Enhancing Listening Comprehension through Oral Paraphrasing with Podcasts

Génessi Geomara Valencia Hidrovo

Guide: Ms. María Rossana Ramírez Ávila

Enhancing Listening Comprehension through Oral Paraphrasing with Podcasts

Nowadays, the English language is considered a universal language. In different countries, English has been included as a necessary language for the different exchanges of information, whether in the personal, work or educational sphere. Thanks to this, many educational institutions have chosen to implement it in their academic curriculum from the first years of the educational cycle (Peña, 2019).

Therefore, it can be inferred the need to learn and master the English language since it will be of great help in many social aspects. One of the most important skills when learning a language is related to the listening skills. The listening skills allow the total understanding of a language due to the fact that it helps in the understanding of words, structures and the basic contents of a foreign language. Individuals must achieve an effective pronunciation of words and learn how these words can be associated within their environment and communication process (Kirana, 2016). While Albán (2021) pointed out that listening skills help the understanding of those unwritten messages and in which, attention must be paid to non-visible factors such as sounds, to capture the main message.

However, most of the students tend to show different difficulties or manifestations regarding the listening skills, for instance, the total comprehension of details in oral texts, audios or recorded conversations. These manifestations include the students' difficulty to orally paraphrase an audio that they have heard. Students also fail to establish the main idea and characteristics of an audio. However, there are other indicators related to the lack of interest shown by students when doing listening comprehension activities. Some activities are considered to be tedious and boring for the students, so they tend to talk when the listening activities take place affecting their understanding of the topic and therefore, their academic performance (Kirana, 2016).

According to Kavaliauskienė and Anusienė (2009), podcasts are audios that can be found via internet, have the facility to be downloaded in different formats and can be played in a variety of technological devices. The use of podcasts allows students to have access to endless audios, which will facilitate the learning of vocabulary and improve their listening skills independently, that is, without needing the teacher's guidance or being inside the classroom. Given these characteristics, the objective of this research was focused on identifying students' perceptions regarding the use of podcasts as well as analyzing the improvement of this skill through the implementation of the oral paraphrasing as a learning strategy.

Ramos (2019) explained that podcasts are an effective tool to improve these skills but it is necessary to train teachers in the use of technological devices in general, since they have become an essential material for the development of all English' skills. On the other hand, Aucapiña (2020) concluded that podcasts contributed significantly to improving the listening Comprehension of learners, taking into consideration that these types of audios make the learning process, easier and more dynamic. These authors' main idea involves the fact that the podcast can help in the students' listening comprehension when listening to them carefully, often and extensively.

Ngan (2018) said that paraphrasing is considered a learning strategy for students as well as a teaching strategy to guide students' comprehension. In Ngan's study, reference is made to a study conducted in 2009, where the authors demonstrated that the technique of written paraphrasing hinders students' communication skills. On the other hand, Donahue and Pidek (1993) in their research showed that, "The ultimate goal for students, of course, is for paraphrasing to become a spontaneous and 'covert' activity that enhances listening comprehension monitoring and note-taking" (p. 41). Therefore, it can be inferred that oral

paraphrases should often be used in language teaching due to their considerable benefits for students.

Hence, this research will be carried out at a private school with B1 level students from ninth grade in Guayaquil, Guayas, Ecuador. These students were selected after taking a survey about certain characteristics regarding their listening skills, in which the researcher found that they have some difficulties that prevent them from mastering listening comprehension of main ideas from audios. This proposal aims to prove that oral paraphrasing with the use of podcasts will be a feasible strategy to apply in the classroom and to improve any kind of deficiencies in the students' listening comprehension. Also, this proposal will benefit the teacher's management of strategies to work in the listening classes and will be of great help to students in the acquisition of the English language. This will be possible by oral paraphrasing facilitated by podcast that will give the students more ways to work the listening comprehension of the audios.

Literature Review

The literature review contains information relevant to the variables of this study, which are listening comprehension and their improvement through the use of oral paraphrasing and podcasts. Thus, the independent variable of this study is oral paraphrasing through podcasts while the dependent variable is listening comprehension. Different studies and concepts are presented that will cover listening for main ideas, listening strategies, the concept and function of and benefits of oral paraphrasing.

Listening Comprehension

Listening Comprehension is considered one of the most complex English skills to develop. Due to this, it is considered that audios are the best materials to work on this skill

and podcasts are one of the formats par excellence since they work on different skills such as listening, reading and even speaking (Chaikovska et al., 2019). At the same time, Gumilang (2019) commented that listening comprehension offers an individual the ability to understand and build their own concept of the information heard. The development and enhancement of the listening comprehension will allow students to learn and master a language.

However, this skill is very complex to master perfectly due to the different factors that may be interfering in the correct development such as the lack of listening retention, contractions of the language, the use of colloquial language as well as the rhythm and intonation (Mukhdar & Yeni, 2019).

According to Rivas (2016), the listener as a language processor has to master the following listening skills:

a. **Processing sound/Perception skill**

As the complete perception does not arise only from the source of the sound, the listeners segment the sounds and detect a limit number of words, contractions, vocabulary; emphasizing the longest words. This must be supported by intonation and other characteristics related to the language such as the tone and speed of pronunciation, the order of the words, basic syntactic patterns and cohesion devices, among others.

b. **Processing meaning/Analysis skill**

Listeners classify a speech into sections by identifying redundant material, maintaining and organizing pieces of information to avoid much detail. In the educational field, this skill can help students anticipate the main message that the speaker wants to convey.

c. Processing knowledge and context/Synthesis skill

Each context has its own frame of reference, social attitudes, and themes. From this, listening is seen as the interaction between language and the brain that involves the activation of contextual information and prior knowledge. This will allow the listener to guess, organize and confirm the sense of context.

Teaching Listening

Taking into consideration the importance of listening in the acquisition of a foreign language, that teachers take into account different teaching strategies and methodologies that allow them to cover the needs of each of the students. Teachers should also be aware that each of the students have different learning styles.

For that, Prada (2014) stated in his study six principles that must be followed in order to succeed in the teaching process with the use of podcasts as a didactic material (1) Include students in different simple activities that reinforce their listening comprehension; (2) Employ motivational strategies that lead to the active participation of students; (3) Use authentic listening materials such as songs, weather forecast and talk shows, among others; (4) Select audio with content that is attractive to students and that matches their interests and tastes; (5) Instill in students the desire to learn through strategies that can be applied in their homes; (6) Repeat the audios as many times as necessary in order for students to become familiar with pronunciation and vocabulary.

Oral Paraphrasing

To construct a new concept from another one is commonly known as paraphrasing, which enables English learners to build their own knowledge from the ideas that they got from reading a text or listening to an audio (Press, 2014). Therefore, when learning English

as a Foreign Language, paraphrasing is an efficient tool to understand better the meanings and convey an idea that goes in accordance to what was heard. That is why, teachers must pay attention to this learning strategy since it can enhance the listening comprehension.

On the other hand, Rogerson (2017) pointed out that teachers must be careful when using this strategy in classes since it can be directed to a different context than the original one. The student can have their own interpretations of an audio and paraphrase based on that. Therefore, the teacher must guide the students in the complete understanding of the audios so that the oral paraphrasing is effective and what is expressed goes according to what was heard.

Podcasts

According to Solano and Sánchez (2010), a podcast is known as a multimedia sound file that can be accessed on different web pages and that covers popular topics such as music or various movies. In an educational setting, podcasts are of great help to involve the student in a class with listening activities, with the advantage that the student can continue to improve these skills even when they are not in the classroom. Due to these, podcasts have changed the educational landscape by promoting the free dissemination of information.

Backwards Design

Backwards design is known as a process in which a curricular planning is divided into three stages in order to obtain the desired results in the academic process (Yurtseven & Altun, 2017). For this proposal, backwards design will help establish the order of priorities in three stages (1) The teacher will establish the learning goals as well as the understandings to be developed; (2) the authentic performances of the students will be defined; (3) the activities that will allow the achievement of the established goals will be planned, emphasizing the

resources and strategies that need to be implemented so that the students will be able to build their own learning (Chavez, 2015).

This section of the literature review contained the different investigations that dealt with the topics of listening comprehension and the use of podcasts as a learning strategy to strengthening this skill. However, none of these investigations have combined the use of podcasts with oral paraphrasing to enhance the listening comprehension of English as a foreign language. This proposal aims to find an answer to the proposed research questions:

1) To what extend does oral paraphrasing with podcast improve student's listening comprehension?

2) Which are the causes that affect the students' listening comprehension??

Innovation

This innovation is directed to enhance students' listening comprehension through the oral paraphrasing with podcasts as a learning strategy. It will also try to find out which are the causes affecting this skill in the students. The development of this study will take around 24 academic hours with the participation of 25 ninth grade students that belong to the B1 English levels in accordance to the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001).

One of the main keys for this innovation will be the access the students have to technological devices as well as the facility to access the internet to also work on these activities at home. At the educational institution students have access to various devices to work in classes. The lesson plan (Appendix 1) will include strategies and activities for this study, which are based on a backwards design. This process provides a guideline so that the student can capture the ideas provided by the teacher as well as understand the message of

different audios, in this case podcasts, so that the students can explain them in their own words.

First, the teacher - researcher will provide students a survey (Appendix 2) prior to conducting the listening activities and oral paraphrasing with podcasts. After this, the role of the teacher will be to guide the students in the instructions to carry out the listening activities that will work on improving students' listening comprehension. These activities will be done individually or in groups.

The podcasts will be chosen based on the level of listening skills of the students so there can be a total understanding of the audios. Therefore, the oral paraphrasing will be used as a method of verification that the main idea of the podcasts was understood and student's comprehension can be built. The activities that the students will carry out consist of 6 multiple-choice questions based on the audio and that will help them to have access to key points that will serve as a guide to later paraphrase the audio. It should be noted that the audios to be used will be of various topics and that are attractive to students, this will allow them to pay more attention to the audios and actively participate in the activities.

Research Methodology

This proposal is based on an Action Research, a type of investigation in which people belonging to a group or community actively participate in the research process, contributing to the identification of the problem under study and the identification of possible solutions (Salas, 2019). In this section, relevant research information is described such as the instruments of the investigation as well as the participants and ethical considerations. A very detail description of participants, instruments and data analysis will be included.

Participants

This study will be directed to the students of ninth grade from a private language school in Guayaquil. The students are between the ages 13 and 14 years old with an acceptable economic and social status, thus, they all have access to the internet and have the necessary technological equipment for the development of this proposal. Of these 25 students, 16 are girls and 9 boys, likewise 24 students are mixed race and one student is Asian. In other words, 24 students have Spanish as their mother tongue and one student has Chinese-Mandarin as his mother tongue.

Instruments

The research instruments that are going to be applied for this study are surveys and pre –posttest. As for the first research question, "To what extend does oral paraphrasing with podcast improve student's listening comprehension?" Pre and posttest are going to be used, which are based on the Preliminary English Test (PET) from Cambridge University (Appendix 3 and 5). Both pre and posttest will be divided in two parts: the first part will contain 6 multiple-choice questions where each of them will have 3 options from which students will have to choose the answer that matches what they heard in the audio. In the second part, students will listen to six different audios on different topics. Each one accompanied by a single multiple-choice question, which will test the students' listening comprehension since the questions were elaborated based on a specific part of the conversation. It should be noted that all audio activities will be accompanied by activities that will require students to paraphrase what they listened. After this, the students will share what they wrote with their classmates orally so that everyone has a full understanding of the topic and work on the listening comprehension.

For the research question, *"Which are the causes that affect the students' listening comprehension?"* a survey of all students belonging to the population will be used. The

survey (Appendix 2) is used to determine the factors that make it difficult to enhance the listening comprehension in students, as well as to identify if the teacher uses adequate teaching materials and strategies for the development of activities in class that help to increase the motivation in students. It should be noted that the survey will be prepared based on a Likert scale that allow defining the concordance parameters, and measuring the attitudes of the population based on a topic or problem (McLeod, 2019). The survey will contain 16 statements and 3 open questions, all of these items will be related to the level of the students' listening activities and the type of tools or materials they use to work on this skill. Similarly, the open questions will inquire into the difficulties that students have when listening to any type of audio in English, as well as whether the activities that are worked on, both in class and at home, have helped them to improve these difficulties.

The application of these tests will determine the level of mastery of the students of their listening comprehension. The application of these tests will be accompanied by audios of short length and a multiple-choice questions activity that will allow to measure the level of listening comprehension. According to the parameters established by the CEFR, the students who are at this level of English have managed to surpass the knowledge of the basic levels but they are not able to fully master the language (Council of Europe, 2001).

Data Analysis

For the data analysis of the research question, "To what extend does oral paraphrasing with podcast improve student's listening comprehension?" the data will be gathered through the application of the pre and posttests which will be analyzed using the SPSS program in order to obtain the mean (M), standard deviation (SD) and Sample. This will be done in order to check if what will be proposed in this study is or is not significant to improve listening comprehension in students.

On the other hand, for the data analysis of the research question, "Which are the causes that affect the students' listening comprehension?" The responses of the students collected in the survey will be organized in tables in the program Microsoft Excel. After this, tables will be made in order to visualize the percentage of each answer and determine the level of knowledge the students have regarding the listening skill. Finally, a short analysis will be made explaining the given results.

Ethical Considerations

To carry out this study, a written authorization is going to be obtained from the director of the educational institution. From this, it will be possible to have access to the participants of the population and to apply the research instruments. The proposal, the importance and the learning strategies are going to be explained to the educational community as well as the data collection process and the socialization of the surveys and tests. Thus, the students who participate in this proposal will be informed in advance of the importance of this strategy and emphasize that their identity will be kept anonymous. In addition, they will be informed that their participation in this process will not affect in any way their academic performance or it is somehow mandatory, so they will have the right to refuse to participate in the study if they want to.

References

Ahmadi, M. (2016). The Importance of Listening Comprehension in Language Learning. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, *1*(1), 7–10. http://ijreeonline.com/browse.php?a_code=A-10-1-2&

Albán Silvana. (2021). *The Podcasts and the English Language Listening Skill Development* [Universidad Técnica de Ambato]. https://repositorio.uta.edu.ec/bitstream/123456789/32626/1/Belquis Silvana Alban Benavides.pdf

Aucapiña, S. (2020). *Analyses of EFL listening strategies for listening comprehension applied on baccalaureate students at the Dr. Alfredo Baquerizo Moreno Public High School, scholastic period 2018 – 2020.* (Issue September) [Universidad Católica Santiago de Guayaquil]. http://repositorio.ucsg.edu.ec/bitstream/3317/15638/1/T-UCSG-POS-MEIE-18.pdf

Chaikovska, O., Zbaravska, L., & Bilyk, T. (2019). Podcasts in teaching EFL for students majoring in engineering. *Engineering for Rural Development*, *18*, 1915–1920. https://doi.org/10.22616/ERDev2019.18.N344

Chávez, M. (2015). El uso del backwards design para introducir la metodologia de aprendizaje basado en problemas en las planificaciones de docentes de nivel secundaria [Universidad Casa Grande]. In *DSpace Universidad Casa Grande*.

http://dspace.casagrande.edu.ec:8080/bitstream/ucasagrande/768/1/Tesis1021RUGu.pdf

Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment.* Council of Europe Portal. https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions

Donahue, M., & Pidek, C. (1993). Listening Comprehension and Paraphrasing in Content-Area Classrooms. *Journal of Childhool Communication Disorders, 15*(2), 35-42. https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.822.544&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Gilakjani, A. P., & Sabouri, N. B. (2016). Learners' Listening Comprehension Difficulties in English Language Learning: A Literature Review. *English Language Teaching*, *9*(6), 123. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n6p123

Gumilang, W. A. (2019). the Use of Radio Podcast in Tecahing Listening Comprehension At Stkip Pgri Tulungagung. *The International English Language Teachers and Lecturers Conference*, *3*(1), 251. http://ineltal.um.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/35-Willy-Anugrah-Gumilang-The-Use-of-Radio-Podcast-in-Tecahing-Listening-Comprehension-at-STKIP-PGRI-Tulungagung.pdf

Kavaliauskienė, G., & Anusienė, L. (2009). English for Specific Purposes: Podcasts for Listening Skills. *Santalka*, *17*(2), 28–37. https://doi.org/10.3846/1822-430x.2009.17.2.28-37

Kirana, M. (2016). The use of audio visual to improve listening. *English Education Journal (Eej)*, *7*(2), 233–245. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/291613903.pdf

McLeod, S. (2019). *Likert Scale Definition, Examples and Analysis*. Simply Psychology.

    https://www.simplypsychology.org/likert-scale.html

Mukhdar, M., & Yeni, M. (2019). Factors influencing students' listening comprehension at

    the fourth semester English study program of Unisi Tembilahan. *ENGLISH JOURNAL*

    OF INDRAGIRI, *3*(1), 39–47. https://doi.org/10.32520/eji.v3i1.467

Ngan, D. (2018). Verbal Paraphrasing Technique: A Case of University English-Major

    Students' Perceptions and Implementation. *KASEM BUNDIT JOURNAL, 19*(June), 449-

    465. https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jkbu/article/view/130205

Nordquist, R. (2019). *The Definition of Listening and How to Do It Well*. ThoughtCo.

    https://www.thoughtco.com/listening-communication-term-1691247

Peña Ledesma, V. L. (2019). *Enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera y desarrollo de*

    competencias lingüísticas [Universidad Andina Simón Bolivar].

    https://repositorio.uasb.edu.ec/bitstream/10644/6603/1/T2833-MIE-Peña-Enseñanza.pdf

Prada, V. (2014). Refining Speaking and Listening Skills Using Podcasts. *Enletawa Journal*,

    7(7), 9–22. https://revistas.uptc.edu.co/index.php/enletawa_journal/issue/view/337/19

Press, C. (2014). *Why English teachers should not overlook the importance of paraphrasing*.

    Compelling Conversations. https://www.compellingconversations.com/paraphrasing-is-

    an-essential-conversation-skill

Ramos, S. (2019). Podcasting in the development of the listening skill [Universidad Técnica

    De Ambato]. In *Repo.Uta.Edu.Ec*.

    http://repo.uta.edu.ec/bitstream/handle/123456789/5301/Mg.DCEv.Ed.1859.pdf?sequen

    ce=3

Rivas, M. (2016). Improving the listening skill through audiovisual resources [Universidad de Guayaquil]. In *Repositorio Universidad de Guayaquil*. http://repositorio.ug.edu.ec/bitstream/redug/24973/1/Rivas Avila.pdf

Rogerson, A. (2017). *ree Internet based paraphrasing tools: further threats to academic integrity*. Enago Academy. http://blogs.biomedcentral.com/bmcblog/2017/01/26/free-internet-based-paraphrasing-tools-further-threats-to-academic-integrity/

Salas, D. (2019). *Investigación acción.* Investigalia. https://investigaliacr.com/investigacion/investigacion-accion/

Solano, F., & Sanchez, M. (2010) Aprendiendo en cualquier lugar: el podcast Educativo. *Pixel-Bit. Revista de Medios y Educación.36(10)* pp. 125-139. https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/368/36815128010.pdf

Yurtseven, N., & Altun, S. (2017). Understanding by design (UbD) in efl teaching: Teachers' professional development and students' achievement. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Egitim Bilimleri*, *17*(2), 437–461. https://doi.org/10.12738/estp.2017.2.0226

Appendix 1

Appendix 1

Lesson Plan

Available upon request.

Appendix 2

Survey

Available upon request.

Appendix 3

Pre Test to evaluate listening Comprehension

Available upon request.

Appendix 4

Evaluation of the pre test

Available upon request.

Appendix 5

Post Test to evaluate the listening Comprehension

Available upon request.

Appendix 6

Evaluation of the posttest

Available upon request.