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Bloom´s taxonomy usage on learners´ listening skills enhancement

Uso de la taxonomía de Bloom en la mejora de las habilidades de escucha de los estudiantes

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Abstract.

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The purpose of this paper was to present the results obtained during a study conducted at the Technical University of Ambato, in which some data gathered was the base to analyze students' listening skills improvement at A1 level using different activities founded on Bloom's Taxonomy. In order to establish the relationship between the variables a survey was applied to 153 students of A1 level at the language Center. The survey results were considered to apply different activities in an experimental group which was chosen randomly. These activities were focused on several listening tasks based on the learning level of Blooms' taxonomy. Furthermore, every activity developed in the classroom was conducted from the most uncomplicated to the most complex activity so that students could improve their listening comprehension. Once the data was interpreted and tabulated, the established hypothesis was corroborated through the application of the Chi-square formula, which demonstrated the improvement in the listening comprehension using Bloom's taxonomy. Finally, several conclusions were formulated considering the most important students' opinions. This fact showed the students' awareness in their listening skill improvement. Moreover, the development of the activities allowed them to be able to see the benefits in the process of learning and communication in English. Therefore, they were conscious about the difficulty in the comprehension of different aspects such as: distinguish the main idea, details, summarize information or give their opinion about the topic listened.

Keywords: Listening skills, Bloom's Taxonomy, comprehension, improvement.

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Resumen.

El propósito de este artículo fue presentar los resultados obtenidos durante un estudio llevado a cabo en la Universidad Técnica de Ambato, en la cual la información recolectada fue la base para analizar la mejora de las habilidades auditivas de los estudiantes en el nivel A1 utilizando diferentes actividades basadas en la taxonomía de Bloom. Para establecer la relación entre las variables, se aplicó una encuesta a 153 estudiantes de nivel A1 en el Centro de idiomas. Los resultados de la encuesta se tuvieron en cuenta para aplicar diferentes actividades en un grupo experimental que se eligió al azar. Estas actividades se centraron en varias tareas de escucha basadas en el nivel de aprendizaje de la taxonomía de Bloom. Además, cada actividad desarrollada en el aula se realizó desde la actividad más sencilla hasta la más compleja para que los estudiantes pudieran mejorar su comprensión auditiva. Una vez que los datos fueron interpretados y tabulados se corroboró la hipótesis establecida por medio de la fórmula del Chi-cuadrado, la misma que demostró la mejora en la comprensión auditiva utilizando la taxonomía de Bloom. Finalmente, se formularon varias conclusiones considerando la opinión de los estudiantes como la más importante. Este hecho mostró la conciencia de los estudiantes en la mejora de sus habilidades auditivas. Además, el desarrollo de estas actividades les permitió ver los beneficios en el proceso de aprendizaje y comunicación en inglés. Por lo tanto, eran conscientes de la dificultad en la comprensión de diferentes aspectos tales como: distinguir la idea principal, detalles, resumir información o dar su opinión sobre el tema escuchado.

Palabras claves: Destreza de escucha, Taxonomía de Bloom, comprensión, mejoramiento.

Introducción.

A language is a vital source for human interaction because it enables us to communicate feelings and thoughts. People study English for different objectives, and something that is a challenge for them is when they try to understand what they are listening to since they are not familiar with the language (Sanchez, 1982). This problem comes out because students are only exposed to understand isolated words in this language. One of the reasons for this problem are teachers' strategies and activities because they are not appropriate, and they bring about confusion and difficulties on students (S¸evik, 2012).

According to Buck (2001) one of the most difficult skill to be developed is listening. During a lot of years, improving this skill has been an arduous work as well as teachers and students. The absence of controlling and supervising this specific skill might be a factor to reflect on as first step. It is for this reason that using different techniques and methods in the classroom is relevant since they help to ease the learning process.

Ecuadorian students have difficulties in this receptive skill since most of the teachers focus on explaining grammar and vocabulary. Consequently, students do not develop activities to be active listeners.

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In 2016, the Ministry of Education in Ecuador worked in a new curriculum for schools, high schools and higher educational institutes because Ecuadorian education needs a progression to reach educational objectives. Even though, academic and personal benefits this syllabus represents, teachers do not seem to use original and active techniques to stimulate students to develop their listening This situation is more evident in lower levels where students do not have an acceptable oral comprehension and as a result, they cannot manage a fluent conversation. Thus, conventional teaching methods are developed, and students are exposed in minimal time to unreal and repetitive conversations (Harmer, 2001).

The tasks employed in the class should enable students to transform the information received in an uncomplicated way and they must be separated from simple to complex ones. Bloom (1971) initiated his work in 1956 and his taxonomy was spread worldwide. In this manner, educators and pupils could use a range of stages and reach objectives gradually. Considering to these stages' educators can advance from knowledge to evaluation questions. However, in several educational institutions, students do not show enough exposure to these activities and have complications when they must use the listening skill.

Therefore, it is vital to recognize this technique has already been used for several years in a subconscious but not in an appropriate way. Harmer (2007) affirmed that students are adapted to listen and repeat, they do not have the ability to generate opinions or points of view about what they listen. This is the result of inadequate teachers' techniques. To improve this fact, educators and learners must work together to develop the cognitive processes. This way, students will have a better oral comprehension in the interaction with their interlocutors.

The relationship between the employment of Bloom's Taxonomy and listening skills development in English learners was established by the analysis of the main variables, considering that listening is one of the most complex skill. In this respect Lindsay (2000), mentioned that it is difficult that someone can communicate with others whithout decoding the message. Also, the academic compared receptive skills and stated that speaking is controlled in some ways but it is impossible to control people's ideas because it will depend of many considerations such as: community situation, substance and intention.

To expand our comprehension about how a language works on different learning levels an extensive analysis was carried in the context of the study. In this sense, Bucks (2001), mentioned that listen to and understand an idea just the once in real time required higher intensity to provide an immediate response, which requires a lot of practice including decoding activities. On the other hand, answers exemplifies the association between transmitter and receiver, which indicates that audience member was able to comprehend the message.

Bloom's Taxonomy encourages the application of scaffolding activities that promotes the use of different understanding levels. Scaffolding interactive activities present a direct impact on learners' outlying skills development (Housten, 2010). This aspect was supported by Glark (2015), who added that teachers can apply associated activities in numerous methods to mesure learners' listening comprehension.

The feasibility of this study was imposed by participants' predispostition to know and use new tools, approaches and procedures utilized around the world. A handbook was created previously

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in the first phase of the study which contributed to engage students in the learning process. The activities in the handbok included simple conversations related to students' English level and also some stages in which learners must exchange thoughts, experiences and ideas about distinct topics.

Students and teachers were considered the straight beneficiaries. Teachers could increase their familiarity about Bloom's Taxonomy and learners were in contact with this procedure through various listening tasks. Moreover, students associated their prior knowledge with understanding about separate subjects. They were able to recognize the central concepts to provide their own point of view using distinct levels of criteria.

Methodology.

The qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied during the study. The positive aspects about the combination of these methods was supported by Hernández (2010), who stated the importance to combine the data gathered and the direct observation of the issue to establish a clear idea about the participants' vulnerabilities.

Crabtree and Miller (1992), stated that qualitative method is focused on real contexts, where the problem takes place, trying to find important evidence about the condition. The approach did not allow to make fake assumptions about the study, and it helped us to explore and understand the situation into the institution.

On the other hand, quantitative process permitted gathering enough information to support the results. In this sense Sukamolson (2007), mentioned that quantitative method facilitates the illustration of the data collected in the statistical processes. The graphs helped to make conclusions and verify the hypothesis established in the study.

Basic Research Modality
Bibliographic Documentary Research
Several books, academics' opinions and other resources related to the topic were analyzed through the application of this modality during the research. Reed and Baxter (2006), declared the relevance of this method, due to fact that it permits considering different bibliographic files contemplating diverse points of view.

Observational
During the study there was direct contact with the learners and context where the issue took place. Foster (1996), declared that this modality analyzes the environment and facilitate the collection of real information related to the topic of the research, and allows keeping a control of participants' progress.

Level of Research
Exploratory

Cooley (1978), stated this level of research is adapted to the context because it is flexible and contributes with some possible solutions through different foundations. For the study, it was

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essential to explore and familiarize with the causes of the problem. It also provides diverse perspectives, which could be valuable for the teaching learning process.

Descriptive

Descriptive method defines the main features about the problem, and it influences on both variables in real time (Lambert ,2012). Considering that there was enough data collected was possible to know all the evidences involved in the study.

Data Collection Plan

The study was carried out at the Technical University of Ambato. 153 students and 12 English teachers from A1 level participated in different stages during the study. The participants were chosen randomly from different groups.

Teachers and students' surveys were validated by the Academic Coordinator of the Languages Center. The questions were related to the objectives and the two variables established at the beginning of the study, considering some suggestions given by Nathan (2011), who mentioned that the effectiveness of the interviews must relate to the purpose of the study.

The people in charge of the study were present during the application of the surveys to explain and clarify any doubt about the questionnaire. The teachers and students' instruments were applied online, this helped to process the information immediately. Passmore, Dobbie, Parchman & Tysinger (2002), mentioned that online resources facilitate the analysis of extensive data avoiding excessive time consuming.

Process and Analysis Plan

The data gathered during the study, including the surveys online results, were analyzed to diagnose the feasibility to apply the Bloom's Taxonomy in some experimental listening activities

Dalton and Smith (2006), suggested that experimental classes are easier to apply if the activities have been designed before. Some academics considers than handbooks are an excellent tool to be used during a study.

Table 1. Students' survey results. Question 1: Listening comprehension for gist and details.

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Always	34	22%
Almost always	50	33%
Sometimes	62	41%
Almost never	5	3%
Never	2	1%
Total	153	100%

Source: Compiled by authors based on Saquinga (2018).

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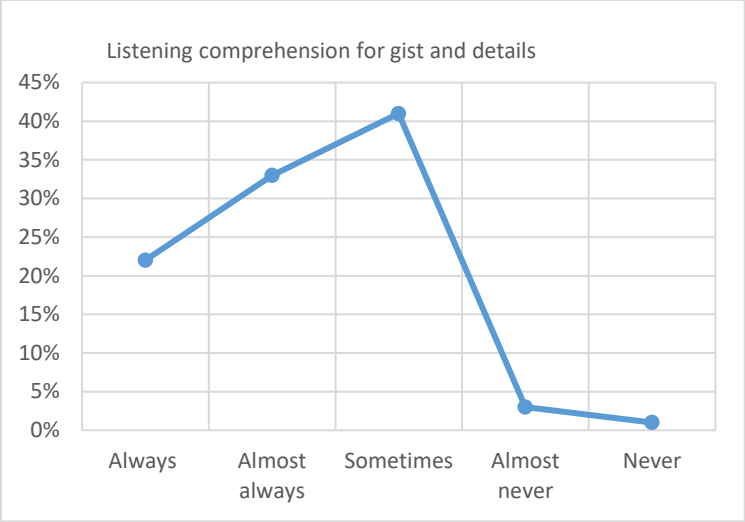
Figure 1. Students' survey results plotted. Question 1: Listening comprehension for gist and details.



Source: Compiled by authors based on Saquinga (2018).

The results showed that only 22% of the participants declared that always understand the main idea and details of the audios content applied during the class. Also, the outcomes proved that most of the participants sometimes present difficulties to listen to for gist and details.

Table 2. Teachers' survey results. Question 1: Students demonstrate listening comprehension for gist and details.

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Always	0	0%
Almost always	2	17%
Sometimes	8	66%
Almost never	2	17%
Never	0	0%
Total	12	100%

Source: Compiled by authors based on Saquinga (2018).

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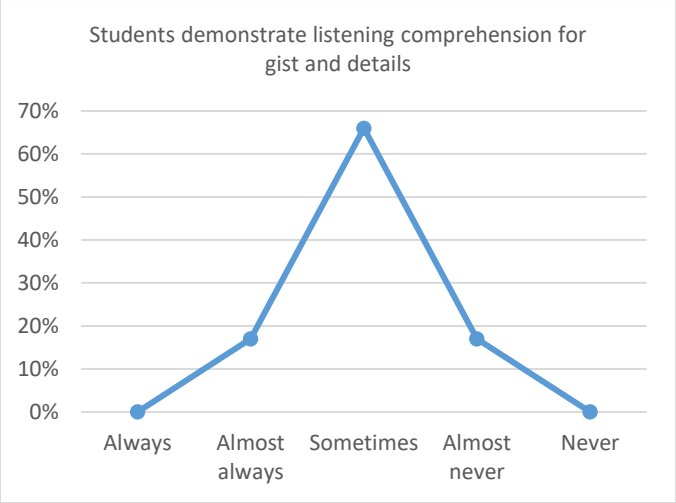
Figure 2. Students' survey results plotted. Question 1: Students demonstrate listening comprehension for gist and details.



Source: Compiled by authors based on Saquinga (2018).

The results obtained on teachers' survey affirmed that most of the learners sometimes recognize the principal idea and specific details about the content of the audios applied in classes.

Table 3. Students' survey results. Question 4: Use of a process to develop listening comprehension.

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Always	29	19%
Almost always	50	33%
Sometimes	69	45%
Almost never	3	2%
Never	2	1%
Total	153	100%

Source: Compiled by authors based on Saquinga (2018).

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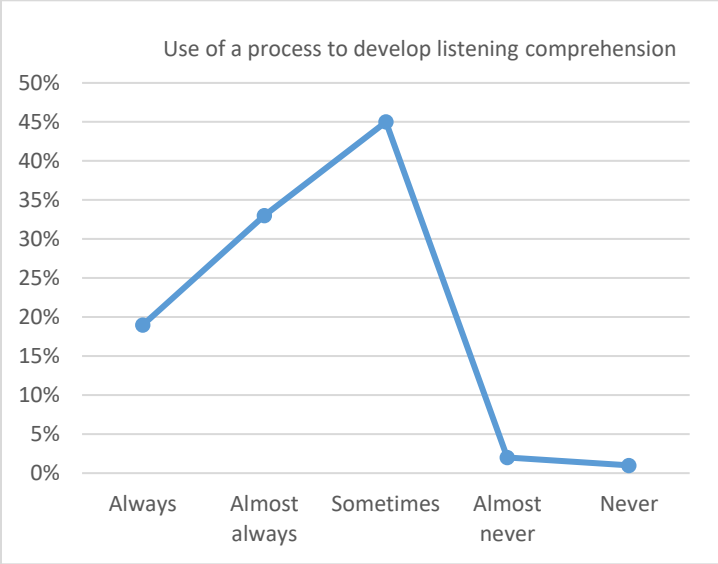
Figure 3. Students' survey results plotted. Question 4: Use of a process to develop listening comprehension.



Source: Compiled by authors based on Saquinga (2018).

The 19% of the participants affirmed that their teachers always apply traditional activities, which guide them from easier to more complicated skills stages to enhance listening comprehension.

In consequence, learners are not exposed to gradual process when they are working on listening activities. The visible results established that listening activities applied do not provide opportunities to improve listening performance from first levels.

Table 4. Teachers' survey results. Question 3: Use of higher thinking skills in listening comprehension.

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Always	0	0%
Almost always	0	0%
Sometimes	6	50%
Almost never	5	42%
Never	1	8%
Total	12	100%

Source: Compiled by authors based on Saquinga (2018).

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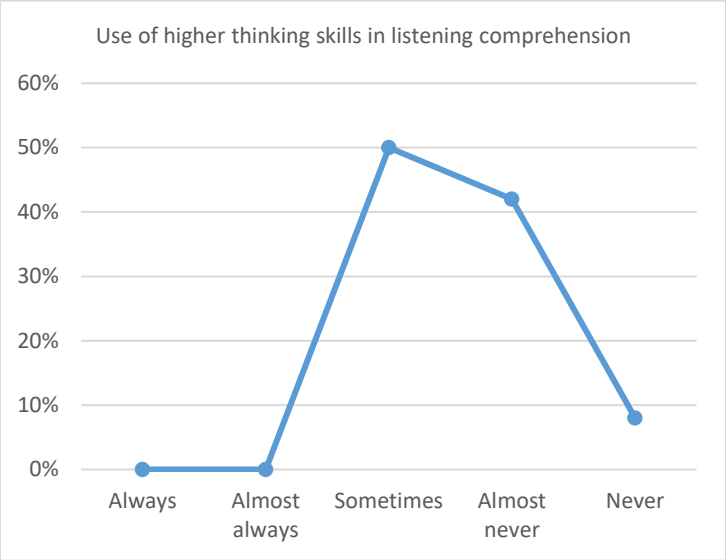
Figure 4. Teachers' survey results plotted. Question 3: Use of higher thinking skills in listening comprehension.



Source: Compiled by authors based on Saquinga (2018).

The results obtained show that 50% of the teachers stated that their students sometimes summarize the main idea in a listening activity and contrast it by presenting their point of view. Nevertheless, there are other teachers who acknowledge that their students are not able to use higher thinking skills. They assume their audio comprehension activities used in class do not contribute on the development of the students´ listening comprehension.

All the data gathered allowed to design and apply new listening exercises based on Bloom's Taxonomy and subsequently the verification of the hypothesis previously stated.

Results.

Hypothesis verification

To determine whether the Bloom´s Taxonomy activities improved the students' listening skills, teachers and students were surveyed through some questions, which have a Likert scale (always, almost always, sometimes, almost never, never). In order to verify the hypothesis, the Chi-square was carried out.

Chi-square (X2) involved the data gathered through the survey to test the significance of the study and contrast of the relationship between the variables in the Chi-square distribution table.

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Contingency tables

Table 5. Observed frequencies O students' survey.

		Dependent variable: Listening Skills					TOTAL
		Always	Almost always	Sometimes	Almost sometimes	Never	
Independent variable: Bloom´s Taxonomy	Always	3	4	15	8	0	30
	Almost always	6	12	36	1	1	56
	Sometimes	10	26	33	3	1	73
	Almost never	2	2	0	0	0	4
	Never	0	1	1	0	0	2
TOTAL		**21**	**45**	**85**	**12**	**2**	**165**

Source: Compiled by the authors based on Saquinga (2018).

Table 6. Expected frequencies students' survey.

		Dependent variable: Listening Skills					TOTAL
		Always	Almost always	Sometimes	Almost sometimes	Never	
Independent variable: Bloom´s Taxonomy	Always	3.82	8.18	15.45	2.18	0.36	30
	Almost always	7.13	15.27	28.85	4.07	0.68	56
	Sometimes	9.29	19.91	37.61	5.31	0.88	73
	Almost never	0.51	1.09	2.06	0.29	0.05	4
	Never	0.25	0.55	1.03	0.15	0.02	2
TOTAL		**21**	**45**	**85**	**12**	**2**	**165**

Source: Compiled by the authors based on Saquinga (2018).

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Table 7. Chi-square calculation students' survey.

Independent variable: Bloom´s Taxonomy	Dependent variable: Listening Skills	Observed O	Expected E	O – E	$(O-E)^2$	$(O-E)^2/E$
Always	Always	3	3.82	-0.82	0.67	0.18
	Almost always	4	8.18	-4.18	17.49	2.14
	Sometimes	15	15.45	-0.45	0.21	0.01
	Almost never	8	2.18	5.82	33.85	15.52
	Never	0	0.36	-0.36	0.13	0.36
Almost always	Always	6	7.13	-1.13	1.27	0.18
	Almost always	12	15.27	-3.27	10.71	0.70
	Sometimes	36	28.85	7.15	51.14	1.77
	Almost never	1	4.07	-3.07	9.44	2.32
	Never	1	0.68	0.32	0.10	0.15
Sometimes	Always	10	9.29	0.71	0.50	0.05
	Almost always	26	19.91	6.09	37.10	1.86
	Sometimes	33	37.61	-4.61	21.22	0.56
	Almost never	3	5.31	-2.31	5.33	1.00
	Never	1	0.88	0.12	0.01	0.01
Almost sometimes	Always	2	0.51	1.49	2.22	4.37
	Almost always	2	1.09	0.91	0.83	0.76
	Sometimes	0	2.06	-2.06	4.25	2.06
	Almost never	0	0.29	-0.29	0.08	0.29
	Never	0	0.05	-0.05	0.00	0.05
Never	Always	0	0.25	-0.25	0.06	0.25
	Almost always	1	0.55	0.45	0.21	0.38
	Sometimes	1	1.03	-0.03	0.00	0.00
	Almost never	0	0.15	-0.15	0.02	0.15
	Never	0	0.02	-0.02	0.00	0.02
$X^2=\Sigma (O-E)^2/E$					**35.1563**	

Source: Compiled by the authors based on Saquinga (2018).

The values for listening skills and Bloom´s Taxonomy were calculated and contrasted, as it is showed in the following graph:

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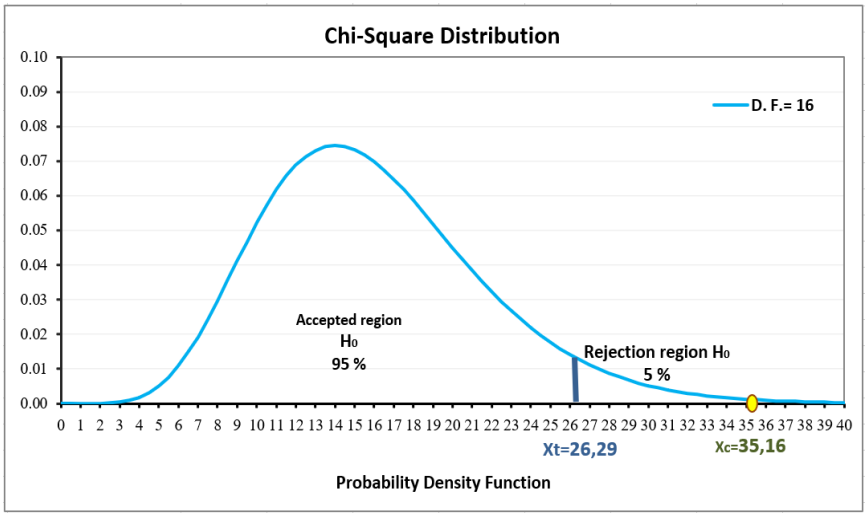
Figure 5. Chi-square distribution students' survey.



Source: Compiled by the authors based on Saquinga (2018).

It can be seen in the results that the null hypothesis H_0 of the work done was rejected, and accordingly the alternative hypothesis was accepted H_1: "Bloom´s Taxonomy has a great contribution in the development of students´ listening comprehension".

Discussion.

The present study confirmed the benefits about Bloom's Taxonomy application in listening. This delivered significantly better results due to the fact, students were faced to different activities that range from the simplest to the most complex according to their English level, in an orderly manner while increasing other cognitive skills.

The results lead to similar conclusions established in Bhargav, H. S., Akalwadi, G., & Pujari, N. V. (2016) research about application of Bloom's Taxonomy in day-to-day examinations, which identified and analyzed the accuracy of some educational techniques and their relation on learner's progress.

The findings demonstrate the students' improvement in different areas and skills. However, even better results were achieved, they were not as expected at the beginning of the study. An apparent limitation in the numbers of practical classes was one of the possible explanations for the results.

To increase the percentage in students' listening skills improvement will be necessary to apply more activities applying Bloom's Taxonomy and extend the time consuming per class.

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Conclusions.

After finishing the analysis of all the data collected, it was possible to remark the following conclusions:

- Most English teachers, who were surveyed, considered graded activities in the classroom provide a scaffolding process and help to increase the listening comprehension on students. Therefore, many students have not had the opportunity to experience these techniques which results weaknesses at the time of working on listening activities.

- A great number of students exposed to listening activities are not able to reach the higher thinking skills due to the lack of enough varied techniques to guide them and make audio comprehension activities enjoyable for students.

- The different stages of the Boom´s Taxonomy were not completely familiar among teachers and students who participated in the study. Students seemed not to be interested or motivated about using English because of the difficulty it represented to understand an audio.

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