

Factors affecting the development of listening comprehension of EFL adolescent learners

Factores que afectan el desarrollo de la comprensión auditiva de adolescentes aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL)

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Resumen

La comprensión auditiva se considera una de las habilidades en inglés que ayuda a comunicarse con otros, no solo entender lo que el hablante está diciendo, es más que eso. Escuchar implica conocimiento del vocabulario, la gramática y la fonética del hablante. También comprende el contexto de las palabras y frases del idioma. Esta revisión se enfocó en analizar los desafíos que enfrentan los adolescentes en cuanto a la comprensión auditiva en clases de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). Como resultado de esta revisión, el factor primario que puede afectar o influir en la comprensión auditiva es el educador, porque tienen la responsabilidad de guiar a los estudiantes para desarrollar y mejorar sus habilidades como la lectura, la escritura, el habla, la gramática y la comprensión oral, que son muy importantes cuando se trata de aprender inglés. Los profesores deben analizar las estrategias que implementan dependiendo de la edad del estudiante y los desafíos que puedan enfrentar en la comprensión auditiva, como la falta de conocimiento en vocabulario, gramática y los diferentes acentos de hablantes nativos y no nativos de diferentes nacionalidades.

Palabras Clave: factores; comprensión auditiva; adolescentes; EFL

Abstract

Listening comprehension is considered one of the abilities in English that help communicating with others not just understanding what the speaker is saying it is more than that. Listening involves knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and phonetics of the speaker. Also understand the context of the words and phrases of the language. This review focused on analyzing challenges faced by adolescents when it comes to listening comprehension in EFL classes. As a result of this review the primary factor that can affect or influence listening comprehension is the educator, because they have the responsibility of guiding students to develop and improve their abilities like reading, writing, speaking, grammar and listening comprehension there are very important when it comes to learning English. Teachers should analyze the strategies that they implement depending on the age of the student and the challenges that they can face in listening comprehension such as the lack of knowledge in vocabulary, grammar and the different accents of native and non-native speakers of different nationalities.

Keyword: factors; listening comprehension; adolescents; EFL



Introduction

In Ecuador, it is a reality that the level of English proficiency is shallow, and it is considered one of the countries in Latin America with the worst command of the English language in 2022 (Angelis, 2022). Considering, that English is an international language, it has been implemented as a compulsory subject from early education to 3rd year of high school, known as EFL (English as a Foreign Language).

This subject has the objective of developing different abilities (Writing skills, speaking, reading, and listening comprehension) so that students feel English is normal or common in their lives and they can lose the fear of practicing it. These abilities are important in learning English (Quiñonez et al. 2020). However, some factors interfere with learning it. Difficulties in language proficiency have been evidenced, especially among adolescents when taking assessments such as TOEFL, IELTS, EFC, etc. There are deficiencies in understanding or interpreting the language itself, particularly when it comes to listening comprehension (Tong, 2019), which is the ability to not only listen but also fully understand what is being said in the English language.

Listening comprehension is one of the important abilities that EFL students should develop, to understand in a better way the language (Saraswaty, 2018). Listening is one of the abilities mostly used in everyday activities (listening to music, watching movies, listening to the radio, etc.). One of the most common is the accent, which varies according to the type of English, whether British or American, or due to the culture or country of origin of the speaker (Büyükahıska & Uyar, 2019) Other factor could be background sounds (Yang et al. 2017) anxiety, knowledge (Vocabulary) and teaching strategies. Therefore, this research aims to answer the research question: “What are the main challenges faced by adolescents when it comes to listening comprehension in EFL classes?”

Methods

Based on the article of Snyder (2019), a systematic review seeks to gather information and classify it by establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that the information is accurate and meaningful. The author refers to the “empirical studies”, which are different types (Experiments, case studies, descriptive, interview deductions, and mixed method). Consequently, the following inclusion criteria were established: articles in English published and related to factors in listening comprehension in EFL in classes were considered. On the other hand, exclusion criteria were findings such as theses, books, conference papers, etc.,



since they are not peer-reviewed or published in a journal. Also, articles older than ten years were excluded because current information is required for this review to be innovative and greatly beneficial for future investigators. An extensive search was carried out using various digital platforms such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Taylor & Francis Online, Web of Science, and Pro-Quest implementing specific keywords for the search which were the following: Factors, listening comprehension, EFL, adolescents.

Results

In total 22 studies were included in this review according to the parameters set already mentioned and respecting the authorship of the studies used in this investigation by citing them appropriately following the APA seventh edition guidelines (Hughes, et al., 2023). The empirical studies were classified by the types of studies, locations, and factors affecting listening comprehension in adolescents, because organizing empirical studies provides a better analysis and allows one to identify if there is a relation among variables and patterns, giving a deeper understanding of the topic.

Authors	Year	Type of Study	Location	Factors	Relevant Aspects
Dalman	2016	Relational Method	Asia	Anxiety, listening strategies and listening performance	Resulting that if anxiety decreases when listening proficiency increases and vice versa.
Gilakjani & Sabouri	2016	Literature Review	Asia	Teaching strategies, accent, cultural differences, unfamiliar vocabulary, quality of record material, length and speed of listening	Suggests that teachers should be conscious of the problems that students present and if necessary, implement new teaching/learning strategies.
Yang et al.	2017	Relational Method	Asia	Noise and learning styles	Obtained that some learning styles or strategies can probably direct students with a significant learning.
Al-Kadi & Ahmed	2018	Literature Review	Asia	Evolution of Internet	The technology advances have provided a facility of learning English in a different way like implementing accents from all around the world



Cheng	2018	Mixed Method	Asia	Accent	Recommend that EFL learners should be more prepare learning English. Training should include listening to both native and non-native languages and practicing the accent pattern to expand the audience capacity.
Sarawasty	2018	Literature Review	Asia	Teaching Strategies	Concluded that some unsuitable teaching strategies and not having enough time for listening are the factors that influence in listening comprehension development.
Büyükahıska & Uyar	2019	Quantitative Method	Asia	Accents	Obtained negative effect related to the different type of accents (British, Italian, Argentinian, Irish, French, Australian and Chinese) on listening comprehension in EFL.
Faisal	2019	Qualitative	Asia	Internal and external factor	Results indicate that students listening issues can be attribute to internal factor (vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar knowledge) and external factors (speed, accent and speed).
Karakuş	2019	Relational Method	Asia	Listening attitude and anxiety	Resulting listening comprehension and anxiety a negative result and for listening comprehension and attitude a significant and positive result.
Nimani & Dagarin	2019	Relational Method	Europe	Vocabulary Skills and Out of school listening exposure	Out of classroom exposure to English (audio and audio visual) is related in a positive way with



listening skill and vocabulary.

Meanwhile, playing video games in English is not related with the vocabulary proficiency and listening skills.

Saharkhiz et al.	2019	Quantitative	Asia	Native and Non-native accent	Implementing non-native accents in the learning process is more effective than applying native accent.
Ton	2019	Literature Review	Asia	Teaching Strategies	The main difficulty is related to the way how English is taught providing a negative effect.
Al-Shammari	2020	Quasi-experimental study	Asia	Metacognitive Strategy	Listening strategies commonly have a positive impact in listening comprehension and metacognitive awareness.
Namaziandost	2020	Relational Method	Asia	Listening Strategies	Focused in relating listening strategies and listening comprehension difficulties giving a negative result. Recommending teacher to change teaching strategies that best fits with the challenges face y the students.
Orfan	2020	Quantitative	Asia	Teaching learning strategies	The lack of knowledge, not knowing how to deal with the meaning of some words that are not common for the students and the lack of opportunities of practicing English were the principal factors in listening comprehension.
Quiñonez et al.	2020	Mixed- method	South America	Teaching Strategies	Comparing listening difficulties between public and private high school. Having as result that private high



schools have more resources.					
Tran & Duong	2020	Case Study	Asia	Pronunciation and lexis, language proficiency and social- cultural and metacognitive factors	Results of the case were that both students and teachers considered that listening problems are related to parsing, utilization and perception.
Mamadaminova & Khadkilhanova	2021	Quantitative Method	Asia	Motivation	Teachers are the ones who motivate students and produce a high impact in the learning process.
Stankova et al.	2022	Relational Method	Asia	Age	Negative correlation between the improvement in listening comprehension in EFL and the age of the learner.
Al- khreshesh & Alruwaili	2023	Quantitative	Asia	Metacognition Strategy	The result provide insight into metacognitive strategies prevalent among EFL learners in Saudi Arabia and highlight the need for gender-sensitive pedagogical approaches to EFL teaching.
Rungsinanont	2023	Quantitative Method	Asia	Vocabulary, Accent and Speed of the speaker.	Classify the results in two categories: factors and problems affecting listening comprehension skills. Obtaining in factors: linguistic features, test speaker and listener. On the other hand, considered speaker speed and accent, knowledge of the listeners as problems that learners faced.
Astrid et al.	2024	Qualitative Method	Asia	Anxiety	Four factors were considered the ones that produce anxiety in students when it comes to listening: lack of



Empirical Studies

The studies were classified by the type of empirical study, resulting in one case study, six that aimed at quantitative research, on the other and, two studies focused on a qualitative result. As a literature review, four studies were found. In addition, two studies applied a mixed method in their investigation. One used a quasi-experimental method. Meanwhile, the other six studies implemented a relational method to see if there was a significant relation between the variables established.

Dalman (2016) implemented a relational method relating listening strategies, listening proficiency, and anxiety. Eventually, anxiety decreases when listening proficiency increases and vice versa.

Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) made a literature review of teaching strategies, accent, cultural differences, unfamiliar vocabulary, quality of record material, length, and speed of listening. Students can present different difficulties in listening comprehension. However, teachers should be conscious of the problems that students face and if necessary implement new teaching/learning strategies.

Yang (2017) used a relational method where he aimed to know if there is a relation between the effect of noise and listening comprehension, obtaining that some learning styles or strategies can probably direct students with significant learning.

Al-Kadi & Ahmed (2018) implemented a literature review about the evolution of the Internet. As a result, technological advances have provided a facility to learn English in a different way like implementing accents from all around the world

Cheng (2018) implemented a mixed method to relate unfamiliar accented and negative effects on listening comprehension. Suggests that EFL learners should be more prepared to learn English. Training should include listening to both together native and non-native languages and practicing the accent pattern to expand the audience capacity.

Saraswaty (2018) made a recompilation of the article where he concluded that the following difficulties are the most common in listening comprehension: unsuitable teaching strategies, and not having enough time to develop and improve the skill. He recommends that teachers have a role in their learning and that they should analyze and vary strategies.

Büyükahıska, & Uyar implemented a test to evaluate and compare listening comprehension of different accents of English. The Accents included were the following: British, Italian, Argentinian, Irish, French, Australian, and Chinese. The test consisted of fill-in-the-blank spaces, true-false, and multiple choice, implementing 7 different listening tapes that were applied to native and non-native speakers in the diverse tapes because phonological characteristics change. It's important to highlight that the students evaluated were taught by British accents.

Faisal (2019) Applied a qualitative study to analyze student's difficulties in learning listening, implementing questionnaires and interviews. Obtaining results indicate that students present problems in listening which can be attributed to internal (lack of knowledge in vocabulary and grammar, pronunciation, difficulties in paying attention, while external factors like noise and the low quality of the audio.

Karakuş (2019) used a relational method Focused on anxiety and attitude as factors that can affect listening comprehension and relating them. Relating listening comprehension and anxiety the result was negative and for listening comprehension and attitude there was a significant result and positive.

Nimani & Dagarin (2019) established a relational method to relate vocabulary skills and out-of-school listening exposure. The results obtained were that classroom exposure to English means audio and audio-visual resources are associated positively with listening skills and vocabulary. On the other hand, vocabulary, proficiency, and listening skills are not related to playing video games even if it is English.

Saharkhiz et al. (2019) applied a quantitative study that implementing non-native accents in the learning process is more effective than applying native accents.

According to Ton Thin (2019), the result obtained through a literature review was that one of the greatest difficulties that arise in learners is how English is taught giving a negative result in terms of the development of listening in English.

Al-Shammari (2020) established a quasi-experimental study, classifying two groups one for an interview and another for a control group. The objective of this study was to analyze the impact of instructions on EFL students in listening comprehension and metacognitive consciousness in listening strategies implemented. As a result, listening strategies commonly have a positive effect on listening comprehension and metacognitive awareness.

Namaziandost (2020) Focused their research on knowing if there is a significant relation between listening strategies and listening comprehension problems implementing the use of a survey Having as a result that there is a relation between listening problems and the strategy implemented which was negative. For this reason, they recommend that teachers analyze the

challenges that EFL learners can present and implement useful techniques to overcome these difficulties.

Orfan (2020) applied a questionnaire that consisted of 28 questions with a Linkert Scale, which had established objectives such as knowing what attitude the students have on learning English. Also, in analyzing the difficulties that they present at the moment of learning and understanding English and the strategies that they implement to learn the idiom. As a result, he obtained that the lack of knowledge, not knowing how to deal with the meaning of some words that are not common for the students, and the lack of opportunities to practice English.

Quiñonez (2020) carried out a mixed method implementing questionnaires and interviews, these students came from 12 high schools (public and private). Obtaining a result that the difficulties depend on the school that the students come from, whether it is public or private. They considered that this difference between the two types of high school varies attributable to private schools usually having more opportunities for technology and other resources that help in the learning process.

Tran & Duong (2020) used a case study to relate pronunciation and lexis, language proficiency, social-cultural, and metacognitive factors. As a result, both students and teachers considered that phonological and lexical problems were the ones that produced a high impact. Mamadaminova & Khadkilhanova (2021) developed quantitative research using as a tool a questionnaire which was an online survey. As a result of his case study teachers of teenagers are the ones who can motivate and have a high impact on the learning process of the teenagers. Suggests that teachers should have constant training and improve their techniques and strategies.

Stankova et al. (2022) Established an objective to find out if the age of a person could be considered a factor that can interfere with the ability to listen comprehension. Analyzing the result obtained there is a negative correlation between the improvement in listening comprehension in EFL and the learner's age. Advice that depending on the age, teachers should use different strategies for better results.

Al-Khreshesh & Alruwaili (2023) implemented a quantitative study to analyze the metacognitive listening comprehension strategies, intending to analyze and identify the strategies most and least used. The results provide insight into metacognitive strategies prevalent among EFL learners in Saudi Arabia and highlight the need for gender-sensitive pedagogical approaches to EFL teaching.

Rungsinanont (2023) Conducted quantitative research to investigate challenges that undergraduate students present with listening comprehension in EFL, implementing an online questionnaire. Classify the results in two categories: factors and problems affecting listening comprehension skills. Acquire in factors: linguistic features, test speaker and listener. On the other hand, speakers' speed and accent, and knowledge of the listener problems that learners face.

Astrid. et al (2024) Multiple Qualitative studies to have data on factors associated with the anxiety produced in students cons listening comprehension. Four factors were considered the ones that produce anxiety in students when it comes to listening: lack of attention, mood or motivation, classroom environment, and lack of listening skills.\

Location

Of the 22 studies collected for the present review twenty of them come from the continent of Asia, While the two remaining articles come, from South America and the other from Europe. This explains a lack of information and research related to the factors that learners face in listening comprehension in Latin America. For this reason, a global compilation was conducted to analyze the results of the studies related to the topic mentioned.

Factors affecting listening comprehension in adolescents

As a result of the analysis of the studies gathered, several factors can influence the development of listening comprehension. The same were classified as the following:

Accent

This is one of the factors that can confuse learners especially when they have to apply listening comprehension. The accent could vary according to the speaker's origin, as well as whether they are a native speaker or not. Variations in phonetics and vocabulary can occur when dealing with American or British English. It is also important to mention that there are a lot of accents around the world like Chinese, Australian, French, etc.

Anxiety

It is common for adolescents to present anxiety when learning English. Anxiety can block the student in the learning process, and this can be due to various reasons like the lack of knowledge (vocabulary), difficulties in paying attention, and difficulties in employing listening skills including learning strategies. This factor can be presented before, during, and after developing listening comprehension activities.

Teaching Strategies



Teaching strategies are considered a factor with a big impact on listening comprehension causing positive or negative results in adolescent learners. This encompasses the other factors or difficulties because if it is not related to skills like reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar, learners won't understand because of the lack of knowledge acquired, the type of activities, speed, and accent employed. In addition, this factor is significantly related to developing a negative result as anxiety in adolescent students, when they are stressed out about developing listening comprehension.

Types of Strategies

Some strategies well-established for teaching listening are the Bottom process, Top-down process (Tong, 2019), cognitive strategy, and metacognition strategy (Quinonez et al. 2020). Furthermore, any of the methods mentioned above have an objective and stages that are recommended to follow to achieve significant progress in adolescent students. (Tong, 2019) also suggest keeping up during the process with the students being a guide before, during, and after listening comprehension applying a variety of activities that allow teachers to explain based on a model and also give them feedback analyzing what was their mistakes, this is an important role for the teacher to help learners improve their listening skills. As a secondary factor, the lack of opportunities to practice the idiom can have several reasons such as the economic situation, not having enough time for it, or not having a good habit of learning it.

Discussion

According to the study by Tong (2019), he considered that teaching is one of the significant factors in the development of learners in listening comprehension in EFL classes. He suggests that teachers should implement their strategies following the step by step, so it can help overcome the difficulties of the learners in listening comprehension. In addition, he recommends implementing the strategy called top-down and giving more feedback on vocabulary can improve effectively listening comprehension abilities.

Based on the result obtained by Quiñonez et al. (2020) Mamadaminova & Khadjikhanova (2021) concluded that teachers must constantly train for better performance as professionals and implement or change the strategies or activities for listening in class. However, Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016), Saraswaty (2018) & Namaziandost et al., (2019) recommended that teacher should vary their strategies, once they have analyzed the challenges that their students present. To be able to choose the strategy that best suits the needs of the EFL students.

Yang et al. 2017 concluded that some learning styles can probably direct students to effective or meaningful learning. Indeed, Büyükahıska & Uyar (2019) consider that implementing



especially different accents in listening activities can make students get out of their comfort zone, but this can help students analyze them understand them and not just get used to one accent. Usually, students are learners with one specific accent and when they listen to a new one that could be from a native or non-native speaker this is a factor that confuses the student at the moment of applying their abilities in listening (Büyükahıska & Uyar, 2019).

Meanwhile, Dalman (2016) & Karakuş (2019) aimed their studies to relate listening comprehension with anxiety. Giving them as results that these two variables are significantly related produces negative results, if listening proficiency decreases anxiety increases and vice versa. But Karakuş (2019) implemented another variable in his study for listening comprehension and attitude there was a significant result and positive.

On the other hand, (Orfan, 2020) focused on relating the challenges that students faced in understanding English and the strategies implemented for the learning process. As a result, he obtained a lack of knowledge, not knowing how to deal with the meaning of some words that are not common for the students, and the lack of opportunities to practice English.

From my perspective, analyzing all the articles collected the development of skills and abilities for listening comprehension can be influenced by various factors, but the teacher plays a very important role in guiding students through their learning process, considering that each student is different in their learning style. It is never too late to change or modify a strategy or technique as long as it meets the learner's needs and provides a significant change.

Conclusion

This literature review focused on identifying and analyzing the existence of information related to the factors affecting listening comprehension in EFL, understanding that nowadays listening comprehension is a topic of great importance in EFL classes that is still under investigation and new information continues to emerge regarding the factor that interferes with it in different parts of the world. Based on the analysis made of the research obtained by the different types of empirical studies in English not older than ten years. Most of the articles obtained gave a result or recommendation that EFL teachers are considered an important factor because they have the role of developing or improving English language learning. Therefore, teachers must be updated and trained to make any necessary changes to develop a significant learning process for their students starting from the analysis of what factors can influence their student's listening comprehension.

It is important to highlight that they are not perfect or the best strategy to learn English nowadays students have different learning styles and their strengths and weaknesses can vary for each student.

Analyzing the studies that are related to listening abilities with anxiety that can be produced at the moment of listening activities gave negative results, if a learner has more anxiety this can produce a lack of listening comprehension and affect the development of the student. But that does not mean that the EFL learners do not understand, it is just that this factor can influence in listening comprehension.

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