and seldom with 36% in each one. This group of IB students do not find difficult to catch up a speech with pauses, although, the teachers disagreed saying that the students often have troubles with a speech full of pauses. It is really important to develop the ability of listening by absorbing the correct pronunciation and tone of voice according to the context and situation (Harmer, 2011). In the interview, some students express that it is easy for them to listen to native speakers since they have been exposed in classes to natives. On the other hand, when a non-native speaker talks to them it is hard for them to understand at the first time. Students need to be in contact with natural English speakers to facilitate the learning. An inexperienced speaker can be a problem to students listening progress, causing confusion or frustration in the learners.

Following the answer of the following question *I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly*: I was found that just 8% of the surveyed students have always issues understanding meanings when a word is mispronounced. And 40% have just seldom these understanding problems. According to the teacher interviews, the students often misunderstand the meaning if a word is not pronounced clearly. This may be because the students do not focus on the message but on every word. It is useful that students

connect the sentence and give sense to the word that is not clearly pronounced by using the context.

A good strategy to understand the speaker is to be aware of the body language that can help to figure out what the word means. According to Brown (2010), the students combine what they listen to with facial expression, body language and nonverbal cues to understand the meaning and give answers if is necessary. A bad pronunciation can be a hinder to students creating frustration. It is important that teachers are prepared to talk and teach students.

The following question *I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast*: represents that the 42% of the students seldom have troubles understanding if the speaker uses a fast speech. According to teachers it is usual that students do not understand the contents if the speaker talks to fast. The speed of the speaker may attribute a problem to students. The students have a lot of exposition in the second language in the school, but as second language learners they need a normal speed, not so fast, not so slow. It is advisable to measure the speed to be in agreement to the level of the students. According to Abbas and Mohammad (2011), English is not a passive process and it is hard to decode sounds, create nexus and link words to create sentences, so it is necessary to practice as much as possible to understand meaning and to be able to interact. And even with exposition it is hard to understand a second language in a high speed.

According to the question proposed in the graph *I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents*: Listening problems are not common with these students when they listen to more than one accent. 38% says that seldom have misunderstood

the message even listening different accents. Teachers agree saying that just sometimes students have problems with listening to different accents. Variation of accent is not a cause to struggle in students, on the contrary, comprise a strategy to understand people from different countries or states.

9% of the surveyed students express that they always have problems listening varied accents. Just such as Hamouda (2012) expresses that among some other issues variety of accents is one of the problems of students learning English as a Second Language, since students feel anxious about changes.

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

The listener passage is the content or audio to be shared (Osada, 2004). The following graph contents the perceptions of the surveyed students.

Table 3

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
14.	Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with my listening comprehension	34%	40%	15%	5%	6%
15.	Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with my listening comprehension	33%	36%	20%	6%	6%
16.	The length of the listening passage hinders me to interpret the message	33%	32%	17%	10%	8%

17.	The content of the listening passage is abstract	37%	32%	18%	4%	10%
18.	The poor quality of recording does not allow me to understand the listening passage	25%	32%	20%	12%	11%

Author: Erika Zambrano Vera

Source: Student's questionnaire

The listening passage refers to the contents that the students are going to listen to in class. It includes the topic, the length, the accent, the tone of voice, the quality of the audio, the silence around and it influences the process of learning. The listening passage has different interest in every student, this vary according to the age, the environment or preferences. MacDonough, Saw & Masuhara (2013) express that is important to create lesson plans taking into account the students' level, determining appropriate academic context and according to the aptitudes and specific talent of students. The teachers need to think about the target to plan the classes and think about topics and activities according to their preferences.

According to the answer gathered for the following question *Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with my listening comprehension*: the results showed that most of the students have just seldom issues with the vocabulary that they listen to. With a 40% in the answer of "seldom", some students understand almost everything by interpreting the whole sentence. In case of confusion, the students ask the teacher the meaning of the word to give sense to the passage. Teachers on the other hand, express that students sometimes find troubles related to the vocabulary. The students express in the interview that if an unknown word appears the teachers help them immediately. Most of the time the teacher explains the

meaning of the word and sometimes the teacher motivates the student to use a dictionary. This item is not a problem for the students since they can find a fast solution. The use of new vocabulary in a passage can create confusion for students, or on the other hand and like in this case can increment the vocabulary in students learning new words meaning.

According to Shrosbree (2008) students get demotivated with the unfamiliarity in a foreign language and the lack of exposition. Most of the students receive many English classes per week, but they do not practice at home or on vacations. A study by Hasan (2000) expresses that when a student finds an unfamiliar word it is difficult to recognize grammatical structure and understand the spoken text.

The following sentence of the graph is: *Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with my listening comprehension*: express that 36% of the students seldom find difficult to comprehend some grammatical structures when listening English passages, nevertheless, from teachers' perspective, students sometimes have problems with grammatical structures. This can be attributed to the listening problems in students. It can be possible that they are used to listening to English every day, but when they listen to grammatical and correct structures they get confused. According to Brown (2010) when students are able to understand and use correct grammatical structures they can handle macroskills and the understanding is clear. The use of grammar, practice and interaction are good tools for teachers, the combination of these will prompt students to manage macroskills.

As have been reported in the following statement: *The length of the listening passage hinders me to interpret the message*: 3% of the students never have problems with the length of the listening passage, and with a similar score another group of students express that they

seldom have problems when the listening passage is too long. On the other hand, teachers express that students sometimes have problems interpreting the listening passage. The length is perceived as a problem toward some students in the listening comprehension process. According to Read and Barcena (2016) the length of a listening activity must be short to keep students concentrated, also it needs to challenge students with interesting listening passages, but not frustrate them with long activities. When students get frustrated it is hard to learn or understand the listening passage. It is advisable to practice with short audios or to divide a long audio into small parts.

According to the following question included in the graph: *The content of the listening passage is abstract:* 37% of the students feel that contents received in classes are never abstract. However, the teachers express that sometimes the listening passages are abstract. 10% of the students perceive that the contents are abstract. According to the interview, students do not have problems with abstract contents. Teachers attribute the understanding to the cognitive process in which students do not realize what is passing on their mind but inconsistently they understand the contents. Just and Carpenter (2013) express that with cognitive process a person can discover information unconsciously with many sub operations that help to understand contents according to the context. It is necessary that the students learn to understand abstract passage and not just basic everyday conversations.

Respect to the following question: *The poor quality of recording does not allow me to understand the listening passage* it was found that teachers agreed among them saying that students never have this kind of problems because teachers provide listening passages with excellent quality to students. On the other hand, the students express with a 32% that just

seldom they have problems understanding because of the bad quality of audios. On the other hand just 11 % of the students always find problems. This means that since the audios are good the students do not have problems, but if the students receive poor quality audio or poor quality pronunciation they can struggle. Hamouda (2012) expresses that the principal problems on listening are related with bad quality of audios or bad pronunciation. The reason why Hardison (2005) recommend the use of electronics, and the importance of combining visual and audio information to improve listening comprehension.

The answers varied between teachers and students, according to students they never have listening problems, but from teachers' perspective, the students sometimes have problems listening to recorded audios. The teachers express that the audios used always show a good quality. Moreover, the students find some issues understanding since the volume is low and they prefer to listen to the teacher voice. Also, students have problems understanding the meaning just with one-time reproduction that is why teachers let them hear more than one time or use English subtitles if the passage is too long. Students struggle listening to audios or speeches with pauses and hesitation, this is a problem that the teachers perceive. As well as the bad quality of recorded audios, a bad pronunciation is a problem too. Another problem that teachers can notice is the lack of interest of students in the listening passage. To avoid confusions, students prefer the voice of native speaker, teachers with a regular speech and the possibility of asking for repetition.

CONCLUSIONS

Students have a high level of understanding in the foreign language thanks to the commitment of the teachers in combining the tools that they have available in the classrooms and students' exposition.

The lack of interest in the second language is one of the principal problems in this group of students, they feel that they already know all the contents and do not make effort in the activities in class such as oral reproduction or predicting the end of the story.

Students find difficult, but not impossible to understand a listening passage when the speaker uses pauses or bad pronunciation or intonation.

The use of background knowledge is important to the listening process, the students use the information learned before combining it with the new one and understand faster the new contents.

The teachers share good quality of audio or videos and use good pronunciation and tone of voice to prompt students to learn without difficulties and motivate them to listen to the contents.

Students have expressed that when the speaker has poor knowledge in the language it is more difficult to understand the contents and the students need to pay more attention to focus on the topic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is highly recommended to appropriately combine the use of audios, videos and teacher speech to keep the rhythm that students already have.

It is suggested to challenge the students to listen to variety of passages with different interesting topics that call their attention and keep them concentrated and make them realize that there is a lot to learn.

It would help to motivate students to use background knowledge to interpret new contents as well as treat the speaker with more patience and collaborate with the silence.

It is highly recommended to motivate students to associate with what they already know or have heard to combine what they are listening to, this is going to help them to make connections and help in the listening process for a better understanding.

It is advisable to give to the students extra material to work at home like apps for cell phones with good quality of audios and topics according to the students' interests.

It is suggested that the students pay attention to the speaker even if the speech is not good, this challenge the students to understand variety of accents.

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ANEXO

ANNEX 1



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA
TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS
CUESTIONARIO DEL ESTUDIANTE

STUDENTS' INTERVIEW

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

Si () No ()

¿Por qué _____

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

Usted como oyente ()

El texto que escucha ()

El hablante (quien emite el mensaje) ()

¿Por qué _____

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

El oyente ¿Por qué?

___ El texto que escucha ¿Por qué?

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

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

APUNTES EXTRAS DE LA ENTREVISTA EN RELACIÓN AL TEMA:

¡Gracias por su colaboración!