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EFL Teachers' Beliefs About Listening and Their Actual Listening Instructional Practices

Creencias y prácticas pedagógicas de docentes de inglés en torno a la destreza de la escucha

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This paper reports a mixed-method study on listening instructional practices and beliefs of 50 EFL teachers of public and private universities in Cuenca, Ecuador. The study aimed to provide empirical evidence of listening teaching practices and determine teachers' beliefs about listening. Data were gathered through a questionnaire and structured class observations. Results evidenced that instructional practices emphasize task completion rather than listening development, are oriented towards the product rather than the process and lack decoding.

Keywords: English language teaching, listening beliefs, listening practices, teaching listening, teacher cognition

Este artículo reporta un estudio de métodos mixtos sobre las creencias y prácticas pedagógicas de la destreza de la escucha de 50 profesores de inglés de universidades públicas y privadas de Cuenca (Ecuador). El propósito del estudio fue proporcionar evidencia empírica acerca de los enfoques pedagógicos usados para la enseñanza de la escucha y de las creencias de los docentes al respecto. Para la recolección de datos se empleó un cuestionario y observaciones estructuradas. Los resultados evidencian que las prácticas pedagógicas enfatizan el completamiento de tareas en lugar del desarrollo de la escucha, están orientadas hacia el producto de la escucha en lugar del proceso y no fomentan el desarrollo de la descodificación.

Palabras clave: creencias sobre la escucha, prácticas de escucha, enseñanza de la escucha, cognición docente

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Introduction

Listening comprehension constitutes the bedrock for language learning (Vandergrift, 2007), and, at the same time and in comparison to other language skills, it is perceived as a difficult skill to learn (Graham, 2003) and to teach (Cauldwell, 2013). In the field of second language teaching, listening tends to be neglected, and learners are usually not instructed to develop or improve this skill; instead, they are evaluated on how well they understand oral speech (Field, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012), a teaching approach that Field (2008) coined as the *comprehension approach*. Learners are expected to develop this skill through an osmosis process that only requires tremendous exposure to oral material (Cauldwell, 2013; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Assuming that the more learners listen to verbal material (extensive listening), the better they develop decoding skills, some researchers still need to consider that learners may first need to acquire these decoding skills to benefit from extensive listening (Field, 2008).

Research on second language listening has mainly centered on the role of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies; decoding processes; affective factors; the role of previous and linguistic knowledge; learners' listening problems, among others (Brown, 2017; Goh, 2017; Vanderplank, 2014). This research has yielded the following principles considered suitable for listening development: (a) listening skills need to be taught because they do not develop by themselves, (b) both top-down and bottom-up strategies contribute to listening comprehension, (c) metacognitive strategies aid listening comprehension, (d) focusing on chunks instead of isolated words is more effective, and (e) prediction activities must be verified (Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy, 2014).

Nevertheless, the primary debate has focused on the priority that listening comprehension strategies should be given during instruction. In other words, if top-down strategies (such as prediction and previous knowledge activation) should be emphasized so that learners can maximize their limited resources and gain confidence while they build their linguistic knowledge and skill, or if more teaching effort should be devoted to bottom-up strategies (such as speech perception training) since class time is usually limited (Vanderplank, 2014). Therefore, even though there is a considerable amount of good practice evidence—due to the controversy above and the fact that research results are inconclusive—listening teaching continues to be a problematic area (Vanderplank, 2014), which needs a more significant number of studies on how teachers deal with listening instruction (Brown, 2017).

Literature Review

According to Borg (2003), teacher cognition refers to "what teachers know, belief, and think" (p. 81), which exerts an impact on their pedagogical decisions. Nevertheless, teachers' beliefs are not always reflected in teaching practices since there are other influencing factors: "teachers' experiences as learners," teacher education, classroom practice, and contextual factors, among others (Borg, 2003, p. 81). Due to the strong connection between beliefs and practices, research in the area of language teacher beliefs has experienced a significant increase over the last 20 years (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017). However, research is very scant regarding teachers' beliefs and practices in second language listening (Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy, 2014). It mainly suggests that teachers are less prepared to teach listening than they are to teach grammar and other language skills and that they do not consider listening as a skill that needs to be taught and developed since it is instead seen as an exercise for practice (Graham & Santos, 2015; Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy, 2014; Graham, Santos, & Vanderplank, 2011).

Bottom-up listening strategies have been left out of listening pedagogy research (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). According to Siegel and Siegel (2015), the listening

pedagogy has focused mainly on top-down strategies and questions to verify comprehension, leaving aside bottom-up approaches, especially phoneme recognition and parsing skills. Teachers tend to predominately employ activities that verifyunderstanding of the content of oral texts (Siegel, 2013), neglecting the teaching of how to listen and the process of listening (Goh, 2017). Additionally, Renandya and Hu (2018) claim that, although research and pedagogical interest in listening skills have increased, teachers are generally not better able to make use of that knowledge in their teaching practice due to a lack of access to the literature (which prevents them from keeping up with the latest developments in the teaching of listening), conflicting views in the literature about the main factors affecting oral text processing and how best to teach listening (which can confuse and disorient teachers who have access to the literature), and lack of access to listening materials and the Internet.

Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014) designed a questionnaire to determine secondary teachers' stated beliefs about listening instruction, their stated classroom listening practices, and the extent to which these beliefs and practices were related to the literature about L2 listening. The results indicate that these teachers believe that effective listening is tantamount to task completion and that factors such as the text, the national curriculum, and educational standards influence their teaching practices.

The knowledge of the relationship between teachers' beliefs about listening in a second language and their pedagogical practices can serve as a foundation for teaching practice improvement (Graham & Santos, 2015), especially when comparing teachers' practical knowledge with theoretical knowledge (Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy, 2014). Accordingly, a thorough understanding of how teachers approach listening instruction is paramount to identifying how listening is operationalized in second language classes since the scarce existing studies are based on anecdotic evidence; thus, empirical evidence is crucial (Graham, Santos, & Vanderplank, 2011). As an attempt to contribute with empirical evidence from a Latin American context to a scarcely researched area, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What beliefs about listening instruction do English as a foreign language (EFL) university teachers hold?
2. What listening pedagogical practices do they use?

Method

An explanatory, sequential, mixed-method design (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011) was used for the study. Quantitative data were collected utilizing a questionnaire and, to get a deeper understanding of these data, qualitative data were gathered through class observations. As survey research highly depends on participants' self-report on their knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (what they report feeling or believing instead of what they really feel or believe, which can make them sometimes choose answers more acceptable or desirable; Mertens, 2015), class observations were included to collect direct information and not only self-reported accounts (Dörnyei, 2007).

The researcher assumed the role of a non-participatory observer and used an observation scheme for the structured observations; nevertheless, extra notes were taken so as not to miss essential details. Structured observations can reduce the complexity of a situation when focusing only on predetermined categories (Dörnyei, 2007).

For analyzing data from the open-ended items of the questionnaire, a textual transcription of all the answers was prepared and read several times to identify emerging categories, which were ordered and counted every time each category was mentioned. This categorization was done three times at a five-day interval, after which the categories obtained in the three analyses were compared and adjusted.

Participants and Context

This study was carried out in March–July 2018. Fifty EFL teachers from six universities in Cuenca, Ecuador (the total number of universities in this city: two public and four private) voluntarily and anonymously completed a questionnaire about their listening instructional practices. Only eight teachers volunteered to be observed while teaching listening (coincidentally, they worked at the same university).

The teacher participants are primarily women (64%), and their average age is 39.8 years ($SD = 9.1$). Their mother tongue is Spanish (94%), followed by English, Italian, and Russian (6%). Their average EFL teaching experience is 14.6 years ($SD = 7.9$), and their levels of reported English proficiency are C2 (24%), C1 (50%), and B2 (26%). Moreover, 70% of the teachers have an EFL teaching degree, 46% a master's degree, and 6% a PhD.

General English is taught in all these universities so that students develop the four fundamental language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to a B1 or a B2 level of proficiency, which is a graduation requirement.

The eight teachers who voluntarily agreed to be observed teach students at different levels of English proficiency (A1, A2, B1), five hold a master's degree in teaching EFL, and all stated having a high English proficiency level (C1 or C2).

Data Collection Instruments

Listening Questionnaire

The listening questionnaire developed by Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014) was used for this study. The questionnaire consists of 10 items that address beliefs and practices regarding listening instruction. Although the questionnaire was designed for secondary English as a second language teachers, it was chosen because the items aim to capture general information about the theoretical principles responsible for effective listening

For questionnaire completion, teachers were contacted via email; however, due to the low response rate, a printed version of the questionnaire was also handed out. In the end, only 50 teachers filled it out.

Class Observation Scheme

To observe teachers' listening practices, Part A of the communicative orientation of language teaching (COLT) observation scheme (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) was used. This scheme classifies the instructional segments of a class into activities and episodes; an activity can be made up of several episodes, and each episode is considered a unit of analysis in which the different categories have to be recorded. This instrument was used because it enables a systematic recording of instructional practices and procedures that occur during a class, which can lead to the identification of differences in teaching, and also because the percentage of class time spent on different activities and episodes can be calculated to make comparisons among the observed classes (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995). After an informed consent form was signed, each teacher was observed once, and the class was also audio recorded. The observation time depended on the time they spent teaching listening.

Results

Beliefs and Practices Reported by Teachers (Listening Questionnaire)

A total of 18 categories of reported procedures and 16 categories for the justifications behind those procedures were identified (see Tables 1 and 2). As shown, the most reported teaching procedure is to *clarify or explain the activity*, while the most reported justification is to *make sure students understand what to do.*

Table 1. Teaching Procedures Reported by Teachers

Procedures	P1	P2	P3	P4	Total
Clarify/Do the activity	23	6	6		35
Play/Listen to the audio	1	17	8	1	27
Make students focus on specific information		9	9		18
Make students focus on the audio context	12	4			16
Check answers/Provide feedback			10	4	14
Make students focus on general ideas	4	8	1		13
Pre-teach vocabulary	7	3	1		11
Stimulate prediction	5	5	1		11
Develop pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary		2	3	2	7
Make students focus on keywords		6	1		7
Pause the audio		4	1		5
Develop other skills (speaking, writing) in follow-up activities			3	2	5
Make students focus on the activity	3		1		4
Check predictions		1	1		2
Combine listening and speaking			2		2
Combine listening and reading			2		2
Make inferences			2		2
Make students talk about the difficulties faced during the activity			1		1

Note. Each participant had to rank four procedures in order of importance (1 = *most important*, 4 = *least important*). The codes represent the element ranked and its level of importance (e.g., P1 = most important procedure, P4 = least important procedure).

Table 2. Justifications Behind Teaching Procedures

Justifications	J1	J2	J3	J4	Total
Make sure students understand what to do	23	4	3		30
Make students get familiar with the topic or audio context/Activate prior knowledge	9	9			18
Evaluate students' performance		3	15		18
Facilitate comprehension	1	9	3		13
Make students focus on specific ideas		7	4		11
Facilitate concentration	2	6	2		10
Develop linguistic knowledge (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary) in the post-listening phase	2	3	5		10
Make students get familiar with the vocabulary they will hear	5	3	1		9
Develop skills (inferencing, active listening, higher-order thinking)	2	3	3		8
Understand main ideas	6				6
Predict	5				5
Develop other skills (speaking, writing)			4		4

Justifications	J1	J2	J3	J4	Total
Motivate students	2	1			3
Identify keywords		3			3
Because I follow the book	1	1	1		3
Check predictions		1			1

Note. Each participant had to rank four justifications in order of importance (1 = *most important*, 4 = *least important*). The codes represent the element ranked and its level of importance (e.g., J1 = most important justification, J4 = least important justification).

Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014) rank teachers as oriented toward the listening process (when they advise on strategies to listen better, provide feedback on activity performance, and focus on communication and learners' autonomy) or the listening product (when they advise on how to do the task, give feedback on the answers, refer to teachers' control to pause audios, or eliminate difficulty). Similarly, the teacher participants were classified based on their responses to the teaching procedures and justifications. A number was allocated between 1 and 5 according to a Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to a teacher very inclined toward the listening process, while 5 is towards the listening product. As presented in Table 3, most teachers orient their practice towards the product of listening, which focuses mainly on delineating the demands of the tasks to be performed, pausing or repeating the audio, and reviewing responses to verify understanding.

Table 3. Process-Focus or Product-Focus Teachers (*N* = 50). Based on Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy's (2014) Scale

	n	%
Very strong focus on process (1)	0	0
Strong focus on process (2)	0	0
Some process, some product focus (3)	1	2
Strong focus on product (4)	10	20
Very strong focus on product (5)	35	70
Did not answer	4	8

The teacher participants indicated that they work on listening twice (48%) or thrice a week (28%). Moreover, they consider that teaching speaking poses the most difficult compared to other skills, so they emphasize this skill (see Table 4).

Table 4. Degree of Difficulty and Emphasis for Teaching Language Skills

		M	*SD*
Degree of difficulty[a] in teaching language skills	Listening	2.6	1.0
	Speaking	3.4	0.7
	Reading	1.6	0.8
	Writing	2.6	1.1
Emphasis[b] placed on teaching language skills	Listening	2.2	1.0
	Speaking	3.5	0.8
	Reading	1.8	1.0
	Writing	3.0	0.9

[a] The mean and standard deviation correspond to a 1–4 scale (1 = *least difficult*; 4 = *most difficult*). [b] The mean and standard deviation correspond to a 1–4 scale (1 = *least emphasis*; 4 = *most emphasis*).

As shown in Table 5, before listening to an audio, the teachers reported that they frequently remind their students of vocabulary related to the topic they will hear, introduce vocabulary items that will be heard, and sometimes ask them to predict vocabulary they might hear. Comparing these results with the reported procedures (Table 1) confirms that pre-teaching vocabulary is part of teachers' practices; however, it was not evident if teachers ask students to think of ideas that are likely to be discussed on the audio or if they ask

students to discuss possible answers to comprehension questions (which is frequently done).

During listening, the teachers stated that they require students to focus on keywords and verify their predictions (however, these categories are non-recurring in the teaching procedures in Table 1). They only sometimes paused the audio the first time their students listened or the second time. After listening, the teachers often asked students to report their chosen answers, asked them to use specific English words or phrases to respond, and advised students how to deal with difficulties the next time they perform a listening activity (although this procedure was mentioned only once in Table 1). The teachers said they sometimes ask students what they did to complete the activity or how they felt doing so, an aspect that appears only once in Table 1.

Table 5. Activities Teachers Report Doing Before, During, and After Listening

		M	*SD*
Before listening	I remind learners of vocabulary linked to the topic.	2.10	0.76
	I give pupils vocabulary items that will be used in the passage.	1.76	0.82
	I ask learners to think of ideas and facts that might be discussed in the passage.	1.64	0.96
	I ask pupils to discuss possible answers to the questions.	1.52	0.97
	I ask learners to predict vocabulary they might hear (e.g., verbs, nouns).	1.36	0.83
During listening	I ask pupils to focus on keywords.	1.96	0.99
	I ask pupils to verify their predictions.	1.70	1.05
	When I pause the tape/CD, I try to pause it at the end of natural speech boundaries.	1.36	0.98
	When I pause the tape/CD, I try to pause it at the end of each speaker.	1.28	0.97
	When I pause the tape/CD, I try to pause it at the end of each question.	1.22	1.04
	I pause the tape/CD only when the passage is played for the second time.	1.20	0.86
	I pause the tape/CD when the passage is played for the first time.	1.04	1.05
After listening	I ask learners what answers they gave.	2.22	0.95
	I ask learners to answer using target language words/phrases.	1.96	0.81
	I advise learners on how to deal with difficulties next time.	1.82	0.87
	I ask learners to use language/structures used in the passage in a productive follow-up task.	1.78	0.97
	I tell learners what the answers are.	1.62	1.28
	I ask learners how they felt about the task.	1.34	0.98
	I ask learners what they did to complete the task.	1.22	0.86

Note. The mean and standard deviation correspond to a 0–3 scale (0 = *never*; 3 = *always*).

Teachers' beliefs regarding how listening should be taught are shown in Table 6. Teachers mostly agree with the statement that *it is possible to teach how to listen more effectively.* At the same time, less agreement is shown with the statement that *lack of background knowledge about the passage topic is the main difficulty for learners.*

Table 6. Teachers' Beliefs About Teaching Listening

	M	*SD*
It is possible to teach learners how to listen more effectively.	4.22	0.97
Listening should be taught differently depending on whether learners are in their first or subsequent years of learning.	4.10	1.07
Learners who do not understand a word should work out its meaning from the context.	4.08	0.94
Learners who do not understand a word should work out its meaning from the words/phrases that precede or follow the unknown word.	4.02	0.82
The main difficulties for learners in listening arise from their lack of vocabulary.	3.86	1.07
I introduce new vocabulary to learners orally in connected speech.	3.82	0.90
It is more important for learners to use the context of the passage to understand than to listen carefully to what is said.	3.80	1.07
Learners who do not understand a word should work out its meaning from their linguistic knowledge.	3.44	1.03
After listening, students should discuss how they completed the listening activity.	3.32	1.11
Learners' main problems lie in identifying where word/phrase/sentence boundaries are.	3.26	1.10
After listening, students should discuss how they felt about the listening activity.	3.02	1.10
The main difficulties for learners in listening arise from a lack of grammatical knowledge.	2.94	1.08
The main difficulties for learners in listening arise from a lack of background knowledge about the passage topic.	2.88	0.96
I introduce new vocabulary to learners orally as individual items.	2.84	1.25

Note. The mean and standard deviation correspond to a 1–5 scale (1 = *totally disagree*; 5 = *totally agree*).

As can be seen, the statements are related to top-down and bottom-up listening strategies, the necessity and feasibility of teaching listening as a skill, and the use of metacognitive strategies. The results indicate that teachers agree that effective listening instruction is possible and needs to be done according to the learners' level; however, the procedures reported by the teachers do not show a teaching variation depending on the different levels, but rather a constant practice aimed at performing listening tasks and obtaining the correct answer. Also, they somewhat agree with the usefulness of metacognitive strategies and are most inclined to use context and co-text as comprehension strategies (top-down strategies). In contrast, bottom-up strategies are considered less important (corroborated by the results of the listening activities used). Teachers also consider that the most significant difficulty for learners' listening comprehension is their lack of vocabulary, while identifying the limits of words, phrases, and sentences is deemed less problematic. Lastly, even though the teacher participants agree with introducing new vocabulary orally in connected speech, this practice does not appear in the reported teaching procedures.

Teachers' beliefs regarding the purpose of doing listening tasks are indicated in Table 7. The teachers consider that listening tasks serve primarily to increase students' opportunities to practice this skill and to teach students how to listen more effectively while evaluating listening is not considered as necessary; however, one of the most frequent teaching procedures they reported doing is to check answers.

Table 7. Teachers' Beliefs About the Purpose of Listening Tasks

	M	*SD*
To increase learners' opportunities to practice listening	3.78	1.33
To teach learners how to listen more effectively	3.38	1.58
To provide learners with a model of pronunciation	3.04	1.09
To assess how well learners can listen	2.76	1.59
To extend learners' vocabulary	2.56	1.30

Note. The mean and standard deviation correspond to a 1–5 scale (1 = *least important*; 5 = *most important*).

Since this item of the questionnaire also prompted teachers to add other vital purposes, two other purposes emerged after analyzing all the responses: to develop speaking and to introduce a topic.

The different listening activities that the participants reported using with students at different levels are shown in Table 8. Following the analysis by Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014), the *yes* answers were merged, and the valid percentage was calculated. The most commonly used activity is *to ask students to listen for specific details* (100%), followed by the general, central, or essential idea (98%), as well as filling in blanks (98%) and focusing on keywords (95.9%). This data corroborates the teaching procedures in Table 1.

Table 8. Listening Activities Teachers Report Doing and Not Doing

I ask learners to	Yes, I do this		I never do this	
	n	Valid %	*n*	Valid %
listen out for specific details	49	100	0	0
listen out for the gist of the passage	48	98	1	2
fill in gaps	48	98	1	2
listen out for keywords	47	95.9	2	4.1
identify the tone of voice/emotion	45	90.0	5	10
match what is heard to a written paraphrase	41	83.7	8	16.3
listen out for marker phrases	41	82	9	18
focus on intonation patterns	41	82	9	18
distinguish one speaker from another	38	76	12	24
listen out for/distinguish between individual sounds	35	70	15	30
listen cooperatively (in pairs)	34	69.4	15	30.6
recognize groups of words that occur together	34	68	16	32
listen for verb endings	34	68	16	32
listen out for how individual words change in connected speech	34	68	16	32
follow a transcription while listening	34	68	16	32
think about how to work out/deal with unknown words	31	64.6	17	35.4
listen out for words learners predict they may hear	31	62	19	38
recognize/listen out for words from different word classes (e.g., verbs, adjectives)	31	62	19	38

I ask learners to	Yes, I do this		I never do this	
	n	Valid %	*n*	Valid %
listen to a text read out by me	30	60	20	40
make sound-spelling links	30	60	20	40
identify word boundaries	25	51	24	49
transcribe everything they hear	24	48	26	52
use peer-designed listening activities	24	48	26	52
keep a listening log about how they approach listening tasks	22	44	28	56
keep a listening log about how they feel about listening	18	36	32	64

The analysis of the frequency with which teachers use listening activities from textbooks indicates that most teachers (60%) always use listening activities from textbooks. In comparison, only a few teachers use them sometimes (10%) or rarely (24%). This item of the questionnaire also includes an open question to provide explanations about not always using the listening activities from textbooks. The main reason reported is to provide students with authentic material.

Lastly, after conducting a content analysis of the responses about the positive and negative aspects of listening tasks found in textbooks, the two most important categories that emerged as positive aspects were the direct connection of activities and audios to the content of the unit and the fact that audios and activities are graded according to the learners' level. On the other hand, the negative aspects mostly reported by teachers are related to the inclusion of non-authentic material that has been modified and simplified in a way that does not resemble authentic discourse and repetitive activities that usually use the same format and are relatively simple.

Analysis of Teacher Practices (Class Observations)

Only eight teachers agreed to participate in class observations, while others seemed reluctant to the idea; one teacher even said that for the listening activities, he just played the audio twice and checked the answers, implying that there was not much to observe.

During class observations, activities and episodes from the COLT observation scheme were completed at the time they occurred. The researcher also took notes of relevant aspects to avoid missing important details that could emerge. The other categories of the scheme were completed after the class observation using the class audio recording. The listening stages pre-, during, and after listening were considered activities, while all the procedures performed in the class were episodes.

The activities and episodes were further categorized using the categories in Table 1 to determine how often teachers followed each procedure. Table 9 shows that the activities mainly carried out by the teachers are to play the audio, check answers, and make students focus on general ideas.

When comparing these results with the reported procedures in Table 1, it can be observed that the categories *Make students focus on specific information* and *Make students focus on general ideas* are not among the first categories in the observed practices because these two categories were registered only when the teacher explicitly told the students to do so. However, since almost all textbook activities include instructions to make students focus on general ideas and specific information, the teacher participants implicitly included such activities when they clarified instructions.

Table 9. Frequency of Observed Teaching Procedures (T = Teacher)

Procedures	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	Total
Play/Listen to the audio	6	6	6	6	9	8	7	2	50
Check answers/Provide feedback	6	5	9	2	10	6	4	1	43
Make students focus on general ideas	4	9	4	3	3	4	3	4	34
Develop pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary	2	1	4	2	1	1	6		17
Pre-teach vocabulary		1		7	5	1		2	16
Make students focus on the audio context	2		1	5	1	5		1	15
Pause the audio	5				3	3			11
Develop other skills (speaking, writing) in follow-up activities	1	1	1		2				5
Combine listening and reading	1					1	2		4
Make students focus on keywords		1			2				3
Make students talk about the difficulties faced during the activity					2		1		3
Stimulate prediction					1		1		2
Make students focus on specific information		2							2
Make students focus on the activity				1					1
Make students focus on general ideas		1					1		2
Check predictions									0
Combine listening and speaking									0
Make inferences									0

The duration of each activity and episode and the percentage of class time spent on each observation scheme category, was calculated (by adding the time spent on each category of the scheme and dividing this figure by the time spent on the whole listening class). As shown in Table 10, all the teachers engaged learners in pre-listening activities and spent much time introducing the topic, the context, and teaching vocabulary. For instance, Teachers 4, 5, and 8—who spent much time in the pre-listening stage—focused primarily on presenting or reviewing vocabulary. Most of the teachers spent more time on the during-listening phase, mainly playing the audio several times (up to four times) and checking answers. Checking answers was considered part of the during-listening phase, although it is more common to consider this activity part of the after-listening phase; however, this decision was made because several teachers checked answers of only a section of the activity and then continued with the audio to check more answers and so on until the entire activity was finished. Thus, it allowed identifying whether teachers carried out other activities, besides checking answers, during this stage.

Table 10. Time Percentage Spent on Listening Stages (T = Teacher)

	Pre-listening	During listening	After listening
T1	13	83	4
T2	19	55	26
T3	15	81	4
T4	45	55	0
T5	51	42	7
T6	28	72	0
T7	9	78	13
T8	60	40	0
M	30%	63%	7%

The after-listening phase receives the least attention from teachers. For instance, three teachers did not include it. The rest spent very little time on it to ask learners' opinions about the topic they heard, which were primarily answered in one or two words, being the teacher who ended up speaking the most.

The analysis of the category *participant organization* revealed that most classes have the teacher at the front interacting with students, who worked most of the time individually, especially to listen to audios or watch videos. Then they worked in groups (usually in pairs) to complete activities and compare answers.

The *content* category analysis showed that teachers spend less time (10%) on *procedures* (giving instructions or clarifying the activity to be carried out). A more significant percentage of time (23.2%) is spent on *language*, mainly vocabulary. Half of the teachers spent time (25.87%) on the *narrow meaning* (when teachers ask whether the instructions are understood or when they ask for answers). Most teachers spent most of their class time (40.65%) on the *broad meaning* (when students listen to audios on unfamiliar topics).

The next category, *student modality*, refers to language skills. Listening predominates (61%), but students were also observed practicing speaking (19%) when comparing their answers, although most did so using Spanish. Reading (3%) was practiced when reading instructions aloud or silently. Regarding writing (25%), only two teachers included activities to develop it. Teacher 1 invested 24% of class time in the combination of listening and speaking to ask students for answers or check students' understanding; however, as mentioned above, students predominantly responded with one or two words, and it was the teacher who spoke most of the time to check answers and give feedback. Furthermore, in all the classes, it was observed that only two or three students responded or interacted with the teacher.

The class time percentage spent on the *content control* and *materials* categories was not calculated. It was observed that in all classes, the subject, tasks, and content of the activities and episodes were selected by the teacher, who was guided by the textbook. Similarly, only Teacher 4 used authentic material from the Internet briefly to introduce the subject, while all the other teachers used the textbook.

Discussion

The findings reveal that the instructional practices reported by the teachers emphasize task completion rather than listening development and are oriented towards the product of listening since they mentioned procedures aimed primarily at obtaining the correct answer (which were verified in the class observations). To this end, the teachers ensure students know exactly what they are expected to do; teach or review vocabulary; ask students to focus on specific ideas, general ideas, and sometimes keywords; play the audio, and check answers. When teachers report performing procedures that involve strategy instruction—such as making students focus on specific information or stimulating prediction (which are the most mentioned procedures)—they refer to asking students to do such activities instead of teaching them how to develop such strategies. The only instructional activities that could be observed were usually vocabulary teaching (to make it easier for students to obtain the correct answer) and, rarely, pronunciation teaching. Vocabulary teaching focused on the meaning of words, and only Teacher 7 emphasized vocabulary recognition in connected speech and some pronunciation rules. These results constitute empirical evidence of what Cauldwell (2013) claimed about teaching listening being synonymous with doing comprehension exercises focused on evaluating students. They also evidence learners' evaluation of their understanding or lack of understanding instead of being trained to develop listening skills (Field, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Likewise, the results are similar to those of Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014) in England with high school teachers, which adds to the evidence that the comprehension approach is the

most widely used pedagogy for teaching listening (Field, 2008). Moreover, the fact that most teachers indicate working on listening (making students do listening exercises) twice a week or less without emphasizing listening teaching corroborates what Vandergrift and Goh (2012) have said regarding the development of listening in second language teaching not receiving the necessary attention.

The fact that teachers consider top-down strategies (such as the use of context and co-text) essential for understanding and give very little importance to bottom-up strategies confirms Field's (2008) assertion that the emphasis on understanding has led to the belief that the use of context is a central element for listening comprehension. Therefore, teachers do not focus on teaching speech perception based on the assumption that subject knowledge will facilitate understanding and help solve ambiguity problems. Nevertheless, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) asserted that many learners' comprehension problems stem from decoding issues. The findings also confirm Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy's (2014) and Siegel's (2013) claims that teachers rarely incorporate activities that favor the development of bottom-up skills since they think effective listening means completing listening tasks with the correct answers.

Also, the teachers reported that the most crucial purpose of listening activities is to increase practice opportunities, which is in line with the most used pedagogy nowadays (comprehension approach) that emphasizes listening to a series of audios (one after the other) to increase the number of listening experiences, which is believed help learners improve their listening competence (Field, 2008). This is learning by osmosis, which assumes that learners will acquire decoding skills similar to native speakers only by listening as much as possible (Cauldwell, 2013). However, as Field (2008) argued, learners who do not understand a significant amount of input tend to stop doing listening activities or use context-based compensatory strategies to guess the meaning, which can trigger demotivation to engage in listening activities and the reinforcement of inefficient strategies to deal with such activities. As observed in the classes, many students did not understand the audios, yet the teachers did not try to improve their ability to perceive speech after providing the correct answers. Therefore, the after-listening phase received the least attention. Once the answers were checked, the teachers moved on to another activity to develop a different language skill (usually speaking), underusing valuable listening material that could have been exploited to develop decoding skills (Cauldwell, 2013). It is worth wondering how much the students benefited from such listening activity or whether it only made them aware of their limitations in understanding speech. Similarly, as Cauldwell (2013) contends, teachers generally use listening activities not to develop this skill but for other purposes; for example, most teacher participants used listening activities to develop speaking or introduce a topic.

For the participating teachers, it is clear that textbooks guide teaching (only three teachers said they use them rarely) and can be responsible for teachers using the comprehension approach since the books focus primarily on understanding general ideas and details and pre-listening activities but lack addressing the development of the listening skill. In addition, the tests included in the textbooks (which only present one or two listening questions that test the understanding of general ideas and specific details) can also influence the use of the comprehension approach because, as Field (2008) points out, one of the advantages of this approach is that it prepares students to pass international exams that consist mainly of comprehension questions. Thus, the results also align with Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014) in that teaching reflects the demands of institutional contexts. The teacher participants indicated that the central negative aspect of textbooks is the modified speech that does not represent actual discourse; nevertheless, it was noted that, for many students, this modified speech is

tough to understand. Hence, it seems that the teachers are aware of the need to practice using real audio, and probably when they do not use the textbook, they may look for this type of material; however, if this material is underused, students would not benefit from that effort.

Similar to the findings in Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014), the teachers did not demonstrate having theoretical or methodological knowledge that guides their instructional practice. Justifications for performing the reported teaching procedures are practical in nature, and many represent the procedure's objective.

Conclusion

This study provided empirical evidence of university EFL teachers' stated beliefs and pedagogical practices about teaching listening. For them, teaching listening means doing comprehension activities whose primary purpose is to select the correct answers. This creates a class environment where only two or three students participate by providing those answers. After this, even though teachers acknowledge learners' lack of understanding, they move on to another activity to develop a different skill without providing any help for listening comprehension improvement, that is, assisting students to go beyond answering predetermined questions—a limited aspect of comprehension—to grasping the meanings behind the verbal message—in-depth comprehension. Teachers, who lack a solid theoretical underpinning that guides their practices, usually rely on textbooks that adhere to the comprehension approach (Field, 2008). They do not encourage working with sound substance to foster decoding skill development. Accordingly, teacher training on effective listening practices is crucial to embrace research-based pedagogical strategies that harness learners' listening process development. Such training can take place in workshops or any continuous teacher education programs. The effect of such training, as well as the effect of decoding-based instruction on learner listening skill development, can be worth exploring in further research.

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