

Mejorando la habilidad de comprensión auditiva en una clase de Inglés como lengua extranjera, mediante estrategias metacognitivas

Improving the listening comprehension skill in an EFL classroom through metacognitive strategies

Améliorer la compétence de compréhension orale dans une classe d'EFL grâce à des stratégies métacognitives

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Abstract

Learning a foreign language can be a challenge for many people and listening comprehension tends to be one of the most difficult skills for English learners. Therefore, this paper reports the findings of a qualitative action research study on the impact of metacognitive strategies on the listening comprehension skill of nine learners at a private language institute. The purpose of this study was to determine how the use of metacognitive strategies might contribute to the development of the listening skill. Some workshops were designed for the intervention, and metacognitive strategies were presented to learners. Each lesson was recorded in a journal to keep track of the students' attitudes, progress and responses to the strategies. Moreover, learners were assessed in their performance in each workshop. They were also asked about their perceptions toward the use of strategies during the listening tasks. Additionally, a listening pre-test and post-test were implemented to compare learners' results, which

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were obtained before and after the intervention. Results showed that metacognitive strategies helped learners to become aware of their own learning process. They had a positive impact on their abilities in order to understand an audio, and improved learners' accuracy in terms of the listening tasks implemented.

Keywords: Context; Listening Comprehension Skill; Metacognitive Strategies; Pronunciation; and Vocabulary.

Resumen

Aprender un idioma extranjero puede ser un desafío para muchos y la habilidad de comprensión auditiva tiende a ser una de las habilidades más difíciles para los estudiantes de inglés. Por lo tanto, este artículo informa los hallazgos de un estudio de investigación-acción cualitativa sobre el impacto de las estrategias metacognitivas en la habilidad de comprensión auditiva de nueve estudiantes en un instituto de idiomas privado. El propósito de este estudio fue determinar cómo el uso de estrategias metacognitivas podría contribuir al desarrollo de la habilidad de escucha. Se diseñaron algunos talleres para la intervención y se presentaron estrategias metacognitivas a los alumnos. Cada lección se registró en un diario para realizar un seguimiento de sus actitudes, progreso y respuestas a las estrategias. Además, los estudiantes fueron evaluados en su desempeño en cada taller. También se les preguntó acerca de sus percepciones sobre el uso de estrategias durante las tareas de escucha. Adicionalmente, se implementó una prueba previa y una prueba posterior de comprensión auditiva para comparar los resultados de los alumnos, que se obtuvieron antes y después de la intervención. Los resultados mostraron que las estrategias metacognitivas ayudaron a los alumnos a tomar conciencia de su propio proceso de aprendizaje. Tuvieron un impacto positivo en sus habilidades para comprender un audio y mejoraron la precisión de los estudiantes en términos de las tareas de escucha implementadas.

Palabras clave: Contexto; Habilidad de comprensión auditiva; Estrategias metacognitivas; Pronunciación; Vocabulario.

Introduction

Much has been discussed about the importance of developing the skills of a language in order to become a proficient user, and the way different methods and strategies can help learners achieve this purpose. In this study the researchers intended to focus on the importance of implementing strategies in order to improve the listening comprehension skill. Listening is considered an active process, which is crucial for the

acquisition of a second language, as stated by Morley (2001). This is also true for EFL contexts. Furthermore, many English teachers see it as one of the most challenging skills for English learners, by considering that an effective communication depends not only on the speaking skill, but also on the development of the listening skill (Harmer, 2007). Therefore, this research project aimed at examining the impact of metacognitive strategies on the development of the listening skill of a group of EFL learners.

A qualitative method was used during the development of the study, through an action research approach. It was conducted in three stages: diagnosis, action, and evaluation and to assure validity, different instruments were used to collect and to analyze data.

During the implementation of the diagnostic stage, a teacher's journal, a learners' survey, a teacher's and a coordinator's interview, and a test, were administered. The analysis of the data gathered in this stage, revealed that learners experienced a high affective filter toward listening tasks, and they also had difficulties to understand the spoken English. By considering these results, learners were provided with some metacognitive strategies in order to help them to become better EFL listeners. Consequently, the following research question emerged:

To what extent can metacognitive strategies impact EFL learners' listening comprehension skill at a language institution in Montería?

During the action stage, six workshops were designed and administered to the sample population. Some metacognitive strategies were introduced and implemented in the listening section of the workshop. To evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies, some instruments, such as a teacher's journal, a learners' survey, an assessment rubric, and two listening tests (pre and posttest) were used. They provided valuable data regarding learners' abilities, practices, and perceptions of the use of strategies.

The findings evidenced that the use of metacognitive strategies had a positive impact on learners' listening comprehension skills. Through the use of strategies, students improved their abilities to comprehend the context, vocabulary and pronunciation of a listening text. Additionally, the results evidenced an improvement in the accuracy of learners' answers in listening tasks. These results verified the benefits that metacognitive

strategies have for the listening comprehension of learners and their abilities to become more autonomous as English language learners.

Rationale

This research project recognized the importance of EFL students to become proficient in the listening skill, by considering that the development of listening comprehension can play a vital role in the development of the other language skills (Vandergrift, 2007). Traditionally, teachers have taught and assessed the listening skill, by presenting oral texts to learners and, by asking them to answer questions about them. This practice often results in frustration and has caused a great difficulty for English language learners. Therefore, the implementation of metacognitive strategies plays a vital role in the learning process since they allow students to monitor their own performance.

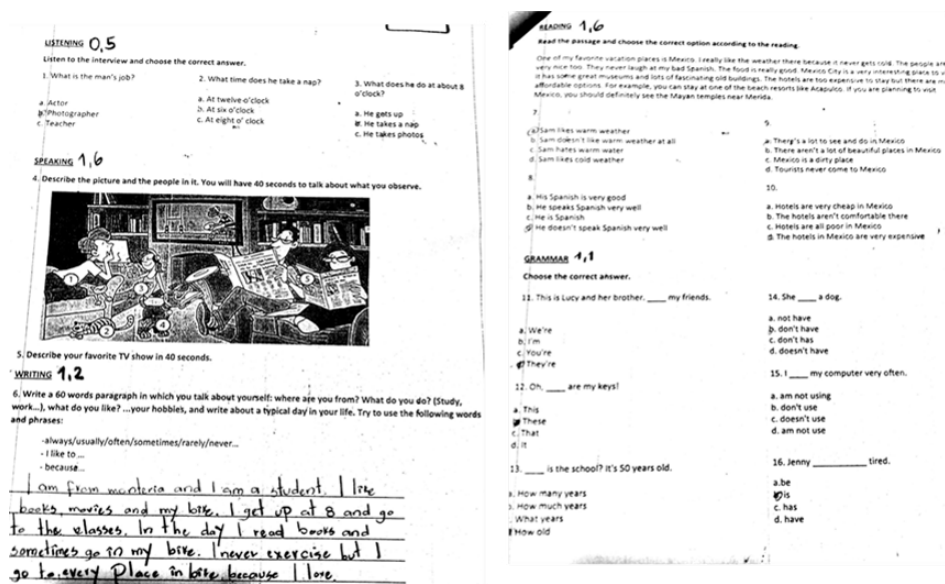
On the other hand, the use of strategies contributes to reduce the feelings of frustration that EFL learners often experience when dealing with the different skills of the language, but especially the listening skill. Consequently, it is expected that the results will encourage other teachers to include instructional strategies in their lessons in order to enhance learners' listening skill.

Moreover, this study adds to the pedagogical field as it fosters learners' autonomy. The use of metacognitive strategies motivates learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses in terms of their own learning process. Thus, this project encourages learners to plan, to monitor, and to evaluate their listening skill and learning process. In brief, this study invites learners to become active participants of their own learning process.

Statement of the problem

During the Diagnostic Stage, preliminary data was gathered through direct observations, learners' surveys, and teacher's interviews in order to identify issues in the teaching and learning processes. The most notable situation was learners' feelings and concerns when performing listening tasks. They expressed feelings of frustration when dealing with listening tasks in the classroom, and dissatisfaction with their performance. Teachers' observations and learners' surveys revealed learners' difficulties in order to understand spoken English. They said that listening was one of the most difficult language skills and that the audios and videos were difficult to understand. On the other hand, the diagnostic exam clearly showed the difficulties that learners had in

the listening skill. This was the language skill, which had the lowest score. (Figure 1: sample of learner's results in the diagnostic test).



Source: done by one student who participated in the study.

As a response to this situation, the analysis of the results of the different instruments were considered to decide on the implementation of some strategies, which could tackle learners' deficiencies, specially, their listening comprehension. Thus, allowing them to become aware of their learning process and to help them to become better listeners in order to improve their overall performance in the foreign language.

Objectives

General Objective

To determine the impact of metacognitive strategies on learners' listening comprehension skill.

Specific Objectives

- To examine the effect of MS to develop learners' accuracy of answers.
- To explore the impact of MS to understand the context, pronunciation, and key vocabulary of a listening task.
- To verify the influence of MS on learners' English performance.

Theoretical framework

This section addresses some concepts, which contribute to a better understanding and analysis of the situation of study. The concepts considered for this study are briefly described: listening comprehension skill, contextualization, learning strategy, vocabulary, pronunciation, metacognition and metacognitive strategies.

Listening comprehension skill

Howatt & Dakin (1974), and Vandergrift (1999) coincided in the belief that listening is an active practice, which deals with the ability to understand and to process what people say as they interact with others. That is to say, their pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and intention or meaning. Meanwhile, Rost (2002) defined listening comprehension as the combination of the information listened with the information already known by the listener. Thus, it is important to conceive listening as a complex activity, more than just hearing what others say. It implies recognizing not only sounds, but also the different linguistic and sociocultural components of the target language. Moreover, O'Malley and Chamot (1989) defined it as “an active and conscious process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual information and from existing knowledge, while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfill the task requirement.” (p. 434). As stated by Goss (1982), listening comprehension is a mental process of constructing meaning with the information listened. This is why the listening skill is considered by many EFL teachers as one of the most challenging skills in the English language learning process, considering all the mental activity the listener must do simultaneously.

On the other hand, it is necessary to mention that for many years the listening skill was not given the importance that it has nowadays in the English classroom. For instance, Nunan (2002) called it “the Cinderella skill in second language learning” (p. 238) referring to the little dedication teachers devoted to the listening skill in class. Meanwhile, referring to the importance of the listening skill, Brown (1987) asserted that learning how to listen is important since it is helpful in the development of the other macro skills. According to Rost (2002), “there is no spoken language without listening” (p. 1). Thus, English teachers, must consider the importance of the listening skill in the development of the other skills and how listening strategies might help

learners to have the necessary tools to overcome their difficulties when dealing with these tasks.

Contextualization

When teaching listening, it is important to consider some factors and tools learners need in order to foster their listening comprehension skills. One of those factors is providing learners with context. Moltz (2010) defines contextualization as a form of “deep learning,” which occurs when linking ideas and concepts. Byrnes (1984) and Vandergrift (2002) coincided in that, by providing learners with the context of a listening text, the process will be easier for them as they can activate their prior knowledge and will have the necessary tools to recognize vocabulary and to understand the message. Brown and Yule (1993) consider that background knowledge (schemata) is one of the factors, which affects listening comprehension. For instance, they describe schemata as “organized background knowledge, which leads us to expect or predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse” (p. 248). This means that the listener’s previous knowledge leads him to construct meaning from what he listens to. Therefore, as the authors assert, it is essential to guide learners in the activation of their ideas and knowledge about the topic. Thus, in this way they can prepare for the listening task, by facilitating the understanding of the message, and even avoiding possible confusions because of words that sound similar in English.

Consequently, it is possible to say that once learners are aware of the topic, and relate it with their previous knowledge, they will have the conditions and tools to understand what speakers are talking about. Thus, it is probable that learners identify vocabulary, expressions, and structures they already know, if they are given the context of the listening text. In this way, it might result in a good listening comprehension which is the goal of a listening activity.

Learning strategies

Considering the importance of accomplishing a successful teaching and learning process, teachers have intended to find and introduce learning strategies in the English classroom. Learning strategies have been defined by Schmeck (1988) as “a sequence of procedures for accomplishing learning” (p.5). Moreover, Weinstein and Mayer (1986) defined learning strategies as “behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning and that are intended to influence the learner’s encoding process” (p.315). According to O’Malley et al. (1985), language learning strategies are a sequence of

actions that learners follow to gather, process and apply information. These authors agree that the use of strategies facilitate the learning process.

Similarly, Griffiths (2013), defined learning strategies as “activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their language learning” (p. 36). Besides, Oxford (1990) stated that learning strategies make language learning: “easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (p. 8). According to these definitions, it can be said that these strategies foster learners’ autonomy since they allow them to decide the most suitable actions to accomplish a certain language task and improve their overall proficiency. In addition, learners do not need to develop skills isolated as strategies use facilitate integration of language skills.

Applying strategies successfully can make the difference between a proficient learner and a less proficient learner, as Chamot et al. (1999) indicated, “differences between more effective learners and less effective learners were found in the number and range of strategies used, in how the strategies were applied to the task; and in whether they were appropriate for the task” (p. 166). Thus, study suggests that more proficient learners are able to apply more and varied strategies accurately according to the learning task they are engaged in, which implies an advantage over those who do not approach tasks strategically since the latter have less tools to overcome drawbacks in their learning process. Considering that, the implementation of strategies is pertinent to help learners with difficulties since “less successful language learners can be taught new strategies. Thus, helping them become better language learners” (Grenfell & Harris, 1999).

In addition, there is theory intended to explain the benefits of including strategy instruction in the English language lessons. Authors in favor of including strategy instruction in the classroom explained that integrating them into classes provide learners with chances to practice strategies in an authentic language learning environment and to use the strategies in other language tasks (Kendall & Khuon, 2006; Oxford, 2002; Zhang, 2008). According to Oxford (1990) there are two main types of strategies: direct and indirect strategies. And these are classified as follows: Direct strategies: Memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies: Metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a key factor in language learning. The term is defined by Neuman and Dwyer (2009) as “ words we must know to communicate effectively; words in speaking (expressive vocabulary) and words in listening (receptive vocabulary)” (p. 385). While Hiebert and Kamil (2005) defined it as “the knowledge of the meanings of words” (p. 3). From these claims, we can assure that vocabulary knowledge plays one of the most important roles in language learning, as it is necessary for the understanding and communication of ideas and therefore for the accomplishment of all language tasks.

Many researchers agree on the importance of vocabulary in language learning, for instance, Cameron (2001) stated that vocabulary plays a crucial role for learners in acquiring a language. Whereas, Schmitt (2000) emphasizes that “lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language” (p. 55). The acquisition of vocabulary helps supporting the teaching and learning of the listening, writing, reading, and speaking skills. (Chengqian, 2009). Thus, the knowledge of vocabulary has major benefits in the acquisition of all the language skills. According to Schmitt (2010) “one thing that all of the partners involved in learning process (learners, teachers, materials writers, and researchers) can all agree upon is that learning vocabulary is an essential part of mastering a second language” (p. 4).

On the other hand, in regards to the influence of vocabulary in the process of listening comprehension, research reports that vocabulary knowledge plays a notable role in this skill (Alderson, 2005). Research has also underlined benefits that listening and vocabulary provide to each other. (Stæhr, 2009; Van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012). Thus, if learners have a solid vocabulary knowledge, they will also have a better comprehension of spoken English since they will recognize a wider range of input in the listening task.

Pronunciation

The importance of pronunciation in language learning cannot be denied. Gilbert (1995) confirms the great role that pronunciation plays in communication. He stated that listening comprehension and pronunciation depend on each other. The purpose of pronunciation instruction is to give learners the tools to manage the sound system that they are learning (McNamara, 1996). That is, the teaching of pronunciation should be part of the lessons as this affects directly learners’ comprehension and production of

language, as assimilation of pronunciation makes learners able to discriminate between different sounds.

Moreover, learners' difficulties with pronunciation might interfere with their ability to construct meaning. One of the reasons why listening tends to be difficult for learners is related to some characteristics of spoken language such as the intonation, tone of voice, rhythm, etc. (e.g. Wei, 2004; Gilbert, 1995; Arvariti, 2009). Thus, a poor knowledge of the sound system might cause that learners misunderstand a message in a listening task or in a real conversation. Pourhosein (2011) indicated that teaching the pronunciation of English words must aim at comprehensible pronunciation, considering this a relevant factor in communicative competence. Considering the aforementioned, it is advisable that learners should be exposed to a varied types of aural input in which they can be trained to identify the different variation in pronunciation (intonation, tone of voice, accent, etc.)

Metacognition

Metacognitive knowledge has been defined as the “seventh sense” and one of the mental characteristics successful learners use (Birjandi, 2006). Flavell (1979) also defined metacognition as the knowledge you have of your own cognitive processes. According to these definitions, metacognition deals with a high level of knowledge and awareness of a person's own learning process, which implies to reflect on his thinking in order to accomplish an effective learning.

Hennessey (1999) defined the term metacognition as:

Awareness of one's own thinking, awareness of the content of one's conceptions, an active monitoring of one's cognitive processes, an attempt to regulate one's cognitive processes in relationship to further learning, and an application of a set of heuristics as an effective device for helping people organize their methods of attack on problems in general (p. 3).

Whereas, Kuhn & Dean (2004) defined it as “awareness and management of one's own thought” (p. 270). That is, metacognition help learners develop awareness of the different techniques they can use to tackle their difficulties. Thence, the researchers decided on the use of metacognitive strategies to help learners acquire abilities to ponder and analyze their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as their practices when dealing with listening tasks to take the necessary actions in order to address their difficulties.

Furthermore, it is important to understand the difference between metacognition and cognition, and this difference is related to how the strategy is used (Chien,

2006; Schraw, 1998). Basically, cognitive strategies, are used to solve problems, while metacognitive strategies are employed to monitor, to evaluate, to control, and to understand these strategies (Chien, 2006). In regards to language learning, metacognition may be useful as it might help learners to identify and to select suitable strategies for accomplishing specific language tasks.

Metacognitive strategies

Brown *et al.* (1983) explained that metacognitive strategies are skills learners implement to manage, to direct, and to guide their own learning. Whereas, Oxford (2002) explained that these strategies include connecting new information to the old one, selecting strategies, planning, monitoring, and evaluating thinking processes. That is to say, the use of metacognitive strategies gives learners the opportunity to monitor their own learning through the selection of other strategies.

Moreover, Anderson (2002) stated, “the use of metacognitive strategies activates one’s thinking and leads to improved performance in learning in general” (p. 3). This means that, by implementing these strategies, learners also become aware of their role in learning. Therefore, they might reflect on their performance in specific language tasks and think of ways to achieve their learning goals.

On the other hand, O’Malley and Chamot (1990) suggested a classification for metacognitive strategies into three categories: Planning, monitoring and evaluation. Planning includes five strategies: Advance organizers, directed attention, selective attention, self- management, and functional planning. Monitoring includes self-monitoring. Finally, evaluation includes self-evaluation. While Oxford (1990) stated that metacognitive strategies are divided into three major groups, and each group contains other strategies. Oxford (1990) explains what each set of strategies implies, as follows:

Centering your learning: The following three strategies help learners to focus on certain language tasks or activities:

Overviewing and linking with already known material: Associating a key concept or set of materials and relating it with previous knowledge.

Paying attention: Deciding to pay attention to a language task in general (directed attention) or to pay attention to specific aspects of the language task (selective attention).

Delaying speech production to focus on listening: To delay speech production until the listening skill is somehow developed.

Arranging and planning your learning: This set of strategies helps learners to organize and plan their learning:

Finding out about language learning: Understand how language learning works to improve one's language learning.

Organizing: Organizing one's conditions (time, space, etc.) to assure an optimal learning environment.

Setting goals and objectives: Setting short- or long-term goals related to language learning.

Identifying the purpose of a language task: Deciding in advance the purpose of doing a specific language task.

Planning for a language task: Planning the necessary language elements for a language task.

Seeking practice opportunities: Finding and creating opportunities to practice the language.

Evaluating your learning: These strategies allow the learner to monitor and evaluate their performance:

Self-monitoring: Identify errors and actions to eliminate those errors.

Self-evaluating: Evaluating one's own progress in the learning of the language.

It is important to mention that for the purposes of this research project, it was considered Oxford's classification of Metacognitive strategies.

Methodology

Type of study

By considering the results of the diagnostic stage, a qualitative method was used during the development of the project, following an action research approach. Through a qualitative research method, the researchers had the opportunity to explore the phenomena and to collect more descriptive information from the participants. Action research was chosen due to the fact that it gives the researcher the opportunity to intervene and to change a problematic situation.

Participants

The participants of this study were chosen through convenience sampling. This was a mixed-age group of nine learners, teenagers, and adults, 6 males and 3 females, aged between 17 and 50 years. Five of them were university students, while the rest were professionals. It was decided to include all of them in the project since they all had the same level of the language.

Instruments

During the development of the project, different instruments and techniques were implemented in order to gather sufficient data for analysis and decisions to conduct the research. The data was analyzed, compared and triangulated to make decisions on how to proceed based on these outcomes.

Table 1 displays the instruments used in each stage and their objectives.

Table 1. *Research stages, instruments and objectives*

Stage	Instrument	Objective
Diagnostic stage	Teacher's Journal	To observe and record learners' moves and attitudes during the class.
	Learners' survey	To know learners' opinions about their English learning process.
	Coordinator's interview	To learn about the coordinator's views on the teacher's practices and the learner's learning process.
	Teacher's Interview	To know another teacher's perceptions on learner's learning process.
	Diagnostic test	To analyze learners' performance in the language skills and components.

Action and Evaluation stage	Assessment Rubric	To assess learners' performance in the listening activity.
	Learners' survey	To know learners' perceptions regarding the activity and strategies.
	Teacher's Journal	To record learners' moves and attitudes during the implementation of the workshops.
	Listening pre and post test	To evaluate learners' listening comprehension and compare the results from both tests.

Action and evaluation stages

The intervention was aimed at designing a plan to help learners improve their listening comprehension skills. The intervention was based on the implementation of some workshops that considered metacognitive strategies to develop learners' listening comprehension skills and enhance aspects related to their autonomy, their abilities to understand the context, vocabulary and pronunciation; their accuracy of answers in a listening activity; and their abilities to use the information listened to perform other tasks. Therefore, the workshops were designed taking into account learners' needs and the topics were chosen regarding their interests and the content in the textbook. Six metacognitive strategies were selected: *Overviewing, finding a purpose, setting goals, selective attention, finding out about language learning, and planning a task.*

Regarding the structure of the workshops, all of them included the four language skills, and two metacognitive strategies that were introduced in the listening activity. Instructions on the use of strategies were presented and clearly stated in the pre-listening or while-listening stages.

Table 2 presents each workshop with its correspondent topic, communicative purpose, and metacognitive strategies.

Table 2. *Content of workshops*

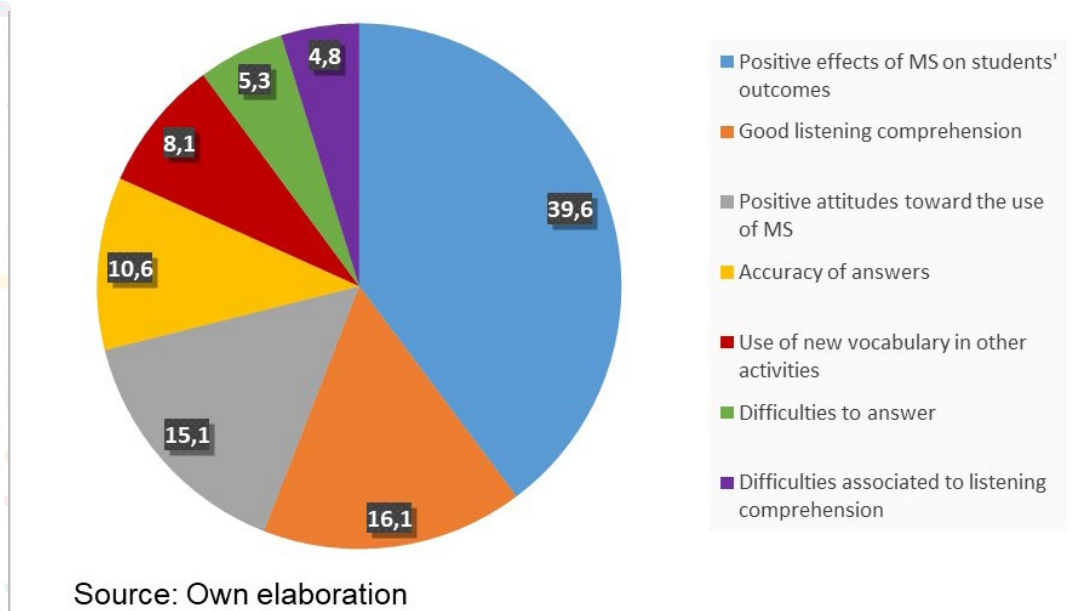
Workshop	Communicative purpose	Metacognitive strategies
1.The ideal vacation	To discuss about vacation and recommend other people places to visit in Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overviewing - Identifying a purpose
2.Healthy people	To talk about health and lifestyles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning a task. - Selective attention.

3.Let's save the planet	To talk about environmental problems and actions to take.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting goals. - Finding out about language learning.
4.Cultures around the world	To discuss about other cultures and countries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting goals - Planning a task
5.Life in the future	To make predictions about the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying a purpose - Finding about language learning
6.My favorite anecdote	To talk about their own anecdotes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overviewing - Selective attention

In the evaluation stage, the researchers used different instruments in order to gather evidence from the interventions. Through the journal; attitudes, practices and comments from the learners were recorded, as well as the teacher's actions and instructions. Moreover, data regarding learners' perceptions and feelings about their performance in the listening tasks, and towards the implementation of the metacognitive strategies were obtained from the survey. There was a rubric that assessed learners' listening performance, taking into account: understanding of important information, accuracy of answers, use of information listened in other tasks, and use of metacognitive strategies.

Results

This section presents the findings after analyzing the data gathered in the implementation and evaluation stages. (Figure 2: shows the codes that emerged after analyzing the results in all workshops).



Positive Effects of Metacognitive Strategies on Learners' Outcomes

The implementation of metacognitive strategies to aid the listening comprehension of EFL learners was meaningful and relevant. The use of these strategies helped learners to become more autonomous and reflective on their learning process. They had the time to think about their listening goals, previous knowledge, difficulties to understand the aural input, and to take actions to overcome those issues. By considering that the main focus of this project was to determine the impact of metacognitive strategies on learners' listening comprehension skill, the findings showed that learners improved their abilities in listening. They were able to overcome some of their difficulties to understand the context, key vocabulary, and pronunciation of oral texts to answer accurately questions about it. Throughout the development of workshops, learners showed that they became familiar with metacognitive strategies and improved their listening processes.

From the beginning of the intervention, learners showed an improvement, as it was evidenced in the assessment rubric. Although in some cases, they felt unsure about the information that they processed, their confidence increased through the implementation of the workshops. Moreover, by considering that metacognitive strategies allowed learners to manage their own learning process, they had a positive attitude toward the use of these strategies since they could apply them successfully in their listening performance. The use of these specific strategies was beneficial for learners' learning processes because they could prepare for the listening task in different ways, by predicting the content, by reviewing target vocabulary, and by analyzing the questions, etc. They also could reflect on their weaknesses in order to tackle their difficulties, by finding appropriate solutions to complete the listening task. Evidence of this code is that after each intervention, learners expressed that the strategies given helped their understanding of the listening and the accomplishment of the task. They even chose the strategies that helped them understand and answer the questions.

Table 3. Sample table of strategies that helped students in the listening task.

Strategy	Students
Read the questions before	5
Review vocabulary	6
Predict the topic	4
Compare ideas with a partner	0
Identify the purpose of the activity	3

Source: own elaboration.

Moreover, learners expressed their ideas about the effects of the strategies. The following excerpts evidence the positive impact of the strategies used:

“Entendí todo. Bueno, casi todo. Y las estrategias chéveres. Me gustaron.” (I understood everything. Well, almost. And the strategies are good. I liked them)

“Another student said: sí teacher, las estrategias buenas y útiles.” (Yes, teacher. The strategies are good and useful)

“Las estrategias facilitan un poco el listening, que es tan difícil” (The strategies facilitate the listening, that is so difficult)

Good Listening Comprehension

Even though learners said that it was difficult for them to understand some words in oral texts, and to answer some questions about them, they also stated that they had learned to relate words and to connect ideas since they were familiar with the context. In this sense, metacognitive strategies helped them to prepare with the context and the vocabulary necessary for the listening tasks. Regarding pronunciation, at the beginning, this was a challenging process since learners expressed their concerns about not being able to understand speakers' pronunciation from audios. However, learners progressed significantly in this aspect as they were exposed to the practice of pronunciation of key words before and after the listening tasks. As a result, their problems to understand speakers' pronunciation gradually decreased.

This progress was evidenced in the following excerpts taken from the teacher's journal:

“After listening for the second time some of them seemed to be a little more confident and they were writing information in the handout”

“The first time they listened they started to write information. They seemed to understand many things. After listening I gave them more time to write.”

“One student said he had finished, and that it was easy this time”.

Table 4. Sample table of students' level of understanding.

Level	Students
1	0 students
2	0 students
3	3 students
4	3 students
5	3 student

Source: Own elaboration.

Positive Attitudes toward the Use of Metacognitive Strategies

Learners showed commitment and a positive attitude since the beginning of the intervention. Besides, they could notice their improvement through the implementation of the strategies, resulting in motivation to continue learning the new strategies. They followed the instructions and were open to the new method and activities. Their feelings of frustration were highly reduced and they were constant in their desire to participate of the tasks and work on their difficulties to obtain good results.

The table below describes some of the comments given by the students regarding the activities and strategies:

Table 5. Comments from learners about the use of the strategies.

1.	“Good teaching methodology.”
2.	“Talking before listening facilitates the comprehension.”
3.	“I liked to learn strategies”
4.	“It is important to continue practicing”
5.	“I would like to continue practicing strategies to improve my abilities”

Source: Own elaboration

Additionally, some excerpts taken from the teacher’s journal related to learners’ perceptions were:

“They were really interested in doing each exercise in the pre-listening exercises”

“they were very active and attentive.”

“I liked the topic a lot. The strategies were very interesting, they make the exercise easier”

“Excellent topic and activities. Both strategies were very useful.”

The Accuracy of Answers

During the implementation of the workshops, learners internalized and familiarized with the strategies. They also learned to focus on the listening task. It was noticeable that they took notes of any word or information they understood, and thought of how that information could help them answer the questions. They started to feel more confident with their responses. Despite this, they still reported having problems answering questions about the listening text by the end of the intervention, their difficulties were diminished progressively. Learners expressed that in many cases, even though they could not understand every word, they were able to answer the questions with the information they understood. It is important to mention that their answers were accurate most of the time. The following table shows some of the comments given by the students regarding their opinion about the level of difficulty:

Table 6. Learners’ level of difficulty to answer the questions.

	Students	Some reasons
Many difficulties	0 students	
Some difficulties	3 students	I still have to accustom the ear to the listening.
No difficulty	6 students	I did not understand some words, but I did get the message. The questions and answers were clear. The audio was clear.

Besides, some comments made by learners taken from the instruments were:

“No tuve dificultad para entender ni para responder” (I had no difficulties to understand or answer)

“Analizamos las preguntas al comienzo. Era claro lo que íbamos a responder” (We analyzed the questions at the beginning. It was clear what we would answer)

Use of new vocabulary in other activities

Considering the results from the evaluation stage, learners demonstrated abilities to use the vocabulary and expressions from the listening to perform other tasks. It was noticeable in the post listening tasks and other sections of the workshop (speaking and writing tasks), that the participants learned new vocabulary and were able to transfer that knowledge to the other language skills and tasks. Thus, learners evidenced not only an improvement of their listening skills, but also took advantage of that to use it in the other language skills.

This category emerged along the intervention as a result of the learners' responses to questions and also oral activities they performed after the listening activity. The increase of vocabulary from the listening activity was evident. Some excerpts taken from the teacher's journal confirmed this information:

“They used similar information from the audio to present their predictions. Some of them adapted the ideas from the audio and made new predictions”

“Some of them tried to include expressions, grammar structures, and words they had listened.”

“They mentioned several words and information mentioned in the listening.”

Difficulties to Answer

Through the implementation of the workshops, learners expressed to have difficulties to answer the questions in the listening tasks. Even by the end of the intervention, some of them still manifested to have some doubts and problems. At the beginning, their problems were related to the pronunciation of the speakers, and their

reasons changed progressively. By the end of the intervention, learners explained that their problems to answer the questions were related to the speed of the audios.

Some students reported to have difficulties to answer some of the questions. In most cases, these problems were related to the length of the audio and the way to organize their ideas at the moment of writing the answers. Thus, in the survey some of them expressed not to feel totally sure about their responses. Similarly, the following comment was taken from the teacher's journal:

“One student said that he understood but that it was difficult to write the answers fast.”

Difficulties Associated to Listening Comprehension

Similarly, although learners evidenced an improvement in their listening skills and the positive impact of the strategies on their performance, they still presented some problems to understand some important information from the audios. Throughout the intervention, learners stated to have some difficulties to understand the listening tasks. At first, these difficulties were related to the pronunciation, and during the development of the workshops, they expressed that their problems were related to the complexity of the topic or the length of the audio.

Most of the time, their reasons were related to their lack of concentration and vocabulary. Thus, although most of them expressed to be able to understand important points, they also expressed to have many difficulties to comprehend the message completely, thus, in some cases, they were not confident enough about what they listened to. The previous findings were evidenced by some excerpts taken from the journal, such as:

“One student said that it was fast.”

“Another student said that it was fast and the pronunciation difficult”

“Some of them said that it was difficult to understand, they were not sure about the words they had listened”

“One student said that she felt he had difficulties to understand the words”

“One student said that she could understand many things but felt unsure.”

Conclusions

Listening is an essential language skill, and it is necessary to strengthen it in the English classroom. Learners need to develop their listening comprehension skills in order to develop an effective communication. Therefore, this language skill should no longer be neglected in the English classroom. The following conclusions and pedagogical implications are drawn so that English teachers, researchers, learners, and the academic community, in general, can consider them if they intend to foster listening comprehension skills through the implementation of these strategies.

Positive Effect of Metacognitive Strategies on Learners' Outcomes

The implementation of metacognitive strategies in the English foreign language classroom significantly affects positively the development of EFL learners' listening comprehension skills. Strategies, such as *overviewing*, *planning a task*, and *selective attention* are helpful strategies for learners to activate their prior knowledge, to contextualize, and to prepare for the listening tasks. In addition, strategies, such as *identifying a purpose*, *setting goals*, and *finding out about language learning* are effective for learners to plan and to monitor their own listening process. The effective use of these strategies has a positive result on the improvement of learners' listening comprehension skill, in terms of the identification of context, words, and relevant information, which simultaneously help learners to answer questions based on what they listen to.

Furthermore, it is relevant to mention that metacognitive strategies also have effects on learners' affective domain since they show a positive attitude toward their use and express feelings of confidence and motivation when they observe that the strategies are effective. However, it is important to remark that the effectiveness of these metacognitive strategies also depends on variables, such as teacher's appropriate instruction, and learners' commitment to learning and improvement of their listening skills.

The Use of Metacognitive Strategies Promotes Learners' Autonomy and Awareness.

The implementation of metacognitive strategies is recommended in language teaching since it enhances learners' autonomy and awareness. The fact that learners think of their previous knowledge about a topic, identify the purpose of an activity, reflect on their needs and problems to understand, and prepare themselves for the activity. It provides them with learning skills from which they can benefit and transfer

it to other kind of tasks. Results from this research study evidence that metacognitive strategies can have advantages in both learners' listening comprehension skills and their abilities to become autonomous English language learners.

Impact of Metacognitive Strategies on Learners' Listening Comprehension and the Accuracy of Their Answers

The use of metacognitive strategies proves to have several benefits for EFL learners. For instance, they provide learners with tools to comprehend the information of an oral text, and to answer questions about it accordingly. The use of these strategies allows learners opportunities to take responsibility of their own learning while they prepare with the context and the vocabulary to deal with the listening tasks. Actions, such as identifying their problems to understand and selecting key actions in advance, which contribute to their understanding, and self-directed learning. Besides, learners can discuss some ideas about the topic, by reviewing vocabulary and sharing some thoughts with their partners, are actions, which make L2 listening comprehension easy. Therefore, their responses in a listening task are likely to be more precise.

The findings of this study have major implications on English language teachers' methodologies and teaching processes. That is why it is suggested that they implement metacognitive strategies in their lesson planning. On the other hand, learners become more aware of the roles that they play in their learning processes.

Additionally, by considering that this research study was conducted at an English language institute, other studies can be conducted in other contexts to investigate the effect of metacognitive strategies on learners' listening comprehension. Thus, replication of this study is advisable in order to confirm the outcomes of this inquiry and to adapt it to other contexts in order to have massive benefits, which can be applied to a larger population. (Public and private schools, universities, language institute, and so on).

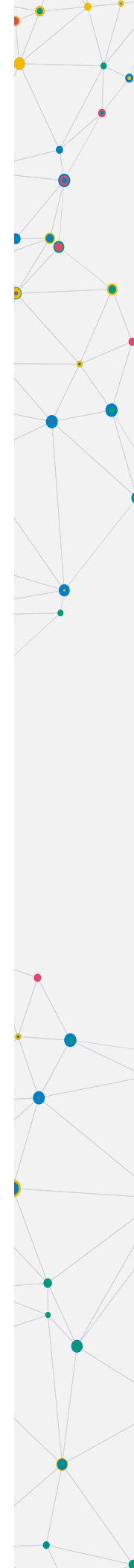
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