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Abstract

Two areas in ESL/EFL listening in need of further research are successful perception activities and ways in which ICT can be used to teach L2 listening (Vandergrift 2011). This Study attempted to address these two issues in a small-scale action research project carried out with 15 intermediate-level students of English doing the first-year course *English Language I* at the School of Languages, National University of Cordoba, Argentina. 5 listening sessions were designed on Moodle 2.3 based on the review of possible activities that aid perception skills and the way in which multimedia and Moodle have been used to design online listening activities. The data obtained from the students' journals of each listening session, the records of the Moodle activities, the final questionnaire and the IELTS pre and post listening tests showed that the perception activities on Moodle had a positive influence on the students, especially if the listening input was authentic and appealing to the students. Since perception is an important process in the initial stages of L2 listening (Thorn 2013, Field 2008a, Cauldwell 2002), these findings could contribute to the design of the first sessions of an online listening course following the Process Approach to L2 listening.

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List of abbreviations

CALL: Computer Assisted Language Learning

CA: Comprehensive Approach

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

L1: First language/ mother tongue

L2: Second language

U.N.C.: National University of Cordoba

CHAPTER 1: Introduction and context

1.1. Introduction

Research is “a powerful form of professional development for teachers” and also a good opportunity to expand our knowledge in the areas that we are passionate about (Borg 2007 n.p.). This is why I have decided to focus my Critical Study on two areas of my interest: L2 listening and ICT. On the one hand, listening is the skill that is most valued by ESL/EFL students but least practiced in class and my teaching context is no exception (Wilson 2008). Moreover, I myself as an EFL learner have always found listening very challenging: I remember getting very nervous in the listening section of tests/international exams and I have always found it hard to understand certain words or expressions said by native speakers of English when travelling abroad. On the other hand, ICT has lately aided teaching in many ways and I really find this area fascinating as its great challenge is to find “*how* computers should be used and *for what purposes*” (Beatty 2003 p.14). In fact, the challenge of my Study is to see if ICT tools can be used to aid L2 listening and in what ways.

This Critical Study was first prompted by the assignment on listening done for EDUC 5901M. Thanks to it, I became familiar with the need of more targeted instruction in perception skills in EFL/ESL listening. My marker’s comment was also illuminating as he suggested that, given the limited class time and the difficulty of attending to learners’ individual problems, the best solution was self-access listening materials. Back in Argentina, I could notice that my students of the Group G of the course *English Language I* at the School of Languages, National University of Cordoba (U.N.C.) had perception problems while doing listening activities. Although my students generally performed quite well in true/false, matching or multiple-choice listening activities, they experienced great difficulty when asked to focus on a particular word or segment of the audio of their textbook. Actually, some months ago, I had to play the

audio many times to make them hear properly all the words in the expression “There is no accounting for some people’s tastes” and only very few students were able to decipher that the speaker was saying “the wind had blown off some of the tiles” instead of “the window of some of the old ties”. Whenever my students encounter listening difficulties of this kind, I tend to do what White describes as her typical reaction to students’ listening problems: “play that section of the tape once more, and hope that hearing it again will magically help the students get the answer next time” (1998 p.6). If that does not work, I give away the right answer hoping that my students will understand their mistakes. But playing the audio many times or giving the right answer does not teach my students how to become better listeners nor does it help them cope with their perception difficulties, a skill of utmost importance for my students, future teachers and translators of English. For these reasons, I have decided to put my marker’s suggestion into action in this Critical Study: to design and try out self-access Moodle activities that will address my students’ listening perception problems.

The best approach to achieve my aim is Action Research (AR) as it involves “taking an area (...) [that] could be done better, subjecting it to questioning and then developing new ideas and alternatives” (Burns 2009 p.2). Following the classic stages of AR, planning, action, observation and evaluation, this Study is organised into 6 Chapters. The remaining section of this chapter describes my students and their learning context. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature in ESL/EFL listening for perception and the use of ICT tools and Moodle for L2 listening and it sets the research questions. Chapter 3 considers the research approach, the ethics, the participants and the research methods. Chapter 4 describes the design and development of the listening activities on Moodle 2.3. The results of the Study are outlined and discussed in Chapter 5 and the research questions are answered. Finally, Chapter 6 includes my personal thoughts and suggestions for further action.

1.2. The teaching context

The students participating in this Study are doing the course *English Language I* at the School of Languages, U.N.C. The School of Languages is a state-owned higher education institution offering, among others, five-year degrees in English Language Teaching, Translation and Research in Argentina. *English Language I* is a core course for students doing any of these degrees. Since it is a first-year course, most students are 18 or 19 years old. The aim of *English Language I* is to help students reach an intermediate level of English or B1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). *English Language I* focuses on the development of the four macro skills and vocabulary using Communicative Language Teaching and tries to integrate what students are learning in their Grammar and Pronunciation courses. The coursebook *Upstream B2* by Evans and Dooley (2008) together with complementary materials provided by the teachers are used to teach the classes.

To be able to do the course, students need to pass a proficiency exam that tests that their level of English is pre-intermediate. However, students who have attended private bilingual secondary schools or English language schools are at an advantage as they have been exposed to English much more than those who only attended semi-private or state-owned schools. *English Language I* is taught in different groups of approximately 70 students and I am in charge of Group G. Unfortunately, classes are not compulsory and my students only have two 80-minute classes per week. Because of this, not much class time can be devoted to the specific teaching of listening or to remedial work after a listening activity. My students need to be good L2 listeners as classes in *English Language I* and other core courses are taught in English and they are training to become English teachers and translators. That is why I have decided to address my students' listening for perception problems with ICT tools so that they can self-access the materials at their own time and pace. In fact, as all my students have access to a computer and, thanks to the EDUC 5253M project, they are used to

Moodle 2.3, the institutional platform of the U.N.C., I consider that Moodle is the best ICT tool for the listening activities. Hopefully, this Study will help me design, implement and evaluate online listening activities that my students can find enjoyable and useful for their perception skills.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

As my Study aims at implementing theory of ESL/EFL listening for perception with ICT tools and Moodle, this Chapter is divided in two major parts: 2.1. ESL/EFL listening and perception skills and 2.2. ICT and Moodle for L2 listening and perception.

2.1. ESL/EFL listening and perception skills

This first section reviews some relevant aspects in ESL/EFL listening, the importance of perception skills, common perception problems faced by L2 listeners and useful activities and strategies that can aid perception.

2.1.A. ESL/EFL listening

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). 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 (Vandergrift 2011, Lynch 2009, Field 2008a, Ur 1984). Fortunately, although listening has been most neglected and least taught in L2 classrooms, now teachers and researchers are centering their attention on how to best teach this important skill (Thorn 2013, Vandergrift 2011, Field 2008a, White 2006, Flowerdew and Miller 2005). In fact, the traditional approach to teaching ESL/EFL listening, known as the *Comprehensive Approach* (C.A.), has lately been challenged as it mainly focuses on testing comprehension rather than teaching listening skills (Vandergrift 2011, Field 2008a, Flowerdew and Miller 2005). With the CA, students take a passive role as it is the teacher that makes most of the decisions: s/he chooses the audio, controls the equipment, decides the number of times that the audio will be played and the segments of the audio that will be focused on (Field 2008a, White 2006). But the most important flaw of the CA is that it “focuses attention upon the

product of listening in the form of answers to questions or responses in a task, and fails to provide insights into the *process* by which the product is derived” (Field 2008a p.81). As a consequence, a *process approach* to the teaching of ESL/EFL listening has been widely suggested by experts in L2 listening (Cauldwell 2013, 2002, Vandergrift 2011, Field 2008a, 1998, Flowerdew and Miller 2005, Goh 2000). By progressively guiding ESL/EFL learners into the different skills, strategies and processes needed for different types of listening, L2 listeners can take a more active role and transfer that knowledge to future L2 listening situations (Vandergrift 2011). Thus, this Study adopts the process approach to deal with one process of listening that is difficult for my students: perception.

2.1.B. *The importance of perception*

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” while “top-down processing involves the application of context and prior knowledge to build a conceptual framework for interpretation purposes” (Vandergrift 2011 p.456). There is general consent among listening researchers that both bottom-up and top-down processes operate interactively (Vandergrift 2011, Field 2008a, 1999, 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 2008a, Wilson 2008).

Perception is the main aspect in bottom-up processing (Vandergrift 2011). Skilled listeners are able to accurately and automatically perceive and decode speech (Field 2008a). There are four main reasons why perception skills are important for ESL/EFL listeners. First, “the number of homophones and homonyms (...) in English is small, while the number of words which can be confused or misunderstood by

inaccurate perception is relatively large” (Ur 1984 p.12). In fact, even though contextual cues can help overcome perception problems, ESL/EFL listeners cannot stop all the time to infer the right words from the listening context because of the fast nature of spoken discourse (Field 2008a, Ur 1984). Moreover, sometimes the use of contextual aids is not enough to accurately perceive an utterance: I will never forget how long it took me to decipher the warning “Caution! Two-way traffic” from an automatic traffic light in Leeds or the question “Are you alright with your packing?” asked by the cashier at a supermarket in the same city.

Second, Field (2008a) strongly suggests that ELT teachers adopting a process approach to listening should focus on their learners’ decoding processes in the first stages of their listening training. In fact, many listening comprehension problems are caused by decoding mistakes and that is why perception in non-native speakers “is a skill that is a pre-requisite for understanding” (Cauldwell 2002 p.3). Moreover, being able to decode phonemes into words and phrases gives the L2 listener more confidence to interpret the wider meaning of the utterance (Field 2008a).

Third, there are certain types of listening in which perception skills are essential (Field 2008a, Rost 2002). For example, L2 listeners need to be able to accurately decode timetable announcements, phone messages, directions or news. Moreover, good perception skills are especially necessary when listening is nonreciprocal (Wilson 2008).

Finally, English learners of all levels need fast decoding skills to deal with the stream of speech that they may experience outside the classroom (Cauldwell 2013, Thorn 2013, Field 2008a, Flowerdew and Miller 2005). Unfortunately, in the ESL/EFL class perception problems are quickly dealt with (if at all) in the post-listening stage (Cauldwell 2002, Field 1998). Thus, when students listen to natural speech, they may encounter many perception problems that cause both miscomprehension and frustration.

2.1.C. *Common perception problems in ESL/EFL students*

These are the most common perception problems faced, especially, by low-level ESL/EFL listeners:

× Mishearing

This perceptual problem is not exclusive to L2 listeners as native speakers may also mishear sounds due to the listeners' noise distortion or the speakers' performance errors (Rost 1990). But in the case of L2 listeners, Ur (1984) interestingly states that students sometimes do not perceive certain English sounds because they do not exist in their L1 or because they exist with some variation. Because of this, Spanish speakers like my students can have trouble identifying the following English phonemes (based on O'Connor and Fletcher 2000 and Frederick n.d.):

1. the 12 pure vowels as Spanish only has 5,
2. /b/v/ because in Spanish the sound /b/ is pronounced for the letters "b" and "v",
3. /s/z/θ/ because the letter "z" in Spanish is equivalent to the English phoneme /θ/, the English phoneme /z/ is non-existent in Spanish and in Argentina only the sound /s/ is produced for the letters "s" and "z",
4. /dʒ/ʒ/ as these sounds do not exist in Spanish,
5. /ŋ/ as it does not exist in Spanish and it is usually perceived as /n/ and
6. /d/ð/ as the sound /d/ in Spanish is plosive and dental like the English /d/ and /ð/ respectively.

Mishearing can also be caused because ESL/EFL students are not used to the stress, intonation and rhythm of the English system (Ur 1984). This is the case of Spanish speakers as Spanish is a syllable-timed language where each syllable has the same duration while English is a stress-timed language with stressed words spoken longer than unstressed words (Flowerdew and Miller 2005).

✕ Difficulty in recognizing known words

Failure in recognizing known words is a common perception problem among ESL/EFL listeners for three main reasons. Knowing a written word does not imply that the listener will recognize its spoken form due to the irregular spelling system of English (Wilson 2008, Goh 2000). Sometimes students cannot recognize known words or expressions because they have probably learned their spoken form in isolation and not often heard them in connected speech (Field 2008a, Goh 2000, Ur 1984). Moreover, features of natural speech can also confuse L2 listeners (Broersma and Cutler 2008, Field 2008a, Wilson 2008, Ur 1984). For these reasons, L2 listeners fail to recognize familiar words and sometimes hear non-existent or, what Broersma and Cutler (2008) call, “phantom” words.

✕ Incorrect lexical segmentation

Word segmentation is the identification of word boundaries in connected speech (Field 2008). Word segmentation is language specific and, thus, it is considered the main perceptual problem faced by ESL/EFL listeners (Lynch 2009, Field 2008a, Vandergrift 2007, Wilson 2008, Cutler 2001, Rost 2002, Goh 2000). One of the reasons is that L2 listeners cannot use physical marks to identify word boundaries as it is the case with reading (Lynch 2009, Wilson 2008). Word segmentation is also difficult as “smaller words are often embedded in larger ones” as it happens with “man” in “manager” (Field 2008b p.37). L2 listeners can also encounter segments that can be divided in different ways such as “a sister/assist her” (Field 2008b p.37). Moreover, lexical segmentation is also hindered by sound variations in connected speech due to redistribution, assimilation, elision and reduction (Field 2008a, Rost 2002, Cutler 2001):

- * *redistribution* affects the shape of words as in English stressed and unstressed syllables are attached together regardless of word boundaries (cliticisation) and syllables beginning with a vowel usually transfer the last consonant from the preceding word (resyllabification) (Field 2008a);

- * *assimilation* occurs when the speaker adapts a sound to the next one. This is troublesome for ESL/EFL listeners when it produces a form that is the same as other words like “*light grey–like grey* or *white board–wipe board*” (Field 2008a p.149);
- * *elision* is caused when sounds are totally elided due to fast production of speech. It commonly occurs when the English sounds /t/ and /d/ are in final position and between consonants (Field 2008). This can be troublesome for ESL/EFL speakers as /t/ and /d/ occur in the endings of past regular verbs, negative auxiliaries and superlative short adjectives (*ibid*);
- * *reduction* occurs when the sounds or syllables of words are weakened, shortened or dropped in connected speech (*ibid*).

Finally, hesitation, another common feature of natural speech, can also cause incorrect lexical segmentation. Since “some hesitation phenomena such as filled pause or repetition are acoustically identical with, or at least similar to, unstressed forms or parts of words”, L2 listeners may interpret hesitations as parts of words or parts of words as hesitations (Voss 1979 p.130).

2.1.D. Activities to improve perception skills in ESL/EFL students

To help ESL/EFL students overcome these perception problems, different activities that focus on perception skills have been suggested:

- ✓ Minimal pairs

Using minimal pairs is a useful way to practice accurate aural perception (Field 1998, Ur 1984). As students have to tell if the sounds in a pair of words (such as “fit” and “feet”) are the same or different, they focus their attention on the subtle differences between the sounds of the L2. Minimal pairs also help L2 listeners become aware of the importance of phonemes to distinguish closely similar words (Field 2008a).

However, asking students to tell if the sounds they hear are the same or different can

be time consuming and a bit demotivating as minimal pairs inevitably include words that are unusual and/or unknown to the students. Another weakness of minimal pairs is that the words are produced in isolation and out of context (Flowerdew and Miller 2005). To overcome these flaws, Field (2008a) recommends designing minimal pair exercises with fairly frequent words and Flowerdew and Miller (2005) and Goh (2000) recommend using minimal-pair exercises in context so as to emulate what happens in real-life listening.

✓ Working with stressed words

Many authors (Field 2008a, 2005, 2003, Flowerdew and Miller 2005, Cutler 2001, Goh 2000) emphasise the importance of working with stressed words to improve perception. Stressed words are important as, based on the given-new principle, new information is stressed while given or recoverable information is unstressed (Rost 1990). Moreover, stress is used by native listeners of English for lexical segmentation: as stressed syllables are easier to perceive, native listeners rely heavily on stress to identify words in the stream of speech (Field 2008a, Cutler 2001, Rost 2002, Goh 2000). In fact, Field (2008a) states that using stress to identify the beginning of words is a possible strategy used by native listeners since 90% of the words in English are stressed in the first syllable. Stress is also useful for comprehension as content words in connected speech are usually stressed while function words are not (Field 2008a, Flowerdew and Miller 2005). For all these reasons, activities that focus on stress should be encouraged to improve perception skills. Field (2008a) suggests asking students to identify the stressed syllables in a short audio and guess the words from which those syllables come from; however, this activity can be quite difficult to implement in an online environment and it can be quite challenging for my intermediate-level students who have not learned about stress in their Pronunciation class yet. Many authors (Thorn 2013, Wilson 2008, Brown 2007) recommend using gap-filling activities strategically designed to make students focus on prominent words

in speech. Despite being a bit time-consuming, these can be quite useful to help students notice and realize the importance of prominent words in listening contexts where listening out for stressed words is essential. Moreover, gap-filling activities can be designed with stressed words which are unfamiliar for students and that conform to spelling conventions to force them to rely only on their perception skills and not on contextual clues (Thorn 2013, Ur 1984).

✓ Working with unstressed words

L2 listeners should also practice perceiving unstressed syllables and words (Thorn 2013, Field 2008a, 2003, Cauldwell 2002, Ur 1984). In connected speech, function words are usually unstressed and in their weak form (Field 2008a). Perceiving function words is important for comprehension as they sometimes carry essential information (Thorn 2013, Field 2008a, 1998, Cauldwell 2002, Ur 1984). As Field states, it is not the same to hear “I am looking *at* the photos” than “I am looking *for* the photos” (2008c p.429). Field (2008c) has shown that ESL/EFL listeners of all levels have difficulty perceiving function words. Contractions are also unstressed and important for meaning building: it is not the same to hear “I’ve lived in London for three years” than “I lived in London for three years” (Field 2003 p.330). L2 listeners find it difficult to perceive unstressed words as they are placed in the background due to stressed words (Field 2008a, 2003). Ur (1984) suggests making students point to all the unstressed syllables in a short segment. This activity can be useful to help students discriminate between stressed and unstressed syllables but, again, it seems to be quite challenging for my intermediate-level students especially if the activity is done online without the teacher’s presence. Thorn (2013) suggests using gap-filling activities with unstressed words which, although a bit time consuming, can be quite effective to help students realize that unstressed words are difficult but important to perceive.

✓ Dictation

This is the most common perception activity (Thorn 2013, Vandergrift 2011, Field 2008a, 2003, 1998, Wilson 2008, Ur 1984). Dictation has an important value for perception skills as it makes L2 listeners practice segmenting speech into words (Field 2008b). Most importantly, gaps in dictation help students see and focus on their particular perception problems (Lynch 2009). Dictation can be done in different forms. *Instant dictation* involves playing a short segment and then asking students to write the last 4 or 5 words (Thorn 2013, Field 2008c, 2004). With *fast speed dictation* students hear an authentic short segment and try to write it down so as to cope with features of connected speech (Field 2008a, Rost 2002, Ur 1984). *Dictogloss*, a “text reconstruction technique”, is a fun variation as the teacher reads a short interesting/amusing passage at fast speed many times and students take down notes and reconstruct the text in groups (Wilson 2003 p.336). All these forms of dictation can be motivating and challenging but it may be difficult to implement dictation in a big class with different students’ needs. Another drawback of dictation is that “the administration and scoring of dictations can be very-time consuming” (Rost 2002 p.138). For these reasons, dictation activities can be quite effective if students can do them on their own, outside the classroom (*ibid*).

✓ Using transcripts

Although not much exploited in ESL/EFL classrooms, transcripts have a great value especially for perception skills (Vandergrift 2011, Field 2008a, Wilson 2008, Cauldwell 2002, Goh 2000). Transcripts can be used to help students analyze the difference between how words are pronounced and how they are written (Wilson 2008). Features of connected speech and word stress can be noticed with transcripts (*ibid*). But most importantly, transcripts can compare what L2 listeners think they have heard with what has actually been said (*ibid*). This is why asking students to look at the transcript, or parts of it, can be very useful to improve their perception skills. However,

reading the transcript after each listening activity can be quite monotonous and if students know that they will be able to read the transcript later, they may not make the effort to listen accurately. To avoid these problems, transcripts should be incorporated in the listening lesson in an innovative way. For example, Rost (2002) suggests using transcripts with some errors to design an error detection activity and Wilson (2008) highly recommends asking students to look at the transcript or parts of it after they have listened to the audio many times.

2.1.E. Compensatory strategies to cope with perception problems

Successful ESL/EFL listeners draw on strategies to cope with listening problems and this is why this final section focuses on strategies for perception problems. In the case of listening for perception, compensatory strategies are very important as they help L2 listeners make up for gaps caused by decoding problems (Field 2008a, Goh 2000, Ur 1984). There are many compensatory strategies identified and named by respected listening researchers such as Field (2008a), Goh (2000, 1998) and Vandergrift (2004, 2003). However, since this Study focuses on the teaching and practice of perception skills, only two main compensatory strategies useful for perception problems will be considered: predicting and guessing (Lynch 2009, Field 2008a, 1998, Wilson 2008, Rost 2002, Goh 2000, Ur 1984). *Predicting* implies activating knowledge of the language, the topic, the speakers, the situation and the world before listening. *Guessing* implies “guessing what something is likely to be even if it has not been perceived properly” (Ur 1984). To make intelligent guesses after listening, the L2 listener needs to draw on linguistic cues, i.e. knowledge of the L2 and L1 and non-linguistic cues, i.e., knowledge of the context, situation, text type, topic, participants and the world (Oxford 1990).

The literature in EFL/ESL listening abounds with research on the importance of perception for listening comprehension, perception problems faced by ESL/EFL and types of perception activities. However, as Vandergrift (2011) states in his summary of

current L2 research on teaching and learning listening, there is not much research on perception activities that have shown to be successful.

2.2. ICT tools and Moodle for L2 listening and perception

This second section reviews how ICT can improve L2 listening, how ICT has been used for the development of perception skills and how listening activities can be developed with Moodle.

2.2.A. ICT tools and L2 listening

ICT can be a great asset for listening development (Vandergrift 2011). Thanks to technology, ELT teachers can choose audios and videos from different sources according to their learners' needs and use multimedia to improve their listening lessons (Lynch 2009, Flowerdew and Miller 2005). ESL/EFL listeners can also benefit from ICT in many ways. First, they can independently access the recording from their computers, mobiles or other audio devices. Second, the ESL/EFL learner can carry the listening tasks at his/her own pace without having to depend on the pace of the class (Wilson 2008). Third, thanks to multimodality, "the opportunities for processing input are amplified" (Rost 2007 p.102-3). In fact, with multimedia devices the L2 listener can control the audio, see images while listening and use subtitles and the transcript. Moreover, with the replay, pause and rewind options, the L2 listener is no longer subject to the temporal and linear nature of speech (Guichon and McLornan 2008). Fourth, multimedia can aid listening comprehension as it has been shown by some listening researchers such as Guichon and McLornan (2008), Grgurvic and Hegelheimer (2007), Hulstijn (2003) and Brett (1997).

The web is full of free and subscription ELT websites that use multimedia to offer listening activities to ESL/EFL teachers and students. The *BBC Learning English* and the *British Council Learn English* sites are highly recommended across the

literature (e.g. Wilson 2008, Harmer 2007) as they offer scripted and authentic audios and interactive activities ready to use with learners of English of different levels.

Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab is also frequently mentioned as it offers JavaScript listening quizzes with scripted and graded audios (Lynch 2009, Wilson 2008). The *English Listening Lesson Library Online* (ELLLO) website offers free multimedia activities and, interestingly, some of them force users to choose the right option to be able to move onto the next question. *One Stop English* is a subscription website that offers different levels of scripted audios and comprehension activities. Different publishing houses also offer free and subscription websites with multimedia listening activities for their ELT textbooks. In all the cases, the activities are product-oriented as they test comprehension by means of true/false or multiple-choice activities but they do not explicitly focus on the different skills, strategies and processes than can be used to aid L2 listening.

2.2.B. ICT and perception skills

ICT can be particularly useful for the development of perception skills. Self-access multimedia can be used to work on perception as “cracking the code of connected speech may demand some intensive individual work on the part of the learner” (Field 2008a p.162). By controlling the audio, L2 learners can rehear problematic segments many times and, thus, overcome perception difficulties (Field 2008a, Cauldwell 2002, 1996). Multimedia can also be used to design dictation activities that learners can access individually. In fact, on the web there are many free sites that offer practice in dictation of sounds, words, sentences or short passages such as *American English Pronunciation Practice*, *Breaking News English*, *SpellingCity* and *Listen and Write*.

Specially designed software that focus on the development of perception skills in ESL/EFL listening is beginning to become available. Hulstijn (2003) has come with *123 LISTEN* which allows listeners to choose the mode of listening to a video or audio.

With the second mode - segmented listening with text displayed afterwards- students can specially focus on perception. Cauldwell (2013) has recently introduced an iPad application, *Cool Speech*, which helps students improve their perception skills with different listening and pronunciation activities to deal with connected speech. This application developed by BCL NuMedia © Richard Cauldwell (2012) has two interesting perception activities: *Hotspots* and *Dictations*. With *Hotspots* users listen to a short authentic extract, choose the right option and then explore the audio script that can be heard at fast and slow speed. With *Dictations* users listen to short spontaneous dialogues and fill in the gaps with words which have particular realizations due to connected speech. Both *123LISTEN* and *Cool Speech* use the perception activities suggested in the literature and are promising for the future development of perception skills in independent environments. However, how computers and multimedia can be used to help ESL/EFL learners improve their perception skills has not been much explored yet (Vandergrift 2011, Lynch 2009, Flowerdew and Miller 2005).

2.2.C. Moodle and listening

“Moodle is a software package for producing Internet-based courses and websites (Moodle 2013 n.p.). Moodle is an open source guided by the social-constructionist approach that offers the possibility of creating different resources and quizzes and tracking students’ participation easily (Moodle 2013 n.p.). Moodle has been widely used for language teaching in different countries (Dudeney and Hockly 2007). In the case of L2 listening, Moodle can be easily adapted to design pre/while/post listening activities following the CA. For example, Stanford (2009) suggests using Moodle *forums* and *mind maps* to activate students’ schemata in the pre-listening session, designing while-listening activities with Moodle *quizzes* (matching/numerical/cloze/multiple-choice) and asking students to complete a *questionnaire* for the post-listening stage. There are various reports (Motteram 2013, Motteram, et al 2008) on how Moodle has been used to design ELT listening activities

such as the ones described by Stanford (2009). However, except for Yang et al (2013), no research on the use of Moodle to improve ELT listening has been published to the best of my knowledge.

Careful analysis of the relevant literature reveals that there are some activities that can develop perception skills and that ICT can be used to design such activities. However, there is not much research on successful perception activities or on how Moodle can be used to design perception activities. Therefore, my main research question is:

- How will the design and implementation of perception activities using Moodle 2.3 influence my students' L2 listening for perception skills?

The related questions derived from this question are:

- Is it possible to design perception activities using Moodle 2.3?
- How do the students find those activities?
- Do the activities help my students improve their perception skills?

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the research approach, the ethics, the participants and the research methods used to answer the research questions.

3.1. The research approach

Action Research (AR) was considered the best approach to do this Study for three main reasons. First, the aim of AR is “to intervene in a deliberate way in the problematic situation in order to bring about changes and, even better, improvements in practice” (Burns 2009 p.2). In fact, the aim of my Study was to implement listening activities to improve my students’ perception skills. Second, AR is a problem-solving approach for a particular teaching/learning situation, in my case, my students of Group G of the course *English Language I* at the School of Languages (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007). Finally, Beatty (2003) states that AR is very useful for teachers/researchers trying to find out how and for that purposes ICT can be used to assist learning. In this Study, AR was used to see if and how Moodle 2.3 could be used to design successful perception activities.

This Study went through the classic stages for AR first described by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988 in Burns 2009):

- 1- *Planning*: the action was planned considering my students’ listening for perception problems and the teaching context.
- 2- *Action*: perception activities were designed, developed and implemented on Moodle 2.3. based on current research on ESL/EFL listening for perception and the use of ICT to teach listening.
- 3- *Observation*: data from my students participating in the Study was collected to observe the effects of the action.
- 4- *Reflection*: the teacher/researcher analysed, evaluated and reflected upon the effects of the action and planned further action.

3.2. Ethics

Fundamental ethical standards needed to be considered to conduct this Study in a moral and responsible way. For AR projects, Burns (2009) suggests being aware of three aspects: the permissions needed, the people affected by the research and the people who should be told about the completion of the research. For this Study, permission from the head of the course *English Language I* was required so that I could implement optional ICT materials to aid EFL listening in one of the groups of the course. Ethical approval from the University of Leeds was also received. Permission from the students willing to participate was also necessary and this leads to the second ethical aspect I considered: the people affected by the research (*ibid*). Before asking for my students' permission, I told them in Spanish what the Study was about, what it was for, what improvements it was expected to bring about and what the participants were expected to do. I also explained that their participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw from the Study whenever they wanted and that their identities would not be revealed. Finally, those who agreed to participate were asked to read and sign the *Informed Consent* which was offered in Spanish (see Appendix 1). "Research should not involve any risk, harm or disadvantage to the students by being involved in the actions you take" (*ibid* p.36). Since my research was done with my students of *English Language I*, I emphasized that it was not part of the requirement of the course to be involved in the Study and that their participation or lack of it would have no impact on their marks. To comply with the final ethical issue in AR, the head of the course *English Language I* and the participants were informed about the completion and results of the Study orally.

3.3. The participants

As the online listening activities did not form part of the requirement of the course *English Language I*, the 70 students of Group G were invited to participate

and 15 accepted. The participants were asked do the pre-test and post-test in June and August respectively and the listening sessions in July. I decided to implement the activities in July because students were on their winter break in that month and, therefore, they did not have classes or school homework that might prevent them from doing the activities.

3.4. Research methods

Vandergrift (2007) recommends L2 listening researchers to use more than one method of data collection to get greater insights and add reliability and validity to the research. Moreover, Burns (2009) states that comparing, contrasting and cross-checking data collected in different ways adds objectivity to the AR. That is why to see how the Moodle listening activities influenced my students' perception skills, I decided to use the students' personal journals after each listening session, their records of the sessions, a final questionnaire and pre and post tests.

3.4.A. Personal journals after each listening session

Using journals to collect students' opinions and feelings of a new activity is a rich form of data collection (Burns 2009). In fact, incorporating a reflective phase after a listening activity is quite a common technique suggested by listening researchers such as Field (2008a), Vandergrift (2007) and Goh (2000) as it helps L2 listeners recall the listening process, reflect on a new teaching experience and notice listening problems and possible solutions. For these reasons, I used a personal journal after each listening session to ask students to record their thoughts and impressions of each session. Following Mackey and Gass (2005), I included some guiding questions specific for each listening session to help students with their reflections and to be able to find possible patterns in the analysis (see Figure 1). Moreover, students were asked to write their personal journals in English or Spanish so that they could freely express in

the language they felt comfortable with. I tried to respond to the students' journals on the same day they wrote them to show that the online teacher was visible and committed, two aspects that Al-Mahmood and McLoughlin (2004) consider essential in any online environment.

To analyze the journals I used "inductive coding" (Burns 2009 p.107). I read all the journals for one session carefully, looked for themes running through the different journals and summarised each theme in a short statement. For example, one student wrote: "*I liked the true/false activity with the joke more*" so I summarized that theme with the statement "liked listening activity 2 more". Similar comments were summarized with the same statement. I also wrote the number of times each statement was mentioned but I did not count the statement if it had already been mentioned by the same student for the same journal entry.

1.2. Journal about Session 1 View 12 journal entries

JOURNAL ABOUT LISTENING SESSION 1

This is a personal journal that will help you reflect on the activities that you have just done in Session 1 and on the things that you have learned thanks to these activities. This journal will also help me improve Session 1 and see if it has contributed in some way so please, feel free to add both positive and negative comments! I have included some questions that can help you reflect on Session 1 but you can add any other ideas that you can think of, they are more than welcome! You can write your answers in English or Spanish.

Did you like doing the activities in Session 1?

Which activity did you like more, the multiple-choice activity with the phone message or the true/false activity with the joke? Why?

Were the activities useful? Did you learn anything from them?

Was the explanation about confusing sounds in English for Spanish speakers useful? Why?

Was the explanation about the strategies "predicting" and "guessing" useful? Why?

Did you have any problems with the activities?

Did you do any of the activities suggested in the Further Practice section? If yes, which ones? Did you like them? Why?

THANKS A LOT!!!!
Your teacher

Start or edit my journal entry

You have not started this journal yet

Figure 1. Guiding questions for the journal

3.4.B. Students' record

The students' record of each listening session was examined as it could shed some light on the students' performance and common difficulties. To see the students'

performance of each session, the average of the students' marks in one session as calculated by Moodle was compared with the maximum mark of that session. To analyse the students' performance across the sessions, the percentage of the average of the students' marks in each of the sessions was calculated and compared. Common specific mistakes made by many students were also analysed.

3.4.C. Final Questionnaire

To get the students' opinions and value of the online listening sessions as a whole, a questionnaire was done after the listening sessions were completed (see Appendix 2). This form of summative evaluation was administered in class to avoid one problem with questionnaires that Gillham (2000) emphasizes: getting the questionnaires back. To let students express freely, the questionnaire was in their native language (Spanish) and anonymous as suggested by Mackey and Gass (2005) and Dörnyei (2010) respectively. Two types of questions were included: rating scales and open questions. The Likert scales - strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/strongly disagree - were used with statements about the listening sessions, their effect and the use of Moodle so that the answers could be quantified and analysed easily (Mackey and Gass 2005). Only 8 statements were used to avoid a lengthy questionnaire (Dörnyei 2010). Open questions were also included to get a more informative and probably more insightful response (Mackey and Gass 2005). However, as the students wrote about the sessions extensively in the journals, only two open questions were asked to avoid overwhelming the students: one asking for my students' overall impression of the listening sessions and the other for ways to improve them. The rating scales were analysed with Microsoft Excel and the open questions with inductive coding.

3.4.D. *Pre and post tests*

Two IELTS mock listening tests were administered in class before and after the implementation of the online listening sessions (see Appendix 3). This standardized test was used because all its question types focus on the correct decoding of words or expressions said in the recording, there are gap-filling activities and my students may need to do this international exam required by many worldwide organizations in the future (IELTS n.d.). The mock tests were taken from *IELTS Testbuilder* by McCarter and Ash (2003). Only the first 20 questions belonging to the sections 1 and 2 of the mock tests were used as, unlike sections 3 and 4, they focus on general topics that my students can handle according to their level of English. The pre-test was administered at the beginning of June and the post-test at the beginning of August, right after the students completed the online listening sessions. As it is the case with the IELTS listening module, the recording was played once for both tests. The mean of the students' scores of both tests was calculated and compared to see if the listening sessions had had some impact on the students' listening performance in the tests.

CHAPTER 4: The listening activities on Moodle

This chapter refers to the rationale for the design of the listening activities, the factors considered for the selection of the audios and the way the activities were developed on Moodle 2.3¹.

4.1. Rationale for activity design

Some authors (Vandergrift 2011, White 1998) hold that perception activities should be done within a listening task while others (Ur 1987) contend that tasks are not necessary if the listening activities are, in themselves, effective and interesting. Moreover, Hulstijn (2003) interestingly states that computers, together with creativity, can be used to design appealing perception activities. For these reasons, I decided to design 5 listening sessions with activities that only called for listening for details so that perception skills were exclusively targeted.

The listening sessions were sequenced progressively according to their level of difficulty. To design the listening activities of the sessions, I used or adapted the perception activities suggested in the literature that were suitable for my students' level of English and possible to develop on Moodle 2.3. Except for session 5, all the sessions had the same structure so that students could get used to them easily:

1. a welcome greeting with revision of the previous session, objectives of the session and description of the listening activities,
2. Listening Activity 1 strategically designed to draw students' attention to the topic of the session,
3. explanation of the topic with examples from the first activity,
4. Listening Activity 2 to practice what was taught in the explanation,

¹ To access the listening sessions, please use the username and password "profesor12" and log onto <http://uncavim20.unc.edu.ar/course/view.php?id=763>. From the *Home Page*, click on the tab *Listening Practice*.

5. revision of what was done, suggestions to external sites to further practice the topic of the session at different difficulty level and a final greeting.

Motivation was also considered in the design of all the activities as “comprehension can only take place if individuals are motivated to listen” (Flowerdew and Miller 2005 p.91). In fact, all the listening sessions had:

- ✚ an informal and friendly tone so that the students could feel at ease in the online environment and encouraged by their online teacher (Al-Mahmood and McLoughlin 2004);
- ✚ listening situations that my students were likely to find in their textbooks or learning materials in their course of studies or that they could encounter in the future as teachers or translators;
- ✚ the possibility of controlling the audios to have a more active role;
- ✚ immediate feedback since, as Ur (1984) states, students want to get the right answer straight away and they may lose interest if they cannot. To imitate Hulstijn’s (2003) mode 2, the feedback comment quoted the part of the transcript and the track minute when the answer was said so that students could compare what they thought they had heard with what was actually said and, thus, focus on what and where they misunderstood.

4.2. The audios

Selection of the right audios was essential to design appropriate and motivating perception activities. To select the audios, I considered their type, source, content and delivery (see Table 1). First, I decided to include graded/scripted and authentic audios for the listening activities because both types have advantages and disadvantages. The listening sessions 1-3 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 (2008a) states, graded/scripted audios boost L2 listeners' confidence and motivation in the first stages of their listening training. Sessions 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 2008a 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 2008a, 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 2008a, p.277).

The graded/scripted audios used in the first sessions were taken from the well-known ELT websites reviewed in the literature and the authentic audios were accessed from the CNN, BBC and VisitBritain websites. To select the websites, I followed a combination of Kapoun's (2010) and Dudeney and Hockly's (2007) criteria for evaluating websites as I considered their accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency, coverage and functionality.

For the content of the audios I considered the listening situations, my students' English level and their possible interests. I made a list of all the possible listening situations that called for close listening for details to choose audios suitable for perception activities and, thus, do as Field (2008a) suggests: match the type of listening text to the task. To look for audios suitable for the level of my students, I used the B1 level descriptor for Overall Listening Comprehension of the CEFR which states that "[B1 students] can understand the main points of clear standards speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in word, school, leisure, etc. (...) [and] the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear" (CEFR p.26). I also tried to find topics that would be appealing to my students. "If the text is intrinsically

interesting, and particularly if the students have a personal stake in it, they will listen attentively” (Wilson 2008 p.26).

Finally, I regarded the delivery of the audios. Since the listening sessions aim at perception skills, I looked for audios that were quite short (1 to 3 minutes long) and of very good sound quality. Except for the quote which was read at quite fast speech for the purposes of “fast dictation”, all the audios had a normal delivery and only 1 or 2 speakers participated in the audios. I only included speakers using standard British or American English.

| LISTENING SESSION | TYPE | SOURCE | CONTENT | DELIVERY |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | scripted | ELLLO | phone message from Mark telling the listener to do some things in his house as he is away | normal speed American English |
| | scripted | BC LearnEnglish | joke about Sherlock Holmes and Mr Watson | normal speed British English |
| 2 | scripted | ELLLO | picture game based on what a hotel receptionist says at check-in | normal speed American English |
| | scripted | Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab | conversation between a taxi driver and a passenger visiting New York | normal speed American English |
| 3 | scripted | One Stop English | conversation between two friends at a clothes shop | normal speed British English |
| 4 | authentic | CNN | news report about Pope Francis' visit to Rio | normal speed American English |
| | authentic | BCC | interview with Prince Harry about the royal baby | normal speed British English |
| 5 | authentic | England TV from Visit Britain | short programme about Liverpool's highlights | normal speed British English |
| | authentic | Skype | short conversation between an English speaker and myself about the Beatles | normal speed British English |
| | authentic | Skype | John Lennon's famous quote read by a native speaker | quite fast speed British English |
| | authentic | YouTube | official video clip of The Beatles' | normal speed British English |

Table 1. Audios for the listening sessions

4.3. Development of the listening activities on Moodle 2.3

4.3.A. The main page

The Moodle page from which all the listening sessions could be accessed was called “Listening Practice”. I used Adobe Illustrator to design this label with a picture of an audio speaker from OpenClipArt, a Creative Commons site, to make it look attractive and user-friendly. Below this label there was a short description of the main aim of the listening sessions. The 5 listening sessions also had short descriptions of their content. For the labels and the descriptions I used blue or gray, the same pre-set colours of the Moodle platform of the School of Languages, U.N.C. as Crystal (2006) states that in webpages colours are important for coherence and clarity. Each session had a link to the online activities (done with *module quiz*) and the personal journal (done with *module journal*) (see Figure 2).

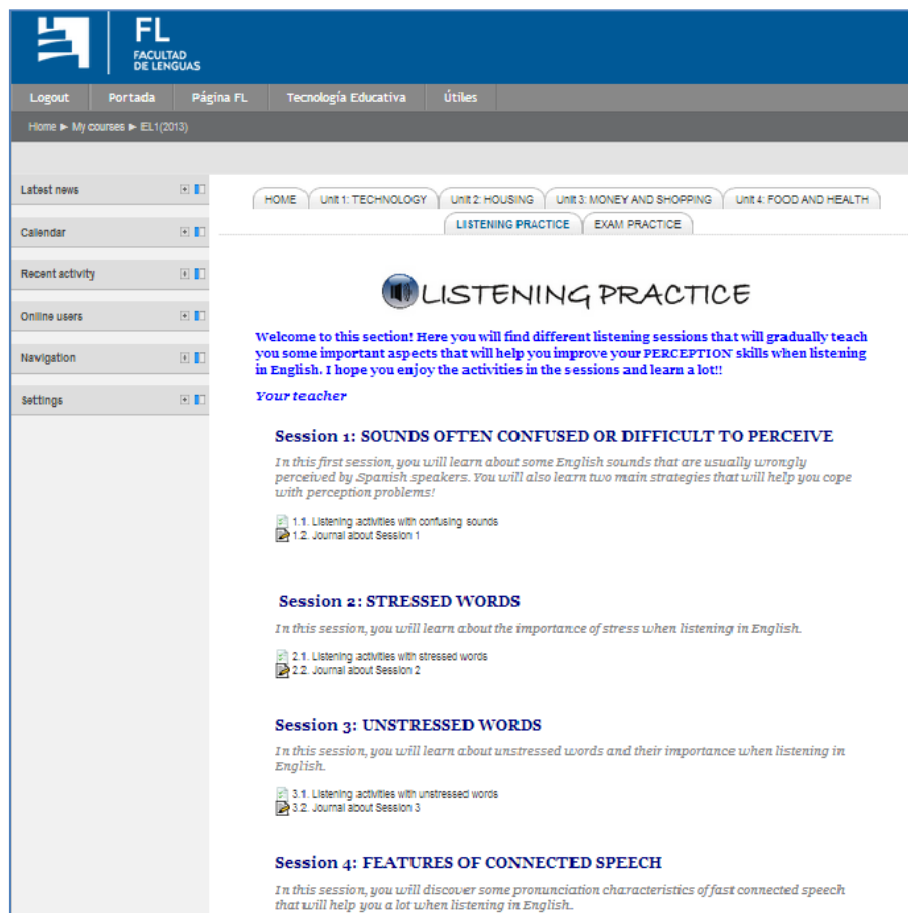


Figure 2. The main page of the listening sessions

4.3.B. *Listening session 1: Sounds often confused or difficult to perceive*


The aim of this session was to make students aware of English sounds which are often confused or difficult to perceive by Spanish speakers and to teach students the compensatory strategies “predicting” and “guessing” which would help them overcome perception difficulties throughout the sessions. For the first listening activity, I combined Rost’s (2002) idea of using a tapescript with some errors and Flowerdew and Miller (2005) and Goh’s (2000) suggestion of using minimal pairs in context. Thus, students were asked to listen to the telephone message, read the script and choose between two minimal pairs designed with *close>multiple choice*. The minimal pairs were selected based on the sound discrimination difficulty that Spanish speakers have and on possible words that collocate in the context. Students could listen to the audio as many times as they wanted and, as this was the first listening activity, specific instruction on how to play, pause and rewind the *Moodle audio player* was given in English and Spanish. In this and all the cases the audio was referenced and students could have direct access to the original source (see Figure 3). After checking their answers, students could read a short explanation of the English sounds often confused or wrongly perceived by Spanish speakers.

LISTENING ACTIVITY 1: MULTIPLE-CHOICE WITH MINIMAL PAIRS

For this first activity, you will listen to a man called Mark leaving you an important message on the phone.

Please, follow these steps to do the activity:

1- First, learn how to use the audio player. To listen to the audio, click on the "play" button and click on the same button to stop the audio. (Para escuchar el audio, hagan click en el botón de play y hagan click en el mismo botón para parar el audio)



If you cannot listen to the audio, click [here](#) to listen to it from its original source
[Audio taken from ELLLO site <http://www.ello.org/apuj/Games/G011-PhoneCall.html>]

2- Read the tapescript below and have a look at the words that you have to choose. Notice that the words are very similar, they are called "minimal pairs" as they differ minimally in one or two sounds. The words are important to understand the phone message correctly so you will have to pay close attention to the audio!!

3- Now listen to the audio and choose the word that Mark says. You can replay and pause the audio as many times as you want and you can even listen to specific parts of the audio by dragging the playing cursor. (Pueden escuchar y detener el audio cuantas veces quieran! También pueden arrastrar el cursor para escuchar una parte específica del audio).

Hey, hello. Hey, Oh, man I'm so glad I got you on the phone. This is Mark. Hey, listen, I really need you to do me a favor. I'm in New York. I was supposed to come home but it looks like I need to stay in New York for two more days, so can you help me out?


The first thing I need you to do is to check my mail. I should have a lot of mail. It will be in the front door and it really piles up and I have an important that's coming so can you take that, take the mail out and put it on the kitchen table.

Also, I left enough food and water for my dog to be sure, can you just check and make sure the dog has food and water? And please the dog if you have time. I'm sure he's

Figure 3. Listening Activity 1 in session 1

The session continued with an explanation of the strategies *predicting* and *guessing* (see Figure 4). For this, signs with Adobe Illustrator and representative pictures taken from OpenClipArt were designed to help students remember the use of each strategy. The sign for *predicting* had an inspector looking for clues so that students could remember that, like an inspector, they had to look for clues of the listening situation before listening. The sign for *guessing* had a question mark so that students could remember that, to make up for words that they could not perceive, they had to make intelligent guesses after listening. To show students how to use the strategies, the explanations included descriptions of how the strategies could have been used in the listening activity they had just done.

Let's learn two compensatory strategies very useful when we have to listen to specific details in English: **predicting** and **guessing**

 **PREDICTING**

This strategy involves predicting or anticipating what someone may say by considering **who** the speakers are, **where** they are (the listening context) and **what** they are going to speak about (the topic). Like an inspector, we consider clues (pistas) of the listening situation BEFORE listening to understand the speakers much more.

It is very easy to use this strategy if we are speaking to someone face to face as we can actually see the speakers and we are part of the listening situation.

But we can also use this strategy if we are doing a listening activity for practice. In fact, there is usually much information about the speakers, the context and the topic in the instructions. For example, have a look at the instruction of the listening activity you have just done:

You will listen to a man called Mark leaving you an important message on the phone.

By reading it very carefully, you can predict that you will listen Mark (speaker), that he is talking on the phone (listening context) and that he is leaving you an important message (topic). With this little information, we know that we have to get ready to listen to someone saying a lot of important things in a bit of a hurry (as it is usually the case with phone messages!) We can also predict that Mark will start off the conversation with "Hi, this is Mark" and that he will finish it with "OK, that's all for now, thanks a lot!"

 **GUESSING**

This strategy involves making **intelligent** guesses, that is, guessing the sound, word or expression AFTER listening based on information about the language (**linguistic** clues) and information about the context, the speakers, the situation and the world (**non-linguistic** clues).

For example, in the case of the listening you have just done, if you could not hear if Mark said "feed or fit" the dog you can make an intelligent guess by considering some linguistic clues: "fit" usually means "suit or match" so it does not make much sense to say "you suit/match the dog". Moreover, you can also consider that Mark had previously asked you to give food and water to the dog which is the meaning of "feed".

If you could not hear if Mark said "loan" or "lawn", you can use your general knowledge of the world to make the right guess: it is impossible to have a loan next to the flowers in the garden, and, if you do, please do not water it! ;)

Figure 4. Explanation of the compensatory strategies in session 1

In the second listening activity, students had the chance of putting what they had learned about confusing sounds and strategies into practice by listening to the Sherlock Holmes' joke. This activity was designed with *true/false quiz*: students had to select "true" if the word underlined in the statement was the one said in the audio and "false" if it was similar but not the same. Again, for this activity I adapted Rost's (2002) idea of using tapescripts with errors and I used minimal pairs in context following Flowerdew and Miller (2005) and Goh (2000). After finishing the activity, students were offered the link to the tapescript of the joke and read about the advantages of using tapescripts mentioned by Wilson (2008). The session finished with links to interactive exercises with minimal pairs confusing for Spanish speakers from the *American English Pronunciation Practice* site and to online dictations of letters and numbers from the *Listen and Write* site.

4.3.C. *Listening session 2: Stressed words*

This session aimed at helping students realize the existence, function and importance for stressed words in English. In a way, I followed the structure of the activity *Hotspot* in Cauldwell's (2012) *Cool Speech* to design the first listening activity. Students were asked to play a listening game where they had to select the right picture according to the hotel conversation and they were reminded of the compensatory strategies before playing the game. Students then read that to succeed in the game they had to pay attention to the stressed words and they were asked to listen to the conversation as many times as needed to complete the tapescript of the audio with all the stressed words missing done with *close>shortanswer* (see Figure 5). Next, students learned that, unlike Spanish, English is a stress-timed language and that stressed words carry new information, they are content words and 90% of the words are usually stressed in the first syllable. Afterwards, students practiced noticing stressed words by doing a *multiple-choice* activity with the taxi conversation and were offered the chance of seeing the tapescript afterwards. Finally, some further listening activities from the *ELLLO* and *Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab* sites were suggested where listening out for stressed words was essential.

As you may have noticed, you can easily succeed in the activity if you can identify the stressed words in the audio, that is if you can notice the words that are given more prominence (that "stand out") by the receptionist.

Let's listen to the audio again but this time trying to listen out for the stressed words!!

2. Listen to the audio, read the tapescript and fill in the gaps with the missing words. You can use upper or lower case but if you need to write numbers, please, write the numbers using letters (i.e. write "one" instead of "1"). Remember that you can listen to the audio as many times as you want, good luck!

This is the same audio of the listening game: 

Tapescript:

hello ✓! welcome ✓ to the hotel ✓! We have ✓ everything ready ✓ for you. Uh, you've already ✓ checked ✓ in online ✓, so first ✓ let me tell ✓ you about your room ✓. Um, you've order ✗ the delux ✗ room and it comes ✓ with one ✓ large ✓ king ✓ size bed ✓, and uh in your room ✓ we have a work ✓ area with a desk ✓ and chair ✓. Uh, luckily ✓ for you, this room has just ✓ been remodelled ✗ so it has been ✗ furnished ✗ and new wallpaper ✓, so it looks really nice ✓ so you'll have one of

Incorrect
Sorry, wrong answer!
The correct answer is: furniture
Mark 0.00 out of 1.00

OK, here is your room ✓ key ✓ this is a modern ✓ key, so what you need ✓ to do is slide ✓ this into the door ✓ and slide ✓ the key ✓ into the door with the holes ✓ facing ✓ the door and you'll see a light ✓ come on and it'll open ✗ the door, so that's how ✓ you get ✓ in the room.

also ✓, for all guests ✓ we offer one free ✓, complementary ✗ beverage ✓ at the bar ✓, so the bar ✓ is located outside ✓ of the hotel by the pool ✓. It's also near

Figure 5. Gap-filling with stressed words in session 2

4.3.D. Listening session 3: Unstressed words

This session tried to raise students' awareness of the existence, function and importance of unstressed words. Again, based on the structure of Cauldwell's (2012) *Hotspots*, the session opened with a *true/false quiz* based on the unstressed words used in the shop conversation (see Figure 6). After having the activities checked, students read that unstressed words were usually function words, contractions, content words already said and hesitations. For the second listening activity, students had to listen to the shop conversation as many times as needed to fill in the gapped tapescript with unstressed words. This gapped activity was designed following Thorn's (2013) advice and using *close>shortanswer*. The further practice section offered a link to a dictation test with unstressed contractions from *SpellingCity.com*.

Maggie gets a bit angry with John because he does not want to look at the brand of the girls' jeans.

Select one:

True ✓

False

Check

Well done! She actually insults him in a low voice by saying "spoilsport" which means "someone who spoils other people's fun" (LDOCE) (Spanish: mala onda). You can listen to this at minute 00:32 in the audio.
The correct answer is 'True'.

John thought that Maggie was spending that day.

Select one:

True ✗

False

Check

Sorry, wrong answer! John says "Anyway, I thought you WERENT spending today." You can listen to it at 00:40 in the track.
The correct answer is 'False'.

Maggie has to write 800 words for Tuesday.

Select one:

True

False ✓

Check

Well done! Maggie says "I've got an eight hundred-word essay to write BEFORE Tuesday". You can listen to it again at 00:42
The correct answer is 'False'.

Figure 6. True/false with unstressed words in session 3

4.3.E. Listening session 4: Features of connected speech

This session aimed at helping students realize why recognizing words in fast connected speech can be troublesome and how they could use what they had learned in the sessions to deal with perception problems caused by fast speech. The first activity was a dictation similar to the one offered by Cauldwell's (2012) *Cool Speech* as students had to watch the CNN news report about Pope Francis and complete the statements with words from the video. The activity was designed with the *short answer quiz* and, in all the cases, the word(s) that students had to fill in was/were affected by a feature of connected speech (redistribution, assimilation, elision or reduction). When students read the feedback for their answers, they learned why the pronunciation of the words they were to complete was altered (see figure 7). As students will learn about features of connected speech in detail next year with the course Phonetics I, only a

general explanation with examples taken from the video was provided. The explanation also encouraged students to put into practice everything they had learned about confusing sounds, minimal pairs, compensatory strategies, stress and unstressed words and features of connected speech to cope with perception problems in fast speech. Students were also asked to download the script of the CNN report and to read it while they watched the report to see how words were realized in fast speech.

The screenshot displays a digital interface for a gap-filling exercise. It consists of four distinct sections, each representing a different feature of connected speech. Each section includes a sentence with a gap, a 'Check' button, a feedback message, and a detailed explanation of the phonetic phenomenon.

- Section 1:** The sentence is "In a Rio slum, the Pope shushed rambunctious boys, prayed with them and ". The input "blessed them" is highlighted in green with a checkmark. The feedback says "Well done!". The explanation states that the inflection "-ed" is between consonants, so the "t" is not pronounced, and the /ə/ in "them" is also omitted, resulting in the phonetic realization /blesəðm/. This is an example of ELISION.
- Section 2:** The sentence is "Pope Francis asks the young "Do , do not lose hope". The input "not lose trust" is highlighted in green with a checkmark. The feedback says "Well done!". The explanation notes that the "t" in "not" is not pronounced because of the final "t" in the negation, which is usually omitted when not followed by a vowel. This is another case of ELISION.
- Section 3:** The sentence is "Because of extreme security, the Pope found it sometimes hard to interact flock". The input "with the" is highlighted in red with an 'X'. The feedback says "Well done!". The explanation explains that the /h/ in "his" is not pronounced and the words "with" and "his" are linked, resulting in the phonetic realization /wɪðɪz/. This is an example of REDISTRIBUTION.
- Section 4:** The sentence is "As pop-artists do, the Pope threw many skull to the crowd". The input "caps" is highlighted in green with a checkmark. The feedback says "Well done!".

Figure 7. Gap-filling with features of connected speech in session 4

For the second listening activity students also had to complete statements about the BBC interview with Prince Harry. After checking the activity, students were encouraged to read the automatic subtitles provided by YouTube and to compare the subtitles with the actual script. I chose this activity to show my students that recognizing words in fast speech is difficult even for computers and that, unlike

computers, they can draw on what they learned in the sessions to overcome perception difficulties (see Figure 8). Finally, students were offered links to the *Breaking News English* dictation site and the interactive dictations of Chanel N5 commercial and The Great Gatsby Trailer from the *Listen and Write* site to further practice recognizing words in connected speech.

3. Now, let's see how much computers understand fast connected speech! Go to the BBC video again and activate the subtitles by clicking on the icon that appears at the bottom towards the right (it reads "activar subtítulos"). Then watch the video while you read the subtitles, what do you think of the quality of the translation?

(read this explanation AFTER you have watched the video with the subtitles)

As you may have noticed, the translation in the subtitles is not accurate at all!! I guess it was done automatically by a computer with no editing, and since computers do not know about features of connected speech, they have a hard time recognizing words in fast speech! Notice how the computer translated:

"it was about that long, about that wide" into "as was well all long about life" or
"I only hope my brother knows how expensive my baby-sitting charges are" into "I heard my father knows how expensive my fave sitting charges of"

Sometimes we, non-native listeners, feel like this computer when we listen to fast speech in English, but we have **many advantages** over computers: we know that there are words that can be easily confused because of minimal pairs, we can use stress to identify important words and the beginning of words, we know that function words are unstressed and said faster than stressed words, we know that because of redistribution, assimilation, elision and reduction words change their pronunciation in connected speech and, finally, we have a "plan b": we can predict the content by reading the instructions carefully (predicting) and we can make intelligent guesses by using our knowledge of the speakers, the context and the world (guessing). So, let's try to use all that knowledge to become better listeners than computers ;)!!

If you want to read an accurate translation of the BBC interview, click [here](#).

Otherwise, please, click on "next" to go to the last section of this session!

Figure 8. Activity with computer subtitles in session 4

4.3.F. Listening session 5: Consolidation

This final session aimed at helping students revise what they had learned in the sessions with four listening activities. First, students read a summary of all the topics of the previous sessions to get ready for the activities. For Listening Activity 1, students had to do a *multiple-choice* activity with the Liverpool programme from the VisitBritain site. After checking the activity, students were offered the opportunity of reading the script while watching the programme. Listening Activity 2 asked students to listen to the Skype conversation about The Beatles between their teacher and an English friend and

to complete a *true-false* activity based on the exact words said by the native speaker. The script of this conversation was also available. Listening Activity 3 was a combination of “fast speed dictation” and “dictogloss”: students had to listen to a famous quote by John Lennon read quite fast by the native speaker of the Skype conversation as many times as needed, write it down and compare their version with the actual quote. Finally, Listening Activity 4 was a *close* with the lyrics of The Beatles’ song *Here comes the sun* where students had to complete the gaps. The session ended with some final comments and a call for continuing practicing listening. In fact, following Field’s (2007) advice, I provided a list with the links to all the listening sites used throughout the sessions so that students could consult them in the future.

CHAPTER 5: Results and Discussion

This chapter displays the results obtained in the Study and their possible explanations. The research questions based on the analysis of the results are then answered.

5.1. Students' opinions of the listening sessions

As it was suggested in the literature (Field 2008a, Vandergrift 2007, Goh 2000), journals were the most effective way of getting my students' impressions of the listening sessions. In fact, by reading and analysing my students' accounts, it was possible to get a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the listening sessions.

5.1.A. Session 1

12 out of the 15 students who participated in the Study wrote the journals for session 1 and there were many similarities in their comments (see Appendix 4). Almost all the students enjoyed doing this session and half of them mentioned that it was helpful. 8 students found the explanation about the compensatory strategies useful and their comments about the strategies were really interesting. Many said that they realised that they were already using the strategies:

"I use them very frequently but I didn't know neither their names or theory so it was very interesting to learn about that". (Jazmin)

"Now that I read about the strategies to listen better I have realized that I use them unconsciously". (Veronica)

Some students also mentioned that the explanation helped them to use the strategies in the Listening Activity 2.

As regards the topic of the session, it appears that students valued being pointed out why they may mishear or not perceive certain sounds. In fact, some

students mentioned that they liked learning about English sounds often confused or wrongly perceived by Spanish speakers as it helped them become aware of possible listening mistakes:

"I felt identified in many aspects about confusing sounds." (Andrea)

Moreover, one student stated that she liked the topic of the session because she could relate it to what they were learning in the *Pronunciation Practice* course.

As for the listening activities students liked more, opinion was diverse. Some mentioned that both activities were interesting and fun while some others preferred one to the other. Interestingly, those who mentioned that they preferred the first activity with the phone message and the transcription with errors said that reading the transcription helped them compare how much they knew about the pronunciation of the words. This shows that designing listening activities with transcripts is a good way of making students aware of the importance of transcriptions for perception. The students who preferred the activity with the joke mentioned that they liked this activity because it was more difficult as they had to pay close attention to the audio to understand the joke. Therefore, jokes are a good type of listening to focus on perception skills.

Finally, two students mentioned that they thought the session would be harder as they did not encounter major problems. This could be considered both positive and negative: listening activities with graded audios that are not so difficult can boost students' confidence and encourage them to continue doing the next sessions but they can also make students feel that they are not profiting from the sessions and discourage them from continuing. When I responded to their journals I reminded them that the listening activities would get harder as they progressed in the sessions which seems to have worked as both students continued doing the activities and finished the 5 sessions.

5.1.B. Session 2

8 out of the 15 students completed the journals for Session 2. This drop in the number of journals reflected one problem of using journals as it “requires a commitment on the part of the participants to frequently and regularly provide detailed accounts of their thoughts about language learning” (Mackey and Gass 2005 p.178). However, the students’ reflections on session 2 were even more insightful than in session 1 (see Appendix 4). Most students enjoyed the session and liked learning about stressed words in English because it was something new and helpful. This supports what many listening researchers have stated: students should be made aware of the function and use of stressed words (Field 2008a, Flowerdew and Miller 2005, Cutler 2001, Goh 2000). This also explains why students mentioned that they found the session useful.

As for the activities, I expected students to complain about having to complete 106 gaps with the stressed words. However, students mentioned that the gap-filling with the hotel conversation was “fun”, “dynamic” and harder than the multiple-choice conversation in the taxi. What is surprising is that almost all the students reflected on their mistakes in the gap-filling:

“I really need to pay attention to the endings of stressed words” (Dalila)

“Stressed words are really hard to catch sometimes” (Jazmin)

This shows that using gap-filling with stressed words is quite beneficial not only because it forces students to focus on the prominent words as Thorn (2013), Wilson (2008) and Ur (1984) have suggested but also because it makes them reflect on why they failed to perceive/recognise the right word.

Learning and working with stressed words seems to have sparked great curiosity in the students of the Study. Some students mentioned that they did the further practice activities to continue practising with stress and some others suggested that I designed gap-filling activities with “real” audios to see how stress can help them understand native speakers.

5.1.C. Session 3

As in session 2, 8 students completed their journals and their reflections were really valuable (see Appendix 4). All the students enjoyed the session because it was interesting, useful and/or challenging. Almost all the students liked learning about unstressed words and found the explanation very useful. This supports the argument for the teaching of unstressed words stated by Thron (2013), Field (2008a), Cauldwell (2002) and Ur (1984). As for the activities with the shop conversation, some students liked the true/false because it was easier while others preferred the gap-filling with unstressed words because it was fun. Fortunately, students did not complain about having to fill 108 gaps with unstressed words. But what is again surprising is that most of the students reflected on their performance and mistakes in the gap-filling:

“The pronunciation was really fast for me when they pronounced the unstressed words, I guess I have to practice more!” (Lara)

“I couldn’t use the compensatory strategies that much, you can’t guess or predict if it is “before” or “for”, they are both possibilities”. (Jazmin)

Sometimes, they reflected on their mistakes by drawing on the explanation they had just read:

“I agree with the theory when it says why it’s difficult for Spanish speakers to notice unstressed words, it’s very difficult!” (Andrea)

It appears that using gap-filling with unstressed words as recommended by Thorn (2013) is not only challenging but also a good way of helping students reflect on the process of perceiving unstressed words. Students seem to have valued session 3 enormously; in fact, almost all of them thanked me for the activities in the session.

5.1.D. Session 4

The 8 journals for this session were a bit puzzling (see Appendix 4). On the one hand, all the students mentioned that the session was very difficult. Some complained that they could not understand everything that was said in the CNN news report about

Pope Francis and the BBC interview with Prince Harry because of the fast speed, the background noise or the speakers' pronunciation. This reflects what many L2 listening researchers (such as Lynch 2009, Field 2008a, Rost 2002) have stressed: how difficult the transition between scripted and authentic audios is and how perception problems arise when ESL/EFL students listen to "real" speech. Unfortunately, it seems that awareness-raising of English confusing sounds for Spanish speakers, stressed and unstressed words and features of connected speech was not enough to help my students succeed in the gap-filling activities with authentic audios. It also seems that being able to replay the audio is not always useful to recognise words as some students stated. Moreover, although both listening activities advised students to use the transcripts to discover their perception problems, none mentioned having done so and none said that reading the inaccurate automatic subtitles was encouraging. To prevent students from feeling a bit disheartened, it may have been helpful to have had an audio device that slows down the speed of the audio as the one in Cauldswell's (2012) *Cool Speech* or to have asked students to complete the gapped transcripts instead of the statements.

However, despite its great difficulty, most students liked the session and found it the most useful for various reasons:

"These activities were the most useful of all because I had to put a lot of effort".

(Andrea)

"It's actually very good practice because that's the people we are going to have to translate". (Jazmin)

"It was a really good exercise to practice the strategies from session 1". (Ines)

"I enjoy doing the second activity as I didn't know about the new addition to the Royal Family" (Mimi)

5.1.E. Session 5

The 9 students who wrote their journals about session 5 (see Appendix 4) described it as the best session because of its listening material:

"I like this session very much since I love The Beatles and one of my dreams is to visit Britain!" (Veronica)

Doing the gap-filling with the Beatles' song was the activity students liked the most because they like listening to songs. Many also liked the true/false because they liked listening to their teacher talking to a friend and some liked the multiple-choice with the Liverpool programme because they would like to visit Liverpool someday.

Some students mentioned that they had to replay the audio many times but they did not complain about it and none of them complained about the difficult words in the Liverpool programme or the tricky gaps in the lyrics. This shows that perception problems can be tackled if there is a genuine interest in the listening material. As Wilson (2008) and Flowerdew and Miller (2005) have stated, motivation helps L2 students become better listeners. And, I should add, it also helps students want to improve their perception skills as one of the students wisely reflected:

"It was really interesting to learn about Liverpool, so it made it easier to pay attention to it". (Ines)

5.2. Students' performance in the listening sessions

The students' reflections in their journals were mirrored in the average marks in each session (see Chart 1). As the level of difficulty of the listening activities increased with the sessions, the students' average mark of sessions 1, 2 and 3 decreased gradually. The difficulty of the CNN news report and the BBC interview caused a sudden drop in session 4 as the average mark was only 53% and the students' motivation in the last session boosted the average mark to 77%, a bit higher than in session 3.

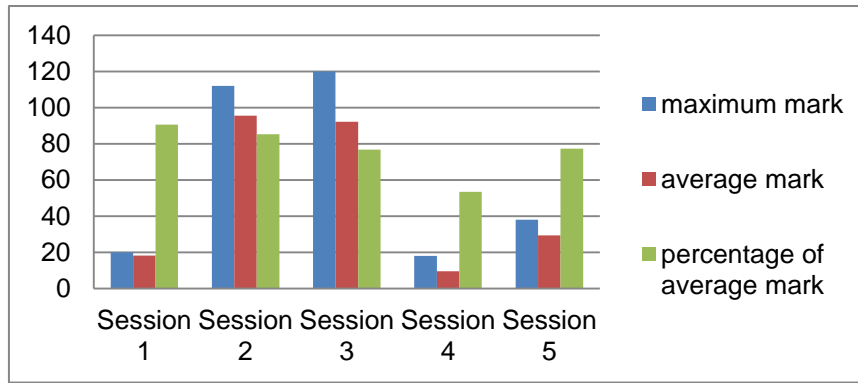


Chart 1. Students' average marks in the sessions

A close look at the students' common mistakes in the activities revealed some interesting findings. In session 1, the minimal pairs "loan/lawn" was troublesome for many students. One student in her journal stated that she always confused the spelling of these words. Another explanation can be that the diphthong "ou" in Spanish (similar to the one in "lawn") is very infrequent and, therefore, difficult to perceive for Spanish speakers. Almost all the students who made a mistake in Session 1 chose that Holmes said "deduct" instead of "deduce". I chose the pair "deduct/deduce" not only because of their minimal sound difference but also because the pronunciation of "deduct" is similar to the pronunciation of the Spanish word for "deduce" (deducir). Based on the number of mistakes for that minimal pair, it seems that possible L1 interference can be used to design challenging activities with minimal pairs. In session 2 almost all the students had spelling mistakes in some of the gaps with stressed words but in session 3 students made some mistakes with the gap-filling with unstressed words not because of spelling but because of mishearing. Moreover, in session 3 almost all the students wrongly marked as true that John thought that Maggie was spending and that Maggie had to write the essay *for* Tuesday. This shows that perception activities with unstressed words are really necessary for my students. In session 4 students made many mistakes which shows how features of connected speech hinder accurate word recognition/segmentation (Lynch 2009, Field 2008a, Vandergrift 2007, Wilson 2008, Goh 2000). Finally, in session 5 there were two common mistakes: one related to

unstressed words as most students chose Sefton as the biggest park in England as they may have failed to hear “one of” in “one of the biggest urban parks” and the other mistake was due to fast speech as most students failed to hear “lonely winter” as it is said quite fast in the song.

5.3. Students’ overall impression of the listening sessions

The 15 students’ response in the final questionnaire was also constructive (see Chart 2). As reflected in the journals, all the students stated that they liked the sessions and found them useful. Most students felt that, thanks to the sessions, they could recognise words in an audio suitable for their level more easily and they were better at identifying the missing words in a gap-filling. This shows that “training learners to recognise words accurately is time well-spent” (Field 2008a p.118). Introducing the compensatory strategies “predicting” and “guessing” in Session 1 and encouraging students to use them in the following sessions seems to have been quite beneficial as almost all the students agreed that they felt they could solve perception problems when listening to audios suitable for their level. Field’s (2008a) argument that focusing on perception skills can boost students’ confidence is also showed as most students said they felt more confident when listening in English thanks to the sessions.

However, some students were neutral with the idea of being better listeners thanks to the sessions and one disagreed with the statement. Field (2008a) anticipates that it is difficult to demonstrate progress in listening in a short period of time. Moreover, as stated in the literature reviewed, although perception is important, it is one of the many componential processes that skilled listeners need to master. These two factors can explain why my students did not feel that they were better listeners.

Finally, my students seemed to have enjoyed the benefits of using ICT and multimedia to learn listening mentioned in the literature reviewed as all of them stated that they liked doing the activities on Moodle. In fact, when answering the open

questions, one student mentioned that using Moodle was “the best way to learn listening”. Another student mentioned that being able to replay that audios helped her recognise the words as Field (2008a) and Cauldwell (2002) have suggested.

In the open questions, all the students answered that the listening sessions were worth their time and effort because they helped them improve their listening skills, they learned a lot and they enjoyed the activities:

“I have realised that when I listen to lyrics now I can understand them better”.

“I am sure I will do much better in the next listening test”.

“They are a nice way to learn how to pay more attention to the sounds and words”

“I had never learned how to listen”

To improve the sessions many students suggested that I included gap-filling activities with authentic audios because they are difficult but “real”. This favours the argument of many authors (such as Thorn 2013, Field 2008a, Lynch 2009) for the use of authentic audios:

“By listening to news (like the one about the Pope) or TV programmes (like the one about Liverpool) you can be certain that you really know and understand English”.

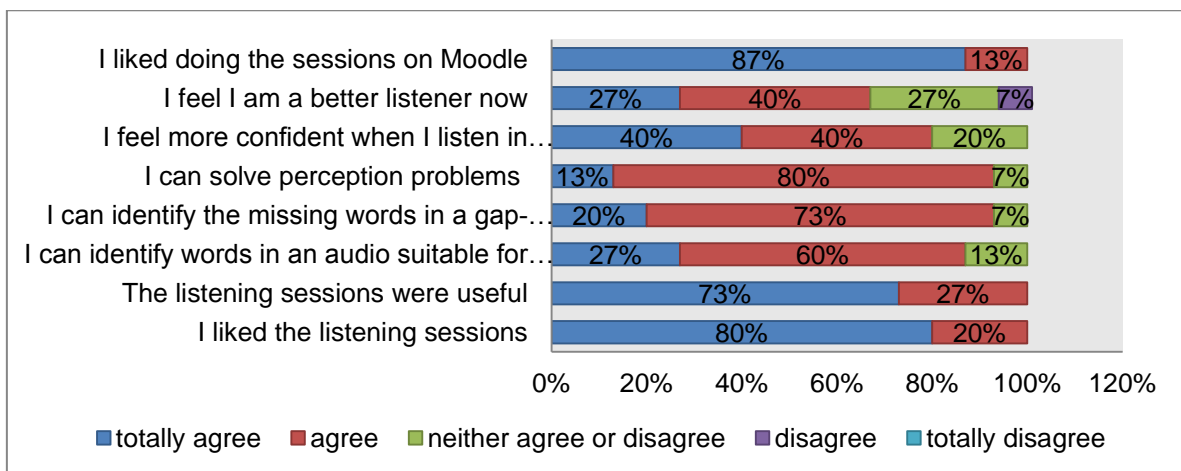


Chart 2. Results of the Likert-scale statements

5.4. Students' performance in the pre and post tests

Comparison of the average marks of the pre and post tests shows that there has been a slight improvement in the student's performance in the post test (see Chart 3). Because of the students' comments in their journals and questionnaires, this increase could have been caused thanks to the listening sessions.

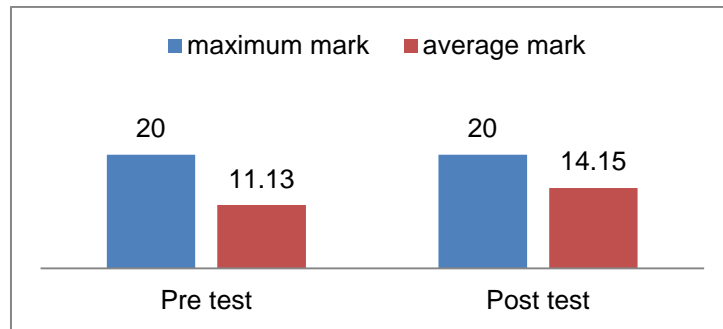


Chart 3. Pre and post tests results

5.5. The answers to the research questions

Analysis of the results has revealed the answer to my main research question: the design and implementation of perception activities using Moodle 2.3 has positively influenced my students' L2 listening for perception skills. More specifically, this Study has showed that:

- It is possible to design perception activities on Moodle 2.3 with *Moodle media* and the *quiz module*. The *true/false quiz* can be used for error detection activities, the *multiple-choice quiz* or *close>multiplechoice* for minimal pair activities, the *close>shortanswer* for gap-filling activities with stressed and unstressed words in transcripts and the *short answer quiz* for word recognition in connected speech. *Immediate feedback* can be used to provide positive or negative reinforcement and quote the part of the transcript and the minute in the

track where the answer was said. Finally, the *insert link* option can be used to provide direct access to the tapescript below the activities.

→ Overall, the 15 students of Group G of the course *English Language I* have found the Moodle activities enjoyable and helpful. The students liked learning about the compensatory strategies, English sounds often confused or wrongly perceived by Spanish speakers and stressed and unstressed words. Students liked controlling the audio and doing self-access activities. The activities have had a positive impact on the moral of my students as most feel more confident when listening in English now. The perception activities that my students have found the most challenging and useful are:

- + minimal pairs in context with a multiple choice or true/false activity
- + minimal pairs designed with confusing words due to L1 interference
- + true/false based on unstressed words
- + gap-filling of transcripts with stressed or unstressed words
- + true/false, multiple-choice and gap-filling listening activities with authentic audios of their interest

→ The perception activities on Moodle have apparently helped my students improve their perception skills. Students have stated that, thanks to the listening sessions, they can recognise words in a suitable audio, complete gap-filling activities and solve perception problems more easily. Their marks in IELTS mock test have slightly raised. However, this was a small-scale AR done so further research is needed to confirm if the activities can help other L2 listeners improve perception.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusions and further action

Burns (2009) states that English teachers all over the world get immense satisfaction from doing AR and, fortunately, that was my case too. In fact, doing this Study has helped me learn many things *during* the action. To design Moodle perception activities shaped by the latest developments in ELT listening, I had to expand on what I had learned about ESL/EFL listening with EDUC5901. I increased my knowledge about perception thanks to current L2 listening researches such as Field, Cauldwell and Thorn but I also discovered that many illuminating ideas had already been suggested in the past with authors such as Rost and Ur. The design of the activities has helped me realise how “CALL pedagogy needs to be developed as distinct from but related to pedagogy for classroom teaching and learning through other materials” (Chapelle 2005, p.753). Moreover, for this Study I drew on what I had learned about designing a VLE with EDUC5253 and online listening materials with EDUC5979. During this Study, I learned how to do AR for the first time.

This Study has also prompted me to reflect *after* the action. Ur (2013), one of pioneers in listening for perception, advises teachers to use technology only if it promotes learning and if it is “cost-effective”. Fortunately, my students have stated that doing the perception activities on Moodle 2.3 has been worth their time and effort and, therefore, I feel that my effort in designing and implementing the activities on Moodle has been worthy. However, my Study was a small-scale one and cannot be generalized to all contexts. But, as Burns puts it, “what we find might still have something to say to other teachers who are facing similar issues in their own teaching and our findings might give them new ideas” (2009 p.95). My AR has combined perception activities and ICT and listening, two areas in need of research, with encouraging results. It seems that true-false, multiple-choice and gap-filling activities on Moodle that focus on specific words from authentic audios, offer immediate

feedback and systematically teach students different aspects to improve perception are quite successful.

But my AR does not end here. My students emphasised in their journals and questionnaires that I included more perception activities using authentic audios. To do so, I could follow Lynch's (2009) suggestion and ask my students to collect recordings for the sessions. In this way, I can be certain that my students will be motivated to listen, a factor that has proved to have a great influence in their success. Following Field's (2008a) advice, I should try to include audios that progressively expose students to other varieties of English, include more than two speakers and have a less planned speech. To help students understand these audios, future sessions should not only include perception activities but also activities that focus on syntactic parsing (Field 2008a), spoken language (Lynch 2009, Flowerdew and Miller 2005), meaning-building (Field 2008a) and useful cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies (Vangergrift 2004, 2003, 2007). In fact, Field (2008a) states that a *Process Approach* to L2 listening should offer a staged programme where the listening components are targeted systematically and progressively. Only in this way a listening course on Moodle will be complete as it will make students feel that they have learned the processes, skills and strategies necessary to decode automatically, become better listeners and get ready for the real world once the course is over.

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APPENDIX 1

Research Consent Form

Dear student,

I am doing my Dissertation for my MA TESOL and ICT at the University of Leeds, UK. The Dissertation aims at implementing listening activities designed on Moodle 2.1 using a process approach to L2 listening. I need to investigate if the activities have a positive impact on students' listening comprehension skills, and I am therefore asking for your permission to carry out my action research with you.

Before you decide whether or not to agree with this request, please let me explain what it involves:

- My action research will be conducted mainly throughout May-August 2013.
- The participants willing to take part in the action research will be asked to complete a pre-test by the end of May, do all the listening activities in the 5 sessions on Moodle in July, write the journal entries after each session in English or Spanish and do the post-test and final questionnaire in August.
- To protect your identity, I will use pseudonyms to refer to your tests' and Moodle activities' scores, your journals' comments and your answers in the questionnaire. I will use the findings in the dissertation and may present them at conferences or publish them in journals.
- It is hoped that the research will offer you the possibility of practising and improving your perception skills when listening in English at your own pace with the constant teacher's help.

If you agree to participate, please sign the form below. I would like to highlight that your participation is purely voluntarily and that you may decline to participate or withdraw at a later date without explanation, if you wish to do so.

Thanks a lot!

Claudia Spataro

Consent:

I have read and understood the above form. I understand that I can ask further questions or withdraw at any time. I consent to participate in the action research study.

Signature

Name

Date

Contact email address and/or telephone number:

APPENDIX 2

FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT THE 5 LISTENING SESSIONS

This questionnaire has 10 questions related to the listening sessions you have done in the virtual classroom. This questionnaire is anonymous and your answers are really valuable as they will help me to change, add or take away activities and thus improve the listening sessions to make them available to all the students doing the course English Language in the future.

Thanks for your time and help! Claudia

Please, select your view about each of these statements:

1. I liked the listening sessions.

| | | | | |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| totally agree | agree | Neither agree or disagree | disagree | totally disagree |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|

2. The listening sessions were useful.

| | | | | |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| totally agree | agree | Neither agree or disagree | disagree | totally disagree |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|

3. Thanks to the sessions, I can identify words in an audio suitable for my intermediate level of English more easily now.

| | | | | |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| totally agree | agree | Neither agree or disagree | disagree | totally disagree |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|

4. Thanks to the sessions, I can identify the missing words in a gap-filling activity more easily now.

| | | | | |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| totally agree | agree | Neither agree or disagree | disagree | totally disagree |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|

5. Thanks to the sessions, I can solve listening problems cause by the lack of perception of words in an audio suitable for my intermediate level of English.

| | | | | |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| totally agree | agree | Neither agree or disagree | disagree | totally disagree |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|

6. Thanks to the sessions, I feel more confident when I need to listen in English now.

| | | | | |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| totally agree | agree | Neither agree or disagree | disagree | totally disagree |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|

7. I feel I am a better listener now.

| | | | | |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| totally agree | agree | Neither agree or disagree | disagree | totally disagree |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|

8. I liked doing the listening sessions on Moodle.

| | | | | |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| totally agree | agree | Neither agree or disagree | disagree | totally disagree |
|---------------|-------|------------------------------|----------|------------------|

APPENDIX 3

IELTS LISTENING TEST 1

SECTION 1: QUESTIONS 1-10

Questions 1-5: Complete the details below.

WRITE NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS or A NUMBER for each answer.

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| <i>Example: Identification and security check:</i> | Platinum <u>Card</u> Service |
| Card number: | 6992 1..... 1147 8921 |
| Name: | Carlos da Silva |
| Postcode: | 2..... |
| Address: | 3..... Vauxhall Close, London |
| Date of birth: | 13 July 4..... |
| Mother's maiden name: | 5..... |

Questions 6-10: Circle the correct letters A-C.

6. The caller has paid **A** less than the computer shows.
 B more than the computer shows.
 C £500 twice
7. The caller is also worried about **A** a bill that is too high.
 B an overpayment to a restaurant.
 C a payment that he does not recognize.
8. The interest **A** went up in April.
 B has not changed.
 C has gone down.
9. The caller's number is **A** 020 7997 9909.
 B 020 7989 7182.
 C 020 8979 7182.
10. The operator will ring the caller **A** tomorrow.
 B in two hours.
 C very soon.

IELTS LISTENING TEST 2

SECTION 1: QUESTIONS 1-10

Questions 1-5: *Circle the appropriate letters A-C.*

Example Hannah's Dad **A** can hear her very well.

B cannot hear her very well.

C wants her to move.

1. How long did Hannah think it would take her to find a place to live?

A three weeks.

B less than three weeks.

C more than three weeks.

2. There is not enough accommodation to rent because

A it is the end of the academic year.

B Hannah is a new student.

C the area has lots of new technology companies.

3. 400 pounds a month for rent is **A** higher than Hannah has paid before.

B lower than Hannah has paid before.

C not cheap for the area.

4. At the moment Hannah is living **A** in a hostel.

B in a suitcase.

C in a hotel.

5. Hannah's new flat **A** is a bit noisy.

B is on the second floor.

C has two bedrooms.

Questions 6-7: *Complete Dad's note.*

Hannah's address: **6.** *Whitehart Road* **7.** *9RJ*

Questions 8-10: *Use NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS to complete each space.*

8. Hannah plans to travel to her parents' house on Friday

9. Hannah's dad will return the van on

10. The journey time is about

| |
|----------------------------|
| SECTION 2: QUESTIONS 11-20 |
|----------------------------|

Questions 11- 14: *Circle FOUR letters.*

Which FOUR planned developments are mentioned?

- A. a village town hall
- B. a leisure centre
- C. a play area for children
- D. a hospital
- E. an industrial development
- F. extra houses
- G. a steel works
- H. a motorway

Questions 15- 18: *Tick column A is the individual is in favour of the proposal.
Tick column B is the individual is against the proposal.*

| | A | B |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Example</i> The local farmer | | ✓ |
| 15. The Mayor | | |
| 16. The conservation group spokesman | | |
| 17. The local MP | | |
| 18. The local shopkeeper | | |

Questions 19-20: *Circle the correct letter A-D.*

- 19.** Upton is
- A** close to Tartlesbury.
 - B** far from Tartlesbury.
 - C** connected by rail to Tartlesbury.
 - D** a town with a university.
- 20.** The College has
- A** never had a 100% success rate.
 - B** had a 100% success rate.
 - C** always been very successful.
 - D** never been successful.

APPENDIX 4

| SESSION 1 | |
|--------------------|--|
| number of students | statement |
| 11 | enjoyed the session |
| 8 | found the explanation of the strategies <i>predicting</i> and <i>guessing</i> useful |
| 6 | found the session useful |
| 4 | liked learning about English confusing sounds for Spanish speakers |
| 3 | liked both activities |
| 3 | liked the multiple-choice activity with the phone message more |
| 3 | liked the true/false activity with the Sherlock Holmes' joke more |
| 2 | thought the session would be harder |

| SESSION 2 | |
|--------------------|---|
| number of students | statement |
| 5 | enjoyed the session |
| 5 | liked learning about stressed words in English |
| 4 | found the session useful |
| 4 | reflected on their mistakes in the gap-filling activity |
| 3 | liked both activities |
| 3 | liked the multiple-choice activity with the conversation in the taxi more |
| 2 | liked the gap-filling activity with the missing stressed words of the hotel conversation more |
| 2 | enjoyed the activities in the further practice section |
| 2 | asked for more practice to work with stressed words |

| SESSION 3 | |
|--------------------|---|
| number of students | statement |
| 8 | enjoyed the session |
| 6 | thanked the teacher for the activities |
| 5 | liked learning about unstressed words in English |
| 5 | reflected on their mistakes in the gap-filling activity |
| 1 | liked both activities with the conversation at the clothes shop |
| 2 | liked the true-false activity more |
| 2 | liked the gap-filling activity with the missing unstressed words more |

| SESSION 4 | |
|--------------------|--|
| number of students | statement |
| 8 | found the session very difficult |
| 6 | found the session very useful |
| 6 | liked the session |
| 4 | couldn't understand everything that was said. |
| 3 | had to replay the audio several times |
| 3 | found the explanation of features of connected speech useful |

| SESSION 5 | |
|--------------------|---|
| number of students | statement |
| 9 | consider this as the best listening session. |
| 6 | thanked the teacher for this session |
| 6 | liked the gap-filling with the song lyrics. |
| 4 | liked the true/false with the Skype conversation. |
| 4 | liked the programme about Liverpool. |
| 2 | listened to the audios many times |