

A SURVEY OF THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION LEARNING STRATEGIES
APPLIED WITHIN THE SECOND SEMESTER OF THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH
PROGRAM IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NARIÑO

By

Adriana Lorena Alvarez Mora

Alfonso Gutiérrez Ortiz

Human Science School
Linguistics and Languages Department
English and French Program
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Alfonso Gutiérrez Ortiz

ADVISOR

Aaron Scott Rogers

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DEDICATED TO:

First and foremost, I would like to thank God, my father, my mother, my brother and my boyfriend, on whose constant encouragement and love I have relied throughout my time at the University. I am grateful also to my Grandparents, Uncles, and Aunts. Their unflinching courage and conviction will always inspire me, and I hope to continue, in my own small way, the noble mission to which they gave their lives. It is to them that I dedicate this work,

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RESUMEN

Esta investigación describe un estudio sobre las estrategias de aprendizaje que asisten la habilidad de escucha usadas por 40 estudiantes del segundo semestre del programa de Inglés-Francés de la Universidad de Nariño. El objetivo del estudio es investigar la frecuencia de uso de las estrategias de aprendizaje directas que asisten la habilidad de la escucha y determinar cómo son influenciadas por el nivel de competencia y el género de los participantes. Asimismo, ésta investigación se enfoca en identificar qué estrategias indirectas de aprendizaje son usadas por ellos. El análisis demuestra que existen diferencias significativas en el uso de dichas estrategias entre los estudiantes del segundo semestre. Del mismo modo, el género desempeña un papel importante en las clases de estrategias que se usan: el género femenino aplica menos estrategias directas que asisten la escucha que el género masculino. De la misma forma, se reconoció un uso inapropiado de las estrategias indirectas que asisten la escucha. Los hallazgos, resultado del presente estudio pueden ayudar a los profesores a identificar las estrategias adecuadas para facilitar la comprensión de la escucha en los estudiantes de los primeros semestres.

ABSTRACT

This research reports on a study of listening comprehension learning strategies used by 40 EFL students from the second semester of the English and French program of the University of Nariño. The aims of the study were to survey the frequency of listening comprehension direct learning strategies use and to determine how it is influenced by the learners' proficiency level and gender. In addition to this, it also aims to identify what listening comprehension indirect learning strategies were being used among learners. Analysis showed that significant differences were to be found in the use of listening comprehension learning strategies among learners of second semester. Gender also played a role in influencing the kinds of strategy used; female students were found to use less listening comprehension direct learning strategies than male students; As well as, an inappropriate use of the listening comprehension indirect learning strategies by learners was recognized. Findings from this study could help teachers identify appropriate strategies to facilitate listening comprehension by earlier stages' learners.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The first chapter deals with the description of the problem and its evaluation. We have also discussed the problem statement, its evaluation, objectives and why this problem was chosen.

Description of the Problem

In the process of teaching and learning languages, many factors can be found reflecting its complexity and their strong or weak relationships. The problem deals with *what listening comprehension learning strategies are applied within the second semester in the English and French program in the University of Nariño*, when they are often faced to real English situations and academic activities.

Rost (2002), stated that “listening is so prevalent in language use and because listening is the primary means of L2 acquisition for most people, the development of listening as a skill and as a channel for language input, should assume critical importance in instruction. (p.103)

Ironically, instruction in listening has not received much attention until recently, over the past 50 years, methods for the development of listening instruction have evolved slowly, as the results of various techniques being combined and recombined. Most methodologies now in use around the classrooms, in material design circles and self-access centers can not be said to subscribe to any one philosophy or theory of learning teaching.

Language learning depends on listening. Listening provides the aural input that serves as the basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken communication. Effective language instructors show students how they can adjust their listening behavior to deal with a variety of situations, types of input, and listening purposes. They help students develop a set of listening strategies and match appropriate strategies to each listening situation.

According to Oxford (1990) “Learning strategies are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. Strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence” (Page 1).

Besides, Strategy development is important for listening training because strategies are conscious means by which learners can guide and evaluate their own comprehension and responses. It is also known that listening strategies can students work with more different material (Vandergrift, 1999). This research aims to explore and describe whether workable strategies are being implemented to improve listening comprehension in EFL learners in second semester in the English and French program at the University of Nariño within our particular setting.

Problem Statement

What kinds of listening comprehension learning strategies are applied within the second semester of the English and French program and how they affect learners’ performance?

Evaluation of the Problem

According to Rost (2002), Listening is the core of language. In order to acquire another language, a second language learner begins with listening. Initially, learners need to spend many hours listening and developing comprehension skills before they can begin to speak, read and write. A beginning student may need as many as thirty hours of listening before he is ready to start communicating orally. Ideally learners will begin to develop listening through much practice working with the instructor, as the first source of foreign language.

Every teacher's aim is to help students function in English at the highest level possible. However this is difficult when faced with a classroom full of mixed ability learners. The challenge we face is to pinpoint the differences and then teach accordingly.

Language learning strategies are used with the explicit goal of helping learners improve their knowledge and understanding of a target language. They are the conscious thoughts and behaviors used by students to facilitate language learning tasks and to personalize the language learning process.

Students are often faced to be measured in the development of their language skills. Listening comprehension activities make up over 20% of final score of their English subject through lab sessions; besides, this listening training is an important fact taking into consideration that this will be a useful guide to success in standardized tests in the future.

This study will be researchable because by means of some data collection instruments, we will gather some data that will help us clarify all the factors involved in the research problem.

Moreover, by finding the strategies used by students to improve listening comprehension, the research is allowed to establish the aspects that teachers and learners can develop, such as class design control and training, and give the listeners an idea about what to do when facing different level activities and advancing in their individual skills.

Significance

Listening comprehension is an important part of foreign language acquisition. Nevertheless, when thinking about English learning it is doubtless that this process is influenced by some conditions such as the motivation and the need to learn a foreign, the access and the support given to a learner to know the spoken language and the social setting which brings the learner in frequent enough and sustained enough contact with target language to make learning possible.

Moreover, the degree of input to deal with foreign language acquisition is modified through language learning strategies in direction of providing examples and checking, rather than syntactic simplification in order to make language comprehension more productive.

This research will be useful for EFL learners because Language learning strategies are used with the explicit goal of helping them to improve their knowledge and understanding of the target language by facilitating language learning tasks and personalizing the language learning process.

Choosing as a research topic what learning strategies are being applied by learners in second semester in the English and French program in the University of Nariño to cope with listening comprehension deals with two reasons. The first one has to do with the real importance that listening comprehension has in English learning as a foreign language; it will identify the kinds of learning strategies used by second language learners while listening, and second it will provide ways in which learning strategies can be applied and learned in an EFL classroom.

Finally, with the results of this research project it is intended to provide recommendations about what types of learning strategies are the most feasible to apply depending on the learning environment.

Objectives

With the achievement of the objectives, this project intends to describe and explore whether learners are using any language learning strategies to cope with listening comprehension and to provide possible recommendations to enhance this process through the different language learning strategies.

General Objective

To describe whether any strategies are being implemented by learners in second semester in the English and French program in the University of Nariño to cope with listening comprehension.

Specific Objectives

To provide a brief overview of the possible current learning strategies used in the second semester of the English and French program.

To explore the learning strategies and the aspects of input that are relevant to teaching and learning, that deal with listening comprehension.

To apply research findings in order to provide ways in which learning strategies can be implemented and learned in an EFL classroom through possible recommendations.

Delimitations

Definition of Terms

In this research there are some main terms which are useful when thinking of listening comprehension learning strategies, they are defined as follows:

Acquisition

Krashen (1982) (quoted by Lightbown & Spada, 1993) claims that acquisition is thought to represent unconscious learning, which takes place when the emphasis is on communication and there is no attention to form.

Active listening

Generic term for a series of behaviors, attitudes, by a listener to prepare for listening, focus on the speaker, and provide feedback. (Rost, 2002)

Authentic language

Language that is targeted at the listener for genuine purposes and needs, not specifically for language-learning purposes. (Rost, 2002)

Bottom-up processing

A form of language processing that bases inferences on a perceptual use taken from the incoming language boundaries. (Rost, 2002)

Challenge

A response by a listener that disputes the speaker's right to make the preceding move or that disputes an assumption and relying on the speaker's assertion. (Rost, 2002)

Comprehensible Input

"Language that is understandable to a learner. It can be comprehensible because the language is adjusted to the proficiency level of the learner or because the learner uses contextual clues or schematic knowledge to make sense of it". (Hedge, 2000, p. 408)

Comprehensible Output

Hedge (2000) claims that it is the modified speech produced by learners to make themselves understood.

English as a Foreign Language - EFL

For Brown (1994) it refers specifically to "English taught in countries where it is not a major language of commerce and education". (p. 4)

Error

For Hedge (2000), an error is seen as a process that students cannot avoid but helps when learning. Nowadays, errors reveal the reflections that students have in their interlanguage development.

“An error in the classroom is commonly understood as something that is rejected by the teacher because it is wrong or inappropriate” (Tsui, 1995, p. 43)

Moreover, an error could be something that the teacher does not hope students to do, or an error could also be something that does not correspond to certain rules proposed by the teacher. Errors are seen as an opportunity to be exposed to language input in order to obtain appropriate forms. These can also be produced by the effect of overgeneralization when learners try to dominate the language. In first and second language acquisition, errors are considered as an essential part of development where they are not viewed as an unacceptable process but the clue that allows the teacher to know the language development of his/her students. It is true that errors should be corrected because students can internalize something wrong but if the teacher corrects every error students will not participate again because they will be afraid of making mistakes. Therefore, correcting errors depends on the students' language competence and their level. In some cases, it is better to listen to students' ideas and not to limit their speeches because of the amount of corrections. Despite correcting errors is a fundamental part when learning, it must not be overused because it might affect communication. It is important to notice if students have internalized the correct form and have avoided using the error again. The process can be carried out by the teacher, by the learner who made the error, or by his/her own partners. (Tsui, 1995)

Feedback

According to Ur (1996), feedback refers to all kind of information that students receive from the teacher concerning students' performance in certain tasks.

Feedback is a continuous language process that is produced when there is lack or incomplete understanding or misunderstood information. This process assumes that there must be

explicit/implicit information and explicit corrections where learners will be able to notice their mistakes. (Klein, 1986)

Tsui (1995) affirms that feedback is a way of interaction between teachers and students because it allows teachers to make evaluations and give comments on students' performance. Feedback can be noticed through three simple parts: an initiation from the teacher, a response from the student, followed by feedback provided by the teacher. When there is teacher intervention, the students can realize that they have made something wrong in their speech.

A feedback session is a class activity in which various individuals or groups report back to the class on what they have been researching or discussing. It may also mean a session in which a tutor reports back to students with an evaluation of their work (e.g. after an assignment has been corrected). (Wallace, 1991, p. 45)

Intensive listening

Listening to a text closely to monitor specific language use. (Rost, 2002)

Interaction

According to Brown (2001) "It is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, and ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other". (p. 165)

Language Learning

It is conceived by Krashen (1981) (quoted by Klein, 1986) that "it is the internalization of explicit rules under conscious control". (p. 28)

Learning

Krashen (1982) (quoted by Lightbown & Spada, 1993) claims that it is "a conscious learning process in which learners attend to form, decode rules and are generally taking into account their own process".

Learning strategy

A mental or behavioral device that learners employ for the purpose of long term learning.

(Rost, 2002)

Listener factors

Features internal to the listener (such as readiness and prior knowledge) that affect the difficulty of a listening task. (Rost, 2002)

Listening strategy

A decision by the listener to make a cognitive or behavior change in order to understand something that is said. (Rost, 2002)

Mental representation

Cognitive formulation of the current discourse in relation to what the listener already knows. (Rost, 2002)

Monitoring

The conscious observation of communication and cognitive processes. (Rost, 2002)

Negotiation of Meaning

For Hedge (2000), “it refers to the adjustments made by speakers in interaction by means of technique such as clarification, in order to make themselves understood and to understand each other”. (p. 411)

Pre-listening

Pedagogic face of a listening activity that occurs prior to learners’ listening to a set input. (Rost, 2002)

Top-down processing

Form of language processing that bases inferences on expectations and predictable generalizations cued by the incoming language. (Rost, 2002)

Population

The Project was developed in the second semester of the English and French Program in the University of Nariño. The survey was applied in a 40 student-group, of both genders, between 17 and 24 years old; the EFL students come from different parts of the region, belonging to different social status.

Geographical

This research was carried out in the University of Nariño located in the city of Pasto near the neighborhood Las Acacias, in a range of time from February to June 2008, where the students are in second semester of the English and French program.

Limitations

We found some limitations such as:

When we were going over previous theses about types of questions, we had some trouble because there was not enough information on this issue as a guideline to follow.

Despite of the fact that the questionnaires were made in a very simple language taking into consideration applicants' knowledge of it, it was necessary the explanation of some terms and sentences in order to collect suitable and reliable information avoiding misunderstandings and confusion.

II. CHAPTER 2: LISTENING COMPREHENSION THROUGH LEARNING STRATEGIES

The Importance of Learning Strategies to Assist Listening Comprehension

In this section, some literature explaining what learning strategies are being applied by learners in second semester in the English and French program in the University of Nariño to cope with listening comprehension is developed as a way to guide and support the whole research. This literature is presented in order to better understand why listening comprehension is an important fact in EFL learning process and how learning strategies can be useful to facilitate and achieve this process effectively.

What's listening?

According to Howatt and Dakin (1974), listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This process involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, the speaker's grammar and vocabulary, and comprehension of meaning. An able listener is capable of doing these four things simultaneously. Tomlinson's (1984) definition of listening includes "active listening," which goes beyond comprehending as understanding the message content, to comprehension as an act of empathetic understanding of the speaker. Furthermore, Gordon (1985) argues that empathy is essential to listening and contends that it is more than a polite attempt to identify a speaker's perspectives. Rather more importantly, empathetic understanding expands to "egocentric prosocial behavior". Thus, the listener altruistically acknowledges concern for the speaker's welfare and interests. Ronald and Roskelly (1985) define listening as an active process requiring the same skills of prediction, hypothesizing, checking, revising, and generalizing that writing and reading demand; and these authors present specific

exercises to make students active listeners who are aware of the "inner voice" one hears when writing.

Significance of listening

Language learning depends on listening since it provides the aural input that serves as the basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken communication.

Listening is the first language mode that children acquire. It provides the foundation for all aspects of language and cognitive development, and it plays a life-long role in the processes of communication. A study by Wilt (1950), found that people listen 45 % of the time they spend communicating. This study is still widely cited (e.g., Martin, 1987; Strother, 1987). Wilt found that 30 % of communication time was spent speaking, 16 % reading, and 9% writing. That finding confirmed what Rankin discovered in 1928, that people spent 70% of their waking time

Communicating and those three-fourths of this time were spent listening and speaking.

According to Bulletin (1952), listening is the fundamental language skill. It is the medium through which people gain a large portion of their education, their information, their understanding of the world and of human affairs, their ideals, sense of values, and their appreciation. In this day of mass communication, much of it oral, it is of vital importance that students are taught to listen effectively and critically.

What is listening comprehension?

When taking a look at different articles that deal in one way or another with listening and listening comprehension, many different definitions were discovered. In fact, in the journal article, "A content analysis of fifty definitions of listening", Glenn (cited in Dunkel, 1991) analyzed 34 different definitions written in different books, and she found that "there indeed appears to be no universally accepted definition" (Dunkel, 1991, pp.433).

There do exist controversies on the nature of Listening comprehension. According to Anderson and Lynch (1988), there are two influential views: traditional view and alternative view. Traditional view regarded the listener as a tape-recorder and the listener took in and stored aural messages in much the same way as a tape-recorder. Anderson and Lynch criticized this view as inappropriate and inadequate. This notion is not a tenable one. Alternative view considered the listener as an active model builder. This kind of listener could combine the new information with his previous knowledge and experience to reach full comprehension of what had been heard. Anderson and Lynch agreed with this view. It emphasized the active interpretation and integration of incoming information with prior knowledge and experience.

Many scholars supported this view. Among the various definitions, a representative one is propounded by Clark and Clark (1977, pp. 43-44). They give both a narrow and broad definition: “Comprehension has two common senses. In its narrow sense it denotes the mental processes by which listeners take in the sounds uttered by a speaker and use them to construct an interpretation of what they think the speaker intended to convey.... Comprehension in its broader sense, however, rarely ends here, for listeners normally put the interpretations they have built to work.”

Lynch and Mendelsohn (Cited in Norbert Schmitt, 2002, p. 194) describe the unique features of listening as follows: Its usually ephemeral, one-shot nature. The presence of a rich prosody (stress, intonation, rhythm, loudness and more), which is absent from the written language. The presence of characteristics of natural fast speech, such as assimilation, making it markedly different from written language, for example /g?mmt/ for “government”. The frequent need to process and respond almost immediately.

According to James, "... it is not a skill, but a set of skills all marked by the fact that they involve the aural perception of oral signals ... it is not passive. A person can hear something, but not be listening ... it is absolutely necessary for almost any other work with language, especially for speaking and even for writing". (1984) (p. 129)

O'Malley states listening comprehension is viewed theoretically as an active process in which individuals focus on selected aspects of aural input, construct meaning from passages, and relate what they hear to existing knowledge, while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfill the task requirement. This theoretical view has not been sufficiently supported by direct research which clarifies what listeners actually do while engaged in listening tasks. (1989)

Listening requires full interpretation of oral sounds. In other words, the person should be capable of distinguishing the smallest units of sound of phonemes. This is what lets a listener know that the sounds that he or she is listening to exist in a given language.

In addition to this, listening is an active skill, not a passive one as was believed to be some years ago. When a person is listening to something he or she is activating several mental processes that let him/her understand what is being said. But, there is a difference between hearing and listening, which is basically that in order to listen to a given utterance the person has to concentrate on what is being said to be able to interpret it (James, 1984).

The interest in listening as a skill in itself occurred in the late 1970's. Before this, listening was almost ignored, as explained by Morley (1991): "many of us still take listening for granted, often with little conscious awareness of our performance as listeners" (p.89). Up to the present time, even though there has definitely been a change of attitude towards listening, most information on listening comes from research into first language acquisition, where it is now seen as a central part in language development, human relationships, and the academic and

professional fields. Research into first language acquisition has shown, according to Dunkel (1986) that, "the readiness to talk is a developmental phenomenon in the infant, which is preceded by hundreds of hours of listening" (p. 105). Moreover, Feyten (1991) states that: "at birth we know nothing about language and we will complete much of the first language acquisition process within our first". In 1983, Krashen and Terrell wrote that listening comprehension plays a fundamental role in second and foreign language acquisition and is critical to the communication process. By stressing the role of comprehensible input, second language acquisition research has given a major boost to listening. According to second language acquisition theory, language input is the most essential condition of language acquisition. As an input skill, listening plays a crucial role in students' language development. Krashen (1985) argues that people acquire language by understanding the linguistic information they hear. Thus language acquisition is achieved mainly through receiving understandable input and listening ability is the critical component in achieving understandable language input. Given the importance of listening in language learning and teaching it is essential for language teachers to help students become effective listeners. In the communicative approach to language teaching, this means modeling listening strategies and providing listening practice in authentic situations: precisely those that learners are likely to encounter when they use the language outside the classroom.

As Rost (1994) points out, of the four language skills— speaking, listening, reading and writing, listening is the most critical for language learning at the beginning stages. In fact, listening is, according to Wang Shouyuan (2003), the most important component in the five aspects of overall English competence he suggests as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, it deserves particular attention. Large amounts of listening practice before speaking

or reading may prepare the learner to acquire a second language with a greater efficiency than if he or she was taught all the skills simultaneously (Postovsky, 1974; Winitz & Reeds, 1973, 1975; Winitz, 1973; Gary, 1978). In fact, listening is the most frequently used language skill in everyday life. Researchers (for example, Rivers 1981; Morley, 1991) propose that we listen twice as much as we speak, four times as much as we read, and five times as much as we write.

Listening is a highly integrative skill and research has demonstrated its crucial role in language acquisition (for example, Rost, 1990; Feyten, 1991; Mendelsohn & Rubin, 1995). Listening is assuming greater and greater importance in foreign language classrooms. Nevertheless, most students and many teachers agree that a student's level of listening comprehension is far lower than any other linguistic skill they possess. Whilst their comprehension of classroom discourse may in fact be high, thanks to their teacher's and textbook's reduction of certain phonological features, their ability to comprehend native or non-native speakers of English outside of school, in the 'real world', is, in many cases, quite poor to the point where the student doubts their linguistic achievements or believe that their homestay family speaks some bizarre dialect of English only comprehended by other native speakers. The problem lies in the fact that the majority of ESL/EFL students have never actually been taught how to listen to English. They have practiced listening, they have been tested, but they have never been taught or given guidance or tools about how to listen to English, Moran (2005).

The process of listening comprehension

With a greater understanding of language quality and the development of teaching theory, there has been recognition of the process of listening comprehension as needing greater emphasis.

Listening comprehension is regarded theoretically as an active process in which individuals concentrate on selected aspects of aural input, form meaning from passages, and associate what they hear with existing knowledge.

Cognitive psychology, the most developed model in accounting for comprehension processes, defines comprehension as information processing. Schemata are the guiding structures in the comprehension process. The schema is described by Rumelhart (1981, p. 34) as “a data structure for representing the generic concepts stored in memory. It can be used to represent our knowledge about all concepts: those underlying objects, situations, events, sequences of events, actions and sequences of actions.” According to the cognitive comprehension theory, “schema” (plural form schemata) means an abstract textual structure that the comprehender uses to make sense of the given text. The comprehender makes use of linguistic and situational cues and also the expectations he/she has about the new input to evoke schemata. When a schema has been evoked, it will become a guiding structure in comprehension. If the incoming information is matched with the schema, then the listeners have succeeded in comprehending the text; if they are not compatible, either the information or the schema will be discarded or modified. The principle of schema leads to two fundamental modes of information processing: bottom-up processing and top-down processing. These two processing intersect to develop an interactive processing. Thus, models for listening process fall into three types.

Bottom-up processing (the first type of models) is activated by the new incoming data. The features of the data pass into the system through the best fitting, bottom-level schemata. Schemata are hierarchically formed, from the most specific at the bottom to the most general at the top. It acknowledges that listening is a process of decoding the sounds, from the smallest meaningful units (phonemes) to complete texts. Thus, phonemic units are decoded and connected

together to construct words, words are connected together to construct phrases, phrases are connected together to construct utterances, and utterances are connected together to construct complete, meaningful text. That is to say, meaning is arrived at as the last step in the process. A chain of incoming sounds trigger schemata hierarchically organized in a listener's mind— the phonological knowledge, the morphological knowledge, lexical and syntactical knowledge (syntactical knowledge aids to analyze the sentence structure). Thus, the listener makes use of “his knowledge of words, syntax, and grammar to work on form” in the bottom-up processing (Rubin, 1994, p. 210). This process is closely associated with the listener's linguistic knowledge.

However, bottom-up processing has its weak points. Understanding a text is an interactive process between the listener's previous knowledge and the text. Efficient comprehension that associates the textual material with listener's brain doesn't only depend on one's linguistic knowledge.

Top-down processing (the second type) is explained as employing background knowledge in comprehending the meaning of a message. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983, p. 557) point out that in top-down processing, the system makes general predictions based on “a higher level, general schemata, and then searches the input for information to fit into these practically satisfied, higher order schemata”. In terms of listening, the listener actively constructs (or reconstructs) the original meaning of the speaker employing new input as clues. In this reconstruction process, the listener employs prior knowledge of the context and situation within which the listening occurs to understand what he/she hears. Context and situation involve such things as knowledge of the topic at hand, the speaker or speakers, and their correlation with the situation, as well as with each other and previous events. We must realize if the incoming information the listener hears is unfamiliar to him, it can't evoke his schemata and he can only depend heavily on his linguistic

knowledge in listening comprehension. Besides, although the listener can trigger a schema, he might not have the suitable schema expected by the speaker.

Thus, only relying on top-down processing may result in the failure of comprehension.

The interactive processing (the third type) overcomes the disadvantages of bottom-up processing and top-down processing to augment the comprehension. In the early 1980s, it was the tendency that only top-down processing was acknowledged to improve L2 (second language) listening comprehension. However it is now more generally accepted that both top-down and bottom-up listening processing should be combined to enhance listening comprehension. Complex and simultaneous processing of background knowledge information, contextual information and linguistic information make comprehension and interpretation become easy. When the content of the material is familiar to the listener, he will employ his background knowledge at the same time to make predictions which will be proved by the new input. As opposed with this, if the listener is unfamiliar with the content of the listening text and deficient in language proficiency, he can only depend on his linguistic knowledge, especially the lexical and syntactical knowledge to make sense of the information.

From the cognitive perspective, Anderson (1983, 1985) elaborates that comprehension consists of perception, parsing and utilization. Perceptual processing is the encoding of the acoustic or written message. In listening, this covers chunking phonemes from the continuous speech stream (Anderson, 1995, p. 37). During this stage, an individual pays close attention to input and the sounds are stored in echoic memory. While the input is still in echoic memory, some initial analysis of the language code may start, and encoding processes may transform some of the input into meaningful representations (Anderson, 1985). It seems probable that the same factors in perceptual processing that attend to auditory material excluding other competing

stimuli in the environment also attend selectively to certain key words or phrases that are important in the context, attend to pauses and acoustic emphases that may offer clues to segmentation and to meaning, or attend to contextual elements that may fit with or support the interpretation of meaning such as the listener's goals, expectations about the speaker's purpose, and the type of speech interaction contained (for example, a conversation or a lecture). In the second listening comprehension process— parsing, words are converted into a mental representation of the combined meaning of these words. The basic unit of listening comprehension is a proposition (Anderson, 1985). Complex propositions may be differentiated into simpler propositions that can be regrouped by the listener to produce new sentences whose basic meaning does not alter. Therefore, through parsing, a meaning-based representation of the original sequence of words can be stored in short-term memory; this representation is an abstraction of the original word sequences but can be employed to reproduce the original sequences or at least their planned meaning. The size of the unit or segment (or “chunk”) of information processed will rely on the learner's knowledge of the language, general knowledge of the topic, and how the information is presented. The main clue for segmentation in listening comprehension is meaning, which may be represented syntactically, semantically, phonologically, or by any combination of these. Second language listeners may have some trouble in understanding language spoken at typical conversational rates by native speakers if they are unfamiliar with the rules for segmentation, even though they may comprehend individual words when heard separately. Findings from research with second language learners show that memory span for target language input is shorter than for native language input (Call, 1985).

Complex input materials may be especially difficult to comprehend in a second language because they need combining of parsed segments in the process of comprehension, thus putting an extra burden on STM (short-term memory) which already may be burdened with unencoded elements of the new input. The third process, utilization, is composed of associating a mental representation of the auditory meaning with existing knowledge. Existing knowledge is retained in long-term memory as propositions or schemata. Connections between the new input meaning and existing knowledge take place through spreading activation in which knowledge in LTM (long-term memory) is activated so that it is associated with the new meanings in STM.

Comprehension occurs when input and knowledge are matched with each other. Perception, parsing and utilization stand for different levels of processing. Of the three levels of processing, perception is the lowest. All three phases are recursive and connected closely, and can occur simultaneously during a single listening event. Coakley & Wolvin (1986) suggest that listening comprehension in a L2 (second language) is the process of receiving, focusing attention on, and assigning meaning to aural stimuli. It includes a listener, who brings prior knowledge of the topic, linguistic knowledge and cognitive processes to the listening task, the aural text, and the interaction between the two. Fischer and Farris (1995) regard listening comprehension as a process by which students actively form a mental representation of an aural text according to prior knowledge of the topic and information found within.

Input

Rost states that the selection and use of input is the central aspect of teaching listening, how we identify sources, select among them and construct tasks around them are the most salient decisions in the teaching of listening.

First of all it is important to talk about the relevance and how it should assume a central role in the teaching of listening, next we will outline the concept of authenticity and we argue for a modified student oriented view of authenticity; we will examine the notion of genre, how it relates to teaching listening, as well as we will examine the practice of examination and finally we will look at the role of the “teacher talk” in teaching listening and examines the variables that make teacher talk more or less effective.

Relevance

According to Sperber and Wilson (1986), human cognition has a single goal: we pay attention only to information which seems to us relevant. If our entire cognition – our powers of attention, perception and interpretation- is organized most naturally and most readily around “relevance”, it certainly makes sense to place relevance of input as the top priority in listening. Relevant material, “the right stuff” according to Beebe (1985) is central to all process in language learning.

Relevant material for listening can be obtained through selection or adaptation. An example of a pedagogic study for selecting material to maximize relevance was conducted by Day and Yamanaka (1998). They surveyed a target population of students to identify the types of topics that students found most interesting and most useful for their English study. Given a list of topics and subtopics, students ranked the topics in terms of interest and relevance to them as discussion topics. Materials for listening were then found or developed for each of the topics selected as relevant by a majority of students. While no approach can guarantee relevance for all students, the approach used in these materials design study used the aim of relevance as its guiding

principle: learning materials are relevant if they relate to learner goals and interests, and involve self-selection and evaluation.

Adaptation can be realized through adapting or adding to existing input material in order to make it more relevant to the needs of a learner group. A materials design study added recorded topical interviews conducted by students to assigned course listening material in order to increase student motivation and course relevance. Students rated the value of the course more highly than a control group that did not use the additional material.

Authenticity

Situated language is the basis of natural, real-time language use, and comprehension of this situated, 'authentic' language is the target of virtually all language learners.

This issue of authenticity is one of the most controversial issues in listening, one that engenders heated discussion among teachers in Second Language settings. On one side are those who define 'authenticity' as any and all language that has been actually used by native speakers for any 'real purpose', that is, a purpose that was real for the users at the time the language was used by them. While this approach is laudable in its evaluation of 'real context' and 'real language' as central to language instruction, it devalues the role of the 'addressee' in *making* the language authentic.

As said by McGregor, (1986); Rost (1990); Goodwin and Duranti (1992), as is now well-established in pragmatics, the closer the participant is to the control center of an interaction, the more immediate is the purpose for interaction, and the more authentic and meaningful the discourse becomes.

If we accept the notion of discourse control as leading to authenticity, then for purposes of language education, only those inputs and encounters that involve the students' own purposes for listening can be considered authentic. In this sense, any source of input and interaction that satisfies the learner's search for knowledge and allows the learner the ability to control that search is authentic.

What many teachers are referring to when they seek 'authentic input' is the characteristic of 'genuineness'. Genuineness refers to features of colloquial style of 'real time' planning (many people say 'lack of planning') that characterize everyday spoken discourse:

- Natural speed
- Natural phonological phenomenon, natural pauses and intonation, use of reduction, assimilation, elision
- High-frequency vocabulary
- Colloquialism, such as short formulaic utterances, current slang, etc.
- Hesitations, false starts, self-corrections
- Orientation of the speech toward a 'live' listener, including natural pauses for the listener to provide backchannelling (e.g. nodding, 'um-hmm') or responses (e.g. 'yes, I think so').

The reasons for preferring 'genuine' input are obvious. If the target of the learners is to be able to understand 'genuine' spoken language, as it is actually used by native speakers, then the targets need to be introduced into instruction.

On the other side, are those who believe that “authentic” input is too difficult for the students to handle or impossible for the instructor to provide. A mediating factor in the use of authentic listening material has been task design. By designing tasks which preview key vocabulary and discourse structures in the input, by ‘chunking’ the input into manageable segments and providing selective focus on its particular elements, teachers can utilize authentic material in ways that are motivating and useful to learners at all levels.

Genres

Learning materials should include a range of genres and discourse types that learners are likely to encounter in their contact with the target language.

In accordance with Olsen and Huckin (1990) one aspect of the authenticity and genuineness arguments that often goes unexplored is the treatment of genres. In principle, learners should be exposed to a wide range of oral genres in order to “develop a feel” goes beyond becoming familiar or comfortable with different genres and discourse types. By becoming familiar with the understanding of different genres, learners can begin to adopt ‘point-driven’ strategies for understanding rather than ‘information-driven’ strategies for understanding.

Genres differ, not only primarily in the situations in which they are most often found, but more in their outlying organization and purposes for use. The five main types of ‘rhetoric’ that have been used since ancient times often serve as a basis for an initial classification of genres. These types apparently correspond to universal thinking processes, although there are countless variations and cultural styles associated with each of them.

From a purely cognitive perspective, part of the listener's initial task is to determine the 'genre' - what kind of text is (narrative, descriptive, comparison/contrast, causal/evaluation, problem/solution) - and then to activate the knowledge of a genre allows the listener to focus on essential information.

Of, course, texts seldom exist outside of a social context in which they are composed and intended to be understood; rather, they are always embedded in a social context and often intertwined with various other speech acts (e.g. persuasion, apology, congratulations). For this reason, understanding a text is always more complex than simply decoding its information and argument structure.

Narrative

The narrative is the most universal rhetorical form. Narratives follow a time, event; change sequence that is understood and enjoyed by people in every culture. Narratives are an unparalleled teaching device for cultural values and facts as well as for morals. Narratives also have great value as second-language teaching devices.

Narratives vary in complexity, but always involve some element of time orientation, place orientation, character identification, events, complications, goals and meaning.

- Time orientation: when are the actions happening? What is the historical setting?

In what order, what events are left out? (Listeners practically assume paratactic organization [that is, the first event is told first, followed by the next event, etc.], unless time-markers indicate backtracking or jumping forward in time.)

- Place orientation: where is the action happening? What aspects of the setting are significant for the narrative. (Listeners typically assume prototypical settings -that is, prototypes or 'typical cases', based on their personal experience- unless specific descriptions contradict them).
- Character identification: who is in the story? Who is/are the main character(s)? Who are minor ('supporting') characters? Who are peripheral ('throw-away') characters? How are they all related?
- Events/problem/complication/goal: what about the setting is problematic? What complicates it? How can it be solved?
- Meaning of the story: most stories are told with some 'point', often with a moral lesson or a principle that confirms some aspect of the relationship between the speaker and listener.

Although the underlying 'semantic structure' of narratives has a great deal in common, the surface features of narratives vary widely. In order to teach listening to narratives, the teacher also need to familiarize learners with transitional elements that help them decode the story as well as content themes in the story (Hatch, 1992).

Descriptive

Like narratives, descriptions –of people, places, and events- are universal. However, unlike narratives, there are many more variations, and cultural differences in how descriptions are likely to unfold.

Oral descriptions of people, places, and things tend not to follow a fixed pattern, but often exhibit –somewhere in the text- characteristics of prototypical descriptions: features that are specific or peculiar or otherwise memorable, features that evoke a feeling or strong impression in the speaker, features that lead to a story or anecdote about the object or place or person being described, features that provide a link to other topics shared by the speaker and listener.

Objects – appearance, parts, functions

Places – spatial/geographical organization (left to right, front to back, etc.)

Linde and Labov (1975) analyzed apartment descriptions and found that many speakers gave their listeners a spatially oriented ‘walking tour’, pointing out their own likes and dislikes in terms of layout and furnishings as they proceeded. They also found that much of the description of an apartment – or other place assumed to be familiar to the listener- is considered ‘given’ and not described. Only those aspects of the description that differ from the norm, and are therefore new are included in the description.

According to Hatch (1992), when we listen to certain genres, we expect characteristic syntactic and lexical patterns. For example, in descriptions, we tend to find copula sentences (it’s very warm, it’s basically blue), relative clauses (it’s a narrow room that leads to the outside porch), presentatives (there’s a big oak door, there are two small windows in the back wall), as well as descriptive adjectives of size, shape, color and number.

Difficulty

The organization of a text (often called a ‘formal schema’) contributes to the ease or difficulty of understanding it. For example, understanding a three-minute segment of a n

academic lecture is considered to be more challenging than understanding a three-minute story. Similarly, the language that is used in the text contributes to its difficulty. For example, a text with a lot of complex and embedded sentences may be more difficult to understand than one with shorter, simple sentences. However, the central feature in difficulty of a text is not the language itself, but the content.

Cognitive Difficulty is defined by Brown (Brown et al., 1984) as the factors that make four central listening processes (*identify* information in some way) easier or more difficult to perform. Having conducted a long series of interactive listening experiments, he and his colleagues proposed six principles of cognitive load that affect listeners:

Cognitive load, principle 1: it is easier to understand any text (narrative, description, instruction, or argument) which involves FEWER rather than MORE individuals and objects.

Cognitive load, principle 2: it is easier to understand any text (particularly narrative texts) involving individuals or objects which are clearly DISTINCT from one another.

Cognitive load, principle 3: it is easier to understand texts (particularly description or instruction texts) involving simple spatial relationships.

Cognitive load, principle 4: it is easier to understand texts where the order of telling matches the order of events.

Cognitive load, principle 5: it is easier to understand a text if relatively few familiar inferences are necessary to relate each sentence to the preceding text.

Cognitive load, principle 6: it is easier to understand a text if the information in the text is clear (not ambiguous), self-consistent and fits in readily with information you already have.

The implication for teaching and testing are that if we wish to grade the texts and tasks that listeners will encounter, we need to take into account the cognitive load of these texts and tasks we are presenting. If we wish to simplify a text (e.g. by shortening it) or a task (e.g. by providing initial vocabulary or other information), we need to consider first the factors of cognition –the listening processes- that make a listening activity difficult.

Simplification

According to Giles (1979) simplification of input is a form of social accommodation, a term first used in social psychology to refer to mutual movements of interlocutors toward the discourse and behavior standards of the other. Simplification of input is one common method of making discourse accessible to L2 users and rendering ‘difficult’ texts usable for language learning purposes.

Simplification of input can be achieved into the basic ways:

1. Restrictive simplification: operates on the principle of using and highlighting familiar linguistic items and frames.
 - Lexical: using a single term (or higher-frequency term) for a more complicated one (or lower-frequency one), less slangs, fewer idioms.
 - Syntactic: using simpler syntax, shorter utterances, topic-fronted utterances (e.g. them and at the reception desk, I gave the package to him), less pre-verb modification

- Phonological: emphasizing word boundaries by slowing down or exaggerating speech patterns.
- Discoursal: (for conversation): using prototypical question- answer patterns (yes/no questions), not inverted questions (“you can sing?”), either-or questions (“where do you live?” “Do you live in the city?”) Or other familiar, recognizable patterns (e.g. tag questions: “you are from Osaka, aren’t you?”).
- Discoursal: (for monologues): using prototypical rhetorical patterns such as direct temporal organization, avoidance of tangential information.

It is important to note that not all intended simplifications by the speaker have the effect of simplifying the input for the listener. In research and in teaching, it is known simplifications do not have consistent effects at making listening texts more accessible or comprehensible.

Elaborative simplification

It operates on the principle of enriching the input:

- Phonological: use of higher pitch and more pitch variation to promote attention.
- Lexical: providing rephrasing of key words and ideas, use of definitions, use of synonyms.
- Syntactic: providing rephrasing of difficult syntactic constructions, to provide more time for processing of meaning.
- Syntactic: use more subordinate clauses and embeddings to make utterance relationships more transparent (e.g. “that is the place where I grew up”).
- Syntactic: supply optional syntax (“I think that he’s here” vs. “I think he’s here”).

- Discoursal: providing explicit frame shifts (“well”, “now”, “so”, “okay”, “the next thing to mention is”, “one of the main issues is”...) to assist in identifying of idea boundaries and relationships. (Temporal relationships: and, after that/ causality: so, then, because/ contrast: but, on the other hand/ emphasis: actually, in fact).
- Discoursal: providing direct repetition of word, phrases, and whole utterances.
- Discoursal: providing narrative examples of key ideas.

Simplification often has the immediate beneficial effect of helping learners understand the ideas in what otherwise might be an inaccessible text, and thus reducing frustration. But because simplification of the input itself necessarily alters the original text and mitigates against the satisfaction of having a ‘genuine’ listening experience, it is important for teachers to use simplification judiciously.

Other means of achieving greater comprehension without altering a text are often preferable and typically much easier to administer. They include:

- Direct repetition: repeating the text by replaying the audio or video extract or repeating the text orally.
- Simplification of the context: preparing for key concepts in advance is the chief means of simplifying the context for the listener. Presenting or eliciting vocabulary and ideas that will be part of the text generally help adjust the listener’s cognitive context.
- Chunking the input: presenting the input in short chunks (e.g. one- to three-minute segments), followed by opportunities for clarification before continuing.

According to Bremer et al. (1996), focusing on interactive discourse between a native and non-native speaker offers a helpful summary of the range (encouraging participation, raising transparency and raising expectations) and types of discourse structuring (offering turns, segmenting and slowing down, ‘meta’ comments, etc.) that will help prevent understanding problems and promote repair of problems when they occur.

Teacher talk

Teacher talk is one of the vital sources of listening input for learners, and the art of appropriately engaging teacher talk is something that all teachers strive to develop. This aspect of listening instructions varies from highly interactive casual talk with learners to less interactive extended academic lectures.

In any kind of teacher talk, we will find that teachers typically accommodate their speech to the comprehension abilities of their students. Although it is desirable to expose learners to genuine language (rather than overly simplified versions of the target language), it is likewise desirable for learners to become engaged in the process of understanding in order to trigger both listening development and language acquisition. For this reason, the continual adjustment of discourse in speech to learners needs to be monitored.

As said by Penny Ur (*Teaching Listening Comprehension*, 1984) the use of the ‘live’ instructor as a main source of oral input for listening instruction, advocates benefits of informal ‘teacher talk’ for the purposes of enhancing students’ listening opportunities. Informal teacher-chat is excellent material; it can be interpolated at any stage of the lesson serving as a relaxing

break from more intensive work. It is easy to listen, since it is 'live' and personal – and it is specifically for particular students, by this particular teacher here and now.

On the other end of the spectrum is the less interactive but equally essential aspect of listening that is characterized in lectures. In lecture situations, or other 'distance' situations in which the listener exerts less direct influence on the speaker's ongoing speech adjustments, 'teacher talk' is realized more as a priori decisions by the speaker on how best to 'deliver' content.

As outlined by Flowerdew (1994) in this area, the speaker must use rhetorical signaling devices in order to guide the listener, both 'micro-markers' such as 'next I will be talking about...' and 'finally, I'd like to look at...'. More importantly, the teacher must use global structuring devices such as graphic organizers and explicit tie-ins to prior knowledge (e.g. reading material) to accommodate the input to the listener.

Autonomous Learning

According to Reinders, (1991) the field of language learning has been in a constant state of motion over the last twenty years. The main change has been a shift of focus onto the language learner. The reasons for this shift are twofold: both goals of language learning and insights into the process of language learning have changed. Society has posed its demands on education and has influenced its shape. Research in fields such as psychology, cognitive psychology, sociology, linguistics and others; have added to our knowledge of how language learning takes place. These two developments have, among others, led to a greater interest in Learner Autonomy. Nowadays learners have much of the responsibility for planning and organizing their learning, for doing it, for assessing its value to them and even for suggesting the mark that the work produced should

get; this process is known as Autonomous learning or self-managed learning. Being an autonomous learner implies determining their objectives, defining the contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the procedure of acquisition, evaluating what has been acquired, and coming up with ways to improve. According to Benson (1994), in this process both learners and teachers have to participate actively in order to achieve the intended goals. For instance, organizing workshops (grouping learners according to strengths, needs, weak points, or mixing patterns) is a way to foster this process inside the classroom and also, it contributes to reduce the silent periods given by teachers allowing students to talk to produce language after the listening process. In listening comprehension process autonomous learners can help themselves listening to a song in the target language or just to watch a TV sitcom at their home in order to improve their skill. Similarly, we can profit from other people styles to become autonomous; the latter can be a very useful source of information (counselor), learning material, and also can be an effective advisor.

Strategy Training

Some aspects of listening are under conscious control of the listener, while others are automatic and not under direct control. The conscious aspects of any goal-oriented behavior are viewed in psychology as ‘strategies’, and it is widely-documented that expert performance in any behavior involves planning and selection of appropriate strategies (Kasper and Kellerman, 1998).

The area of strategy training for second language learners has been very active since the early 1990’s, starting with the work of O’Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1990) with much initial effort aimed at identifying and cataloguing the types of strategies that both successful and unsuccessful listeners use. The terms ‘strategy’ and ‘learning strategy’ themselves have been used in various senses in applied linguistics literature to refer to a range of goal-

directed plans and behaviors and have encompassed all ‘thoughts and actions that assist learning’. A number of categorization distinctions have been used: direct vs. indirect, cognitive vs. affective, leaning vs. use, cognitive vs. social, cognitive vs. metacognitive (Chamot et al. 1999).

The goal of finding distinctions is aimed at the critical objective of ‘psychological validity’: until the researcher has some certainty of what the experience of using the strategy is like and why someone is using a particular strategy, there can be no progress toward incorporating strategy training into pedagogy.

The most widely agreed-upon classes of language use strategies are ‘social strategies’ (e.g. asking someone for help), ‘cognitive strategies’ (e.g. paying attention to the main points of a lecture), although the boundaries between these categories are not always clear.

For teaching purposes, two distinctions seem most important to make. First, if ‘strategies’ are decisions that the user (the learner) makes, the ‘mental decision’ or ‘mental action’ that the learner undertakes must be psychologically valid, that is, it must be clear to the learner when she is and when she is not engaging the strategy. Only psychologically valid strategies need to be considered for instruction. Second, strategies that are associated with improved or ‘expert’ performance are those that need to be identified, modeled and practiced. Only “success strategies” need to be taught. ‘Success strategies’ can be found through research of successful listeners – listeners who have made and are making progress in their listening ability (cf. Rost and Ross, 1991; Vandergrift, 1996; Fujiwara, 1989; Mendlesohn, 1998).

If these distinctions can be made, it is possible to teach strategies by way of indicating what the learner does (or should attempt to do) and what the teacher does to promote use of a particular strategy.

Learning strategies

Another factor to consider is that no two students learn in the same way. According to Oxford, “we as teachers must create a wide range of activities in order to expose our students to many different learning strategies”. (1990) One of the most widely accepted definitions of learning strategies is the one provided by O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, and Russo (1985a), O'Malley, Chamot, and Kupper (1989), and O'Malley and Chamot (1990): “learning strategies are any set of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learners to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information”. And according to Oxford "strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability". (1990). Listening strategies are techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input.

This idea of learner autonomy is asserted by Widdowson (1996, p.67) who asserts that the idea that has been prompted in English language teaching over recent years is that learners should be as autonomous as possible, and be allowed to make the language their own. This idea of autonomy gives primacy to the process of learning. Teachers, therefore, can benefit from an understanding of what makes learners successful or unsuccessful, and establish in the classroom a milieu for the realization of successful strategies (Brown; 2000, pp.94- 95). Many researchers emphasize the need for learning to learn skills and language learning strategies. Oxford and Crookall (1989, p. 415) think that the most constructive attitude resides in those researchers who really care about learners, who wish to understand and enhance the learning process, and who help to promote learning to learn skills. Oxford (1990, p.201) asserts that learners need to learn how to learn, and teachers need to learn how to facilitate the process. Conscious skill in self-directed learning and in strategy use must be sharpened through training.

Specifically in second language acquisition, learning strategies are extremely important because, and according to Tarone (1985) "attempts to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language" (p. 43). Language learning styles are the general approaches students use to learn a new language. These are the same styles they employ in learning many other subjects and solving various problems. The four central dimensions of language learning styles are: the analytic-global aspect, sensory preferences, intuition-sensory/sequential learning, and the orientation toward closure or openness. (Oxford, R. And Scarcella, R. 1992)

Learning strategies are relevant in the second language teaching field for a number of reasons. For instance, less successful students could find help in using learning strategies and thus become better learners. Rubin (1987) refers to an investigation she carried out in 1981 in which her subject (Henze) states that "conscious attention to her learning strategies "helped her focus her learning"" (p.16). As a matter of fact, learning strategies are important in second language learning because they help students understand what they are doing in order to learn the language. Nevertheless, and according to Rubin (1987) "it has been discovered that those students who are taught, and who learn to use learning strategies are more likely to succeed outside the classroom environment because they learn to control their own learning process" (p. 17).

Strategies are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communication ability. Appropriate learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence in many instances. (Oxford, R. And Scarcella, R. 1992)

Unlike most other characteristics of the learner, learning strategies are readily teachable (Oxford & Nyikos; 1989, p.291). Oxford and Crookall (1989, p.114) believe that it is possible and generally advisable to teach learning strategies through completely informed training in

which learners are taught how and why to use, transfer, and evaluate strategies. Oxford (1990, p. 202) thinks that awareness training is very important because it is often the individual's introduction to the concept of learning strategies. Awareness of thought processes while learning is essential as suggested by research. Lotfy (1995, p.58) emphasizes that supporting thinking habits enhances self-regulation and makes the learner more aware and more sensitive to feedback and evaluation of his/her performance. Dirkes (1981, p.38) stresses that individuals should understand their thinking habits and use them more effectively. Tama (1986, p.32) states that the emphasis on promoting thinking skills in the classroom has taken three directions: the teaching of thinking, teaching for thinking, and teaching about thinking. In the first, thinking is regarded as a process of developing a set amount of skills. The second fosters thinking skills in the specific context of school curricula. In the third, students are encouraged to become more conscious of their own mental processes as they study or solve problems. Students learn how to predict the outcome of their performance, to plan ahead, to apportion time and cognitive resources, and to monitor and edit more efficiently their efforts to learn. This process is known as metacognition. The concept of metacognition is well-grounded in theory and research. Paris and Winograd (1990, p. 15) state that the metacognitive theory focuses in general on (a) the role of awareness and executive management of one's thinking; (b) individual differences in self-management of cognitive development and learning; (c) knowledge and executive abilities that develop through experience; and (d) constructive and strategic thinking. Hacker (2002, p.11) concludes that the promise of metacognitive theory is that it focuses precisely on those characteristics of thinking that can contribute to students' awareness and understanding of being self-regulatory organisms, that is, of being agents of their own thinking.

Language learning strategies have been differentiated into four distinct categories: cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective (based on Chamot 1987, Oxford 1990). Cognitive strategies usually involve the identification, retention, storage, or retrieval of words, phrases, and other elements of the target language (e.g., using prior knowledge to comprehend new language material, applying grammar rules to a new context, or classifying vocabulary according to topic).

Metacognitive strategies are useful in developing all the language skills (Oxford; 1990, p.152). Many researchers highlighted the importance of metacognitive strategies and investigated the effect of training in metacognitive strategies on developing reading and listening comprehension

(Brown, Armbruster, and Baker (1986); Carrell (1989); Carrell, Paris, and Liberto (1989); Glover, Ronning, and Burning (1990); Carrell (1992); Abdelraheem (1993); Vandergrift, 1997a; Vandergrift, 1997b; Vandergrift, 1998; Strange (2001); and McCartney (2001); and Vandergrift, 2004. Abdelraheem (1993, p.35) states that metacognition plays a vital role in reading, for example, successful readers plan strategies, adjust efforts appropriately, and evaluate the success of their ongoing efforts to understand. Carrell (1989, p.123) found that the students who think that they use the most productive strategies (i.e. perceived strategy use) actually read through context better and understand more than do those who do not think they use such strategies.

Anderson (2002b, p.1) emphasizes that learners who are metacognitively aware know what to do when they don't know what to do; that is, they have strategies finding out or figuring out what they need to do. He asserts that the use of metacognitive strategies ignites one's thinking and can lead to more profound learning and improved performance, especially among learners who are struggling.

In fact, Anwar (1992, pp. 66 - 67) investigated the effect of training English majors of the faculty of education in effective reading strategies on their acquisition and use of these strategies and on English language proficiency. She states that students' language skills should not be considered completed by the end of secondary schools, but more teaching and training is needed to develop such skills at the university level. She recommends that students enrolled in the first year English department should be trained in effective reading strategies through a comprehensive pre-service training program.

Metacognitive strategies deal with pre-planning and self-assessment, on-line planning, monitoring and evaluation, as well as post-evaluation of language learning activities (e.g., previewing the language materials for the day's lesson, organizing one's thoughts before speaking, or reflecting on one's performance). Such strategies allow learners to control the learning process by helping them coordinate their efforts to plan, organize, and evaluate target language performance. Social strategies include the actions that learners select for interacting with other learners, a teacher, or with native speakers (e.g., asking questions for clarification, helping a fellow student complete a task, or cooperating with others). Affective strategies serve to regulate learner motivation, emotions, and attitudes (e.g., strategies for reducing anxiety, for self-encouragement, and for self-reward). Language use strategies, in turn, include both language performance and communication strategies. Performance strategies include strategies for rehearsing target language structures, such as through form-focused practice. They also include strategies for simply coping in the language classroom, such as by participating in classroom tasks to look good in front of other students or the teacher.

The relationship between metacognitive strategies and comprehension is established by Yuill (1992) and Abdelraheem (1993). Yuill (1992, p.35) states that poor comprehenders have

three main areas of weaknesses: in making inferences from text, in using working memory to integrate information in a coherent model, and in reflecting on their own comprehension.

Abdelraheem (1993, p.121) recommends that reading instruction, especially for academic programs of prospective teachers of English, should benefit from the inclusion of explicit comprehension, fostering metacognitive strategy training.

In performing language tasks in and out of the classroom, language learners can employ both language learning and language use strategies across language skills. These strategies may appear at three stages in task performance. Students may select strategies to help them prepare for upcoming language learning or use tasks, monitor language input and output, and evaluate or reflect back on the task.

Learning Strategies to Assist Listening Comprehension

Oxford (1993) classifies the learning strategies in two groups: *direct strategies* which involve the new language directly and *indirect strategies* which provide indirect support for language learning through focusing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation and empathy and other means.

Direct strategies for listening comprehension.

The direct strategies which require mental processing of the language are memory, cognitive and compensation; however each group does this processing differently and for different purposes.

Memory strategies, such as grouping or using imagery, have a highly specific function: helping students store and retrieve new information. *Cognitive strategies*, such as summarizing or reasoning deductively, enable learners to understand and produce new language by many

different means. *Compensation strategies* like guessing or using synonyms, allow learner to use the language despite their often large gaps in knowledge.

Memory strategies encompass four sets: *creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well* and *Employing action*.

Memory strategies reflect very simple principle, such as arranging things in order, making association, and reviewing. These principles all involve meaning. For the purpose of learning a new language, the arrangement and association must be personally meaningful to the learner and the material to be reviewed must have significance.

Two kinds of strategies are useful for making mental linkages: *grouping, associating/elaborating*.

Grouping

Grouping involves classifying or reclassifying what is heard or read into meaningful groups, thus reducing the number of unrelated elements. It sometimes involves labeling the groups, as well.

Associating/elaborating

It involves associating new language information with familiar concepts already in memory. Naturally, these associations are likely to strengthen comprehension, as well as making the material easier to remember.

There are four strategies in order to apply images and sounds: using imagery, semantic mapping, using key words and representing sounds in memory.

Using imagery

A great way to remember what has been heard in the new language is to create a mental image of it. The imagery used to remember expression does not have to be necessary mental, drawings for instance can make mental images.

Semantic Mapping

This strategy involves arranging concepts and relationships on paper to create a semantic map. A diagram in which the key concepts are highlighted and are linked with related concepts via arrows or lines. This strategy is valuable for improving both memory and comprehension of new expressions.

Using keywords

It combines sounds and images so that learners can more easily remember what they hear in the new language. This strategy has two steps. First, identify a familiar word in one's own language or another language that sounds like the new word. Second, generate a visual image of the new word and the familiar one interacting in some way.

Representing sounds in memory

This strategy helps learners remember what they hear by making auditory rather than visual representation of sounds. This involves linking the new word with familiar words or sounds from any language: the new language, one's own language, or any other.

Employing Action encompasses two different strategies: using physical response or sensation and using mechanical techniques.

Using physical response or sensation

It may involve physically acting out a new expression that has been heard. The well known teaching technique TPR (Total physical response), is based on this strategy. Learners can associate the heard expression with a physical sensation.

Using mechanical techniques

To remember what has been heard, mechanical techniques are sometimes useful. For instance flash cards, with the new word. They are also used to contextualize new expressions. Separate section of the language learning notebook can be used for words that have been heard and words that have not.

Cognitive strategies encompass four subgroups such as: practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning and creating structure for input and output.

In the Practicing we find a strategy related to listening comprehension.

Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems

In listening skill, this strategy is often focused on perception of sounds (pronunciation and intonation) rather than on comprehension of meaning. In listening perception exercises, it is essential to keep visual and contextual clues to a minimum; therefore, recordings, not live speech are recommended for listening perception. This strategy also centers on learning new writing systems necessary for using the target language.

Within receiving and sending messages subgroup there is a strategy: *Getting the idea quickly*.

Getting the idea quickly

This strategy helps students home in exactly what they need or want to understand, and it allows them to disregard the rest or use it as background information only. Two techniques constituting this strategy are skimming and scanning.

Skimming involves searching for the main ideas the speaker wants to get across. *Scanning* has the main of searching for specific details of interest to the learner.

There are two strategies related to listening skill in Analyzing and reasoning; *analyzing expressions and analyzing contrastively*.

Analyzing expressions

In order to understand spoken in the new language, it is often helpful to break down a new word, phrase, sentence or even paragraph into its components parts. This strategy is known as analyzing expressions.

Analyzing contrastively

This strategy is fairly easy one that most learners use naturally It involves analyzing elements (sounds, words, syntax)of the new language to determine likeness and differences in comparison with one's native language. It is very commonly used at the early stages of language learning to understand the meaning of what is heard.

Creating structure for input and output is another set of strategies such as *taking notes, summarizing and highlighting*, which help students sort and organize the target language information that comes their way as well as to demonstrate their understanding tangibly.

Taking notes

It is a very important strategy for listening skill, however students are rarely taught to use it well. The focus of this strategy should be on understanding and it can be use at the early stages

of learning. One advantage of using this strategy is that it helps learners to organize what they hear while they are hearing it, thus increasing the original understanding and the ability to integrate new information with old.

Summarizing

It is another strategy which helps students structure new input and show they understand is summarizing, that is, making a condensed, shorter version of the original passage. At the early stages of language learning, summarizing can be as just giving a title to what has been heard.

Highlighting

This strategy emphasizes the major points in a dramatic way, through color, underling, capital letters, initial capitals, big writing, and bold writing stars. Boxes circles and so forth.

Finally, the compensation strategies that encompass: *using linguistic clues and using other clues*, and which help learners to overcome knowledge limitation of the listening skill.

Using linguistic clues

Previously gained knowledge of the target language, the learner's own language, or some other language can provide linguistic clues to the meaning of what is heard. Suffixes, prefixes and word order are useful linguistic clues for guessing meanings.

Using other clues

In addition to clues coming purely from knowledge of language, there are some others that come from other sources and in sometimes they have nothing to do with the language, for instance titles or nicknames which help students guess the meaning of what they hear. In Listening, perceptual clues concerning the situation aid the listener's understanding, being the clues audible.

Indirect strategies for listening comprehension

The indirect strategies are divided into metacognitive, affective and social.

Metacognitive strategies

According to Vandergrift (1996), Metacognitive strategies allow learners to control their own cognition, it means, it provides a way to learners to coordinate the learning process by using functions such as planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

Planning.

This set of four strategies help learners organize and plan what learners do.

Advanced Organization

Learners decide what the objectives of a specific listening task are and why is it important to attend to this.

Direct Attention

Learners must pay attention to the main points in a listening task to get a general understanding of what is said.

Selective Attention

Learners pay attention to details in the listening task.

Self-management

Learners have to manage their own motivation for a listening task.

Monitoring

It means when learners monitor their own performance while listening, including assessing areas of uncertainty. It includes:

Comprehension Monitoring

Learners check their understanding of ideas, through asking confirmation questions.

Auditory Monitoring

Learners check their identification of what they hear.

Task Monitoring

Learners check their completion of the task.

Evaluation.

Learners' check how well they have understood, and whether an initial problem posed has been solved. It includes:

Performance evaluation

Learners judge how well they did on the task.

Problem identification

Learners decide on what problems they still have with the text or task.

Affective strategies.

Oxford (1993), includes into the indirect strategies the factor of effectiveness, which refers to emotions, attitudes, motivations and values. It is impossible to overstate the importance of the affective factors influencing language learning. Language learners can gain control over these factors through effective strategies. Oxfords divide this set into three strategies: *lowering your anxiety, encouraging your self, and taking your emotional temperature.*

Lowering your anxiety encompasses three different subgroups such as; *Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation, using music, using laughter.*

Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation

It refers to use the technique of alternately tensing and relaxing all the major muscle groups in the body, as well as the technique of breathing deeply or meditating by focusing on a mental image or sound in order to relax.

Using music

It refers to listen to any kind of music to relax.

Using laughter

Using laughter to relax by watching a funny movie, reading a humorous book, listening to jokes, and so on.

Encouraging your self is a set of three strategies that is often forgotten by language learners, mainly those who expect encouragement from other people and do not realize they can provide by their own.

Making positive statements

It refers to say or write positive statements to oneself in order to feel more confident in learning the new language.

Taking risks wisely

It refers to push oneself to take risks in a language learning situations.

Rewarding yourself

It refers to give oneself a valuable reward for a particularly good performance in the new language.

Taking your emotional temperature is a set of four strategies with the aim of help learners to asses their feelings, motivations and attitudes and, in many cases, to relate them to language tasks. This set includes:

Listening your body

It refers to be able to pay attention to the signals given by the body, this signals can reflect stress, tension, worry fear as well as happiness, interest, calmness and pleasure.

Using a checklist

It refers to use a checklist in order to discover feelings, attitudes and motivations concerning language learning.

Writing a language learning diary

It refers to write a log to keep track of events and feelings in the process of language learning.

Discussing your feelings with someone else

It refers to talk to someone in order to discover and get across feelings about language learning.

Social strategies.

Language is a form of social behavior; it is communication among people, interaction that needs appropriate social strategies to develop this process. It includes three important strategies:

Asking questions

It helps learners get closer to the intended meaning and thus aids their understanding. It also helps learners to encourage their conversation partners to provide larger quantities of input in the target language and indicates interest and involvement. It involves production skills and also shows that a question was understood. It concerns clarification or verification, correction, and informal social settings.

Asking for clarification or verification

It means, asking the speaker to repeat, paraphrase, explain, slow down, or give examples: asking if a specific utterance is correct or if a rule fits a particular case; paraphrasing or repeating to get feedback on whether something is correct.

Asking for correction

Asking someone for correction in a conversation. This strategy most often occurs in conversation but may also be applied to writing.

Cooperating with others

It implies the absence of competition and the presence of group spirit. It involves a cooperative task structure or a cooperative reward structure, and mutual support. Cooperative strategies have many benefits such as stronger language learning motivation , students' satisfaction, more feedback about errors, and greater use of different language functions.

Cooperating with peers

These strategies can involve a regular learning pattern or a temporary pair or small group. This strategy frequently involves controlling impulses toward competitiveness and rivalry.

Cooperating with proficient users of the new language

Working with native speakers or other proficient users of the new language, usually outside of the language classroom. This strategy involves particular attention to the conversational roles each person takes.

Empathizing with others

It is essential to have a successful communication in any language, and learners can develop it through cultural understanding and becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings. Empathy can be developed more easily when language learners use these two strategies:

Developing cultural understanding: trying to empathize with another person through learning about the culture, and trying to understand the other person's relation to that culture.

Becoming aware of other's thoughts and feelings: observing the behaviors of others as a possible expression of their thoughts and feelings; and when appropriate, asking about thoughts and feelings of others.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

In the previous chapter, the theoretical implications of listening comprehension and learning strategies, and their relevance were presented. In this chapter, we intend to explain the steps that have to do with the methodology of this research topic to know the qualities and features of participants and of the setting. Moreover, the most appropriate techniques to collect the data will be described. The characteristics of the instrument used for validation criteria, the aids to analyze data and the ethical issues to take into account when making research will be also addressed.

Design

This research was based on a qualitative method because it dealt with the development of a process. It means, interpreting the different events that happen in a usual environment, the way how EFL learners use learning strategies to deal with listening comprehension tasks and activities within the classroom to generate input and then to promote the communication for learning to take place. The purpose of this research was not to evaluate, verify or judge theories to teach listening comprehension or learning strategies. On the contrary, it was to describe the strategies that are used to help learners cope with listening comprehension. Then, these mechanisms can give us a start and guide in order to check if it is relevant and generates learning.

On the other hand, we ignored the preconceptions and prejudices about part of the theme, in order to get the real meaning of the information that will be collected through classroom observation. The focus of the method is descriptive because it describes the real characteristics and properties of a population, area and defined circumstances, which are specific in a systemic way.

Participants, Setting and Sample

Participants and Sample

We took as participants 40 students belonging to the second semester of the English and French program of the University of Nariño during the months from February to June 2008. The average age of the group is 17-24 years old both male and female, who belong to a middle-high class. In order to collect data provided by students and, it was necessary to apply two data collecting instruments to the semester mentioned above, in order to determine what kind of learning strategies were being applied in order to cope with listening comprehension. This sample of students helped us to describe the learning strategies that help EFL learners in their process of learning.

Setting

Talking about the internal setting, the University of Nariño is an institution that offers the English and French program to people yearning to speak and become teachers. The University of Nariño has appropriate classrooms, where the students spent their time studying during hours their classes from Monday to Friday. Each classroom has a TV set and it is possible to borrow tape recorders. There is a language laboratory, a resource center, classrooms, computer rooms and teachers' advisory rooms.

Procedure

Data collection techniques

To carry out this research the researchers considered important to take into account the following instruments in order to collect data:

Questionnaire: To collect information, it was useful to gather all the information provided by learners of second semester through sixteen question regarding Oxford's listening

comprehension direct learning strategies, therefore researchers applied an interview as a second instrument in order to deepen the research focusing on Oxford's listening comprehension indirect learning strategies.

Description of the Procedure

To begin this research, first, the researchers designed a survey to diagnose what listening comprehension direct learning strategies were applied by the second semester students. Moreover, with the permission of the students, a recording device was used to record the students whose answers fixed the diagnosis in order to gather all data. Thus, the most useful listening comprehension learning strategies were identified among them, as well as those that were totally unknown. Then, the researchers analyzed the data and gave some useful conclusions and possible recommendations.

Validation criteria

In order to analyze our present work, an objective tool was necessary to be used with the second semester students of the English and French program. This was meant to investigate the learners' knowledge about the use and application of listening comprehension learning strategies. In doing so, we aimed at bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Students were asked to complete a questionnaire on Listening Comprehension Strategies constructed by the researchers. The questionnaire consisted of 16 statements regarding the students' use and knowledge of direct strategies both, in class and at home. The system proposed here is by no means innovative, but rather brings together features of several previous successful studies of this type. The questionnaire used a simple yes/no question format which allowed researchers to compile all the required information correctly due to its practicality and accuracy, as well as, it was not so difficult in order for the students to provide their information. The

researchers analyzed the information and gathered it, in order to assign data an appropriate meaning. The results of these questionnaires were the starting point to select a sample of people to carry out a recorded interview in order to deepen in our research, by focusing on the indirect strategies of listening comprehension that were the complement and served as support of the previous questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Calvache (2005) states that data analysis highlights the findings related to both the research problem and the main and specific objectives.

This study was given a qualitative focus, so making good interpretation of data in the qualitative research includes some steps such as a) data organization, b) identification of the main ideas to be classified, c) finding categories, d) analyzing data and e) final interpretation of it.

The instruments to get data were questionnaires and recorded interviews (see appendixes), the first one, was very useful but we considered that it was not enough to achieve the intended objectives, so the use of a recording device was fundamental to record participants' opinions to deepen and support better the research.

According to the needs of the research and taking into consideration the listening comprehension learning strategies, the researchers decided to design two instruments to collect data (see appendixes). One of them was used to gather information about learners' knowledge of listening comprehension direct learning strategies, and the second one to collect data about the

different listening comprehension indirect learning strategies and as support of the whole research.

To conduct the survey, we prepared sufficient copies of questionnaires for every student. On the day of the survey, we handed out these questionnaires to 40 students (21 women, and 19 men) on their break, in order for they did not feel under pressure or uncomfortable due to the presence of any teacher. We explained to them the purpose of the survey. As the questionnaire was worded in very simple English, it was not translated into Spanish. Nevertheless, we encouraged students to ask us to explain statements or words which they did not understand. We also told them that they could refer to the dictionary if they had to. There were very few questions from the students that they found that they couldn't understand. We allowed the students to take as much time as they needed to complete the survey. On average, students completed the answers within 10 minutes. The questionnaires were compounded by sixteen different questions. Questions 1 to 3 deal with the knowledge that learners have about learning strategies; and each question from 4 to 16 deals with twelve different listening comprehension learning strategies according to Oxford (1990).

The total and average scores for each of the sixteen questions of the listening comprehension learning strategies in the survey were classified by gender and calculated in order to facilitate the analysis of the research. This was followed by a statistical analysis using the most common procedures for this kind of surveys. The results of this analysis are shown on chapter 4.

Next, researchers selected a sampling group of the people to be interviewed taking into consideration the three first questions of the previous survey, which were the starting point to deepen on strategies and continue with the indirect ones.

Finally, the results were collected and analyzed regarding the frequency of the answers in order to create categories which were then, interpreted so that researchers could provide conclusions and recommendations later.

Ethical Issues

To develop this research, there were some aspects to take into consideration. The first one had to do with the permission to carry out an investigation at the institution with the Principal's authorization. The second one dealt with the identity of the students involved in the research. Students' names were used to select a sample to carry out the questionnaire and the interview, then, they were changed by consonants from A to O. Moreover, it did not cause any harm to the participants of the institution.

In this chapter, the researchers have showed some significant features about the method such as the design, the participants, the setting, the sample, the procedure, the validation criteria, and the techniques used to gather the data.

In the following section, the data gathered through surveys and recorded interviews are analyzed.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Subsequent to the chapter on methodological aspects, the fourth chapter of the project is presented in order to provide readers with all the information about the analysis and outcomes of the research with the aid of the two instruments of collection of data.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

Listening comprehension direct learning strategies

Questionnaires were intended to help us find out the required information about the knowledge that students had about learning strategies as well as what listening comprehension direct learning strategies were known and which ones of them were the most used in a correct way by the learners within the classroom, therefore the survey was useful to distinguish the differences in the use of the listening comprehension learning strategies regarding the gender.

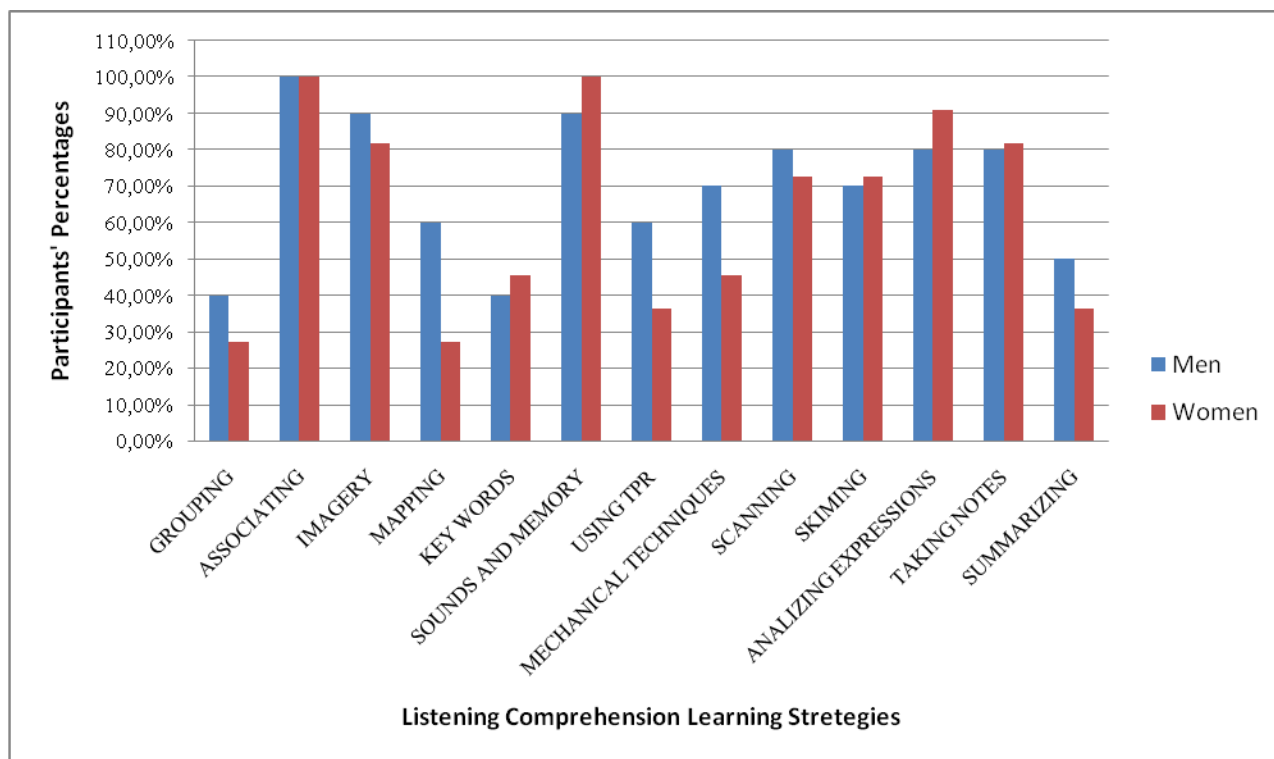
Based on the results given by the students for questions 1 to 3, the researchers found that a percentage of 85% of the sampling people consider important to be trained on listening skill in their current English instruction; the 61% of the students stated that they know what a learning strategy is, and the 71% of the learners recognized its importance.

We can infer that most of the students from the earlier semester of English and French program of the University of Nariño think that to be trained on listening comprehension skill is important for their L2 instruction, as well as a good number of them accept the importance that learning strategies have in their learning process, Nevertheless almost the half of the participants do not know with certainty what a learning strategy is. In addition to that, the results collected not only allowed us to know whether learners had previous knowledge about learning strategies and their first answers regarding their relevance, but also the selection of people who were the ideal applicants for the next step of the research, which was the interview.

Regarding the question from 4 to 16 that deal with the Oxford's listening comprehension direct learning strategies : Grouping, Associating/elaborating, Using imagery, Semantic/mapping, Using keywords, Representing sounds and memory, Using physical response or sensation, Using Mechanical techniques, Getting the idea quickly (skimming/scanning), Analyzing expressions, Taking notes, Summarizing; the results have shown that students have a preference for using the association of the new language information with familiar concepts that they already know (Associating/elaborating). On the other hand, the least used listening comprehension learning strategy is *Grouping*, it means that they hardly ever classify what they hear or they prefer to use another listening comprehension learning strategy. In addition to this, we also distinguish the answers taking into consideration the gender of the participants in order to know if there is any difference regarding listening comprehension learning strategies and the sex of the learners.

Figure1 shows the preference profile of the types of listening comprehension learning strategy used by the forty students from second semester of the English and French program of the University of Nariño.

Figure 1. Preference profile of listening comprehension learning strategies.



As can be seen from Figure 1, the second semester students both, men and women reported using strategies of Association and Elaboration more than all the other types of strategies.

Associating /Elaborating.

As Oxford states, Associating and Elaborating allow students to strengthen comprehension and makes material easier to remember (1990). Strategies are executive processes that regulate and manage learning, which may be they link words that have sense for them, what makes it personal and significant.

Representing Sounds in Memory.

The strategy that stands in the second place of use by the second semester students is Representing Sounds in Memory; although, the results showed little difference between the number of positive answer given by men and women (90% and 100% each). This strategy is

quite linked to Association, and its implementation helps learners remember what they hear by making auditory rather than visual representation of sounds.

Using Imagery and Analyzing.

Eventually, in the third place we found that less applied strategies were Using Imagery and Analyzing. The first one is most used by men than by women (90% and 81.82% each), latter one, on the contrary is most used by women than by men (80% and 90.91% each). These two strategies act as a complement of each other; while the first one transforms input in mental images, the second one use them to establish likenesses and differences between L1 and L2 to understand what is heard, through contrastive analysis.

Taking Notes

In the fourth place, we found that Taking Notes was chosen by both genders at almost the same proportion (men 80%, women 81.82%). Note taking needs a physical means to transform learners' representations into objective elements (words, sentences, paragraphs) and also, act as a sequence of the previous ones because it relates the product of the input with understanding. Although it seems to be one of the most common listening comprehension learning strategies because of its practicality and naturally, the survey showed that it only takes a less relevant position for the learners.

Scanning and Skimming.

In fifth Place, the listening comprehension learning strategy found was Scanning (men 80%, women 72%) and in the sixth position was Skimming (men 70%, women 72.73%); the applied questions not only tried to verify whether students knew this listening comprehension learning strategies but also it allowed us to find out that learners do not make correct use of it. It is important that learners know the correct use of these strategies because they help them

understand what they need, besides Scanning reinforces learners personal interest in order to get ideas efficiently and skimming involves the listeners for searching the main ideas they want to get across, in addition to this for English learners at this stage preview questions provide many clues to come up with the answers.

Using Mechanical techniques.

Using Mechanical techniques was placed in the seven position (men 70%, women 45%), the results showed that the use of didactic materials like the use of flashcards and in this case as it is common among students they do not make an appropriate use of notebooks and books. The implementation of this strategy is helpful for the learning of new vocabulary and memory exercises.

Using physical response or sensation.

One unexpected result was the position taken by the listening comprehension learning strategy called Using physical response or sensation (men 60%, women 36.36%) because at earlier stages of proficiency is useful for engraving new information in memory what make it easier to remember.

Semantic mapping, using keywords and Summarizing

Three listening comprehension learning strategies share the ninth position, Semantic mapping (men 60%, women 27, 27%), using keywords (men 40% women 45, 45%) and Summarizing (men 50%, women 36, 36%). The use of the two first strategies cooperates with memory, notwithstanding the results showed that students do not incorporate them as complement for the development of other strategies (Taking notes). Those previous listening comprehension learning strategies can be used as the basis to create a good note-taking format and start to practice a particular associational linkage; in addition to this students can start to

interact with words, ideas and sounds. It is understandable that Summarizing takes one of the last positions because it is one of the strategies that requires greater consideration of knowledge and thought; although at earlier stages of language learning it can be as simple as just giving a title to what has been heard, or playing with the correct order of images of a story; Oxford (1990).

Grouping

Finally the least used listening comprehension learning strategy by the students of second semester of the English and French program was Grouping (men 40%, women 27%). Maybe it is understandable that this strategy is in the last place due to it requires a independent and good use of other listening comprehension learning strategies such as Taking notes, using mechanical techniques and associating and elaborating.

To conclude this section of the results, we can say that there is one listening comprehension learning strategy that is commonly used by men which is associating elaborating; on the other hand strategies such as Grouping and Using keywords are the least used. In the case of women Associating/elaborating and Representing sounds in memory are also the most common used listening comprehension learning strategies; they also state that Grouping is one of the strategies less used among them .The divergence with men is that Semantic mapping is the strategy that complements the group of the least used listening comprehension learning strategies for them.

After analyzing the results of the questionnaire about the previous knowledge that the students of the second semester of the English and French program had about Oxford's listening comprehension direct learning strategies the researches developed a recorded interview regarding listening comprehension indirect learning strategies, inasmuch direct and indirect learning strategies cannot work in a isolated way because they support each other, so that the management of the language can be controlled through their interaction; Oxford (1990). In addition to this, the

application of the recorded Interview also aim to support the results of the survey and place particular emphasis on the personal opinion that learners have about their use of listening comprehension learning strategies.

Categories for Listening comprehension indirect learning strategies

The recorded interview was based on six questions whose answers provided by the students were sorted in groups regarding their frequency. After that the researches set up categories taking into account the answers, which were interpreted taking the literature about listening comprehension learning strategies and the second semester learners' L2 learning experience as point of reference.

The following six questions were developed in order to enhance the information obtained in the previous questionnaires. The answers given by the students were:

1. WHAT IS A LEARNING STRATEGY?

A: It is a method to learn easier the foreign language, using any didactic instrument for instance by watching movies or TV programs in English.

B: A learning strategy would be a tool to improve the quality of knowledge that we have or could have.

C: As far as I'm concerned, a learning strategy is like a method that every person uses to make use of the knowledge they have acquired.

D: For me it's the personal way to learn a subject or specific area, in this case languages.

E: It is a method to reinforce the oral expression in languages.

F: For me a learning strategy is the way how students can learn in an easier way.

G: It is the means that we as students of languages use in order to learn a specific Language.

H: I think that a learning strategy is a learning tool that helps us to learn faster and a easier way.

I. To be honest, I cannot say the correct definition however; I think that the learning strategies are the different ways to learn a language.

J. I do not know exactly, however as its name gets across a learning strategy is an advanced method to learn better.

K. Learning strategies are like games to learn.

L. It is a process to learn to pronounce better the foreign language.

M. It is like a means to improve the language and to understand what people say.

N. They are activities to learn the foreign language and to improve what we already know.

O. They are like a method to speak English like we want to, and to improve it.

2. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BE TRAINED ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION LEARNING STRATEGIES?

A: Because it helps a lot to learn the foreign language and reinforce pronunciation and to have a better management of the language.

B: Because it is like a tool to improve my knowledge, to improve what I am learning and to be able to teach in the future.

C: First of all, we are preparing to be teachers, so if we learn to use them we can teach in the same way.

D: Because it helps us to understand better a subject, and to teach to our students.

E: It is important to reinforce new knowledge regarding what we're going to become, teachers.

F. Because students can understand better the language, in our case English language, besides, we will become teachers and we must know about this topic.

G. Because we need these means to be able to learn better the English language.

H. Because it is important to know the different ways to learn the languages.

I. Because we as students have to know the different ways to make easier our learning, and then, in the future we will be able to convey this knowledge to our students.

J. Because, it is necessary to know all the ways to learn better and faster.

K. It is important because we are studying to be teachers and we have to know them to teach our students in the future.

L. Because we have to look for ways to improve what we're learning.

M. Learning strategies are important for us because they are part of the formation of a teacher.

N. Because they help us to learn what is more difficult for us.

O. Because they act as a guide for learning and for teaching.

3. HOW DO YOU USE LISTENING COMPREHENSION LEARNING STRATEGIES?

A: My personal strategy is to listen to music in English.

B: My learning strategies are listening to music in English and French, watch movies and TV programs, I support myself reading subtitles and using close caption, and sometimes I use the dictionary too.

C: I think I don't make a good use of them because I almost never apply them. I'm just satisfied with what I learn in class and I'm not constant with the work in home, like reading, or to listen to music. Nevertheless I think it would be great to deepen in it and to have more knowledge about it.

D: I like to watch movies in English supported by its subtitles also in English, I try to listen and copy lyrics of songs.

E: I listen to music; I like to watch TV programs in English with subtitles.

F. Traditionally I like to practice my English by listening to music or watching TV programs in English language, in this way I can improve my language proficiency.

G. It depends on in the language I want to learn; for example for English language I like to listen to music and try to understand what it is about.

H. I cannot answer this question correctly because I do not know all the learning strategies, but personally I like to listen to music in English language and when I have to answer the questions in laboratory sessions I like to get the main idea first and then listen more carefully the next attempts in order to answer the worksheet.

I. I do not if I actually use the learning strategies; nevertheless I like to speak English language as much as I can with the aim of improving my language proficiency.

J. Actually, I don't know if I use or apply them, or if I use or apply them but in a wrong way, nonetheless, I often like to listen to something and write down what I hear, in this way I can improve my listening comprehension.

K. I like a lot to watch TV and to try to understand music in English.

L. My strategy is to listen to music in English of my favorite singer.

M. I think that my strategy is to try to pay attention to what teachers say to me in class and then when I don't understand something I try to ask at the very moment that I find new words.

N. Well, I think that the strategy that I apply is to listen to music because it is the easiest for me; I try to sing the lyrics and understand meanings.

O. As lab sessions are too short some times, I try to imitate what we do there, I record my voice to check pronunciation and find the blanks of some texts.

4. WHAT ARE LISTENING COMPREHENSION LEARNING STRATEGIES USEFUL FOR?

A: They are useful because we can domain and understand much better the language, and to pronounce better, that is the most important.

B: In my opinion they help us to deepen in the topic we're dealing with, it is just like to be in the correct environment, and in the case of English it is like to be closer with the language and to interact with it.

C: For me they allow us to deepen in our knowledge and reinforce what we already know.

D: It helps us to enhance our knowledge and convey it to other people.

E: They are useful to develop the oral expression easily.

F: I think that they are very useful in our learning because they facilitate our everyday learning.

G: I think that these strategies are useful to understand better the language and help us memorize the vocabulary easily.

H: I consider that they are useful in order to make easier and faster the learning of the languages.

I: I think that the learning strategies are useful for improving my language proficiency.

J: Because they help us learn easily and quickly the English Language.

K: They are useful because we are students now, but we'll become teachers and we have to manage them well with our students.

L: They are useful in the sense that work can be faster if we apply them.

M: In my opinion, they help to develop our daily listening activities.

N: Learning strategies help us to improve language and to develop a better expression.

O: They are useful because they present steps that we can follow in order to control and improve what is new for us and what we already know.

5. HOW DO YOU IMPROVE YOUR LISTENING COMPREHENSION IN AN AUTONOMOUS WAY, NOT ONLY INSIDE THE ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES BUT ALSO AT HOME?

A: As I mentioned before, I like to listen to music and try to focus on a specific objective.

B: I just listen to music and I try to watch movies without seeing subtitles.

C: I watch movies in the foreign language; I listen to music, translating song lyrics...

D: I download lyrics of songs from Internet and try to sing them while I listen to the song.

E: For example, when I listen to songs in English I also read their lyrics and try to understand them without using translations but the knowledge that I already have.

F: I sometimes like to listen to music in the target language, besides I try to speak in English with my classmates.

G: I often read websites in English language; I try to find new words and their pronunciation and then try to find them in the daily language.

H: As I said before I like to listen to music in English language as well as I like downloading song lyrics from the internet and check if what I hear is correct or not.

I: Well, I like to listen to music in English language, watch TV sitcoms as "Friends", "Two and a half men" and so on.

J: As I mentioned before, I like to listen to a song and try to write down the lyric of it, in addition to this, I like to watch movies and TV programs in English language.

K: Although I'm not very constant in what I do, I try to watch TV in English without reading the subtitles.

L: I try to listen to music in English but, due to my level it is difficult to me to understand every single thing, so I like to look for the lyrics and follow the songs to understand their meanings.

M: To be honest, I don't have a special activity in home; I just practice in the university with what we do in classes.

N. I like a lot to listen to my classmates outside the classes to see how they pronounce and compare that with my own pronunciation, and sometimes I ask them for the differences we have when doing that.

O. I just listen to music in my free time, and sometimes watch TV but this is not very often.

6. HOW DO YOU EVALUATE YOUR PROGRESS IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION?

A: I don't know, maybe, by listening and recording myself in the computer and try to identify and improve my errors.

B: I try to understand movies and TV programs, without reading subtitles and try to check if I understand what actors say and what is the situation about.

C: I try listen and copy song lyrics that I like and that are not so difficult for me.

D: I notice that when I began the career I didn't have a good performance, and now it has improved; for me my strategy is very good.

E: I try to listen and copy lyrics in English.

F. Maybe, when I listen to the teacher I realize if I am understanding or not what he says.

G. I often watch TV programs or Movies in English and I verify how much I can understand, in addition to this I check my performance in the laboratory sessions.

H. When I listen to my English teacher I can identify if I am understanding or not, and in the laboratory sessions results.

I. When I watch a TV program or a movie I check how much I understand, as well as when I listen to music.

J. I can verify my listening comprehension progress in the laboratory sessions as well as when I talk to my friends or students from higher semesters.

K. Sometimes I develop exercises in home like those of the lab sessions, I listen to recording texts but it is not easy because it is difficult to understand native speakers.

L. Music is a very useful material for me; sometimes I download lyrics and ask to somebody to erase some words, so that I can fill in the blanks.

M. I try to verify if I understand what teachers say by asking some classmates if the information I have is the same they have.

N. I like to be informed about culture and other things, and I check my progress when I develop lab session in the university.

O. Maybe I check it when I realize if I follow in a correct way teachers instructions and what they say when explain something.

After this process of gathering data, it is possible to establish the following categories regarding the frequency of the answers.

The most frequent answers for question 1. "What is a learning strategy?" were:

- It is a set of personal activities to improve language management.
- It is a method to facilitate language proficiency.
- It is a learning tool to improve quality knowledge
- It is a game to apply the language.
- It is a learning process to learn a language.

The most frequent answers for question 2. "Why is it important to be trained on listening comprehension learning strategies?" Were:

- Because it allows us to improve knowledge.
- Because we will become teachers and it is important to know them.
- Because they help us to develop

The most frequent answers for question 3. “How do you use listening comprehension learning strategies?” were:

- Listening to music and watching movies.
- I don't know.
- Paying attention in class.
- Recording oneself voice.

The most frequent answers for question 4. “What are listening comprehension learning strategies useful for?” were:

- To ease L2 learning and daily work.
- To improve overall language proficiency.
- To have a better interaction with the language.
- To enhance listening skills.

The most frequent answers for question 5. “How do you improve your listening comprehension in an autonomous way?” were:

- Listening to music and watching TV.
- Using internet learning tools.
- Doesn't have any.
- Listening other people talk.

The most frequent answers for question 6. “How do you evaluate your progress in listening comprehension?” were:

- Comparing one's listening comprehension progress throughout the time.
- Watching TV without subtitles.

- Copy lyric songs by listening.
- Using recording devices.

The previous answers provided by the students were the most representative; they reflect the tendency that the sampling group pointed out.

After all this process of analysis and interpretation of data, we can in effect set up the following categories:

A set of individual activities. Although the 40% of the sampling group knows that a learning strategy is a set of individual activities developed step by step with the aim of improving L2 learning and to have control over the language; the other 60% does not have a clear concept about what it is about; and they tend to confuse it by using other terms such as game, method and process. We can infer that most part of the students provide a predictable definition of this concept due to the name of the term itself; nevertheless they do not know what it exactly is.

Regarding the relevance of the level of the students and the daily work that they develop in the university, it is important that they eventually keep in mind the difference among these terms to be aware of their existence and significance throughout their learning progress during their whole career.

Using and conveying knowledge. The 46.66% of the sampling group stated that it is important to be trained on listening comprehension learning skills to be able to convey knowledge in the future as teachers. They claim that language learning depends on listening. Listening provides the input that enables learners to interact in spoken communication; Rost (2002).

Although it is an acceptable reason to be trained for, they must be guided by the sense that they are still students and, to be teachers they should profit all their stages as learners, these

stages involve a good use of these learning tools to discover all the functions that assist their progressive advance of the language.

Some other students recognize that these listening comprehension learning strategies assist the listening skill and it also helps them enhance their pronunciation; they agree that listening skills are closely linked to pronunciation abilities but they do not have into consideration that the main objective of strategies is not to improve skills in an isolated way, but intend to help learners product real language.

Planning for a language task. The 66.66% of the interviewed students affirm that listening to music and watching TV in English are a good use of a listening strategy, even though they are good examples of the use of indirect listening strategies, they are not related with the activities proposed by the direct ones, what may deal to a not very successful process of individual learning, because memory training is the only beneficiary factor.

A very worrying issue is that some others state sincerely not to know how to apply listening comprehension learning strategies or whether what they were doing had to do with listening comprehension learning strategies; for instance, develop activities such as recording oneself voice.

Listening comprehension learning strategies as support of language proficiency. The 40% of students state that listening comprehension learning strategies make easier the L2 learning and all its involving activities. Students recognize the benefits produced by the use of listening comprehension learning strategies; for instance, the reinforcement of the language, improvement of the L2 learning, abilities to interact with the target language as well as it makes part of the formation of a good teacher.

All the previous information collected was closely related to the purposes and relevance of the listening comprehension learning strategies, but a clearer guide to find what they are useful for is to train our disposition of attention, perception and interpretation and to keep them organized and ready to be immersed into the sources of input; as well as to manage compensation of incomplete input or partial understanding; Rost (2002).

The use of authentic material. The 80% of the students claim that they use music, films, TV shows, and internet learning tools as support, with the aim of achieving their personal goals in listening comprehension.

Regarding the age of the students and their likes it's obvious that they prefer and look for innovative, interesting and funny ways to improve their listening skill, both, inside and outside the classroom and, even though they do it naturally and as a habit without knowing they are applying a listening comprehension indirect learning strategy, it should be a good idea to think that the instruction of the direct ones could be the guide to a progressive use of them to become a complement of the firsts with the time.

Self- assessment. The 46.66% of the students recognize the relevance of achieving personal benchmarks during their career, regarding listening comprehension they use to compare their progress on listening comprehension throughout the time, in this way they know how much they have progressed. Nevertheless, taking into consideration that in their answers they confirm the development of activities such as copying by listening and avoiding reading subtitles when watching movies, it is acceptable to say that there is a deficiency in planning and organizing their learning, so that they can suggest and implement new ways to produce language with more responsibility and autonomy.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

After the data analysis and the interpretation chapter, the fifth chapter about conclusions and pedagogical implications is presented in order to provide students with different learning strategies to improve and cope with listening comprehension. It might help them enhance both classroom learning development and ease the learning conditions through the use of learning tools.

After analyzing the data, the following conclusions can be drawn:

English listening competence is a complex skill that needs conscious development. It can be best developed with practice when students reflect on the process of listening with self-evaluation. Guiding students through the process of listening provides them with the knowledge from which they can successfully complete a listening task; it also motivates them and puts them in control of their learning (Vandergrift, 2002). It was found that by focusing on the process of listening students acquired a useful learning tool to enhance and ease their English comprehensive competence. The results of the research indicate that listening comprehension is essential in learning a foreign language. Furthermore, listening comprehension levels do influence the capacity for improvement in other language skills such as speaking, reading, writing and translating, which highlights the importance of spending much more time doing it. However, improving first stages students' ability as English speakers is a demanding process but necessary to achieve higher results in further stages.

Listening comprehension development is a process that involves both, a theoretical and a practical level. This is a most promising trend at a time when language learning and use strategies can have a major role in helping to shift the responsibility for learning off of the shoulders of the teachers and on to those of the learners.

Moreover, the listening comprehension direct learning strategies called Grouping and Using Key Words were surprisingly reported to be the least frequently used; regarding the level of the students, the use of words without having to use grammatical structures is one of the most appropriate and nearest way they have to begin to handle the language; it means that the process of simplification is not fully used in order to activate learners background knowledge the gradually helps them be more active, make inferences and be able to respond to what they hear. We also found that there was a significant difference between genders in the use of these strategies. Male students reported using them more frequently. On the other hand, strategies such as Associating/ Elaborating, and Representing sounds in memory are the most used by second semester EFL learners.

Regarding listening comprehension indirect learning strategies, we found through the interview that most of the students use metacognitive strategies such as planning for a language task, for instance they like and enjoy to practice listening comprehension by listening to music or watching TV programs in English language as well as but in a less number, some students use social strategies, such as cooperating with proficient users of the new language.

The data took us to think that, students apply some of the listening comprehension direct and indirect learning strategies because of personal likes or needs; nevertheless, they are not aware of neither their existence nor its importance, that's why they don't use them in a correct way, consequently they are not capable of profiting from all their potential; as well as it happens when they apply self-assessment, they usually do it, but they do not know they do.

It is important to remark that students don't have a clear knowledge about what a learning strategy is, what draws on the confusion with other terms such as method, game, and technique. Therefore, the researchers found that there is a lack of instruction in order to encourage students

to know and use these strategies, because according to what was intended for this stage, it will be known in later semesters.

The lack of these learning strategies strip students of important learning tools that make easier and assist the learning process during the whole career; regarding listening comprehension, these strategies provide multiple choices in order to enhance, facilitate and improve this skill.

Pedagogical Recommendations

It is important that earlier stages EFL learners' willingness and ability are capitalized to enhance learning process by providing specific training in listening skills. We also note that the students on the whole do not use learning strategies very frequently. The reported use was mainly in the medium range. Second semester EFL learners would, therefore, benefit greatly from training in the use of all learning strategies. Since many of these strategies would be new and perhaps even unnatural to some learners, teachers would have to be very sensitive to the existing mindsets of learners. Teachers will also need to offer their students a great deal of guidance in order to help them experiment with these new strategies and decide on the types of strategies that suit them.

More to the point, it would be supportive for learners if both, direct and indirect listening comprehension learning strategies are given the same importance in the process of learning, in order to have a general and successful management of the foreign language and to strengthen better the ways that students have to coordinate their own learning process.

Further research is therefore needed to determine if these strategies are in fact used during language learning in the development of the career. This is especially important in the case of metacognitive and cognitive strategies. We suggest that more in-depth study into actual mental

processes be conducted using other procedures such as production of different types of activities that allow the collection of new results regarding the needs of the research. In addition, more research is needed to understand students' selection of strategies within each major group of strategies. In particular, a further analysis of why second semester ESL learners vary in their choice of individual strategies would be useful. This would help identify those strategies that could enhance language learning, but which are not fully exploited by students due to a number of factors.

It's would be a good idea that EFL teachers start encouraging their students to use the techniques of metacognitive language learning strategies for centering, learning, arranging and planning for learning, and evaluating learning, an with regard to listening skill, by using authentic listening tasks in their classrooms by providing guidelines to help them enhance their knowledge. Therefore, it is also important to encourage EFL students to transfer metacognitive learning strategies to other learning contexts, it means, practice in the real world to fulfill the coming needs; for instance, it would be essential the correct use of direct strategies such as skimming and scanning, which are the most relevant when dealing with materials of considerable length.

Finally, students should start to think that, although listening is a process that can not be seen directly, it's as active, or even, more active than the other ones, because we're exposed to the constant influence and contact of the surrounding world. Learners must be motivated to pay attention to the management of their own learning to gradually become autonomous learners when experiencing that world.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A - questionnaire – Listening Comprehension Direct Learning Strategies

**“A SURVEY OF THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION LEARNING STRATEGIES
APPLIED WITHIN THE SECOND SEMESTER OF THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH PROGRAM
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NARIÑO”**

Human Science School

Linguistics and Languages Department

English and French Program

University of Nariño

June 2008

NAME _____

DATE: _____

Please read carefully the questions below, and mark in the “yes or not” charts just **One** answer with an X

No.	QUESTIONNAIRE	YES	NO
1	Do you find training on listening skills in your current English course useful?		
2	Do you know what a learning strategy is?		
3	Do you find learning strategies useful?		
4	Do you group or classify what you hear into meaningful groups in order to reduce the number of unrelated elements?		
5	Do you associate the new language information with familiar concepts that you already know?		
6	While you listen to something, do you create a mental image of it?		
7	While you listen to something, do you use any kinds of arrows, drawings or diagrams on paper to highlight key concepts?		
8	Do you link new words with images or with words belonging to your native language? Ex. “Nose” (nariz) con “no sé” (negación en español)		
9	Do you learn new words through rhymes, songs, poetry, either; foreign language or your native language?		

10	Do you use your body or remember someone else's movements to learn new words?		
11	Do you use different sections in your notebook in order to classify the words that you know and the words that have been recently heard?		
12	Do you search for specific details when you listen to something for the first time?		
14	Do you divide in small parts of language what you listen for better understanding?		
15	Do you usually take notes about what you understand?		
16	After listening to something, do you summarize what you hear?		

Appendix B - Interview - Listening Comprehension Indirect Learning Strategies

1. WHAT IS A LEARNING STRATEGY?

2. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BE TRAINED ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION LEARNING STRATEGIES?

3. HOW DO YOU USE LISTENING COMPREHENSION LEARNING STRATEGIES?

4. WHAT ARE LISTENING COMPREHENSION LEARNING STRATEGIES USEFUL FOR?

5. HOW DO YOU IMPROVE YOUR LISTENING COMPREHENSION IN AN AUTONOMOUS WAY, NOT ONLY INSIDE THE ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES BUT ALSO AT HOME?

6. HOW DO YOU EVALUATE YOUR PROGRESS IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION?
