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CORRESPONDENTE**

**LISTENING TO ACADEMIC LECTURES:
A COMPARISON OF TWO GROUPS OF EFL LEARNERS**

Por

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To Leducir Viganó (in memoriam)

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims at investigating the effects of an EAP approach on L2 learners' performance of academic listening tasks. The study was carried out with 10 learners of two English language schools, situated in Pato Branco, southwest of Paraná (PR). The participants were divided into two groups, named Group 1 and Group 2, and were exposed to two approaches. Group 1 received extensive general textbook listening tasks, while Group 2 received extensive British Broadcast Corporation (BBC) lecture listening with pre-, while- and post-listening tasks.

The learners of the two groups were also required to perform a common academic listening task in order to verify the effects of the two different approaches on their listening performance. Data were analyzed in terms of number of words recalled from extracts of the authentic material in

gap-filling tasks. The results obtained showed that Group 2 had a slightly better performance in word recall than Group 1.

Key words: academic listening; ESP/EAP; lexical unit; lecture

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RESUMO

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O objetivo deste estudo é investigar os efeitos da abordagem do ensino de Inglês com objetivos Acadêmicos no desenvolvimento de atividades de audição para alunos de língua estrangeira. O estudo foi realizado com 10 alunos não graduados, estudantes de duas escolas particulares de língua inglesa, situadas em Pato Branco, sudoeste do Paraná (PR). Os participantes foram divididos em dois grupos nomeados, Grupo 1 e Grupo 2, e foram expostos à duas abordagens. Grupo 1 recebeu tratamento extensivo com atividades de audição de livros texto enquanto que o Grupo 2 recebeu extensiva audição de palestras extraídas do *site* oficial BBC de Londres, seguidas de atividades contendo os três passos básicos: antes, durante e depois da audição. Ao final, os estudantes dos dois grupos participaram de uma atividade em comum para verificar os

efeitos das duas abordagens no desenvolvimento das duas audições. Os dados foram analisados em termos de número de itens lexicais reconhecidos dos extratos do material de audição autêntico, em atividades que designadas para completar os espaços em branco. Os resultados obtidos mostraram que o Grupo 2 teve um desenvolvimento levemente melhor no reconhecimento das palavras do que o Grupo 1.

Palavras-chave: audição acadêmica; Inglês para Objetivos Específicos/
Inglês para Objetivos Acadêmicos; unidade lexical; palestra.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Preliminaries

This study was born out of my experience in the teaching of English as a foreign language for students in private English language schools, elementary and high schools, and private classes for specific purposes for around ten years in Pato Branco, Paraná. In my daily routine, I noticed that listening strategies for specific purposes were not addressed as they should be in class. In general, the material adopted in most schools addresses listening skills for general purposes and students feel insecure when they have to listen to more specific material, such as authentic texts. This was the starting point of my research in the area of listening.

According to Brown (1994), “the importance of listening in language learning can hardly be overestimated” (p.233). Rost (2000) also points out the importance of listening as “the most widely used language skill” (p.7) and in practicing this important skill, learners can have their acquisition processes enhanced. However, historically, the listening skill has been neglected both from a research and a pedagogical perspective (Flowerdew, 1994) and one of the reasons why listening is not so commonly emphasized in EFL classes is that teachers tend to give

greater importance to the speaking skill. The lack of listening practice may be due to the fact that the communicative approach method, largely used in language schools nowadays, requires conversation more than other skills.

Concerning the importance given to academic listening, Flowerdew (1994) highlights that “a lot more research is needed before we have a clear idea of what constitutes a successful second language lecture”(p.25). This is a relevant aspect that teachers should take into consideration when studying and preparing classes about academic listening.

As stated by Silva & Santos (1994) “listening is the perception that there is a systemic message rather than accidental noise in a continuous stream of sound”(p.134). Listening comprehension implies an interaction among background, procedural, situational, and systemic knowledge of the language.

The listening skill can be developed through the use of intensive listening with authentic material, and this includes academic listening. (Rost, 2000). Listening comprehension can be facilitated by the use of learners’ knowledge of the world. The ability to apply background knowledge to listening tasks differs from individual to individual, which means some students seem to be more prepared to go beyond the information supplied by the aural text and to use their knowledge of the world to comprehend particular types of discourse. These learners use procedural knowledge associated with their knowledge of the world and speech perception, in an interactive manner.

ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and EAP (English for Academic Purposes) are applied to tertiary education in specific areas of study and involve the four basic skills: writing, reading, speaking, and listening. In listening, the skill of comprehending lectures and long texts is taken as relevant (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, pp. 36-37). Ellis (2003) also states that in a lecture, there are no specific addressees and, thus, the listener should be prepared to notice what is the information declared in the lecture in order to comprehend it. According to Hamp-Lyons (2001), EAP requires a learners' needs analysis so that courses and teaching be implemented. Hamp-Lyons (2001) states that "if a general approach to an EAP course is taken, the course usually consists primarily of study skills practice (e.g. listening to lectures, seminar skills, etc.) with an academic register and style in the practice texts and materials" (p.127).

Brazilian English language students do not have many opportunities to listen to lectures in their language classes. As a consequence, learners lack the listening skills necessary to understand academic lectures, according to some of the students' needs concerning future studying in universities where the teaching through lectures is a common practice. As many learners choose to go to further studies, at the undergraduate and graduate levels, the skill of listening to academic lectures seems to be necessary in their repertoire of competences in the use of the foreign language. The present study is an attempt to bring the skill of academic listening into focus and to gain better comprehension of how this skill can be addressed in the EFL classroom.

1.2. Objective of the study

The objective of the present study is to investigate the effects of an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) approach on L2 learners' performance of academic listening tasks. This objective was pursued by comparing the performance of two groups of learners on an academic listening task. Participants of Group 1 were exposed to a sequence of general listening texts, whereas participants in Group 2 were systematically exposed to authentic academic lectures taken from the British Broadcast Corporation (BBC) archives.

1.3. Significance of the study

This study may indicate to the teaching community that academic listening can be approached in class through the use of authentic listening materials and not only by the material available in the textbook the teacher adopts, thus improving learners' motivation and influencing other teachers to explore the listening strategies in class beyond the textbook listening tasks.

The students who could profit from this study are the ones who are interested in studying at colleges or universities and to develop their studies through academic work. One of the aspects of academic work is the academic listening, which contains information in a formal language guiding the learner to profit from the language and the knowledge at the same time.

1.4. Organization of the thesis

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the context of investigation, the objective of the study, and its significance and organization. Chapter two reviews some of the relevant literature in the area of ESP/EAP, general listening comprehension, academic listening comprehension, some aspects of vocabulary learning in specific fields, and reviews some empirical studies on listening. In Chapter three the methodology used in this study is described. Chapter four deals with the discussion and data analysis and the presentation of the results. Finally, Chapter five presents the final considerations, the limitations of the study, suggestions for further research and pedagogical implications.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature found to be relevant to the present study in the area of listening and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The chapter is organized as follows: section 1 reviews the literature on listening skill and its features; section 2 reviews the literature on general listening comprehension; section 3 reviews the literature on academic aural texts, section 4 reviews the literature on English for Specific Purposes and English for Academic Purposes, and section 5 reviews aspects of vocabulary in specific fields.

2.1 Listening skill and its features

According to Rost (2000) “ the term listening is used in language teaching to refer to a complex that allows us to understand spoken language”(p.8). The skill is greatly used with the other three skills, which are speaking, reading and writing. Listening needs specific strategies in order to be applied to the comprehension of the aural text. EFL (English as Foreign Language) students do not have many

opportunities to practice listening in class as much as they need to or would like to; this fact may lead to learners' lack of interest and, as a consequence, they may avoid practicing listening in class and out of it, avoiding authentic material such as news on television, films, documentaries, or simple conversations.

Rost (2000) states that "listening began to assume an important role in language teaching during the late-nineteenth-century... and this focus on speech was given in the 1930s and 1940s when anthropologists began to study and describe the world's spoken languages"(p.7). The teaching of language went through different stages, being recognized by applied linguistics in the early 1970s, when it was recognized that "listening is the primary channel by which the learner gains access to L2 'data' and therefore serves as the trigger for acquisition"(p.8). Since 1980, listening has been seen as a crucial aspect for language learning (Richards, 1985; Richards and Rodgers, 1986; Rost, 1990, in Rost 2000).

According to Flowerdew (1994), "a listening text exists in time rather than space"(p.10). The listener in general, does not have the opportunity to recall information so he/she should trust in his/her memory and specific listening strategies. According to Buck (2001) "spoken texts exist in real time and need to be processed very rapidly as they are heard"(p.60). The listener should be connected to the aural text, establishing the purposes of listening. In order to comprehend the spoken text it is also necessary to activate background knowledge and keep the most relevant data in memory (Ellis, p.40-41). For this reason, the learner has to carry out the necessary procedures in a short period of time to comprehend the aural text. The redundancy of information given

by the speaker is a tool which can be recognized by the listener and used to extract the necessary information, but this tool is not a frequent rhetorical item the speaker's discourse gives as an opportunity for listeners to comprehend the aural texts, so listeners have to learn to rely on other elements for comprehension.

Buck (2001) points out some essential characteristics concerning spoken texts: "phonology, accents, prosodic features, speech rate, hesitations and discourse structures"(p.32). Rapid and slow speeches have different impact on aural comprehension. Buck (2001) claims that "stress and intonation carry a vital information. Stress is used to mark words and ideas, and intonation marks the grammatical structure of the text as well as indicating the attitude of the speaker to the content of the message "(p.60). In addition, the speaker's communicative intent needs to be interpreted in terms of word knowledge, summarizing, and linguistic environment. That is, the listener has to have the ability to extract the basic linguistic information to grasp the meaning of the aural text.

Access to vocabulary, parsing, and memory processes are the three main elements cited by Cook (2001, p.95) for the comprehension of speech stress in aural texts. Access to vocabulary, according to Cook (2001), requires that the listener hear the information and relate the words with his/her already stored knowledge instantaneously, selecting the most important information he/she wants from the aural text and linking that to his/her background knowledge to gain a view of the topic. According to Cook (2001, p.94-95), the mind is automatically activated when the listener knows what he/she wants from the text, that is, when

the listener has clear and organized purposes concerning the listening task.

Additionally, Cook (2001) explains, “parsing refers to how the mind works out the grammatical structure and meaning of the sentences it hears” (p.95). When a sentence is pronounced, the mind searches for meaning through working out the structure and even if the listener is not aware of this process, the grammar is active all the time listening is happening. For that reason, the two most important cognitive processes are *bottom-up* parsing and *top-down* parsing. Cook (2001) calls our attention to the fact that, if parsing fails, the learner finds other strategies, of which the least effective is translation.

Cook (2001) also mentions the memory processes involved in listening. For him, “all listening comprehension depends on the storing and processing of information by the mind”(p.97). The listener retrieves words or group of words and connects them in a meaningful sequence that is, the listening process may happen from a small sound unit to a big sound unit, that is, from a word to a sentence.

2.2 General Listening Comprehension

Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2000, p.103) state that *top-down* and *bottom-up* listening processes are essential for the comprehension of aural language; the former involves “activation of schematic knowledge and contextual knowledge”(p.102) and the latter involves “prior knowledge of the language system (i.e. phonology, grammar,

vocabulary)” (p.103). The activation of schematic knowledge involves content, which means background information, and formal schemata, which means the knowledge of the discourse features. (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). Another attempt to define these cognitive processes *bottom-up* and *top-down* comes from Cook (2001). According to him, bottom-up parsing “involves building up the sentence up in our minds bit by bit, putting the sounds into words, the words into phrases, the phrases into a whole sentence”(p.95). On the other hand, top-down parsing “means breaking the whole sentence down into smaller and smaller bits”(p.95). The listener makes use of both *bottom-up* and *top-down* listening processes to build effective comprehension.

Reading has been the most studied topic according to Lund (in Flowerdew, 1994), and the strategies applied to the comprehension of written texts are very similar to the strategies applied to the comprehension of oral texts. The outline of the listening comprehension process comes from studies on reading, and the aspect, which belongs exclusively to listening comprehension, is the phonological aspect, as stated by Flowerdew (1994), Rost (2000) and Buck (2001). There are important types of knowledge which are also involved in the process of listening comprehension: pragmatic, semantic, syntactic and lexical knowledge, but the most important and unique features of listening comprehension are real-time processing and phonological and lexico-grammatical features, (Flowerdew,1994).

Flowerdew (1994) defines schemata as “underlying structures which account for the organization of text in memory and which allow for hypotheses to be generated regarding the possible interpretations of

texts. They are the key-element in *top-down* processing”(p.9-10). Schemata are “structures for representing knowledge in memory, and are assumed to exist for most things we would want to represent in memory....guiding the interpretation of the text”, (Buck,2001, p.20).

Processing language and meaning in real-time is a typical feature of listening comprehension. The listener cannot revise the aural text, that is, once listened, it has to be understood. Flowerdew (1994) says that “listeners do not have the same control as have the readers”(p.10) because usually the listening text only exists in time. The listener has only one chance to hear the speaker, and comprehension must take place at once. It is mentioned here the listener only and not the social condition which involves conversations where it is allowed to repeat information and rephrase ideas in order to clear them.

Cauldwell (1988) mentions a number of basic processes involved in listening, which do not occur sequentially or consciously but may take place simultaneously and according to the listener’s needs. According to Cauldwell (1988) the listener:

- a- determines a reason for listening;
- b- takes the raw speech and deposits an image of it in short-term memory;
- c- attempts to organize the information by identifying the type of speech event (conversation, lecture, speech events like: music shows, news, interviews, publicity, talk-shows, etc.) and the function of the message (persuade, inform, request);
- d- predicts information expected to be included in the message;

e- recalls background information (schemata) to help interpret the message;

f- assigns a meaning to the message;

g- checks if the message has been understood;

h- determines the information to be held in long-term memory;

i- deletes the original form of the message that was received into short-term memory; (Brown, 1994; Dunkel, 1986) in Cauldwell (1988, p. 2)

In the framework of EFL teaching, these important processes should be taken into consideration to influence teachers and learners in practicing listening in class.

Learning the strategies to comprehend spoken language is a difficult task. Foreign learners have to be aware of the purpose of what they hear, and then process it through the use of strategies. However, without the ability to distinguish word boundaries within the flow of speech to recognize the stressed syllables and words that carry the most important information in formal and informal speech, foreign learners cannot possibly use *bottom-up* and *top-down* cognitive strategies to achieve comprehension.

For example, helping learners recognize reduced forms should be an integral part of English classes that focus on listening comprehension, particularly for lower-level students. Weinstein (1985), cited in Norris (1993, p.2), says that "reduced forms represent one of the most neglected areas of listening comprehension". It is the learners' responsibility to listen to as much English as they can in conversations, lectures, news, documentaries and other kind of listening circumstances, whenever they consider important. It is the responsibility of teachers, however, to

present learners with the suitable strategies they need to understand aural texts.

2.3. Academic Aural Texts

2.3.1. Lectures

According to Hansen and Jensen (1994), “lectures are extended pieces of discourse that are delivered by one person to a group of people”(p.245). Lectures may involve the use of diagrams, pictures, films, graphics, OHP transparencies, and slides, as visual tools – the paralinguistic features.

In the same way Dunkel and Davis (cited in Flowerdew, 1994, p.57) point out that the function of a lecture is to present information about a relevant topic in such a way that a coherent representation of information is established by the listener. The information structure of the discourse can be described within certain typical discourse markers and connectives directing the listener to the speaker’s ideas.

Nattinger and DeCarraro (1992) state that lectures contain “formulaic phrases” and sometimes they cannot be interpreted literally. Since these ready sentences are not commonly taught in second language classes, non-native speakers often do not recognize them letting these important signals which are crucial in indicating the direction of a lecture (p.133-134). In other words, the recognition of parts of speech and the relation among them are relevant tools to comprehend the aural

text. Lexical phrases are not the only systematic knowledge needed to comprehend a lecture. According to Nattinger and DeCarrero (1992), the teacher should also instruct the learner to recognize the style of academic lectures, which can vary according to the lecturer's personality and experience.

Chafe (1979) cited in Hansen and Jensen (1994) labeled ideas in lectures as *idea units*, and conceptualizes "*idea units* as having a single intonation contour followed by a pause"(p.245). The *idea units* in lectures, according to Hansen and Jensen (1994), contain on average eleven words, while in conversation they contain seven words. This accounts for several features of academic lectures, including the literary vocabulary and the degree of complexity they present.

Researchers such as Dudley-Evans and Johns (1981), cited in Nattinger and DeCarrero (1992, p.134), claim that academic lectures follow three styles: a) reading style, b) rhetorical style and c) conversational style. The reading style indicates a lecturer reading about his/her topic from notes already prepared; the rhetorical style deals with the performance from the lecturer; and the conversational style is defined by the lecturer interaction with the students. The present study is not concentrated in any specific style.

2.3.2. Lecture Comprehension

A conversation, news broadcast, a documentary, a soap opera, a film, and a lecture requires different listening strategies by the listener.

Flowerdew (1994, p.11) describes lecture strategies as follows: “In a lecture, listeners are likely to require a knowledge of the specialist subject matter, while in a conversation, necessary background will be more general”. Also, listeners need the ability to distinguish the main purpose from the less relevant. In addition, turn taking in conversation is essential, but in lectures it will happen only if the speaker allows interruptions by the audience.

Finally, Flowerdew (1994) mentions that listeners must be able to understand “implied meaning or indirect speech acts” (p.11). That is, the core of a lecture’s comprehension is transmitted through the emphasis given by him/her to one or more topics by paraphrasing and repetition of key words.

Turning to particular skills to comprehend lectures, Flowerdew (1994, p.11) points out three of them: a) “the requirement to be able to concentrate on and understand long stretches of talk”, b) note-taking, and c) the ability to integrate with the media, which can be handouts, textbook, material displayed on a board, or by an overhead projector. Pollock (1999) mentions the students’ cognitive capacities involving listening and understanding information simultaneously, as a difficult exercise mainly for EFL learners. He (1999) also divides academic listening comprehension in four features: a) aural decoding; b) discourse analysis; c) visual and written support; d) ethnographic feature.

According to Hansen and Jensen (1994) “ listeners use two major coherence strategies in the listening comprehension process, *global* and *local* coherence strategies”(p.244). The former is used to link the

sentences to make sense. The latter is used to recognize the topic of the lecture, the main ideas, and the aural text as a whole.

2.4 The ESP/EAP Approach

According to Ejzenberg (2001), English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is a subdivision of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) categorization that was initially used in the United States of America. Ejzenberg (2001) defines EAP as programs as those whose aim is “to prepare the learner to engage in content-based, academic work, generally at the college or university/higher education” (p.475). Dudley-Evans (2001) stresses that “the key defining feature of ESP is that its teaching and material are founded on the results of need analysis” (p.131). Analyses are necessary in order for specific and successful materials to be designed. In order to prepare materials and to know the audience, the teacher/instructor tries to identify the learners’ needs through direct questions, opened conversations and/or interviews during the first classes therefore with the informal data, ESP teachers may feel confident to prepare the classes for the semester.

Dudley-Evans and St Johns (1998) point out that English for Specific Purpose implies a special methodology that differs from the one used in General Purposes English teaching. By methodology the authors mean “the nature of interaction between the ESP teacher and the learners”(p. 4). “ESP is concerned with teaching language discourse and relevant communication skills. It exploits topics and the underlying

methodology of the target discipline to present language, discourse and skills”, states Dudley-Evans (2001, p. 132). Following Dudley-Evans’ (2001) ideas, some of the important features of ESP teaching is the analysis of the learners’ needs, the methodology applied to the specific studied discipline, and the use of adequate language in the teaching-learning situation. ESP is usually seen as part of teaching an adult environment but, according to Dudley-Evans (2001), this special teaching could be applied to learners at secondary school level and also to beginners.

According to Jordan, (1997, p.1), mentioned in Ejzenberg (2001, p.475) the term “English for Specific Purposes” came from the United Kingdom and the specific study of the four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, became relevant in English Language Teaching also in America. This factor brought important categorizations in different areas in ELT such as English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP), English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP). The former is directed to general and formal academic language and the latter is directed to academic fields such as engineering, physics and the like (Ejzenberg, 2001).

Hamp-Lyons (2001), posits an important part concerning EAP. He states that “EAP is not only a teaching approach. It is also a branch of applied linguistics consisting of a significant body of research into effective teaching and assessment approaches, methods of analysis of the academic language needs of students, analysis of the linguistic and discursal structures of academic texts, and analysis of the textual practices of academics”(p.126). In order to comprehend the situation of

EAP teaching, and General English teaching, Hamp- Lyons (2001) states that EAP is “an educational approach” with particular features different from General English features, which begins language teaching with the language while EAP teaching begins with the learners and the situation.

Even though the use of appropriate textbooks for ESP/EAP classes is significant, these materials may contain more general than specific features of the language and, for a specific audience, they may not meet the learners’ expectations. Under these circumstances, teachers can design the materials and apply them together with a textbook, in order to become more sophisticated and meet the students’ needs.

The formal education based on the teaching of EAP courses usually “consists of primarily instructions as listening to lectures, seminar skills, academic writing, reading and note-taking with specific attention to the language used in the specific disciplinary context identified in the needs analysis” proposes Hamp-Lyons (2001, p.127). EAP language teaching, according to Hamp-Lyons (2001) is concentrated on three important levels, which are: a) *register*, involving lexical and grammatical features, b) *discourse*, which is the effect of communicative context, and c) *genre*, which shows how language is used in a particular setting, such as papers, articles and formal lectures.

Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) cite Brazil as a South American country which classifies EAP “as Technical English (Inglês Instrumental) and the courses have focused almost exclusively on reading”(p.40). They also comment on Brazilian teachers’ worries about material development and teacher training. According to Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) these materials are focused on micro and macro skills

of reading, and lexical and grammatical items designed to comprehend the text. Concerning Brazilian ESP classes, an important topic mentioned by the authors is that the classes are taught in Portuguese and they resemble a problem-solving class with teachers and students working on academic texts (Alderson and Scott, 1992; Scott, 1981a and 1981b, cited in Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

The students' needs in ESP teaching is more precise than in English for General Purposes, considering that English in ESP plays a key role and it is generally designed for specific professions or disciplines. Widdowson, (1983) (cited in Hamp-Lyons, 2001) suggests that the class methodology can exploit the subject area of the learners' professions with complete attention to the language. According to Dudley-Evans & St John (1998), "EAP refers to any English teaching that relates to a study purpose"(p.34). As English is used throughout the education system, especially at undergraduate and graduate courses, the teaching of the language for learners who are interested in academic research in their areas, should be relevant, and applied to each field of study in specific contexts.

2.5 Aspects of Vocabulary in Specific fields

According to Ellis (1997) "language is sequential. Speech is a sequence of sounds. Writing is a sequence of symbols. Learning to understand a language involves parsing the speech stream into chunks which reliably mark meaning" (p.122). In order to learn new vocabulary

through speech, students make use of their mental lexicon to categorize the new sound pattern and link it to their already stored vocabulary, as suggested by Ellis (1997). In other words, the learners recognize the sound and with the words he/she already knows it is possible to give meaning to a sentence.

According to Laufer (1997) (cited in Bell, 2001), “knowing a word implies knowing its form, structure, syntactic pattern, meaning, lexical relation, and common collocation”(p.7). There are special vocabulary features to be recognized by the learner considering the purpose of his/her study, and the meanings are generated according to the different degrees of knowledge he/she has. Nation (2001) states that “when the learners have mastered the 2,000-3,000 words of general usefulness in English, it is wise to direct vocabulary learning to more specialized areas”(p.187). Among these areas, academic vocabulary is a need in ESL teaching/learning.

Academic texts contain a great number of academic vocabularies placed according to the context. Nation (2001) gives four reasons for learners to study academic vocabulary. The first one is that they are not so common in non-academic texts; the second is that “academic vocabulary accounts for a substantial number of words”(p.189). The third reason is that “academic vocabulary is generally not as well known as technical vocabulary”(p.190) and the fourth is that “academic vocabulary is the kind of specialized vocabulary that an English teacher can usefully help learners with while in technical vocabulary the teacher can often do little because of lack of knowledge in the field”(p.191).

Considering the learning of academic vocabulary, Nation (2001) points out some activities that, can help to develop this kind of vocabulary. Students can be encouraged through formal oral presentations, articles discussions, lecture listening and task solving in order to become proficient despite Nation's comment on the idea that academic vocabulary "is not easy to learn because words refer to abstract ideas"(p.209). To comprehend the academic text, Hoey (1991, cited in Nation, 2001) suggests that learners need to be motivated to recognize the repetition of words, paraphrase, substitution and ellipsis. These features may help the attentive learner to make sense of the text he/she is involved with.

2.6 Some empirical studies on listening

In order to have an overview of the studies on listening skill, I describe some empirical studies to recognize the increasing importance of the studies developed lately. The first author mentioned in this section is Vandergrift (2004), whose article about listening instruction, particularly about techniques, aimed at helping students on how to listen. The author used two approaches. The first one was presented in order to raise attention to the metacognitive approach (favoring top-down processes) and the second technique was an approach to develop lexical segmentation and word recognition skills (favoring bottom-up processes). Vandergrift (2004) pointed out that "students need to learn to listen so that they can better listen to learn" (p.3). This author's studies

involve cognitive processes in listening comprehension, empirical studies on listening instruction, instructional observations, teaching students how to listen, stage of listening instruction, and research on different types of listening.

Considering that my study focuses on EAP, I concentrate on the aspect of academic listening raised by Vandergrift (2004), who emphasizes the scope of research reported by Flowerdew (1994), (cited in Vandergrift, 2004), one of the most comprehensive treatment on the area of academic listening. Another author cited is Littlemore (2001, in Vandergrift, 2004), whose study indicated that the use of metaphor in university lectures leads the L2 listener to a puzzle mind result and to misinterpretation of the lecture. According to Littlemore (2001 cited in Vandergrift 2004), misunderstanding is a serious problem to be solved. In other words, more research and study about metaphors in lectures are necessary in order for teachers to help EFL learners. The study of note taking is not the only topic to be developed in academic listening. Most of the L2 learners are not prepared to cope with an academic listening task and note taking at same time, and so lose many important topics of the lectures because these learners rely too much on memory, and information and time are wasted significantly.

According to Vandergrift (2004) the listening instruction area involves visual elements, repeated and systematic exposure to the same sequence of metacognitive strategies (planning, directed attention, monitoring, selective attention, problem solving and evaluation) used by skilled listeners. In other words, the metacognitive strategies are learning strategies, which learners can use in the learning process. These

strategies involve thinking about the mental processes used in the learning construction, monitoring learning while it is taking place, and evaluating learning after it has occurred. (Richards, Platt, Platt, 1992).

To conclude, Vandergrift's points out that "listening is the least explicit of all the language skills"(p.18). As oral texts exist in real time, they need to be processed rapidly, and when the aural text finishes, only a mental representation remains. L2 listening materials also needs to focus on authentic listening to listen and learn. The importance given to technology, bottom-up and top-down cognitive processes and bidirectional listening may be the support to enhance the learning to listen in the L2 and learning the L2 through listening (Rost,2002, p. 91 in Vandergrift, 2004).

The second author mentioned in this section is Goh (2002) who examined a group of Chinese ESL learners' listening strategies and the tactics that operationalised these strategies. Data were collected and analyzed using protocol analysis or 'think-aloud' sessions, a retrospective verbalization procedure based on human information. There were two selected participants from a group of eighty learners in an intensive English programme in Singapore.

The author identified forty-four tactics. Although the listeners used many similar strategies, the higher ability listener demonstrated the use of both cognitive and metacognitive tactics. The combination of tactics to process each segment of the listening passage shows that text comprehension is a dynamic process involving the interaction of mental

techniques. Goh (2002) concludes that protocols showed the interaction of various tactics that made use of prior knowledge, text and context.

The third author cited in this section is Field (2004) who suggests that “listening to a foreign language may be assisted by an interactive-compensatory mechanism already available in L1, which compensates for gaps in understanding” (p.363). The author calls attention to the conflict between bottom-up and top-down processes used by listeners as information to solve comprehension problems. According to Field (2004) “the terms ‘bottom-up and ‘top-down’ occur frequently in the literature on second language listening and reading”. In a ‘bottom-up’ listening process, small units are gradually restructured while the listener is involved in the aural text and they are turning into larger units, while in a ‘top-down’ process, larger units exercise a control over the way in which smaller ones are perceived” (p.364).

Field (2004) designed three experiments in order to test their top-down or bottom-up information. The subjects were students at Eurocentre Cambridge, a leading British EFL school. They were divided in two groups: one of 31 – lower intermediate, and another of 17 – high elementary level. The author’s findings show that the three experiments attempted, in different ways and degrees to discover the relation between the two cognitive processes.

Field’s study (2004) shows that the processing of new words gives an additional insight into the bottom-up/top-down relationship. The study shows that “when a salient word is unfamiliar, learners do not adopt a technique of visualizing the orthographic form of the word and inferring its meaning from context” (p.374). In this case, learners try to

match the new word with a known word. This match may occur due to word frequency, or it can draw upon top-down expectations. To conclude, both bottom-up and top-down processes have their importance to associate information for second-language listeners.

This chapter reviewed the literature found to be relevant for the present study. In the next chapter, I present the methodology used to investigate the effects of an ESP approach on L2 learner's performance of academic listening tasks.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

This chapter describes the method applied in the present study. Firstly, I describe the participants of the study. Secondly, I explain the instruments used and, thirdly, I describe the procedures followed in the data collection.

3.1. Participants

The participants of the present study were ten (10) young learners, ages ranging from fourteen to seventeen years old being three men and seven women, from two Private English Language Schools in Pato Branco. They were all volunteers. In both schools, the two groups of learners selected to participate in the present study were enrolled in English for General Purposes classes.

In order to gather further information on the learners' background and their needs concerning the listening skill, a short needs' analysis questionnaire was applied to the ten participants (see appendix 1).

According to their answers to the questionnaire, their main interests in studying English language were to cope with the University

entrance exam, whose English test focuses on reading comprehension, and deal with the academic language when studying at College or University. These learners wanted to apply their knowledge of English in their future studies. More detailed description of the questionnaire will be provided in section 3.2.6.

The selection of the participants of the present study was based on the assumption that they were neither beginners in English nor completely skilled in aural texts. The participants were divided into two groups of five learners, which will be designated Group One and Group Two.

3.1.1. Group One

Participants from Group One attended high school classes and studied English in the afternoon. Their English classes lasted three hours and were held once a week. Group One was classified by the school as an advanced one because the participants had already gone through the New Interchange series and were using the Passages series. In the present study, Group One was given ten listening tasks taken from General English and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbooks.

3.1.2. Group Two

The five students from Group Two were also considered advanced learners since they had gone through the New Interchange series and were studying General English with the Passages series. The learners had two-hours English classes, twice a week. From the five students in this group, one was at college while the others were in high school. In the present study, Group Two was trained with ten British Broadcast Company (BBC) lectures.

3.2. Instruments

In order to answer the research question the present study pursues, Group One performed ten general listening tasks taken from General English and ESP (English for Specific Purposes) textbooks, whereas Group Two performed ten listening tasks based on BBC (British Broadcast Company) authentic lectures. Both Groups had weekly meetings in their schools. The tasks given to Group Two were specially designed by this researcher for the present study. My purpose was to investigate if giving students General Listening tests would have an effect on their performance in academic listening tasks or if performance in academic listening tasks would require specific treatment. Below it is described the tasks given to each group.

3.2.1. Selection of Textbooks for Group One

As already mentioned, Group One was trained with ten listening tasks from General English and English for Specific Purposes tasks from textbooks. The tasks were applied following the instructions contained in the teacher's guides of the textbooks. The tasks were taken from the following five textbooks:

1. Computing, Boeckner, K. and Brown, P.C. (1993). Oxford University Press.
2. Cutting Edge, Cunningham, S. and Moor, P. (1999). Longman: Pearson Education Limited.
3. International Express, Taylor, L. (1997). Oxford University Press.
4. New International Business English, Jones, L. and Alexander, R. (1989) Cambridge University Press.
5. Passages, Richards, J.C. and Sandy, C. (1998) Cambridge University Press.

These textbooks and the tasks taken from them were selected randomly.

3.2.2 Group One's Tasks

The ten tasks Group One performed were applied as indicated by the textbooks where they were taken from. The tasks were usually preceded with pre-listening tasks, the greatest part of them consisting of

activities involving vocabulary to prepare learners to listen to the aural text. Others contained pre-listening questions to be discussed orally in order to call learners' attention to the topic and activate their background knowledge through informal conversation. Other tasks contained close questions. e.g. true or false ones, and also demanded the learners to check their guesses by listening to the oral text. Some pre-listening tasks contained pictures used as visual support to attract the learners to the topic and to encourage them to activate relevant schemata related to the material to be listened to.

The while-listening activities involved vocabulary tasks, information checking and note taking about the relevant information of the aural text. Some tasks required learners to organize information in sequence of occurrence or in chronological order, other tasks required learners to confirm information according to the aural text. The activities were varied and some of them were considered difficult to comprehend by the learners.

The post-listening tasks were not part of all the tasks. When included, these tasks required learners to write examples, short stories, prepare a talk or presentation with the information they obtained from the aural text. Others asked learners to work in pairs or groups and discuss the material they had listened to.

3.2.3 Selection of Lectures

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) lectures are authentic lectures organized by John Reith, the founding director general of the British Broadcasting Corporation, according to the official BBC website. The lectures can be listened to via the website using Real Audio (see appendix, CD in Word format). The Reith Lectures were formally opened in 1948 by the BBC to mark the historic contribution made to public service broadcasting by Sir John (later Lord) Reith, the corporation's first director-general. These lectures are a public service offered by the BBC and each year the British Broadcast Corporation invites personalities in various fields to deliver a series of lectures on radio with the objective of discussing issues of contemporary interest.

No special criteria were followed in the selection of the topic of the lectures used in the present study. However, I selected the most recent ones and those, which were easier to be recorded in the university laboratory. The lectures were recorded on tapes. Their length ranges from twenty-five to thirty-five minutes, each lecture, with only one lecturer talking with no interruptions. In the original document, which can be listened to and read on the BBC website, (see appendix, CD), the listeners interact with the lecturer at the end of the speech to make questions and solve their doubts. These parts of the lectures were not recorded since they were not considered relevant for this study.

The ten BBC lectures given by seven lecturer selected for the first part of this study were: a) *Globalization, Tradition, and Family*, by Anthony Giddens, b) *Phantoms in the Brain* and *Synapses and the Self*

by Vilayanur Ramachandran, c) *Biodiversity* by Tom Lovejoy, d) *Health and Population* by Gro Halem Brundtland, e) *Called to Account* by Onora O'Neill, f) *Poverty and Globalization* by Vandara Shiva and g) *Brave Old World* by Tom Kirkwood. The tasks applied to Group Two contained pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities designed for the purposes of the present study. The title of the eleventh lecture listened by both Group One and Group Two, was *Business*, and the lecturer was John Browne.

3.2.4. Corpus Linguistics and WordSmith

The tasks designed to be applied to Group Two were corpus-based ones prepared with the support of the WordSmith software. In order to obtain key words and clusters, a general corpus and a specialized corpus are necessary to identify the frequency and keyness of lexical units. A specialized corpus is made of specific texts from different areas of study.

The use of the electronic concordance WordSmith to extract the lexical unit concerning frequency and key word in context was relevant in this study. The program identifies the academic keywords and clusters in the given texts and they are considered key words if their percentage rate in the specialized corpus is unusually high in comparison with the general corpus. The WordSmith program identifies these key words in order of occurrence, or statistical or alphabetical order by comparing patterns of frequency (Bell 2003, p. 39).

The WordSmith program compares two word lists generated by running a computer program on two ready corpora. One of the corpus, which is bigger, will be the reference or general corpus, and the other is the specialized corpus. In order to collect the lexical units from the comparison of the two corpora, a general corpus named Brown and the specialized sub-corpus named Learned, which was a subdivision of Brown, were used. Then it was possible to obtain the most frequent keywords from the ten lectures to be applied to Group Two.

The software program WordSmith was used in this study as a tool to extract the lexical units concerning frequency and key word. The authentic BBC lectures were stored in the Wordsmith as files. In order to organize the lexical units from the eleven lectures stored, one lecture (one file) was selected separately and the process of extracting the frequency and keyness began. As already mentioned, a reference corpus was used generating a quantitative view of lexical units, called wordlists, accessible in alphabetical order. Then by cross-tabulating the wordlists, keywords were obtained and, to have more a definite group of keywords, the sub-corpus was contrasted to the general corpus. The results were a group of keywords for each lecture and these keywords were used in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) tasks applied to Group Two.

3.2.5. Group Two's Tasks

This Group was trained with ten BBC authentic lectures, as already mentioned. The tasks were elaborated by this researcher according to the WordSmith software. Each lecture was extracted from the official BBC website with no specific priority concerning the subject but concerning the facilities to record them on tapes. The ten lectures given to Group Two plus the one lecture given to both groups were applied in around thirty-minutes, each, and contained pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities.

Pre-listening tasks were always part of the listening activities and were applied to motivate the participants to pay close attention to the lecture. In the pre-listening activities, learners could write their answers or discuss orally the possibilities and arrangements of lexical units and collocations for the required question (see appendix 2).

The while-listening activities were composed by approximately ten to twelve short extracts with three or/and four lines each, exactly as the lectures were presented on the web site in the written version form. Words or groups of words were removed from these extracts to be completed by the participants while listening to the aural texts. Learners were asked to write the answers silently without oral comments. If the learners considered necessary to write extra notes, they were allowed to do that.

To end up the whole task, post-listening activities involved open questions, where learners could express their ideas using the information they retained from the lecture and contributing more information about

the topic. The post-listening activities were very relevant to the learners due to the fact that they were not directly connected to the aural text in terms of answering questions, but were an opportunity for learners to produce their own texts, convey their ideas and use the language they got from the lecture.

3.2.6. Participants' Needs Analysis

In order to obtain general personal information on the participants' needs regarding listening activities, a needs analysis questionnaire was given to the two groups (see appendix 1). The questionnaire contained questions related to the learners' reactions and attitudes concerning listening activities from textbooks and listening to authentic materials.

The questionnaire contained seven opened questions. Question 1 asked learners about how much they had studied English apart from the normal school curriculum. Question 2 asked learners the level they were studying in the English Private School, e.g. basic, intermediate, advanced or as usually happens, learners give the name of the books they study. Question 3 asked learners to say if they liked the listening tasks from the classes they were having in the Private schools they were studying in and to give the reasons.

Concerning question 4, there were seven options to be chosen by the learner about how much they could comprehend the spoken language. The options were: it depends on the subject, the day, the task, the teacher, the noise, the sound system and a final free answer. Question 5

asked learners about how much they could comprehend native speakers. To try to find opportunities to learn English by themselves was the purpose of question 6 and finally question 7 was asked what the learners considered fundamental in order to comprehend spoken discourse in formal and informal ways.

First, I will describe Group One's needs and then Group Two's needs.

3.2.6.1. Group One Needs Analysis

From a total of five participants in Group One, three of them reported they did not like to perform listening tasks, the reasons being the noisy street where the school was located and the quality of the sound system offered by the school. One learner pointed out that the accent was a barrier to listening comprehension. Two other learners reported enjoying the listening activities despite the length of some listening tasks being too long in their opinion.

In the question concerning general listening comprehension, the learners reported considering important to understand the topic of the listening text, and the activity. They also said that the teacher's performance plays an important role during the task; the extra noise and the quality of the electronic equipment were reported as being of great importance for the comprehension of aural texts. Regarding the comprehension of oral native speech, the participants of Group One stated that native speech was different from the conversation examples

they were used to from textbooks. All five students reported that they tried to listen to authentic aural texts by listening to songs, watching movies, and cable television programs. When they were asked what they considered relevant to comprehend longer listening texts in specific areas, like the news on television or lectures, they reported that vocabulary, concentration, intonation, verb tenses, experience, knowledge, attention and dedication were identified as relevant.

3.2.6.2. Group Two Needs Analysis

Participants from Group Two reported that they liked to perform listening tasks from textbooks and that they considered the listening tasks a good procedure to keep in contact with 'real' language. Two students said the listening exercises from textbooks helped them to learn the language and three learners stated that listening is one of the best approaches to learn the English language since it helps in pronunciation and accent recognition and practice. Three students reported that songs aid them to comprehend the accent and the language. Two learners considered important to listen to the news on cable television and the Internet.

In order to understand the spoken language, learners considered relevant the accent, the voice tone, facial expression (in case images were available), vocabulary, and good classes. Students consider it difficult to comprehend spoken texts when they do not know the vocabulary and when the speech rate is too fast. To study aural texts,

students consider important the quality of the sound system, the absence of noise, the teacher's performance and explanations, their motivations and the type of activity.

3.3. Data Collection and Procedures

The data collection was carried out within eleven weekly meetings with each group, in their schools. As already said, Group One performed ten listening tasks taken from General English Textbooks and English for Specific Purposes textbooks in one one-hour class per week. The learners from Group One accomplished the listening tasks following the instructions given in the textbooks. Group Two had one one-hour and a half class per week. It is important to point out that listening to the lecture required from the learners thirty minutes, at least, and after listening to the lecture they were asked to perform the listening tasks which took around one hour, thus the meeting was not a short one and, because of that, the whole meeting demanded learners' concentration to carry out the listening itself and all the tasks. Below, I explain the procedures followed with each group.

3.3.1 Group One Steps

Group One performed ten listening tasks from textbooks, which were already described in subsection 3.1.1. The approach followed by

Group One will be called *Traditional*, given that it is a common practice in Private English Language Schools in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (following Bell, 2003).

Ten listening tasks were presented to learners (see subsection 3.2.4). The procedures followed were:

1. Learners were told they would receive listening tasks from various textbooks in different fields with different approaches, kinds of exercises, accent, and subjects.
2. They were supposed to complete the tasks according to the teachers' instructions, which followed the textbooks instructions.
3. They were also told that the time to accomplish each task was according to the textbook's instructions, which took, in the majority of the meetings, one hour.
4. The instructions were given in English and comments in classes varied from English to Portuguese, according to the learners' motivation to convey their ideas, and also according to the topic of the task.
5. Learners were informed they would listen to the aural text for three times, as suggested by the textbook, and perform the tasks.
6. Tasks were collected and students could make their comments.

These classes lasted almost three months because the participants did not come to class weekly, as planned and I had to postpone some classes in order to have all participants in the classroom. After applying the ten textbook tasks, the study had to be interrupted for a month in order to prepare the eleventh task, the task developed to be applied according to the BBC lecture called *Business*, and which was the main

task from this study because it was the measure of the Groups. The eleventh task contained three steps, pre, while and post-listening tasks and the procedures to apply them were as follows:

1. In the pre listening task, instructions were given to the students concerning the recognition of the lexical units and collocations they were supposed to listen in the lecture and translation if they consider important. They were also asked to try to guess which words from this task could be repeated by the lecturer, in other words, to try to recognize the key words of the speech in advance.
2. In the pre listening task, learners were allowed to take notes and/or make oral comments about the lexical units.
3. They were asked to listen to the thirty-minute lecture.
4. The final activity was a written one. Students were supposed to write a short summary or a long sentence about the topic of the aural text using the learners' own ideas.

3.3.2. Group Two Steps

A similar procedure was adopted with this group. The participants received ten corpus-based tasks distributed in one-hour and a half class once a week, from May to July 2004. The eleventh corpus-based listening task which was the same for both Groups, was given in September due to the time needed to elaborate the questions and students' time availability. From the ten corpus-based tasks, which contained pre-listening activities, while-listening activities and post-

listening activities, one had a different approach, which belongs to the academic listening theory. It is the “lecture note taking” activity, that is, listening to the lectures without answering questions but taking notes from the lecture in a sheet of paper.

The procedures followed with Group Two were as follows:

1. The learners were told they would listen to authentic lectures in a variety of themes, with different approaches, accents and voice tones.
2. The learners were asked to discuss the topic, of the lecture throughout oral and written exercises in the pre-listening task involving vocabulary and collocations.
3. They were asked to listen to the lecture once without pauses.
4. The exercises were given and instructions on how to answer the while-listening task were shown according to the lecture.
5. The last activity required learners to produce short texts with the information they stored from the authentic BBC lectures and their own knowledge.

As already mentioned, the eleventh lecture was the same for groups One and Two. It was the measure used in the present study to verify the effects of the different approaches or learners' performance of academic listening task. The eleventh lecture was applied to the Groups separately, I mean each Group received the material in their schools, and they did not have any contact during this period. The performance of Group One and Two brought to this study some conclusions concerning listening activities approaches.

This chapter presented the method applied to collect data from the two groups of participants. In the next chapter I present the analysis of

the data collected based on the main theories of the field of listening comprehension for academic purposes.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and discusses the results of the present study. First, I present the results of Group One, which was trained with the textbook's listening tasks, and then I present the results of Group Two, which received the intensive BBC (British Broadcast Company) listening lectures. Finally, I discuss the results according to the theories from the area of listening comprehension and the lexical approach in order to answer the research question: "What are the effects of an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) approach on L2 learners' performance of academic listening tasks?"

4.1 Data Collection Review

In order to investigate the effects of an EAP (English for Academic Purposes) approach on L2 learners' performance of academic listening tasks, the ten students who participated in this research were asked to listen to a lecture extracted from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). This lecture, entitled "Business", is a material

broadcasted by the BBC Radio 4 and the BBC World Service, available on the BBC website at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2003>.

The listening activity involving the lecture consists of three main parts: a pre-listening task, a while-listening task, and a post-listening task. As already said, the ten participants were assigned to two groups with five students each, named Group One and Two. *Group One* listened to ten textbooks listening tasks. These tasks were extracted from General English textbooks and ESP textbooks. The learners received ten tasks in ten one-hour classes, once a week from May to July 2004. *Group Two* listened to ten BBC lectures in one-hour and half weekly classes from May to July 2004. After the treatment period, the two groups were asked to perform a final listening task. It is the performance of each group on this task that is the main source of data under analysis in this study.

Below I present and discuss the results of the groups in the pre-listening task, then in the while-listening task, and finally in the post-listening task.

4.2. The pre listening task

The first question in the pre listening activity was an open discussion about six lexical units. The main objective was to verify if students could recognize the given words as key words in the aural text they would listen to in the while-listening task, and to comment on the possibility of recurrence of the lexical units based on the topic of the

aural text. Three of the six lexical units were key word and the other three were not. The learners were also asked to read the lexical units and write their definitions if they consider necessary, or if they have doubts. An oral comment was made in order to warm up. I asked them to think about some possible combination of the lexical units, I mean, any possibility of the words in the list collocating among themselves or with other different word.

The lexical items presented in the pre-listening task were: a) companies, b) business, c) development, d) cities, e) advances and f) transparency. This task contained six lexical units, where three of them were key words extracted from the lecture whereas the other three were not present in the lecture. In the task, the first three key lexical units were ones, while the other three were chosen randomly. The main objective of this task was to make learners recognize key words related to the subject of the lecture.

About fifty per cent of the learners in *Group One* made comments about the lexical units in the pre-listening task. From these, about thirty percent wrote notes, and the other twenty per cent made oral comments and were not interested in taking notes. A hundred percent of the learners in *Group Two* wrote their comments and a great deal of them made oral remarks and observations in English and Portuguese, which was also allowed for both groups.

Learners were then asked to read again the six lexical units, say aloud or read the definitions and comment on the possibility of those lexical units being part of the oral text they would listen to. This activity also asked learners to add to the list new words they thought could be in

the text. Learners in *Group One* promptly said that all the six words would be part of the listening task and none of the learners added a new possible word.

Group Two had a different view of the lexical units. Three of the learners recognized the first three lexical items, *companies, business and development*, as likely of being recurrent in the lecture, while one learner stated that all of the words could be repeated in the lecture. One student did not say or write anything about the lexical items. Like the learners in *Group One*, the learners in *Group Two* did not add any word to the list, although some learners made informal comments orally. The fact that learners did not make predictions about the content of the oral text by adding new words to the list they had may be due to their lack of familiarity with the text and lack of self-confidence, which might contribute to poor comprehension (Nation, 2001, p. 225).

The attempt to make learners aware of the importance of a word or groups of words studied before listening is important because this awareness helps in the comprehension of the text and in the inference of new information through lexical units.

According to Field (2002) the anticipation of vocabulary by the listener is part of the listening process and, in the first ten to fifteen minutes of listening to a long aural text such as the news on television, a lecture or documentary, the motivation gained through lexical items recognition may be a positive aspect to help the listener in the listening comprehension process. Field (2002) points out that the presentations of key words to brainstorm the listening task is relevant, considering that words are part of the process of comprehending the whole texts (p.243).

Anticipating words can help learners to activate their schemata by constructing meanings based on vocabulary brainstorming.

4.3.The while-listening task

This activity involved the listening of the thirty-minute BBC lecture, named 'Business', by the participants in this study. The BBC lecture was played once trying to follow the real-time lecture feature. In this task, the learners were asked to read the extracts of the speech and to fill in gaps with collocations in each of the ten short paragraphs extracted from the lecture. Nation (2002), points out that some theorists argue that listening to an aural text twice (or more) is "unnatural because in real life, one gets only one hearing" (p.243). Thus, listeners in this study were not supposed to listen to this authentic BBC lecture more than once. Although it was decided from the beginning of the present study that the aural text of the while-listening task would not be repeated during the task, I took the methodological decision of repeating parts of the lecture in order to minimize participants' anxiety towards the task and to increase their level of motivation. These repetitions did not follow specific steps, and the attitude was taken in no more than three moments during the task.

The while-listening task asked participants to listen to the lecture and to make an effort to recognize the words, now arranged in groups of words that had been presented in the pre-listening tasks, in order to fill in the blanks and process the meanings.

The task involved a gap-filling kind of written exercise, containing twenty words in pairs as follows and the participants know the answers right after the task, but do not correct them.

1- POWER of COMPANIES

2- COUNTRIES and COMPANIES

3- BUSINESS PROCESS

4- BUSINESS SUCCEED

5- CONNECTED COMPANY

6- DRIVEN ECONOMY

7- GENUINE PROGRESS

8- SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

9- AROUND WORLD

10-FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE

The results of Group One and Two are presented in Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1 in terms of percentage of right answers.

Table 1.1 Participants' performance in the while-listening task

Lexical Units	Group One		Group Two
	Results	Results	Results
1- Power of companies	100 %		100 %
2- Countries and companies	90 %		100 %
3- Business process	0 %		30 %
4- Business succeed	70 %		100 %
5- Connected economy	90 %		100%
6- Driven economy	50 %		60%
7- Genuine progress	70 %		80%
8- Sustainable development	100 %		100%
9- Around world	100 %		100%
10- Fundamental change	100 %		10%

To calculate the percentage of correct answers for each item (1 through 10), for each group, the following general procedure was adopted: each group of two or more words was scored 20%, each content word was scored 10%. Since each group of participants consisted of five learners, when one of the participants recognized one word of a given group of words, he/she scored ten percent for the group. If the participant recognized the two (or more) words he/she scored twenty

percent for his/her group of learners. The total percentage of right answers by the five students produced a final score of a hundred percent for each specific group of words (1 through 10). Thus, for instance, for the first group of words (power of companies) all of the participants in Group One and in Group Two got the two content words correctly.

Table 1.1 shows that Group One scored 100% in 4 out of the 10 groups of words in the while-listening task, item 1 (power of companies), item 8 (sustainable development), item 9 (around world) and item 10 (fundamental change). This group scored 90% in items 2 and 5 (countries and companies and connected economy, respectively), 70% in items 4 (business succeed) and 7 (genuine progress) and 50% in item 6 (driven economy). No learner in this group was able to recognize the words in item 3 (business process).

In contrast, Group Two, whose participants received specific treatment in listening to academic lectures, scored 100% in 6 out of 10 items, namely in items 1,2,4,5,8 and 9 (power of companies, countries and companies, business succeed, connected economy, sustainable development and around the world, respectively), 80% in item 7 (genuine progress), 60% in item 6 (driven economy) and 30% in item 3 (business process). Overall, the results of Group Two in the while-listening task of this study, were higher than the results of Group One, whose participants did not receive specific treatment concerning listening to academic lectures.

A number of factors might have contributed to the overall better performance of the participants of Group Two. First, the learners had already attended to ten thirty-minute lecture listening classes previously,

which brought them enough support to become more accurate in recognizing the lexical units according to each task. Second, all the ten previous lecture listening classes were followed by tasks containing the three main parts, pre, while and post-listening tasks, offering the learner an opportunity to distinguish the purpose of each activity without being introduced to completely new tasks with each listening practice. Third, the participants were involved in similar activities before being exposed to and motivated by the topics of the lectures, which helped them to diminish anxiety and focus on the key words, considering that they were not being evaluated in any moment. Also, task procedures were varied but the essence on key words was maintained, therefore the learners had have opportunity to get used to the purpose of the exercise and the genre of the listening practice: lectures.

Finally, learners became familiar with lecture listening, thus the schemata was activated more frequently, helping them to listen to the thirty-minute lectures and to comprehend them. Furthermore, in some moments, participants manifested opinions against the lecturers point of view, which means they were interacting with the topic, the lecturer and the whole situation.

The recognition of less than 50% percent of the words of the task by Group One shows that these learners, who were not intensively exposed to authentic listening materials tasks involving keywords recognition, were not as prepared to listen to and comprehend long aural texts.

Otherwise, Group Two showed a facility in word recognition because they had already participated in listening classes containing

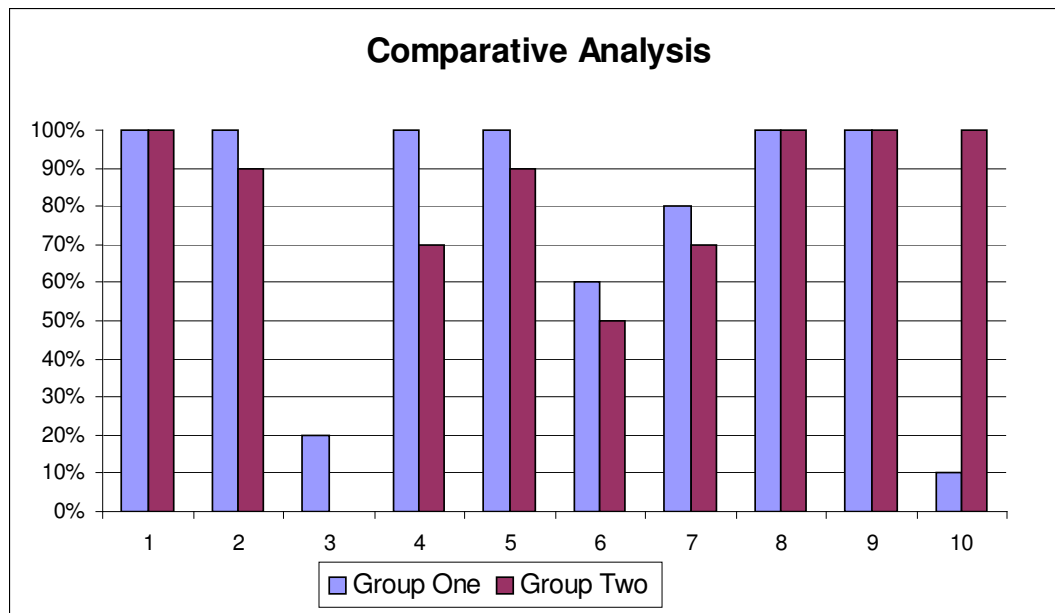
similar tasks with key words, listening to long lectures in academic language. These learners were more prepared to attend lectures and comprehend the features presented by them, such as hesitations, false starts, varied accent from the lecturers, structured sentences (Field 2002, p. 244; Dudley-Evans, St. Johns 1998, pp.102, 103).

In being exposed to authentic BBC lectures with a certain degree of frequency, participants of Group Two developed specific strategies to cope with the task of listening to long texts. These strategies included maintaining concentration over a long period listening to the lecturer, recognizing the purpose of the activity being developed, focusing on the repetition of words by the lecturer, observing the stress of sentences, without paying attention to sounds coming from the outside (Buck, 2001).

The results from Table 1.1 show these learners might not have accommodated the third group of words in their short-term memory, considering the percentage of recognition of this group of words was zero. In other words, learners did not identify the group of words: *business process*. One of the reasons for this might have been the phonological aspect, considering that the British accent is not common in the schools of the southwest of Paraná. The bottom-up cognitive processes described by Brown (1994), Rost (2000) and Hansen and Jensen (1994), involve decoding parts of linguistics items, such as words. Thus, the learners in this study might not have used this practice to recognize the items from the specific paragraph of the listening task, leading to a zero percent result.

Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983), cited in Hansen and Jensen (1994), posit that “a stream of sound is held very shortly in the short-term memory where phoneme recognition and morpheme chunking begun”(p.243). Thus, it could be that learners might not have been able to store information and recall the words in the proper time, considering that listening to a lecture is generally a *nonparticipatory* listening activity, a term coined by Dunkel (1991, p. 434) to define a non interactive process where the learners listen and comprehend by activation of their own knowledge and experience to monitor their answers and hypothesis (Rost, 2000, p.11). The quantity of phonological, grammatical and lexical information inside a thirty-minute lecture may overload the learners reception, therefore the recall for words might be weaker than expected in this type of task, especially since learners listened to the lecture only once in the majority of the listening tasks, as it would happen in a real-life situation.

Figure 1.1 Comparative Analysis on the while-listening task by Group One and Group Two



The overall results of the while-listening task show that Group Two performed better than Group One in almost all questions of the listening task. The lexical items were recognized by Group Two in a hundred percent in six, of the ten questions while Group One recognized a hundred percent in four questions. Group Two results show they had more control over the cognitive listening features corresponding to the task, confirming that extensive exposure to real-life lectures is effective for learners who are studying General English and may be future EAP learners, considering the academic educational system as one of the main objectives in their lives.

ESP listening skills might be acquired through the use of general textbooks. However, the results of the present study show that Group

Two had an advantage over Group One and this may be due to the kind of material used to practice listening skill. The great difference between the two groups is that the lectures were authentic. To explain the failure by Group Two in the recognition of the group of words *fundamental change*, which was the last question from the while-listening task, and the successful recognition of the same group of words by Group One, it could be argued, as pointed out by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) that the participants from Group One were more attentive to the end of the lecture. At the end, the voice of the lecturer was clear, the intonation and the structure of the lecture were already integrated as a consequence of a long speech (pp.112-113). As Group One did not receive extensive listening practice, the result may be due to their effort to concentrate in order to comprehend the lecture and recall the word units.

4.4. The post listening task

The purpose of the post-listening task was to verify the amount of lexical units that listeners could use to write a short paragraph about the topic of the lecture. This part of the test was applied right after the while-listening tasks. It was required from the participants of both groups to write about the topic of the lecture they had listened to using their background knowledge and the information from the lecture. It was given them six titles to follow or not to develop the paragraph and they were free to use them as guides or choose their own.

According to Hansen and Jensen (1994) “lectures are extended pieces of discourse that are delivered by one person to a group of people”(p.245). Because academic lectures are generally longer texts, hard to memorize and also contain special features such as pauses, stress, and intonation, it is not an easy assignment for listeners to retain all the information the lecture contains and write about it, without missing relevant information.

Group One wrote long sentences instead of short paragraphs in the post-listening tasks referring to the production of sentences as it was designed by the task. The task was accomplished, although the participants did not make use of the key words (companies, business and development) presented in the pre-listening task in their sentences while Group Two did. The participants did not give their opinion about business, the topic of the lecture, and did not use the rich information the lecture brought. The recall of words through the task was done isolated, and consequently without appropriate meaning, but forms. The deficiency of the participants’ feedback through the post-listening task might have been caused by the lack of contextual arrangement of words, which means that, listeners may have taken the words from the while-listening task and did not know how to use them to construct meaning in context. The content produced by the participants through their sentences was not convincing, and the key words used by them did not make meaning in their texts. This result may cause a gap in their learning process concerning academic listening.

Learners from Group Two did not have many extra notes about the lecture, although they were aware of the fact that they would have to

complete a post-listening task. The short paragraphs they wrote were related to the topic of the lecture, learners gave feedback through sentences related to the new information received from the lecture, the key words and the use of their schemata to produce new information. These learners produced their own texts using the varied information they received from the lecture and their own knowledge. Even though Group Two wrote did not write paragraphs, they show through their sentences, the importance of the key words by using them to talk about the topic of the lecture.

To sum up, Group One did not make subsequent use of the information in the lecture. A possible reason for this may be the participants' poor comprehension of the lecture. On the other hand, Group Two made subsequent use of the information in the lecture by writing paragraphs with the words from the lecture. This may be due to the fact that participants of Group Two were better able to comprehend the lecture and its main contents.

In the next chapter I present the final remarks of my study. First, the final considerations, then the limitations of the study and suggestions for the future research, after that, the pedagogical implications, and finally the conclusion drawn from this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINAL REMARKS

This chapter is divided into four main parts: final considerations, the limitations of the study, suggestions for further research, and pedagogical implications.

5.1 Final Considerations

The present study had one main objective: to verify the effects of an ESP approach on L2 learners' performance of academic listening tasks. The study was developed with two groups of five participants each. They were attending classes in two Private English Language Schools in Pato Branco – PR, and were enrolled in the last level of the course offered by these language schools, considered the advanced General English levels.

The groups were named Group One and Two. During the development of this study, both groups attended ten different classes in two approaches.

Group One was trained with ten listening classes whose texts were extracted from General and ESP textbooks already mentioned in chapter

four. Group Two was trained with ten listening classes whose texts were taken from BBC lectures. The eleventh class, which was a BBC listening class, containing specific vocabulary tasks, was given to both groups as a final task to verify the effects of an EAP approach on L2 learners' performance of academic listening tasks.

For the data collection, the students completed a task containing three basic features: a pre, a while and a post-listening activity about a lecture entitled Business. The results showed that Group One did not comprehend the key words as much as Group Two did. It could be observed that the learners from Group One were not as prepared as learners from Group Two to listen to a thirty-minute BBC lecture and recognize the key words from the lecture in order to have, at least, a general idea of the topic of the lecture. This result may be due to the lack of listening to authentic academic lectures in general English classes.

Group Two recognized a greater number of groups of words in the same listening task. What is relevant to point out here is that Group Two was exposed to authentic listening, whereas Group One was not, and this might have contributed to overall result concerning the eleventh task. It is possible, thus, to assume that Group Two was more prepared to listen to authentic lectures.

5.2 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

The first limitation of the present study concerns the number of participants. Only ten learners were selected because it was not easy to convince learners to attend extra classes during the treatment period. Further research should be carried out with a more representative sample of learners.

Another limitation of the present study concerns the needs analysis questionnaire applied to participants, which should contain more appropriate questions designed to unfold learners' attitude concerning, among other things, vocabulary and collocations given to participants. A third limitation concerns the listening tasks I would recommend preparing more specific questions regarding lexical units and listening comprehension, following Nation's (2001) and Buck's (2001) and Flowerdew's (1994) ideas, such as allowing learners to answer the vocabulary questions in their first language and to make comparisons from the listened vocabulary to the already known vocabulary in their first language. Another idea concerning these tasks could be the note-taking method, which requires the participants to give feedback about the listening according to their capacity in retaining information from the aural text. There is also Buck's idea on the assessment of lecture comprehension followed by a short summary of it in which some words or phrases may be deleted and replaced with blanks. Participants fill in the blanks with content appropriate to the talk. This complementary information might help the researcher to interpret the final results.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

The present study shows that although textbooks are excellent tools to aid the process of language learning, non-pedagogical materials such as the lectures used here may implement the classes and bring 'real-life' to the learners. Thus, teachers interested in developing learner's academic skills should try to include these types of material in their classes. This study shows that ESP/EAP listening classes are essential to advanced learners, since they may be exposed to academic vocabulary through lecture listening in their levels at college. For that reason, ESP/EAP instruction should be given more attention in General English classes, thus giving learners an opportunity to be exposed to this type of language.

Appendix 1: Needs-analysis questionnaire

Este questionário faz parte de um projeto de pesquisa do curso de Mestrado da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina - UFSC e Universidade Estadual do Centro-Oeste - UNICENTRO. Este projeto busca investigar quais são os efeitos de uma abordagem de ensino de inglês com objetivos específicos na performance de estudantes estrangeiros nas atividades de audições acadêmicas. Agradeço a participação de todos. As informações aqui contidas bem como os nomes das instituições de ensino permanecerão em sigilo e não serão revelados na apresentação dos resultados do projeto.

ALUNO _____(identificar-se por letra designada antecipadamente)

Nome: _____

Idade: _____

Data: _____

Escola regular: _____

Série: _____

Há quanto tempo você estuda inglês no ensino extracurricular? _____

Nível do ensino inglês que está cursando nesta escola: _____

Gosta de fazer atividades de 'listening' nas aulas de inglês aqui?

Explique a(s) sua (s) razão(ões)?

Como você entende a linguagem falada formal ou informal:

Depende do assunto? ()

Depende do dia? ()

Depende da atividade? ()

Depende do professor? ()

Depende do barulho? ()

Depende do aparelho de som? ()

Depende

Você entende os falantes nativos ou falantes fluentes?

Você aprende com uma palestra em inglês? E o vocabulário, considera difícil?

Você busca oportunidades para tentar entender os falantes nativos fora da sala de aula, com materiais que não sejam os livros didáticos?

O que você considera importante para entender a linguagem falada, não apenas em conversas informais, mas palestras, conferências, telejornais, documentários de TV, etc?

Appendix 2: Listening Test

Student n°: _____ Date: _____ -

BUSINESS

Pre Listening Task

1-What are the possible words, which may be recurrent in the lecture?
Give definitions and some possible combinations for these words. Add more words or expressions you could listen in the lecture.

a-companies _____

b- business _____

c-development _____

d- cities _____

e-advances _____

f- transparency _____

While Listening Task

2- Listen to the lecture and recognize the combination of words, which fit in these extracts.

a-It is said, and I think has even been said in this series of lectures, that the _____ of _____ has increased while the power of governments has declined. I don't think it is quite so simple.

b- They would argue that competitive and commercial pressures militate against such measures. And they would say this is why some _____ and _____ are unwilling to move in this direction.

c- We'll be selling cleaner fuels in over 40 big cities around the world by the end of this year. Technology is delivering. That in itself is part of the _____ to start from what you know, to deliver that, to spread best practice using all technology available, and simultaneously to learn from experience ...and to look for the next step.

d- People want to work for something they believe in...and to make a contribution to the progress of the world in which they live. And if _____ is to _____ it has to offer them the opportunity to do just that. That's why our very commercial targets now themselves embrace environment.

e- ...but connected as the brain is connected – as a network of multiple and simultaneous linkages. The _____ is beginning to give us the ability to create new marketplaces and to integrate and manage complex systems at a distance and with great precision and speed.

f- But if you look objectively at both the technical progress which is being made, and at the impact on business behavior of the connected, knowledge _____ the judgment must come down in favor of optimism.

g- It is that sort of transparency which I think will in the end overcome the skepticism and doubts which exist about science and about the linkage between technical advance and _____. Transparency is not just about publishing numbers; It is also about establishing clarity as to where responsibility lies.

h- Business is not in opposition to, but has a fundamental role in delivering _____ to meet the needs of today's world without depriving future generations of their means to do so.

i- We've eliminated lead, and lowered sulphur and benzene levels in our diesel and gasoline throughout the United Kingdom. We'll be selling cleaner fuel in over 40 big cities _____ the _____ by the end of this year.

j- The pressures of population growth. The pressures of urbanism. Water shortages. Environmental challenges. The quality of the air we breathe. The pollution of oceans. The loss of species as habitats are transformed. The gathering evidence of a _____ to the climate caused by human activity.

Post Listening Task

3- According to the lecture and to your own ideas about the topic BUSINESS, write a short paragraph about it. You may develop one of these topics or choose yours.

- a- The lecture's pros and cons of business
- b- Business and globalisation
- c- Family business: good or bad idea?
- d- Characteristics of big/small business companies
- e- Innovation and opportunities in business
- f- Business in poor/rich countries/states/cities

Appendix 3: BBC lectures in word format

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