Strategy to focus English attention

Estrategia para focalizar la atención del inglés

Estratégia para focar a atenção em inglês

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study addresses the inadequacies in the focus of attention that affect listening comprehension in English in fourth-year elementary school students at Cinco de Mayo School, which limits their performance in learning the language. Materials and methods: The methodology used for this research was through a qualitative approach whose research is based on the analysis of information collected through interviews and observation sheets. Methodological solutions based on the designed didactic strategy are proposed, which constitutes an innovative proposal. Results: The main result was a contextualized didactic strategy based on changes with cycles and pauses, including greater processing of oral information and reinforced motivation towards learning English. Discussion: The strategy was shared with teachers through a socialization workshop, where they expressed their enthusiasm for the design and its future implementation. Conclusions: This study concludes that listening comprehension should be encouraged through breaks between classes, thereby improving student attention and performance in English learning and foreign language teaching. This study offers practical tools to optimize listening comprehension in educational settings.
Keywords: Listening comprehension; teaching strategy; English language teaching; listening comprehension.

RESUMEN

Introducción: El presente estudio aborda las insuficiencias en la focalización de la atención que afectan la comprensión auditiva en inglés en estudiantes de cuarto año de básica de la unidad educativa Cinco de Mayo, lo que limita el desempeño de los estudiantes en el aprendizaje del idioma. Materiales y métodos: La metodología utilizada para esta investigación fue a través de un enfoque cualitativo cuya investigación parte del análisis de recolección de información a través de entrevistas y ficha de observación, se propone soluciones metodológicas basadas en la estrategia didáctica diseñada la cual constituye una propuesta innovadora. Resultados: Como resultado principal se obtuvo la estrategia didáctica contextualizada basada en cambios con ciclos y pausas incluyendo un mayor procesamiento de información oral y una motivación reforzada hacia el aprendizaje del inglés. Discusión: La estrategia se compartió con docentes a través del taller de socialización, donde manifestaron su entusiasmo por el diseño y su futura implementación. Conclusiones: Este estudio concluye que debe fomentarse el desarrollo de la focalización auditiva mediante pausas entre clases consiguiendo una mejor atención y desempeño de los estudiantes hacia el aprendizaje del inglés y la didáctica de lenguas extranjeras, ofreciendo herramientas prácticas para optimizar la comprensión auditiva en entornos educativos.
Palabras clave: Comprensión auditiva; estrategia didáctica; enseñanza del inglés; focalización de la atención.

RESUMO

Introdução: Este estudo aborda as deficiências no foco de atenção que afetam a compreensão auditiva em inglês em alunos do quarto ano do Ensino Fundamental da Escola Cinco de Mayo, o que limita seu desempenho na aprendizagem da língua. Materiais e métodos: A metodologia utilizada para esta pesquisa foi a de abordagem qualitativa, cuja investigação

se baseia na análise de informações coletadas por meio de entrevistas e fichas de observação. Soluções metodológicas baseadas na estratégia didática elaborada são propostas, o que constitui uma proposta inovadora. Resultados: O principal resultado foi uma estratégia didática contextualizada, baseada em mudanças com ciclos e pausas, incluindo maior processamento da informação oral e motivação reforçada para a aprendizagem de inglês. Discussão: A estratégia foi compartilhada com os professores por meio de uma oficina de socialização, onde expressaram seu entusiasmo pelo design e sua futura implementação. Conclusões: Este estudo conclui que a compreensão auditiva deve ser incentivada por meio de intervalos entre as aulas, melhorando assim a atenção e o desempenho dos alunos na aprendizagem de inglês e no ensino de línguas estrangeiras. Este estudo oferece ferramentas práticas para otimizar a compreensão auditiva em ambientes educacionais.

Palavras-chave: Compreensão auditiva; estratégia de ensino; ensino de inglês; compreensão auditiva.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English as a foreign language, in the modern context of education, implies the development of communicative linguistic skills in an efficient way to satisfy the necessary competencies to face the labor and social world in a demanding professional and academic context, so it has been necessary to research on methods and approaches for the teaching and learning of the language.

Different approaches have been used to address the teaching-learning processes of English, from the traditional to the communicative approach. This paper focuses on mindfulness and how to approach it in the English classroom.

According to Codina (2014), attention, or focus, in English learning refers to the brain's ability to concentrate on the information presented to it, being crucial for the learning process and language acquisition. For (Martins, 2025), attention in listening comprehension is fundamental to understanding an oral message, referring to the ability to pay attention to sounds, identify words and phrases, and construct meaning.

In educational centers, teachers are often not sufficiently prepared to teach the subject in this way, which can generate disinterest and demotivation on the part of students by not using the appropriate tools for the development of this skill in the context of foreign language teaching (EFL), as expressed by (Sweller, 2018), it is understood that divided attention during listening comprehension activities generates an overload in the working memory, preventing the effective retention of information.

Adequate motivation can facilitate greater student engagement, improve their competencies, and foster a positive attitude toward learning English. As noted by Field (2019), specific strategies for auditory attention training can increase retention of oral information by up to 40%.

Teaching strategies for developing listening attention are characterized by three strategies (Hadijah & Shalawati, 2018), meta-cognitive strategies; which allow the learner to control and regulate their own learning, cognitive strategies; which are the mental processes used to learn and comprehend information, and socio-affective strategies, which involve emotional management to enhance learning. Each of these strategies has a specific function in listening activities.

Studies on the approach to attention for listening comprehension in Ecuador have focused on pedagogical strategies to improve listening comprehension, such as strengthening critical thinking, autonomy, emotion management, and adaptation to bilingual and bicultural contexts (Mero, Alcivar, Mendoza, Rojas, & Loor, 2024).

In the experience of the authors of this research, the 4th-grade students of the Cinco de Mayo educational institution present difficulties in attention, particularly in the development of listening comprehension skills. Based on this observation, the present research had the purpose of deepening strategies to improve focus and attention in the area of English, thus promoting greater concentration and more effective learning.

The problem identified focused on the inadequacies in focus that affect listening comprehension in the English language in the students of the Cinco de Mayo educational unit. To address this challenge, the stated objective was to elaborate a didactic strategy to favor attention focus and improve students' listening comprehension in English.

We worked with a population of 795 students from which a sample of 24 students and 4 teachers of the institution was taken. A qualitative approach was used for the research and the strategy elaborated constituted an interesting and useful proposal.

In the process of learning a foreign language, attention plays a crucial role, thus enabling learners to more effectively process linguistic information, improving comprehension and retention.

According to Fang (2008) listening comprehension is an active process that requires learners/listeners to focus on the meaning of the auditory information and associate it with their prior knowledge. In other words, listening comprehension requires learners to be able to discover meaning, which must be supported by various factors, such as linguistics, listening strategy, and effective factors. For Vandergrift (2007), vocabulary and grammatical comprehension are key elements in listening comprehension. Therefore, the listening strategy can also influence students' listening competence, if we want to listen and not just hear, it is necessary to be aware, focused, and present at the moment we intend to listen.

Studies by Wah (2019) and Panggua et al. (2023) specify that audiovisual tools and interactive listening activities significantly improved listening comprehension. These findings are largely in agreement that podcasts, gamified instruction, and digital storytelling were considered highly influential techniques for the development of listening skills. Authors such as Hsieh (2019) and Salam (2020) have also shown that captioned videos and visual information promote vocabulary learning and listening comprehension, confirming that comprehensible information should integrate different modalities to maximize learning benefits.

Recent studies, such as that of Hiroyuki (2021) showed that many students were satisfied with the learning environment of applying media to blended learning. If there is contact between speakers and listeners, communication occurs, therefore, listening functions are explicitly and substantially linked to the amount and consistency of speaking skills. English language learners' active listening depends on many factors such as language skills, and context awareness, among others. Students need to listen to a variety of texts to develop their listening skills, such as short telephone dialogues, airport announcements, job orientation, speech, poetry, and songs.

In many of the schools, within their (language) classrooms, they tend to focus on the outcome of listening; students are asked to record or repeat the details they have heard or to explain the meaning of a passage being many activities within the classroom that do nothing more than assess their listening skills given that students are often exposed to situations where they have to demonstrate how much they have understood or more often, reveal what they have not understood, feeling anxiety when listening.

On the other hand Jones (2015) argues that digital platforms that include listening activities, combined with games or interactive exercises, offer an effective way to keep students engaged and motivated. These tools allow learning to be personalized, adapting the difficulty of tasks according to the needs and abilities of each learner. Zhao (2013) highlights that interactive technologies provide a safe and controlled environment where students can practice without the pressure of making mistakes in front of their peers. These platforms also allow immediate feedback, which facilitates self-correction and positive reinforcement, two key elements for improving listening comprehension.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research topic was approached through a qualitative approach in the collection of bibliographic information and the analysis of the observations made in the educational institution on different dates, which allowed the design of a didactic strategy that promotes the focus on the attention of students in the 4th grade of elementary school and a correlational level of reaserach was considered for this work.

Among the theoretical methods used is analysis-synthesis, which was present throughout the work with an emphasis on the study of the scientific literature consulted, about the different theoretical conceptions on the strategy to focus English attention, and in the empirical methods, it was decided to use observation. The induction-deduction method was fundamental to particularize and generalize the facts, phenomena, and processes linked to the evaluation of students' listening skills in English, thus making it possible to specify the theoretical assumptions that support the proposed methodological strategy.

The population consisted of 795 people, including teachers and students, and the sample consisted of 24 students from the 4th grade of elementary school of the Cinco de Mayo educational institution in the

Chone canton and 4 teachers. For data collection, interviews were conducted with four teachers who shared their perceptions of the challenges in the classroom related to focus and the strategies used to solve the shortcomings found in the classroom; in this case, the information was collected through voice recordings of the participants. On the other hand, the semi-structured observation form was used to evaluate the teaching dynamics, the strategies applied by the teachers, and the students' responses during the listening comprehension activities in function. The observation was carried out on May 20, 2025, to students in the 4th grade of elementary school.

As a contribution to this research, a contextualized didactic strategy was designed that responds to the particularities of the students and is characterized by introducing changes with sicles and pauses. According to (Tokuhama, 2021) the capacity to maintain sustained attention varies between 10 and 20 minutes, so blocks of no more than 15 minutes should be used to increase the attentional capacity of students, thus facilitating the processing and consolidation of information. The strategy was shared with teachers through the socialization workshop, where they expressed their enthusiasm for the design and its future implementation.

RESULTS

During the observation of the 4th-grade students, a dynamic and interactive environment proposed by the teacher, who uses different strategies in order to develop listening comprehension in English, was evidenced. However, despite the efforts to make the class attractive and playful, it was not possible to keep the attention of all the students.

One of the tools employed by the teacher was the didactic songs, selected to facilitate the children's connection with the language. However, this strategy was not effective for all students, as some were disinterested during its execution. The activity, although designed to be motivating, did not always achieve its learning objective as it was not accompanied by a more structured follow-up to ensure the active participation of all students.

Also, artistic activities such as coloring, drawing, and assembling figures were incorporated while students listened to related audio. Although these proposals can complement learning, in practice they tend to become a source of distraction. Instead of strengthening listening comprehension, they sometimes divert attention from the oral content to the manual task. It was observed that some students focused more on their drawing than on the narrated story, which made it difficult to make the link between what was heard and what was represented.

On the other hand, the resource of videos with audio in English was used. Although this strategy has the potential to generate interest, its impact was limited. While some students reacted positively to the images and sounds, others showed only superficial attention, with no clear evidence of comprehension or retention of the new vocabulary. The lack of follow-up or learning verification activities reduced the effectiveness of the audiovisual resource, making it more of a momentary stimulus than a meaningful teaching tool.

In general, although the class presents a playful and varied proposal, it would be convenient to rethink some strategies to ensure that all students stay focused and that the activities really fulfill their pedagogical purpose.

Key Findings from the Teacher Interview

Among the methodologies used to develop listening comprehension skills in students, teachers highlighted that students' attention span is directly influenced by their level of proficiency in the language. Limited vocabulary and unfamiliarity with basic grammatical structures hinder listening comprehension, leading to frustration and disengagement in some cases. This challenge is intensified if students do not have opportunities to practice listening outside the classroom, especially in homes where contact with English is not encouraged through media such as music, movies, or educational apps.

Likewise, emotional and physical factors, such as fatigue or anxiety, also play a role. Teachers mentioned that students who arrive tired or with a negative emotional charge often have difficulty concentrating on listening activities.

To assess listening comprehension in students, it has been observed that the type of material used by teachers does not produce a significant improvement in the attention and motivation of students; younger students tend to be distracted even when cheerful songs and animated videos are used, which limits the

effectiveness of these resources. Although these tools seek to make learning more tangible and entertaining, they fail to generate a real impact on the development of listening comprehension.

On the other hand, adolescents are more likely to seek certain types of materials that connect with their interests, such as movie scenes, interviews with artists, or popular songs. In contrast, audio without visual support or that are not adapted to their contexts is often less engaging and more difficult to follow, affecting their willingness to actively participate in the activity.

Within the specific follow-up or feedback to maintain students' listening comprehension, teachers mention that they resort to strategies that are not always effective. One commonly mentioned technique is the strategic pause during the listening comprehension activity, where the audio is paused to briefly explain the content in English and Spanish. Although this helps to clarify concepts and renew attention before continuing, in many cases it fails.

These practices reflect a deep understanding of students' needs and dynamics, showing how small adjustments can have a significant impact on their attention and learning capacity.

Proposed Strategy for Focusing English Attention

The design of this strategy is intended for the 4th grade of elementary school at Cinco de Mayo.

Changes with cycles and pauses.

Phase 1: Establish a routine before giving instructions

Before issuing instructions, it is essential to apply a routine to capture the full attention of the students. According to Tristan de Frondeville (2009), an effective routine could include the following steps:

1. Achieve absolute silence.

2. Ensure students' full attention.

3. Verify that the "five eyebrows" are directed to the teacher: the two eyebrows of the eyes, the two eyebrows of the knees (as a sign of posture and body disposition), and the eyebrow of the heart (in reference to emotional or attitudinal attention).

Prior to the call for silence, they can be told that they will have a few minutes to talk to each other, but then they will be given a signal (such as counting from 1 to 3 out loud or ringing a bell) to resume their attention.

Time: 10 minutes

Phase 2: Moves to maintain students' attention

Keeping students' attention is critical because lack of attention can lead to poor learning outcomes, disinterest in learning, and misdiagnosis.

1. Establish patterns of clapping and stomping, accompanied by rhymes, verses, or chants. The teacher initiates a simple pattern, such as two claps followed by a stomp. He then repeats it several times with his students and may accompany it with a rhyme or chant to increase participation.

2. Rhythmic Echo Challenge: Generate simple rhythms by finger snapping, clapping, or tapping on the table. They must imitate it exactly. The teacher acts as the model and the group must repeat the pattern or echo. It is important to vary the rhythm and intervals every 15-20 seconds to avoid monotony.

3. Movement chains: The teacher starts with a simple gesture (click), and the next student adds a second (e.g., clap). And so on. Everyone must repeat the entire sequence at the end. Requires attention, memory, and cooperation.

Time: 10 minutes

Phase 3: Tasks during downtime

During moments of inactivity, such as handing out materials or preparing audios, time-outs can generate unnecessary distractions or conversations in the listening comprehension class. To counteract this, the teacher can apply strategies such as:

1. Ask students to read the assigned tasks or to summarize in one sentence what they have recently learned, writing it down as a headline or central idea, which allows the teacher to verify student comprehension.

2. Listen to subtitled music in English to establish phoneme-grapheme relationships.

3. Comment on what they have heard in class and what they liked the most.

4. Ask a question or pose a challenge on the board.

5. Ask them for summaries, headlines, or headlines of what they have just heard in class (e.g., What was the most interesting thing about...?)

It should be noted that children's music is selected based on student's interests and motivations, the vocabulary used in the song, and grammatical structures related to the content taught in the classroom.

Time: 10 minutes

Discussion

The results obtained through observation cards and interviews with teachers evidenced the insufficiencies in the use of didactic strategies to focus attention on the students' listening comprehension, so it was considered necessary to design a strategy to favor attention in English listening comprehension.

The didactic strategy used in this context is characterized by selecting activities or tasks that favor students' attention within the classroom to maximize the effectiveness of the learning process as mentioned by (Mishel & Lissette, 2024), that children's songs are a beneficial tool to promote learning and improve attention. Incorporating melodies and rhythms in learning improves students' ability to concentrate and their auditory perception and memory skills. Lack of concentration is related to difficulty in maintaining attention in children, which leads to easy distraction by objects around them or playing with peers. In addition, employing children's music appropriate to the basic year in which it is to be taught as a strategy will improve concentration and attention span in the classroom.

The teacher interviews corroborated that the level of vocabulary and prior knowledge of the English language are determining factors in the students' attention span during listening comprehension activities. Teachers agreed that those students who have frequent contact with the language outside the classroom, either through songs, movies, or applications, show greater ease in understanding and maintaining attention in listening activities.

Likewise, the significant impact on students' motivation and focus was reaffirmed. Audiovisual materials, especially those that include visual elements such as videos or animations, are perceived as more effective, as they manage to capture and sustain students' attention for a longer period of time.

The strategy was shared with teachers through the socialization workshop, where they expressed their enthusiasm for the design and its future implementation. A space for dialogue was generated where participants contributed ideas, made suggestions, and highlighted the relevance of the proposal in terms of the real needs of the classroom. They were motivated to put it into practice, recognizing its potential to improve attention and strengthen students' listening comprehension skills.

Conclusions

In conclusion of the study, it is considered that the development of auditory focus should be encouraged through breaks between classes, achieving better attention and performance of students in learning English. Among the inadequacies found was the lack of auditory focus on the part of the students, proposing an intervention aimed at developing listening comprehension through a strategy to enhance the development of this skill. The proposed strategy offers a promising approach to improving students' listening comprehension skills in English by focusing their attention on key elements. By implementing this strategy, teachers can help students develop their ability to understand main ideas, recognize vocabulary, and comprehend complex structures. The strategy was shared with teachers through the socialization workshop, where they expressed their enthusiasm for the design and its future implementation.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Declaration of responsibility of authorship

We, the authors of the aforementioned manuscript, DECLARE that we have directly contributed to its intellectual content, as well as to the genesis and analysis of its data; therefore, we are able to take public responsibility for it and accept that their names appear on the list of authors in the order indicated. Furthermore, we have complied with the ethical requirements of the aforementioned publication, having consulted the Declaration of Ethics and Publication Malpractice.

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