



Effects of Summarizing on Listening Comprehension in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade EFL Students

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Author's note

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### Abstract

This research intended to analyze the effectiveness of the summarizing strategy on listening comprehension in A1 students. The study was applied at a private high school in Guayaquil, Ecuador. The sample was 31 EFL students from eighth grade who showed ability at the A1.2 level in line with the Common European Framework of Reference. This study took the form of an action research and was supported by both quantitative and qualitative instruments. Students were first taught to summarize from written text and then transferred the skill to listening. Results showed that with a Cohen's  $d=0.05$ , summarizing does not have an impact on listening comprehension in A1 English learners. However, this research helped discover some of the difficulties students face when it comes to listening comprehension such as speaker's pace of delivery and lack of vocabulary. This study is aimed at authorities, teachers, and researchers who may be interested in improving listening comprehension within the Ecuadorian context.

*Keywords:* Listening comprehension, summarizing, EFL

### Resumen

La presente investigación pretendió analizar la efectividad de la estrategia del resumen en la mejora de la comprensión auditiva de estudiantes de inglés en el nivel A1. Dicho estudio se llevó a cabo en una institución privada de la ciudad de Guayaquil, Ecuador. La muestra de los participantes fue de 31 estudiantes de octavo año de básica quienes demostraron habilidad en el nivel A1.2 según el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia. El estudio tomó la forma de una investigación-acción la cual estuvo apoyada por instrumentos tanto cuantitativos como cualitativos. En primer lugar, los estudiantes aprendieron a resumir de textos escritos y luego transfirieron esta estrategia a la habilidad auditiva. Los resultados demostraron que con un coeficiente Cohen  $d=0.05$ , la técnica del resumen no tiene un impacto significativo en la comprensión auditiva de estudiantes del nivel A1. Sin embargo, esta investigación permitió descubrir las dificultades que los estudiantes tienen al momento de exponerse al inglés hablado, como son la rapidez del hablante y la falta de vocabulario. Este estudio va dirigido a autoridades, profesores e investigadores en el área de inglés como lengua extranjera que estén interesados en mejorar la comprensión auditiva dentro del contexto ecuatoriano.

*Palabras clave:* comprensión auditiva, resumen, inglés como lengua extranjera.

### **Effects of Summarizing on Listening Comprehension in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade EFL Students**

English is known as the lingua franca of the science and technology community (Gordin, as cited in Ministerio de Educación, 2016). According to its number of native speakers, English is placed as the third most spoken language all around the world; however, around 753 million people use it as a second language (Lane, 2019). Moreover, the Ecuadorian Educational System has adopted English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Ecuadorian EFL curriculum aims to provide students with the necessary tools to achieve competence at B1 level, in line with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) by the end of Bachillerato General Unificado (BGU) (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). Nevertheless, this goal has not been reached yet. In accordance with the Education First English Proficiency Index 2018, Ecuador ranked 65th in the global ranking and 13th in Latin America, which means that despite its improvements throughout the years, the country still has a low proficiency in English (L2).

The CEFR states that one of the traits of plurilingualism is the ability to express oneself in one language (or dialect, or variety) and understand a person speaking another (Council of Europe, 2018). Darançik (2018) stated that for successful and effective education and training in foreign language courses, it is necessary to develop and reinforce four basic language skills under the level and needs of the learners. These skills are reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Writing and speaking are considered productive skills since it is when people are actively using the language to express themselves. Whereas, reading and listening are receptive or input skills because people are getting language from an external source. Nonetheless, it does not mean that these skills do not contribute to communication; instead, they share this contribution with other skills by influencing the outcome indirectly (Kim & Pilcher, 2016). Besides, Gilakjani and

Sabouri (2016) claimed that the key to learning a language is to receive language input; in agreement with Ableeva and Stranks (2013), who asserted that listening comprehension is recognized as a pivotal component of L2 proficiency. Based on such assertions, listening comprehension is vital for effective L2 acquisition.

Still, EFL learners have crucial problems in listening comprehension because most of the learning programs only pay attention to grammar, reading, and vocabulary (Hamouda, as cited in Pinto, 2019), focusing on doing listening exercises rather than teaching listening skills (Al-Nafisah, 2019). In their study about problems in listening comprehension, Tersta and Novianti (2017) found out that one of the main issues in comprehension while listening was unknown words. Vandergrift (as cited in Tersta and Novianti, 2017) mentioned that the problem arises when students try to understand every word rather than the whole message. Considering that they are not taught how to listen in the second language (Vandergrift as cited in Khavazi, Yousefi & Kharaghani, 2018), students need instruction in developing proper listening comprehension strategies to ease the L2 acquisition process. In that event, summarizing may affect listening comprehension since, in Jones' words, it allows students to reprocess information and then reproduce it in their own words (cited in Khavazi et al., 2018).

In 2018, Khavazi et al. conducted a study, in a language institute of Bojnourd, Iran, in which they aimed to discover the effect of notetaking and summarizing strategies on B1 Iranian EFL learner's listening comprehension. In their results, they found that although both approaches enhanced this skill, summarizing turned out to be more effective than notetaking. However, there had not been a similar study within the Ecuadorian EFL context nor in a high school environment.

Therefore, this research was carried out at a private school with EFL students from eighth grade in Guayaquil, a city of Guayas province in Ecuador. These students were selected after taking a simulation of an English proficiency exam, in which the researcher found that they had a low performance in listening comprehension compared to the other skills. This paper, moreover, intended to discover what some of the factors affecting students' listening comprehension were, in addition to report the findings of an innovation that tried improving this skill.

### **Literature Review**

This action research intended to improve listening comprehension in beginner (A1) English learners through summarizing. The independent variable was summarizing, and the dependent variable was listening comprehension. Additionally, the innovation was planned by using backwards design. This section illustrates theories and concepts that support this study.

#### **Listening Skill**

Listening is a psychological phenomenon which takes place on a cognitive level inside people's head (Amari & Gorjian, 2019). From Çakir's (2018) point of view, listening goes beyond hearing and decoding utterances, to the process of constructing meaning from them. Notwithstanding the fact that listening is the most widely used language skill in normal daily life (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016), which can also help in the development of other language skills (Dunkel, as cited in Khavazi et al., 2018), it is not considered an essential skill on which teachers should concentrate (Çakir, 2018). Nevertheless, "it is not something that is just picked up (Schmidt, 2016, p. 16)." In other words, explicit listening instruction is necessary.

Listening is regarded as one's ability to understand what is heard (Pinto, 2019) and organize it into lexical elements to which meaning can be allocated (Rost, as cited in Amari & Gorjian, 2019). In 1995, the International Language Association (as cited in Wolvin, 2013,

p.104) defined listening as the "process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages."

In contradiction to what is usually believed, the act of listening is a highly complex process (Ross, cited in Çakir, 2018; Vandergrift, cited in Rahimi & Soleymani, 2015); in which the listener must activate schema, infer, predict, construct meaning, and use short and long term memory functions almost simultaneously (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). However, according to Schmidt (2016), it has been assumed that listening skills would be naturally acquired. Thus, it has been overlooked in EFL teaching practices (Al-Nafisah, 2019; Amari & Gorjian, 2019; Çakir, 2018; Wolf, Muijselaar, Boonstra & Bree, 2018) to the point that it is considered the Cinderella skill in second language learning (Amari & Gorjian, 2019; Ulum, 2015), because in spite of its important role in communication, it is the most neglected (Kök, 2017).

Nevertheless, many researchers have found that people spend about 45 percent of their time listening (Burely-Allen, cited in Çakir 2018; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Jafari & Hashim, 2012), compared to the 9 percent writing, 16 percent reading and 30 percent speaking (Lee & Hatesohl, 1993). In other words, listening is a crucial skill in communicating effectively. Furthermore, in Al-Nafisah's words, it is through listening that learners are introduced to a new language (2019), and such input is vital to learn it (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). It is, moreover, claimed as a fundamental skill that can develop another one (Tersta & Novianti, 2017). For instance, Çakir (2018) stated that effective listening instruction enables learners to develop comprehension and fluency in speaking as well as correct pronunciation. In accordance with Rost (as cited in Al-Nafisah, 2019), listening is crucial for effective and meaningful participation in oral conversation. For these reasons, teachers should enhance listening instruction during the EFL acquisition process to ensure its development.

**Listening Comprehension**

As reported by O'Malley and Kasper, comprehension takes place when the input and prior knowledge are linked against each other (cited in O'Malley, Chamot & Kupper, 1989). According to Wolf et al. (2018), comprehension entails the construction of a situation model, a mental representation conveyed by the words of a text. However, they also mentioned that this skill is not tied to the way the information is received. In other words, comprehension consists of decoding the message from the input, whether this is visual or oral.

Listening comprehension means that people understand what they have heard (Amari & Gorjian, 2019; Hogan, Adlof & Alonzo, 2014), through the processes of extracting and constructing meaning from this input (Kim & Pilcher, 2016). Listening Comprehension is regarded as an active and conscious process in which the listener focuses on selected aspects of aural input to construct new meaning and relating what was heard to existing knowledge while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfill the task requirements (O'Malley et al., 1989).

There are multiple language and cognitive skills involved in listening comprehension (Kim & Pilcher, 2016). According to Tyagi (2013), the listening process occurs in five stages, namely hearing, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding. Ableeva and Stranks (2013) described that the listener engages in two main processes while facing input; these are bottom-up and top-down (Nguyen & Newton, 2018). Furuya (2019) stated that the bottom-up process is the one in which the learner moves from the parts to the whole, therefore it involves the learner's language knowledge (Buck, 2001), which is knowing words, syntax, and grammar. This process begins at the lowest level of comprehension, identifying and decoding phonemes, then words, following linguistic meaning, and finally literal meaning.

On the other hand, top-down is the process during which the learners rely on their background and content knowledge to understand the input (Furuya, 2019) moving from the whole to the parts. These same processes occur while reading since reading and listening comprehension are two versions of the same comprehension skill (Wolf et al., 2018). When listening, however, people need to deal with different features unique to spoken language such as sound modification, hesitations, redundancy, repetitions, and corrections (Buck, 2001), to mention a few. Furthermore, Buck also pointed out that input processing does not always follow the order of the stages and that an interaction between the two processes is necessary. Broadly speaking, listening comprehension involves cognitive processing, which is interactive rather than linear, and it relies on linguistic, topical, and world knowledge (Rukthong & Brunfaut, 2019).

Therefore, listening comprehension is not an easy-to-acquire skill. It requires the acquisition and coordinated application of different language and cognitive skills (Kim & Pilcher, 2016) like memorization, use of set phrases, and “the ability to listen and understand to hear” (Kondrateva, Safina & Valeev, 2016, p.1051). Under Amari and Gorjian (2019), listening comprehension is the result of teaching methodology, which may lead to the automaticity of the cognitive processes which, according to Rukthong and Brunfaut, is thought to impact students' success positively (2019).

Nevertheless, Hogan et al., (2014) stated that listening comprehension has not received enough attention from the educational system, despite the benefits that it poses in language learning such as, in Kim and Pilscher's words, facilitating the productive and appropriate written expression of ideas (2016). Additionally, most of the activities proposed in coursebooks involve listening activities whose focus is product rather than process (Çakir, 2018). In contradiction to Tyagi (2013), who mentioned that some key elements that the listening skill contains are

identifying expressions and set of utterances that convey to create meaning and recalling important words or ideas. The objectives of listening comprehension instruction should consist, therefore, in developing abilities and mental functions such as attention and memory in addition to teaching students to highlight essential information in a stream (Kondrateva et al., 2016).

Listening comprehension is, without doubt, an unduly integrative skill that plays a fundamental role in the language learning and acquisition process. It enhances the comprehensible input (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016), therefore, promotes the development of other language skills (Ulum, 2015). However, the field lacks specific recommendations about how best to assess the development of listening comprehension or how to intervene when these skills are not up to par (Hogan et al., 2014). Then, insight is needed (Wolf et al., 2018) in order to move from the mere vocabulary instruction, which is insufficient for making improvements in reading or listening comprehension (Hogan et al., 2014); to the explicit attention to inferences, character's thoughts and emotions, comprehension monitoring (Kim & Pilcher, 2016), and the development of students' cognitive strategies such as reconstruction, which allows the listener to rely on words or phrases decoded from the spoken message to recreate parts of it so that comprehension is complete (Rukthong & Brunfaut, 2019).

### **Factors Affecting Listening Comprehension**

Tersta and Novianti (2017) stated that it is neither possible to get improvement nor achieve communication unless the learners understand the input. Nonetheless, comprehension of an oral input can pose a challenge to learners owing to the fact that there are many factors involved in this process. According to Kondrateva, et al. (2016), there are three groups of difficulties to understanding oral speech properly. First, there is auditive, which encircles phonemes, rhythm, and lexis. Then, semantic which involves understanding the objective,

motives, general idea, and the logic presentation of the information. Finally, there is the communicative group, which is based on the presentation of one-shot information, making it impossible to analyze single words; the pace of the speaker, and deviations from usual speech, such as using slang, reduced forms and prosodic features of English (Tersta & Novianti, 2017). As Macháčková (2009) mentioned, it is the perception of many students that it is difficult to understand oral input due to their inability to control the speed of the speakers' speech. Similarly, Boyle (1984) reported that some of the factors affecting listening comprehension the most were practice opportunity, level and background, general ability in English, and vocabulary. Listeners tend to have a limited repertoire of vocabulary, so when the speaker chooses a word that is not included in it, it creates confusion, and they may lose focus trying to understand one single word missing out the next part of the message (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

### **Summarizing**

Kintsch and Kintsch (cited in Hogan et al., 2014) stated that good “comprehenders” go beyond word and sentence comprehension to constructing a mental model that integrates a story's multiple propositions and prior knowledge into a cohesive whole. In Pečjak and Pirc's (2018) words, summarizing poses a learning strategy that allows students to find relevant information in a text and combine it into a coherent short version of the original text, called a summary. Furthermore, summarizing is a higher-level comprehension strategy that enhances long-term recall of information, influencing positively, therefore, individuals' learning (Khavazi et al., 2018). Since it requires students not only to determine essential ideas but also to produce it in their own words (Nurhayati & Fitriana, 2018), summarizing is a valuable skill in both academic and work-related tasks (Saddler, Asaro-Saddler, Moeyaert & Ellis-Robison, 2016).

Summarizing has been examined as an effective strategy in developing reading comprehension (Nurhayati & Fitriana, 2018). However, little exploration has been done in the listening skill field, in which it may present an advantage since both skills provide input. In 2018, Khavazi et al. conducted a research study about the effects of summarizing and note-taking on listening comprehension in a language institute in Iran. As a result, they discovered that both strategies affected it positively; summarizing, whereas, showed more significant benefits. Also, they highlighted some of the advantages this strategy poses to learning in general. As they stated, “it can be seen as an output-based activity in which language learners need to produce language rather than just receive it (p.49).” Moreover, Nurhayati and Fitriana (2018) claimed that apart from allowing learners to identify key ideas, summarizing also lets them reduce the information to critical points for a more concise understanding.

According to Kato (2018), to produce a summary, the learner is assumed to follow three stages; these include understanding the text, identifying the main idea, and integrating these ideas into a shorter text. It consists of deleting, generalizing, and integrating information (Pečjak & Pirc, 2018); therefore, producing a summary is deemed a complex cognitive skill (Kato, 2018). While working on summarizing a spoken passage, learners engage in an even higher challenge. A summary like this needs more elaboration and recoding since language learners need to first listen to a message, comprehend it, identify the main ideas, and reword it in their own words (Khavazi et al., 2018). This process allows students to reconstruct, which means to rely on words or phrases decoded from the passage to recreate parts of the text missed, if any, while listening to make comprehension complete (Rukthong & Brunfaut, 2019). Additionally, Khavazi et al. declared that this active reconstruction of meaning through summarizing might have led to the depth of processing and deeper learning of students in their research (2018).

Summarizing stimulates students to determine essential ideas and consolidate critical details to support them (Nurhayati & Fitriana, 2018). Moreover, it is an indicator of comprehension (Pečjak & Pirc, 2018). Thus, it can be used as an assessment method to identify whether students are learning. On the other hand, it can equip the instructor with first-hand information regarding the learners' understanding or lack of it (Khavazi et al., 2018), which constitutes a source for future methods or techniques to be planned and applied.

Cassazza (as cited in Nurhayati & Fitriana, 2018) expressed that the teaching of summarizing increases students' comprehension of a reported (written) text. It is believed that this technique may have similar effects on spoken language since it requires active listening (Khavazi et al., 2018). Besides, due to the processes involved in their production, summaries play a crucial role in today's assessment method; either self- or teacher-assessed (Kamil, cited in Khavazi et al., 2018).

### **Backwards Design**

Backwards design is a thorough process of curriculum planning which is divided in three stages (Yurtseven & Altun, 2016) namely desired results, the evidence, and learning plan. It takes its name thanks to this order of design, in which all the techniques, strategies, and materials used for teaching and assessment are selected based on a clear conception of the learning goals (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). In other words, by following backwards design, teachers should start by stating clear goals and then move on into the strategies and activities to reach them. Therefore, the innovation in this study was planned by using backwards design.

After analyzing both the problem and the literature this paper intended to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent does summarizing affect listening comprehension?
2. What are the factors affecting the development of listening comprehension in EFL learners?

### **Innovation**

This innovation aimed to develop students' listening comprehension through the summarizing strategy. It also tried to find out what the factors affecting this skill are. It took around 28 academic hours with 31 eighth grade students. To carry out this innovation, students needed a device in which they could practice listening at home. However, at school they were provided with the necessary devices to work in class. The lesson plan (Appendix A), which included the strategies and activities for this study, was designed following backwards design.

Prior starting the innovation students were assessed with the Key English Test (KET) for Schools listening paper (Appendix B), these results were used as a reference point for students' listening comprehension ability. Once their level was recorded, students learned how to summarize from written text. Then, they transferred this strategy to listening by being exposed to and summarizing audio passages related to the topic of the unit they were working on. They used a summarizing worksheet (Appendix C) which was adapted from Widdowson (2018). This was called "Let's Sum it Up!". It consisted of listening to an audio passage, namely a conversation or a monologue, and taking notes of the most important parts of it. Then, according to the length of the audio, they were provided with an amount of "money", and each word had a "price". For instance, if they had \$3,00 to spend, and if each word was worth \$0.10, then they could only use up to 30 words in their summary.

Once the summary was finished, it was self-assessed using a checklist (Appendix D) provided by the teacher. Additionally, students interchanged their summary with their

classmates, and they would also assess it with the same checklist. If needed, students would use that feedback to correct their summary. The final stage of the summary was to use that piece of information to answer some comprehension questions from the audio passage. Therefore, if the students could answer most or all the questions correctly, then their summary was considered to have fulfilled its purpose of getting just the main idea from the passage. If they got less than 50% of the questions wrong, feedback was provided by the teacher and the flaws were discussed in the class. The number of questions varied according to the length and complexity of the audio. In addition, given that the students were from eighth grade, and relatively young, they would put a happy face every time they got a correct answer.

Moreover, they were exposed to sample listening tests from KET to assess their progress. At the end of the innovation they took a different sample of the KET listening paper (Appendix E) to assess their listening comprehension development. The final assessment was overseen by the teacher himself.

### **Methodology**

This study was conducted as an action research which studied the effect of summarizing on listening comprehension in Ecuadorian EFL 8<sup>th</sup> graders. This section provides information regarding the research design, participants, variables, and instruments which were used throughout this study. Participants' level is described below, and instruments are mentioned in the order they were used.

### **Research Design**

This research took the form of an action research, which involves learning by doing (O'Brien, cited in Jacobs, 2018). It focused on analyzing the effects of summarizing on listening comprehension in eighth graders, alongside with discovering the factors that affect this skill in

EFL students through learning logs and a focus group. Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analyzed to provide the results.

According to Jacobs (2018, p.34), “action research is a type of research which is conducted with research participants rather than on participants.” Hence, action research empowers a collaborative process of knowledge-production which leads to new insights for both researcher and research subjects (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). It draws attention, therefore, to previously overlooked areas of qualitative methodology (Jacobs, 2018), making it suitable for the purpose of this study.

On the other hand, qualitative research is a process which, through iteration, leads to improve the understanding of the phenomenon under study by making new significant distinctions that result from the researcher getting closer to it (Aspers & Corte, 2019) by exploring and analyzing concepts, points of view and real-life contexts (Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, cited in Kalman, 2019).

### **Participants**

Participants of this study were 31 EFL learners (15 females and 16 males) from a private school in Guayaquil. According to an official Cambridge Examination (Flyers), they were at A1.2 level in line with the CEFR. They were in eighth grade around the ages of 11 to 12. They were selected due to their development in English learning since they were at the highest level according to the internal institution placement test for eighth grade, which was administered at the beginning of the school year. However, after analyzing its results, it came to the researcher’s attention that they had several problems regarding their listening comprehension. These students took nine hours of English a week; additionally, they had in-home practice using the online Moodle platform that the school provided.

### **Variables**

The summarizing strategy posed as the independent variable, which might affect positively the listening comprehension skill, which was the dependent variable. Additionally, the qualitative variable were the factors affecting listening comprehension eighth graders EFL students.

## **Instruments**

To answer the first question: *to what extent does summarizing affect listening comprehension?* The researcher used the Key English Test (KET) for Schools listening paper examination from Cambridge University as a pre-test and post-test (Appendices B and E). This provided an overall appraisal of students' comprehension in a variety of contexts (Cambridge English, 2016). The listening section from KET for Schools consisted of five parts, each with one or more recordings and a set of questions (See appendix F for details about each task). Texts included monologues or dialogues based on authentic situations. Furthermore, it covered a range of listening skills on a range of everyday topics (Cambridge English, 2016). These traits allowed a more accurate measurement of the students' comprehension aligned to the standard A2-understanding conversation between speakers in line with the CEFR:

Can generally identify the topic of discussion around him/her that is conducted slowly and clearly. Can recognize when speakers agree and disagree in a conversation conducted slowly and clearly (Council of Europe, 2018, p.56).

Additionally, the summaries that the students produced were self- and peer-assessed using a checklist adapted from Kato (2018). In her study "Exploring the transfer relationship of summarizing skills in L1 and L2," Kato used a rubric which covered a wide range of criteria to assess summaries. That rubric was adapted into a checklist to ease understanding from the students, knowing that they were A1. The criteria in the checklist covered main idea coverage, to

check if the students had not added any unnecessary information; language use, to measure student's ability to use their own words in the summary; integration, checked for coherence and cohesion; and source use, whether students have stuck to the number of words allowed for the summary. The checklist used a satisfaction scale using faces to make it more engaging for the students, in addition to a space to reflect on their work, where they could write what may have gone wrong.

As for the second question, *what are the factors affecting the development of listening comprehension in EFL learners?* All the students completed a survey, and two learning logs. Additionally, a focus group was applied to 10 randomly chosen students. The survey (Appendix G) served as a demographical measure and a way to discover whether they were exposed to English input outside the classroom setting. The learning log (Appendix H) and the focus group questionnaire (Appendix I) were created by the researcher based on the literature in this study. Both instruments aimed to obtain qualitative information of what was keeping the students from understanding the listening input.

### **Data Analysis**

Data was collected from the results of the pre- and post-tests. It was put into an Excel worksheet and ran through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software from the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM). This program provided with the descriptive statistics (minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation) to answer the first research question. To answer the second research question, there was a survey, two learning logs, and a focus group. The information gathered by them was organized based on common patterns in the students' responses.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Prior to undertaking this research, a written approval was obtained from the School Director General. Then, the participants were fully informed of the research process and they were presented with its objectives. The strategies and the importance for the education community were discussed in the classroom, as well as the methodology and duration. Given the age of the students, confidentiality was pivotal in the research process, so parents were asked for permission to take photos of the process. However, students' faces were not photographed, and they were assigned a code to identify their work. Pictures and codes were only kept in order to provide with evidence of performance. Finally, the students were explained that their participation in the study did not represent a benefit nor a harm in their grades, and they were free to refuse their participation in any stage of the process.

### **Results**

The data, to answer the two research questions, collected during the duration of this action research is presented in this section. In regard to the first question: *to what extent does summarizing affect listening comprehension?* results were obtained from the pre-test and post-test; they allowed to provide a quantitative analysis. For the second question: *what are the factors affecting the development of listening comprehension in EFL learners?* qualitative results were obtained through learning logs, a focus group, and they were categorized by common patterns in the students' response.

### Pre-test and Post-test

After the pre-test was administered, there were some results which showed that listening comprehension was the skill in which students struggled the most. However, after taking the post-test, it was shown that the innovation did not have a direct effect on this skill.

Table 1

*Test Results: Pre- and Post-test*

	N	Pre-test		Post-test		<i>d</i>
		M	SD	M	SD	
Test results	31	18.29	4.23	18.06	3.48	0.05
<i>p</i> <0.05						0.35

Note. N= number of participants, M=mean, SD= standard deviation, *d*= Cohen's

The table above shows the result of the pre- and post-tests. Before the innovation, students mean score on listening skills was 18.29 with a standard deviation of 4.23. After the innovation was applied, students mean score slightly decreased to 18.06 with a standard deviation of 3.48, with a *p* value of 0.35. These results suggest that the summarizing strategy does not affect listening comprehension in A1 students. Additionally, Cohen's effect size was 0.05 which indicates it had little impact on learning.

As for the second question *what are the factors affecting the development of listening comprehension in EFL learners?* Students' comments were collected through two learning logs, and a focus group.

## Learning Logs

The students completed two learning logs in order to analyze their point of view on the topic of the research, specifically on the difficulties while doing listening exercises and whether they considered summarizing as a useful strategy to improve this skill. The information gathered in the learning logs is mentioned in this section.

In the first learning log, students answered the following question *from your point of view, what difficulties do you face when you have to do listening activities?* This was applied in the first stages of the innovation. Once the students' answers were gathered and analyzed, four main difficulties showed up namely, speaker's pace, pronunciation, vocabulary, and environment. It is worth mentioning that out of the 31 participants in this study, 23 provided a response to this question. 56.5% of the students mentioned that it was difficult to understand audio input due to the pace speakers were delivering the message. Participant SLC-003 said, *"I have the difficulty that at times they heard (spoke) very fast, so I get lost"* (Appendix J). Regarding speaker's pronunciation, 30.4% claimed that it was difficult because the audio had a pronunciation they were not familiarized with. Student SLC-010 expressed, *"The difficulty that I have with a listening comprehension is that sometimes they pronounce the words very quickly or in a different way and that causes me a bit of confusion."* (Appendix J). Twenty six percent (26%) of the students wrote that they could not differentiate between homophones. *"I think that my problem in the listening, is that I can't know what word it is, because there are words that sound the same, but the spelling is different. So, I get confused,"* said student SLC-006. Finally, 21.7% of the participants stated that they could not understand because of their surroundings and equipment problems. As student SLC-009 mentioned, *"My problem is that sometimes when I*

*listen to an audio, I do not understand it well by several things such as: the noise around me, the low volume or that the characters speak very fast and I do not understand them.” (Appendix J).*

The second learning log was applied when the innovation was about to finish, students were asked *how summarizing was helping them to improve in listening and to describe their experience*. Twenty four out of the thirty one participants provided an answer and it was discovered that the perception of most of them was that summarizing helped them focus on the main ideas of the audio. Student SLC-030 stated, *“Well this process helps to identify the main ideas from the listening and take notes to help during the audio, now this is not so difficult in the listening.”* Similarly, participant SLC-012 claimed, *“The strategy has helped me get the most important (information) from a text and, eliminate repeated ideas and make a short but good summary”*(Appendix J).

### **Focus Group**

The focus group was applied at the end of the innovation to gather students’ opinion regarding difficulties in listening comprehension and the effectiveness of summarizing in improving the listening skill. Ten participants were randomly chosen and interviewed following appendix I. After analyzing the data collected, it was found out that students considered listening to be an important skill given that it allows them to communicate more effectively. They also mentioned that one of the biggest difficulties they face when listening is the speaker’s pace, followed by the similarity in some word’s pronunciation, and problems in their surroundings when doing a listening activity. Students were also asked whether they had any strategy to cope with the issues mentioned above, and the most common answer was that they move on to the next question and wait for the audio to repeat. Finally, most of the participants claimed that

summarizing was a good strategy since it allowed them to focus only on the most important parts of the audio.

### Discussion

This action research intended to improve listening comprehension in eight graders by using summarizing. Despite the fact that this strategy turned out not to have the desired effect in this level, this section presents the results in light of the theories cited before. However, it was possible to analyze students' perception regarding the difficulties in understanding oral input in English, said results are also included in this section.

Answering the first research question *to what extent summarizing affects listening comprehension*, according to the Cohen's effect size of  $d=0.05$ , summarizing does not have a significant impact on improving listening comprehension in A1 students. Khavazi et al. (2018) stated that summarizing is a *high-level* strategy, therefore A1 students may lack some of the language knowledge to fully apply it and get the most of it. In addition, it was mentioned that summarizing from oral input poses a greater challenge because, according to Buck (2001), the listeners need to cope with specific characteristics of spoken language such as sound modification, hesitations, redundancy, repetitions, and corrections. These might have made it difficult for the students to understand the message completely. Moreover, students at an A1 level are still developing the bottom-up process of comprehension, which consists of identifying parts of the input as words, syntax, and grammar to construct meaning from them (Buck, 2001; Furuya, 2019). Thus, A1 students' repertoire at this stage is still limited, as opposed to the B1 students to whom Khavazi et al. applied a similar innovation in 2018, which has been pointed out as one of the main difficulties in listening comprehension (Boyle, 1984).

Respecting the second question *what the factors affecting the development of listening comprehension in EFL learners are*, it was detected that most of the students considered the speed of the speaker to be the most difficult aspect to cope with. This was mentioned by Underwood (1989) and Macháčková (2009), students feel they do not understand because they cannot control the speaker's pace of delivery. Secondly, in accordance with Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), students' lack of vocabulary was also mentioned as a restraint to fully comprehend the input. Students also claimed that they heard some pronunciation with which they were not familiarized, thus comprehension was not accomplished. As stated by Tersta and Novianti (2017), deviations from usual speech, such as using slang, reduced forms and prosodic features of English makes it harder for listeners to understand. Furthermore, in some situations when conversations are spontaneous, there are some vague signals such as pauses, gestures, loudness, pitch change, or different patterns in intonation, which are commonly missed by less proficient listeners (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Finally, few participants expressed that the surroundings were also a factor that impeded understanding. Nevertheless, it has not been considered a major issue by previous authors.

Despite not being effective on improving overall listening comprehension in A1 English learners, students regarded summarizing as a useful strategy which allowed them to focus primarily on the most important ideas of the input rather than on meaningless details. This was claimed by Nurhayati and Fitriana (2018), summarizing stimulates students to determine essential ideas and consolidate critical details to support them. Thus, other areas of the language acquisition process can be analyzed to discover how this strategy helps at this stage of learning.

## Conclusions

Summarizing is a highly useful strategy to enhance comprehension, however it should be used in higher levels of English proficiency when the students have a larger repertoire of vocabulary to understand a wider range of situations. It also came to the researcher's attention that A1 students require more practice developing their bottom-up comprehension process, meaning that they ought to increase their language knowledge at a slower pace, starting from learning phonemes, words, and basic communication features such as voice inflections, repetitions, and meaning negotiation. Then, as their proficiency grows, they can be exposed to higher level strategies.

It was shown in the students' inability to keep up with a native pace of speaking that more exposure is needed to improve listening comprehension. This is understandable, considering the circumstances of the L2 acquisition process within a foreign language context, as it is the Ecuadorian situation, where there is little or no need to use English outside the classroom setting. On the other hand, it is also necessary to present students with various features of spoken language such as most commonly used slangs, and different accents so that in the long run they can easily understand a variety of contexts.

It goes without saying that vocabulary plays an important role in developing comprehension, students should be able to differentiate among synonyms, antonyms, and homophones to interpret oral input correctly and decipher the intended meaning. However, as their vocabulary grows, their contextual knowledge should also do so. Therefore, in this way the aim ought to be developing students bottom-up and top-down processes simultaneously.

Lastly, despite having been proved not effective in improving listening comprehension in A1 students, summarizing may still have benefited them improve in other areas of the language acquisition process. Thus, more research is still necessary.

### **Limitations and Scope**

This study was limited to 31 A1 EFL language learners from a private high school in Ecuador. It was also limited mostly to the classroom setting with little outside exposure to the language due to the students' responsibilities to the other subjects in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. The scope of this research was to prove how effective was summarizing in improving listening comprehension. Therefore, if there was any other skill benefited by this strategy, it is not included in this paper.

Another important limitation to this research was the time of application. It only lasted 28 academic hours. Thus, it was not possible to fully develop other areas involved in listening comprehension such as increasing vocabulary and knowledge of other communication features. However, it helped discovering students' perception towards factors that impede their comprehension while being exposed to oral input.

### **Recommendations**

After analyzing the result of this action research, these are some of the recommendations for future researchers. First, choose the strategy according to the learners' level to maximize the benefits from it. For instance, at an A1 level notetaking may be of greater use than summarizing. Secondly, allotting time for mastering the strategy prior to starting the innovation can be more useful, and end up with more realistic results, since the students will focus primarily on the task at hand rather than on learning how to summarize on the go. Moreover, it is necessary to study

the effect of other strategies within the Ecuadorian context such as increasing vocabulary and longer exposure to the target language. Finally, it would be helpful to analyze how the students improved their writing skill thanks to the repeated exposure they had to writing summaries.

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**Appendix A**

**Design from your Goals**

Available upon request.

**Appendix B**

**Pre-Test KET for School Listening Paper**

Available upon request.

**Appendix C**

**Post-Test KET for School Listening Paper**

Available upon request.

**Appendix D**

**Listening Tasks from KET for Schools**

Available upon request.

**Appendix E**

**Summarizing Worksheet**

Available upon request.

**Appendix F**

**Summary Checklist**

Available upon request.

**Appendix G**

**Survey**

Available upon request.

**Appendix H**

**Learning Logs**

Available upon request.

**Appendix I**

**Focus Group Questionnaire**

Available upon request.

**Appendix J**

**Learning Logs Responses.**

Available upon request.

**Appendix K**

**Focus Group transcript**

Available upon request.