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3. Título de la presentación: **Language Learning Strategy Instruction: Design, Implementation and Results of a Workshop on Listening Strategies for EFL Students**

4. Eje temático: **9) Didáctica de las lenguas extranjeras**

5. Abstract

   Language learning strategies are considered keys to learners' autonomy and meaningful learning. Teachers play an important role in helping learners become aware of, develop and use strategies to complete tasks. In 2015, a series of workshops using "one-time strategy training" (Oxford, 2011, 1990) were delivered to train EFL students doing the course *English Language I* at the School of Languages (U.N.C) in the use of direct and indirect language learning strategies to apply to the four macroskills. This paper reports the design, implementation and results of the workshop on listening strategies to carry through listening tasks at B1 level.

6. Key words: language learning strategies - strategy-based instruction – listening strategies

7. Texto completo

Language Learning Strategy Instruction: Design, Implementation and Results of a Workshop on Listening Strategies for EFL Students

Introduction

Over the last thirty years there has been an important shift in the field of language learning and teaching with greater emphasis put on learners and learning rather than on teachers and teaching. At the same time, researchers have focused on how learners process the new information and what strategies they use to learn the new language. According to Rubin and Wenden (1987), most of the research has aimed at "identifying what good language learners report they do to learn a second or foreign language, or, in some cases, are observed doing while learning a second or foreign language" (p. 19).

Since the 1980s, Strategy-Based Instruction has been widely implemented in ESL/EFL teaching methodology (Brown, 2007). Based on the great amount of research in the field, Oxford (2011) has presented the Strategic Self-Regulation (S^2R) Model which defines language learning strategies as "deliberate, goal-directed attempts to manage and control efforts to learn

the L2" and which offers a new taxonomy of strategies (p. 12). As learning strategies can be taught, teachers play an important role in helping language learners become aware of, develop and use the different strategies to successfully complete different tasks (O'Malley & Chamot, 1994; Oxford, 2011, 1990). However, it is quite challenging to teach students to use new strategies with cognitive tasks as, in the early stages, strategies are complex procedures that place an extra burden on the task (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Different instructional approaches have been suggested to train L2 learners in the appropriate use of strategies with various results depending on the students' needs, the macroskills and the context of learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). One of such approaches, "one-time strategy training", consists in teaching one or more strategies particularly needed by the learners with actual tasks in one or a few sessions (Oxford, 1990). "This kind of training gives the learner information on the value of the strategy, when it can be used, how to use it, and how to evaluate the success of the strategy" (Oxford, 1990, p. 203). Using this approach, in 2015 a series of workshops were delivered to train EFL students doing the course *English Language I* at the School of Languages (U.N.C.) in the use of language learning strategies to apply to the four macroskills. The goal of the workshops was to develop learning strategies in an EFL course at university and to raise students' awareness of the need to take responsibility for their own learning and develop autonomy. This paper reports the design, implementation and results of the workshop on listening strategies useful for *Language I* students to carry through listening tasks at B1 level (Field, 2008, 1998; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Lynch, 2009; Vandergrift, 2003).

Key Issues in ESL/EFL Listening Strategies

Strategy-Based Instruction has been widely implemented in ESL/EFL teaching methodology since the 1980s (Brown, 2007). In her early work, Oxford (1990) defines language learning strategies as "actions taken by second and foreign language learners to control and improve their own learning" (p. ix). Oxford (1990) groups the strategies according to the impact they have on learning. Thus, the two broad categories are *direct strategies* (memory, cognitive and compensation strategies) that directly involve L2 and *indirect strategies* (metacognitive, affective and social strategies) that indirectly support language learning (Oxford, 1990). Recently, Oxford (2011) has proposed a new model of strategic competence that focuses on how learners regulate their own language learning behaviour through the use of strategies. In fact, Oxford (2011) redefines language learning strategies as "deliberate, goal-directed attempts to manage and control efforts to learn the L2" (p. 12). The Strategic Self-Regulation (S^2R) Model integrates socio-cultural, cognitive and affective dimensions (Oxford, 2011). Thus, the model includes *cognitive, affective* and *sociocultural-interactive strategies* all of which are actively managed and controlled by the learner through the use of *metastrategies* (Oxford, 2011). Regardless of the taxonomy used, teachers play an important role in helping language learners become aware of, develop and use the different strategies to successfully complete different

tasks and master the language macroskills (O'Malley & Chamot, 1994; Oxford, 2011, 1990). A language teacher should, therefore, provide a wide range of learning strategies in order to meet the needs and expectations of their students possessing different learning styles, motivations, strategy preferences, etc. Therefore, it can be stated that the most important teacher's role in foreign language teaching is the provision of a range of tasks to match varied learning styles (Hall, 1997, p. 4).

Listening is considered the most important skill for ESL/EFL learners as "it internalizes the rules of language and facilitates the emergence of other language skills" (Vandergrift, 2011, p. 455). In a way, language learning depends on listening as it provides the aural input that serves as the basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken communication. Listening is also considered the most difficult skill to learn because of its temporal nature, the complexity of the listening processes and the special features of spoken language (Field, 2008; Lynch, 2009; Ur, 1984; Vandergrift, 2011; Wilson, 2008). Different types of knowledge are used in listening and there are two common views about the order in which they are applied: bottom-up and top-down (Buck, 2001). "Bottom-up processing involves decoding, i.e., segmenting the sound stream into meaningful units" (Vandergrift, 2011, p. 456). When using this type of knowledge, the listeners rely on the language in the message, the meaning created by the combination of sounds, words, and grammar. In contrast, "top-down processing involves the application of context and prior knowledge to build a conceptual framework for interpretation purposes" (Vandergrift, 2011, p. 456). The listeners need to draw upon their background knowledge of the topic, the situation or context, the type of text, and the language. This background knowledge will activate their schemata, a set of expectations that will help them to interpret what is heard and anticipate what will come next. There is general consent among listening researchers that both bottom-up and top-down processes operate interactively (Vandergrift, 2011; Field 2008; Wilson, 2008; Flowerdew and Miller, 2005; Buck, 2001). However, the prevailing type of process that the listener will use depends on the type of listening, the listening purpose, the listening context and the listener's language knowledge (Vandergrift 2011, Field 2008, Wilson 2008).

Given the critical role of listening in language learning and the different types of knowledge used, students need to "learn to listen" (Field, 2008, 1998; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Lynch, 2009; Vandergrift, 2003). Listening strategies are techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input. Effective language instructors should show their students how they can adjust their listening behavior to deal with a variety of situations, types of input, and listening purposes. They should also help students develop a set of listening strategies and match appropriate strategies to each listening situation. Field (2008) advocates teaching listening strategies, especially in the early stages of the process programme to teaching listening. Vandergrift (2003) states that skilled listeners "orchestrate" the use of different strategies. In the listening strategy literature, there are three main categories of strategies that L2 listeners should use: *cognitive strategies*, to make sense of the spoken text, *metacognitive strategies*, to plan, monitor and evaluate understanding and *socioaffective*

strategies, to include contextual factors and encourage the listener to understand (Lynch, 2009, p.79). Based on the most important listening strategies mentioned in the literature (Field, 2008; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Lynch, 2009; Wilson, 2008), the workshop to teach listening strategies was designed and implemented.

Design and Implementation of a Workshop on Listening Strategies for Students of *English Language I* at the School of Languages

The workshop on listening strategies was aimed at helping *English Language I* students improve their listening strategies. *English Language I* is an intermediate course of the first year of English Language Teaching, Translation and/or Licentiate programmes at the School of Language, National University of Cordoba. The workshop was designed following what Oxford (1990) names "one-time strategy training" which consists in teaching one or more strategies particularly needed by the learners with actual tasks in one or a few sessions. Thus, the workshop took place in a three-hour session, it was taught by the authors of the paper and 22 EFL students voluntarily attended it. To learn about the students' perceptions of the listening strategies and the impact of the workshop, a pre- and a post-survey were administered respectively (See Appendix). The surveys were written in Spanish, the students' L1, so that language proficiency would not hinder students from expressing their opinions and suggestions. The survey analysis and result as well as the explicit teaching of key listening strategies have shown some interesting findings.

Pre-survey

Wilson (2008) states that listening is the skill that is least practiced in class and that is sometimes considered "the Cinderella skill"; overshadowed by the other macroskills. This was in fact reflected in the pre-survey as only 32% students admitted to having received instruction in L2 listening while the great majority stated they had not. All the students surveyed expressed that they were willing to receive instruction in listening strategies and the reasons varied greatly: to understand audios in English (7), to improve my listening skills (5), to know what to do while doing a listening activity (2), to answer the questions in the listening activity correctly (2), to understand what the other speaker says (1), to overcome listening problems (1) and to perform better in tests and exams (2). Interestingly, 2 students mentioned that they wanted to improve their perception skills. Main experts in listening (Cauldwell, 2013; Field, 2008; Ur, 1984) agree that many listening comprehension problems are caused by decoding mistakes and that listening for perception should be given primarily importance especially in the early stages. One student explicitly mentioned that s/he wanted to learn listening skills to become more confident while listening in English. In fact, Field (2008) states that listening is the skill that makes students feel the most insecure as it is difficult to measure their progress in the skill and a stream of speech cannot be remembered for long.

Listening Activities

The three-hour session consisted of 5 main listening activities. Selection of the right audios was essential to design appropriate and motivating activities. To select the audios, their type, source, content and delivery were considered. Both graded/scripted and authentic audios were used as both types have advantages and disadvantages. The listening activities 1, 2 and 3 used graded/scripted audios as "students may learn best from listening to speech which, while not entirely authentic, is an approximation to the real thing, and is planned to take into account the learners' level of ability and particular difficulties" (Ur 1984 p. 23). Moreover, as Field (2008) states, graded/scripted audios boost L2 listeners' confidence and motivation in the first stages of their listening training. The listening activities 4 and 5 used authentic audios, i.e. "recordings of people speaking naturally and without the purposes of language learning in mind", relevant to my students and suitable for their language level" (Field, 2008, p. 270). In this way, students could listen to speech at its normal rate of delivery and with its typical features of spoken discourse as they will encounter it outside the classroom (Thorn, 2013; Field, 2008, 1998, Lynch, 2009; Wilson, 2008; Vandergrift, 2007). Moreover, "learners' motivation is boosted enormously by evidence that they can apply classroom learning to instances of L2 in the real world" (Field, 2008, p. 277). The audios were mainly taken from different EFL websites to offer variety and to familiarize students with these learning resources.

Listening Activity 1 aimed at introducing students to the listening strategy *listening for gist* by using a joke. Students were explicitly trained in the strategy before listening to the joke (see Figure 1). Students were asked to listen for gist to understand "one of the funniest jokes in the world" taken from the LearnEnglish website (https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/magazine/funniest-jokes-world). After listening to the joke, students were pointed out the advantages of the strategy *using the tapescript* as, among others, it helps listeners compare what they think they have heard with what was actually said and see the difference between the pronunciation and the spelling of a word (Oxford, 1990). To encourage the use of this strategy, the tapescripts of all the audios were included in the students' handout.
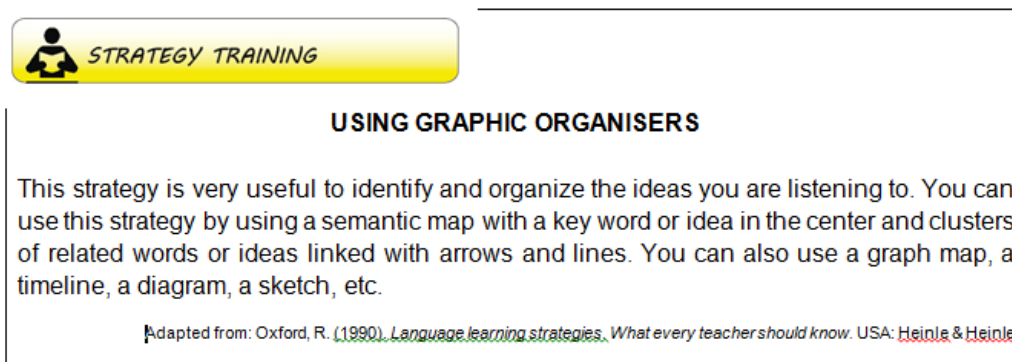

STRATEGY TRAINING

LISTENING FOR GIST

Listening for the general gist involves getting the main idea the speaker wants to come across. That is, you have to focus on exactly what you need or want to understand and disregard the rest. In order to get the main idea of a speech, you need to try to listen to the key words. As content words are stressed in speech, these words are easy to perceive. You can also draw on your knowledge about the speakers, the listening situation and the context in order to figure out the main idea of a speech.

Adapted from: Oxford, R. (1990). *Language learning strategies. What every teacher should know*. USA: Heinle & Heinle.

Figure 1. Explicit instruction of the listening strategy *listening for gist*

The objective of Listening Activity 2 was to teach students the strategy *listening for detail* by asking them to listen to a recorded telephone message and complete the notes with words and numbers. The audio was taken from the Handbook of *Certificates in English Language Skills* (2001). To help students make out for the sounds and words that they could not hear, the strategies *predicting* and *guessing intelligently* were also explicitly taught. The strategies are defined by Oxford (1990) as compensation strategies since they "enable learner to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge" (p. 47). Students were advised to predict before listening and to make intelligent guesses after listening to the audio.

Listening Activity 3 was designed to train students in the use of the strategy *using graphic organisers.* To achieve this aim, after introducing the strategy (see Figure 2), students were asked to draw the sketch of a house as it was described. The audio was taken from the well-known EFL website ELLLO (http://www.elllo.org/english/0501/533-Eucharia-NewHouse.html)

Figure 2. Explicit instruction of the listening strategy "using graphic organisers"

The strategy *taking notes* was taught through Listening Activity 4. Following Oxford (1990) and Wilson (2008), students were instructed in the use of different ways of taking down notes: notes, shopping list and T-list format. Particular emphasis was put on T-list as it allows students to arrange what they hear in an organised and effective way (Oxford, 1990). The students were then asked to listen two people talking about the difference between the United Kingdom and Great Britain and note down the main differences. The video was taken from the LeanEnglish website (http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/how/how-understand-difference-between-uk-and-great-britain).

Finally, The Beatles' song "Here Comes the Sun" was used for Listening Activity 5. This activity focused on helping students revise the strategies learned in the session as they had to 1) listen to a song and comment on its message and 2) listen and fill in some gaps in the lyrics. The song was also a good opportunity to familiarize students with the strategy *lowering anxiety* as listening to a familiar piece of music that most students like helps them to relax and become less anxious about the listening activity. After listening to the song twice, students were asked to think about their performance and to evaluate it by considering a score from 1 to 10. In this way, students learned about the use and importance of the strategy *self-evaluating.*

Post survey

After the session, a post-survey was administered to evaluate the impact of the workshop and learn about students' perception of the treatment (see Appendix). Fortunately, when asked if the workshop on listening strategies had been useful, all the students answered affirmatively and the reasons varied. 45% of the students stated that they found the workshop useful as they would be able to put into practice what they had learned when doing a listening activity. Many students mentioned that they found the workshop useful as they would be able to apply what they had learnt in further opportunities; some mentioned that the workshop prompted them to keep on practising listening and one student stated that she was able to pinpoint her weaknesses when listening thanks to the workshop.

The second question asked students to name at least 4 listening strategies taught in the workshop without looking at the handout. Interestingly, all the students managed to name one or more strategies: 68% of the students successfully named 4 or more strategies and 32% of the students named 3 or less strategies (see Figure 3).
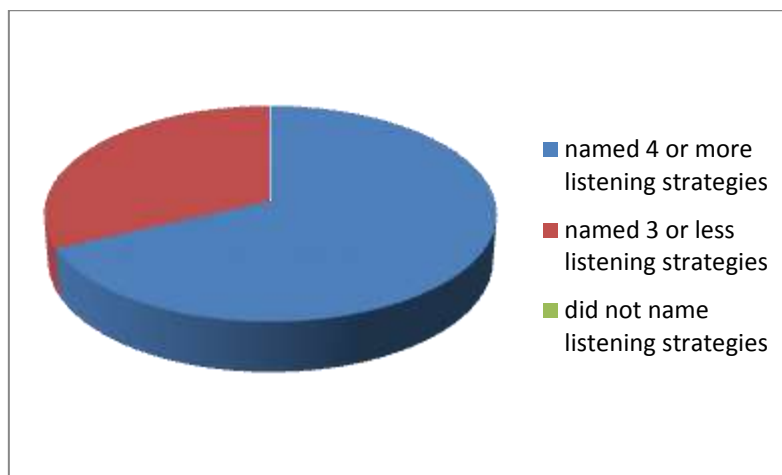

Figure 3: Percentage of students that named listening strategies

To the question "Were you familiar with all or some of the listening strategies taught in the workshop?" 55% answered "no" and 45% answered "yes". Students mentioned that they were already familiar with the listening strategies: *predicting*, *guessing intelligently*, *taking notes* and *using the tapescript*.

When the students were asked to mention the aspect of the workshop that they had found find the most interesting/positive, 6 out of the 22 students named *using graphic organizers* as the most interesting. Their comments were: "*The drawing strategy is very interesting, I had never heard of it*", "*It is a technique I did not know and I find it very helpful. It is helpful and interesting.*" 4 students mentioned *taking notes with a T-list* as the most interesting strategy. One student mentioned that s/he liked learning how different strategies were used for different types of listening activities and another student thanked the teacher for showing different websites to put into practice the strategies learned.

When asked about the aspect of the workshop that they had found irrelevant/unnecessary, most students stressed that all the aspects of the workshop had been relevant and only two students mentioned that *using graphic orga*nizers was not useful.

As for their further comments or suggestions, many students said that the workshop had been very interesting and fun, many suggested that the teachers should organize more listening workshops because they had found the activities very productive and one student mentioned that it was really useful to gain confidence in the listening skill.

Conclusion

Language learning strategy training facilitates L2 learning. Many teachers are explicitly promoting strategy awareness in different ways so that "learners can learn more language and learn it more quickly" (Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Snow, 2014). With this workshop on listening strategies we tried to introduce *Language I* students at the School of Languages, U.N.C. to the use of different strategies for different listening types and we think we have been quite successful. In fact, after delivering the workshop and analyzing the pre and post surveys, we can conclude that explicit training in the main listening strategies in a workshop setting has had positive effects. Using different types of audios and listening activities to teach different listening strategies has surprisingly proven to be really useful and it has also been valued positively by the students who attended this one-time strategy training. Students showed great enthusiasm throughout the workshop and, hopefully, they will start using the different strategies presented in the workshop to accomplish different listening tasks.

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Appendix

PRE-TEST

Por favor, antes de realizar el taller conteste las siguientes preguntas.

1. ¿Alguna vez ha recibido instrucción en lectura?

    Sí   No

2. ¿Alguna vez ha recibido instrucción en estrategias de lectura?

    Sí   No

3. Si contestó "Sí", especifique cuáles.

4. ¿Considera que recibir instrucción en estrategias de lectura sería beneficioso?

    Sí   No

5. ¿Por qué?

6. ¿Qué hace cuanto tiene que …?

escuchar una historia/anécdota en inglés	
escuchar un chiste en inglés	
realizar un ejercicio en el que hay completar con las mismas palabras utilizadas por los hablantes en inglés	
escuchar a alguien que da instrucciones en inglés	
escuchar al profesor hablar en clase en inglés	
escuchar una canción en inglés	

escuchar una serie/película en inglés

7. ¿Hace lo mismo cuando lee textos en español? ¿Por qué?

8. ¿Qué audio/ situación de escucha considera que es el más difícil de entender en inglés? ¿Por qué? ¿Utiliza alguna técnica/estrategia para facilitar su comprensión? ¿Cuál/es?

POST-TEST

Por favor, marque con una cruz o conteste las siguientes preguntas:

1. ¿Cree que el taller fue útil?

    Sí   No

2. Si respondió "Sí", ¿cómo cree que lo aprendido hoy lo ayudará?

3. Sin mirar el material que preparó el docente, indique el nombre de al menos cuatro estrategias de escucha.

4. ¿Conocía o estaba familiarizado con las estrategias presentadas (o con algunas de ellas)?

    Sí   No

5. Si contestó "Sí", especifique cuáles.

6. ¿Qué aspecto le resultó más interesante/positivo?

7. ¿Qué aspecto le resultó irrelevante/innecesario?

8. ¿Tiene algún comentario o sugerencia? Por favor, escríbalo a continuación.

8. Biodata

Claudia Spataro is a Teacher of English and Public Translator (National University of Cordoba) and she holds an MA Degree in TESOL and ICT (University of Leeds). She has taught *English Language I* and *English Language II* at the School of Languages, U.N.C. At the moment, she is Adjunct Teacher of *English Language I* at the School of Languages, U.N.C. She is particularly interested in EFL teaching and learning with ICT.

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