

The role of accents in College EFL classes in Mexico

El rol de los acentos en clases universitarias de ILE en México

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This article investigates the role of accents in an English as a Foreign Language classroom with college students in Mexico. The paper starts by defining key concepts necessary to understand the topic, such as accent and different types of accents. Then, a description of the setting and participants is presented, followed by a detailed explanation of how the study was carried out and a discussion of the results. This study demonstrated that there is no need to use just one type of accent in the EFL classes but rather a variety of accents regardless of the student's proficiency level. What is needed, however, is to design warm-up activities to prepare students for listening to audio recordings to succeed with the tasks.

Keywords:

accent, audio recordings, college students, native accent, non-native accent

Resumen:

En este artículo se presentan los resultados de investigación sobre el rol de los acentos en las clases de inglés, como Lengua Extranjera con estudiantes de universidad en México. El artículo comienza definiendo conceptos base necesarios para comprender el tema el acento o los diversos tipos de acentos que existen-. Posteriormente, se describe el entorno, las características de los participantes en el estudio y la manera como este se llevó a cabo, para terminar con la presentación de los resultados. Este estudio demuestra que se puede usar una variedad de acentos en las clases de inglés como Lengua Extranjera, en vez de limitarse a usar un solo tipo de acento, sin que el nivel de inglés de los alumnos sea un problema. Sin embargo, lo que sí se necesita es tener actividades previas al uso de los audios, para con ello preparar a los alumnos a escuchar los audios para tener resultados positivos en las actividades a realizar.

Palabras Clave:

acento, audios, alumnos de universidad, acento nativo, acento no nativo

Introduction

In an English as a Foreign Language class, audio materials are commonly used to train students' ability to understand spoken English. These recordings are commonly spoken by American or British people. Thus, these are the two most recurrent accents students hear and practice inside the classroom. Regarding the students' perceptions of using diverse accents inside the classroom, Candan and Inal (2020) argue that "participants strongly agree that it is acceptable to see English uses different

accents around the world" (p. 126). However, students might have preferences regarding accents, as Van Gelder (2019) found out after carrying out his investigation in which he mentions that "more students have a better attitude towards the standard American English accent [...] than towards standard British English accent" (p. 50).

A similar situation is found in Mexico. Nevertheless, few studies in the country or in Latin America have explored this topic. For this reason, the purpose of this study is to identify whether accents have an impact on students'

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listening comprehension in College EFL classes in Mexico. Should this aspect be identified, there could be some changes or adjustments in the EFL classes in the country regarding the use of certain listening materials.

For this investigation, the following research question was set:

To what extent do American and British accents shape College students' listening comprehension?

The following paper is divided into five sections. The first one introduces the topic while the literature review is discussed in section two. Section three provides an explanation of the methodology used for this study. Section four reports the results obtained from this investigation and, finally, in section five the conclusions of the research can be found.

Literature review

This section provides a detailed review of the theoretical background of this study. As stated in the previous section, this project aims to know whether accents have an impact on students' listening comprehension in College EFL classes in Mexico; for that reason, some definitions related to accents are discussed. Additionally, four studies related to listening comprehension with a variety of accents are discussed.

Accent

In the field, there are several definitions for accent. Birner, (1998) defines this term simply as "the way you sound when you speak" (p. 3). However, Moyer (2013, as cited in Ambele & Boonsuk, 2021) affirms that "accent not only [refers] to the articulation of individual sounds, or parts but also to suprasegmental characteristics" (p. 91); in other words, accents carry cultural elements with them that characterize a specific country, region, or community. To support this idea, Jenkins (2007, as cited in Ambele & Boonsuk, 2021) states that the accent "exerts the greatest influence on (culture-based) attitudes" (p. 91). As it can be inferred, accent –besides being an individual trait– can also include specific characteristics in a community. As Birner (1998) explains, "people who live in close contact grow to share a way of speaking, or accent, which will differ from the way other groups in other places speak" (p. 3).

There is a variety of English accents all across the globe: from the native ones –British, American, Australian, or Irish, to mention a few examples– to non-native accents. This is due to the fact that "as English has become a global language, the use of English appears to have more individual differences" (Zhuying, 2015, p. 48). The different accents that exist in the world could also be found in English as Foreign Language classes and this substantial variety may have a positive or negative impact on students' listening comprehension.

Listening comprehension and accents

Different accents can have either positive or negative repercussions on students' listening comprehension. "Listening comprehension is a complex psychological process of listeners' understanding of language by a sense of hearing. It is an interactive process of language knowledge and psychological activities" (Guo, 2005, as cited in Jidong *et al.*, 2021: 81); comprehending a listening activity is not only about the skill a student has, but an internal process that is sought to be achieved with success. Jidong *et al.* also mention that "listening comprehension is one of the most important skills in both second and foreign language" (p. 81), so special attention needs to be paid to this aspect.

Additionally, Zhuying (2015) argues that an "unfamiliar accent is an important variable that could hinder the comprehension process of test-takers" (p. 48). This is because students are not familiarized with the accent – native or non-native–, and they might not understand the audio or video presented in an activity even though they have the ability to do so. To support this idea, Jidong *et al.* (2021) state that "research studies [...] have provided evidence that 'accent' can affect listening comprehension" (p. 81), proving that accents really have an impact on students' listening comprehension. Furthermore, Büyükahiska and Uyar (2019) support the statement regarding the complexity of understanding non-native accents by claiming that "it is evidently clear that people from different nationalities may tend to pronounce some words differently. The listeners actually knew the word but they could not recognize it when they were being tested" (p. 1389) in their study. Another aspect that could influence learners to understand the variety of accents that exist is the attitudes they have toward them.

Attitudes toward accents

Attitudes might shape the outcome of an activity that, in this case, is focused on measuring students' listening comprehension. For example, Jidong *et al.* (2021) assure that "different accents attract different reactions from different listeners, and these reactions one way or the other may, in turn, influence the listener's comprehensibility" (p. 81).

Another illustration of the influence attitudes have on listening comprehension can be found in Zhuying's study (2015, p. 66) in which the subjects needed to select their preferred accent along with a varied sample; in the results, the author indicates that "all test takers show a strong preference for British accent" instead of Indian or Australian, even though the three of them are native accents. A tendency of being biased by the British accent can also be found in Büyükahiska and Uyar's (2019) study. They found out that "British accent appears to be the most understandable one for the participants. They performed

the best level of listening comprehension at the rate of 80%" (p. 1387). These attitudes apparently change not only according to the individuals but also to the world's region. Zhuying argues this aspect in their paper, affirming that "test-takers living in Australia have a better attitude towards Australian accents and British accents compared with test-takers living in China" (p. 67).

As it could be noticed, understanding to an accent is not only a matter of proficiency in the language, but it also involves other aspects such as cognitive processes, students' attitudes, and even the region in which the students were born.

Previous studies

Several studies have been conducted to analyze students' perceptions and understanding of different English accents. Charpentier-Jiménez (2019) conducted a quantitative study on two groups—in total, 97 students-- at the University of Costa Rica to understand college students' perceptions about the exposure to several English accents in their BA in English and English Teaching. After administering a 16-question survey to the learners, the results showed that "46 students (59.7%) asserted having been formally or informally exposed to other types of English accents" (p. 11); while the rest of the subjects were not exposed to any other accents. Regarding difficulty in understanding different accents besides the American, "more than a quarter of the population labels understanding accents as difficult or very difficult [and] an important group (39%) considered understanding accents moderately difficult" (p. 13). Additionally, when the participants were asked to mention how important they think exposure to various accents is, almost 80% assured that it is very relevant (p. 14).

Similar but slightly different to Charpentier-Jiménez (2019), Van Gelder (2019) conducted a mixed-method study to investigate "the effect of attitudes towards native English accents" (p. 21) at the vocational college Deltion College in Zwolle, the Netherlands. The participants were 43 college students from 16 to 25 years old. The study was conducted in two parts: in part 1, questionnaires were administered to know the background of the participants. In part 2, the subjects were exposed to several audios in which different English accents were played to check the participants' attitudes after hearing the different accents. The results showed that the participants had a general positive perception of different English accents, categorizing them as worthy of respect, polite, and intelligent. In contrast, less than half of the population classified accents as funny. But after some analysis, Van Gelder concluded that "General American [was] the overall preferred accent of the Dutch EFL learners" (p. 45).

Additionally, Canan and Inal (2020) carried out a mixed-method study at a preparatory school of a foundation

university in Istanbul, Turkey. Since it was a mixed-method study, questionnaires were online administered to 169 participants and 10 of them were interviewed later. The authors wanted to know the students' perceptions of native and non-native pronunciation and accents while learning English. The study showed that the participants could not express their opinions about "understanding different accents of English and feeling uncomfortable about them" (p. 126). This means that they did not have a positive or negative perception of various English accents.

In general, even though these four studies had a similar focus—attitudes towards different English accents—the results varied considerably. While in Van Gelder's (2019) investigation the participants had positive opinions about the diversity of English accents, in Canan and Inal's (2020) study, the subjects did not have a specific opinion about them. Moreover, in Charpentier-Jiménez's (2019) investigation some of the participants stated that understanding different accents was a difficult task. With these four studies, it can be shown how the perception of native and non-native accents does not have a solid unique response: it varies according to the subjects.

On the other hand, the four studies reviewed revealed that students have a clear vision of English accents and already know that there is a wide variety of them around the world. I draw on Charpentier-Jiménez because his investigation aligns with the main objective of this study is to identify whether accents have an impact on students' listening comprehension in College EFL classes in Mexico. To reach this aim, the next research question is set:

To what extent does listening to American and British accents shape College students' listening comprehension?

Methodology

As stated before, this study aims to identify whether accents have an impact on students' listening comprehension in College EFL classes in Mexico. This section is focused on the methodology undertaken to carry out the present research that is related to the use of different accents in English classes.

Some aspects such as the worldview, the approach, and the design are explained. Additionally, a description of how the investigation was carried out is provided regarding the setting, the instrument implemented, and the data analysis.

Worldview, approach, and design

In this investigation, a constructivist worldview was adopted. According to Mogashoa (2014), constructivism refers to a theory "that argues that humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas" (p. 52). The reason I adopted

this worldview is that, since this is an action research investigation, I am in constant contact with my students, wanting to know their perceptions of a specific topic –in this case, accents. For that reason, I consider constructivism the most suitable worldview for this paper. It is pertinent to mention that there are two authorities involved in this study: me myself carrying out the action research and the coordinators of my bachelor's degree, which were continuously checking the progress of my study and guiding me thorough the entire study.

This research was conducted with a qualitative approach, which, according to Creswell (2004), the researcher tries “to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants” (p. 33). Additionally, this approach is highly involved in the cultural aspects of the participants. I consider a qualitative approach suits the main objective of this study which is to know whether different types of accents shapes students' listening comprehension –in which, as expected, culture plays a very important role just as Zhuying's study (2015) explained in the previous section.

As briefly mentioned at the beginning of this section, this study adopts an action research design. Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) identify action research as a series of cycling processes in which observation and reflection are characteristics that cannot be omitted (p. 22). The previously mentioned authors stress that both observations and reflections are needed in this context in order to reach results and have a better understanding of the impact of different accents on students. Without the two aspects mentioned, this investigation couldn't be accomplished with success.

Setting

This investigation was carried out at “Centro de Internamiento para Adolescentes” in Hidalgo. We had the opportunity to teach students in the mentioned facility because the project was part of our Research Seminar class. The coordinators of this program mentioned that participation in this project was not mandatory, but I wanted to be part of it to put into real practice with action research and know what results I could get at the end of the fifteen-week period.

I had two male students. There were some kiosk-like structures that consisted of a table and banks in which my classmates and I taught classes every week. The materials I mostly used for each class were prints, videos, audio recordings, pictures, and notes since there was no possibility of the use of a whiteboard.

Instruments

The main instrument for this research was weekly reflections. Although the reflections were written according to each teacher's teaching experience, the coordinators of

the “Centro de Internamiento para Adolescentes” program proposed two questions to guide our reflections. These questions needed to be answered on the same day the class was given and submitted up to a day later. This was established with the intention that every possible detail might not be forgotten by all the participants of this project. Reflections are the description and analysis of a specific situation in which the experience of the person who is doing the reflections is needed as well as the understanding of the information (Ussher, 2020: 27).

As previously stated, two questions were part of the weekly reflections. The first question was focused on the teaching methodology applied in each class. We, as the teachers of this project, were asked to evaluate our own instruction in order to recognize the positive aspects but also the opportunity areas. Since there is no such thing as a perfect class, each week answering the same question leads us to plan our classes better in order to have the best results possible not only for this investigation but also for our teaching practice so that the students could learn as much as possible.

The second question was focused on the research itself. Once we taught our class and noticed –after reading the entries of the diary in which we recorded the data and wrote the highlights of the classes we taught– the students' behaviors, beliefs, improvements, and thoughts, the coordinators of this program required us to explain and support the activities we did in the class so they could be well informed about the strategies we were applying in our classes and they could guide us better according to the main objective of our research. It was requested to link in a certain way the teaching practice with our investigation –since that was the main purpose of teaching at the “Centro de Internamiento para Adolescentes”. Every week, an explanation of certain tasks that were focused to contribute to this research was given as well as the mention of which author –that was previously read and analyzed in the literature review chapter– we drew on according to the results we get that week.

Data analysis

As stated above, this action research study used reflections to gather the information needed to answer the research question that was established from the beginning. After teaching the “Centro de Internamiento” students with a particular methodology –in the case of this study based on warm-up listening activities–, weekly reflections were written in order to collect the data. In these reflections, I reported the students' general performance in the class, of course, centering on the way they reacted to the different accents from the various videos I played in the classes.

There was a total of twelve written reflections. As Seers (2011) suggests, the “first step is to sort and organise the

data, by coding it in some way" (p.2). For this process, I gathered the reflections in a chart, in which I could read them and then highlight with different colors the important aspects I considered vital for this investigation. After identifying the most important topics separated from the information that was not needed for the research, I grouped them once again to have two main categories: the students' comprehension of different accents –Mexican, American, and British– and their perceptions of these three accents, which resulted in two major categories: positive and negative emotions.

For the first category, students' comprehension of different accents, the aspects that were taken into consideration were their level of English proficiency and the contrast between the students' understanding of a Mexican accent and an international one –in this case, and as mentioned before, American and British. These two subcategories were combined because one is related to the other: according to their individual level of English, the students understood better or struggled more to know the meaning of the message of either of the three accents. For the second category in the coding process, I took into consideration the content of the audios played in each class together with the students' reactions to those mentioned audios and the accents the speakers had. In the next section, the results of this investigation will be discussed.

Results

Students' comprehension of different accents

In this action research, I was able to notice that students' level of proficiency plays an important role in the comprehension of audio recordings. In contrast, the audio itself was not very decisive in establishing whether they understood or not what the native speaker was saying as I anticipated. I had two students with different English proficiency levels: one had a basic level while the other I could categorize at an intermediate level. It seems obvious that the student with a lower English level was struggling the most with understanding me and the videos I played in class, no matter how many times I played the audio recordings –three to five times on average. Nevertheless, throughout the classes I was aware that if I made use of different resources, this student was able to know what I was saying, as I wrote in reflection number 5:

Of course, it [trying not to speak in Spanish] was harder because one of my students –who struggles more than the other– looked really confused. I used all the resources I had –such as mimicking, drawing, writing, and talking slowly, among others– for him to understand me and apparently, he did. (Reflection 5)

Here, it can be read the way in which I was able to help my student understand me because I used different strategies

and techniques to facilitate their listening comprehension. The lower level of English proficiency student was very quiet, so I could not rely on him actually saying he understood me. I can argue that he understood me because I noticed his body language: nodding, smiling, copying my mimicry, among other brief physical responses. Therefore, they understood better the different audio recordings that I brought to class every week because I was doing some extra teaching rather than just starting to talk or play the video without any previous preparation. Taking into account that "pre-listening activities aim to deal with all of these issues: to generate interest, build confidence and to facilitate comprehension" (Rajaei, 2015: 35), I planned simple yet functional warm-up activities. They were not always the same; they changed according to the topic of the lesson, but showing and pointing at images was one resource I commonly used. Showing pictures of the vocabulary, drawing certain verbs they did not know, or even pointing at a word helped the students to better understand the vocabulary that latter on was heard in the audio recordings. All the audio recordings I played were authentic materials and not pedagogical ones. I found the use of these type of materials were positive to engage students into real-life situations. I support this statement with Tous and Haghghi's (2013) finding, which mentions that "additional materials can be supportive. [The use of] authentic sources from the native speech community helps to engage students" (p. 71).

Because I was aware of the effect that previous activities had on this student in particular, I planned classes in which these warm-up activities were included, so the results of this investigation would not be diametrically affected by the different levels the students have as it was seen in reflection number two:

The same applies to the video they saw in the previous class: one of them understood almost everything at the first hearing while the other needed more support. (Reflection 2)

However, I found a certain way to do the activities and have a certain equilibrium with my findings. It is true that depending on the English proficiency level is how well the students are going to understand certain audio which I consider as the key factor of the understanding of different English accents and not the accent *per se*.

To support my last statement, I explain what happened in week eight. That week I only had a class with the student whose level of English is higher. Taking the opportunity of this, I played an audio a little more difficult to see how much he was able to understand: the speaker was a person whose British accent was quite strong and the speed of his speech was not slow but rather quick. The activity consisted of doing a handout in which several

comprehension questions were shown. I only gave the student some seconds to read the questions before playing the video, and he did not do any previous activity to familiarize himself with the topic. Surprisingly, he was able to answer the handout quite easily, as I wrote in my seventh reflection:

To be honest, I thought he would not be able to understand most of the video even though he has a higher level of English because the accent, in a previous class, was a little difficult to understand for them. But, to my surprise, he did not need to read the closed captions, as usual, to understand the audio and complete the activity. In fact, he did it almost at the first attempt and only asked me to repeat the video to confirm his answers. (Reflection 7)

Undoubtedly, his performance changed the way I thought accents affected the students' listening comprehension. It was because of his level of English that he was able to know what the speaker was saying. His attitude towards the language might have had somethings to do with his ease to answer the handout: from the beginning, this student was open and willing to learn the language, so a psychological barrier against the language never existed as contrary to my other student, who was not very interested in learning English. Later in that session, I asked him—the lower level of English student—if he was familiar with British speakers, to which he answered that he did not listen to them frequently; his later statement and performance that day were the opposite of what Charpentier-Jiménez (2019) mentions in his paper: "Evidence suggests that, when the students have had contact with different types of accents, they have considered the experience somewhat difficult" (p. 15), the student who I worked with did not consider the activity as complicated. So, as this example illustrates, it can be said that even though a person is not used to listening to a particular accent; if their level of English is good enough, then it is likely that they understand most—if not all—of what the native speaker is saying.

However, the previous finding cannot be generalized. It is true that the student with the higher level of English understood more and easily what the speakers of the audios were saying, but there is another factor that helped the other student to understand certain information that was said in the videos: the previous activities. In the beginning, I did not consider the warm-up activities as important for this research since I was not focusing on them. Nevertheless, after writing the reflections for each class week by week, I noticed that they had a positive impact on the students' listening comprehension.

When the warm-up activities—mostly vocabulary centered—were carried out, the students were able to better understand the audios and to successfully do the tasks related to the video they previously saw. For

example, in reflection eight, the following results were found:

We reviewed the parts of the body because the video that I had prepared for that day mentioned them in most parts of it. [...] The speaker, a woman with a neutral American accent, indicated what to do—for example: put your legs in front of you, straighten your spine, close your eyes, and so on. Because of that, it was important that the student was familiarized with the body parts so that when he heard the audio, he could recognize what to do with his body. He did not struggle a lot taking into consideration that the speaker of the audio was speaking softly and low. (Reflection 8)

It was because of the previous activity done—in this case, the recognition of parts of the body in an image—that the students were able to understand the video with not as many problems as could have been expected just as Büyükahiska and Uyar (2019) proposed in the conclusion of their study, arguing that "the students should be encouraged and provided with the skills to employ necessary strategies to cope with the comprehension problems which they experienced in English listening courses" (p. 1390). In the case of this, the strategies the authors mentioned were the warm-up activities. This tendency did not only occur one time but several more; another example can be found in reflection number ten:

First, they chose seven papers in which the characteristics of aerobic and anaerobic exercise were stated. I gave them some time to read them and then to ask questions about the words they did not know. [...] After that, I played the audio in which those phrases were mentioned and they did a very good job classifying the papers—they only had two errors out of a total of twenty-two items. (Reflection 10)

As stated before, the previous activities that were done in class helped these students to perform correctly what they were asked to do as Tous and Haghghi (2013) concluded on their study: "Activating prior knowledge relevant to listening materials increased listening comprehension" (p. 70). In contrast, the accent did not impact a significant matter. In fact, they did not notice immediately that the audio had different accents, proving that the accent was not an important factor that affected or helped them to comprehend better what was being said in the videos. A similar situation was reported in Kelch and Santana-Williamson's (2002) study. After carrying out their research, they found out that "ESL students were not, in fact, able to distinguish NS [native speaker] accents from NSS [nonnative speakers] accents with a high degree of accuracy" (p. 62); meaning that the participants did not care about accents as much as they thought.

Student's reaction to accents

The students' perceptions of the audios were the ones I expected: when the audio was fast, they struggled to hear what was said and, of course, when the video was clear

and slow, they had more opportunity to correctly answer the questions requested at that moment. There is also information about the accent of the audios' speakers which, different from the results previously mentioned, was unexpected for me. The previous two implications can be noticed in reflection three:

I asked the students how they felt after doing the activity related to the video, and they mentioned that the speed was faster than they expected –which, in reality, was a normal conversation between two people. They, however, did not mention anything about not understanding the speaker's accent or way of talking. (Reflection 3)

As it was written in the previous reflection, the students were very focused on the speed of the audio and not really on the accent of the speaker. Throughout my teaching, I noticed that this was a particular issue that they paid attention to rather than the speaker talking in a certain accent, coinciding with what Canan and Inal (2020) found in their research regarding this topic, in which results showed that “learners do not believe that they can differentiate different accents and pronunciations easily” (p. 129). For them, it was more difficult when someone spoke quickly than when that same person pronounced the words in a different way as they may have listened to them in previous experiences.

Another example of the little difference that American and British accents had in the students' comprehension was seen in reflection eleven. In this case, the videos contained both American and British speakers speaking to each other in a conversation –this is important to highlight because, as can be expected, the environmental elements, the volume, intonation, and other characteristics that could affect the listening comprehension, were the same. I wrote the following:

The four extracts I played had people whose accent was different: American and British. This, as I stipulated previously, did not have any influence on their understanding. (Reflection 11)

With this extract, I can affirm that the students did not pay attention to the accent of the audio, nor it affected negatively their perception as Charpentier-Jiménez (2019) found in his study, where he argues that “more than a quarter of the population labels understanding accents as difficult or very difficult” (p. 13). Yet, accent plays an important role when it comes to understanding a word that was not clear in the audio, as it happened several times during this teaching process as shown in the extract below, What was interesting to me to notice was that when he was not able to understand the speaker of the audio, I repeated the word, and then, he was able to understand it easily. (Reflection 8)

This was a recurrent situation: when I asked the students for a specific word or phrase and they were not able to

listen to it correctly, I said it again, without using Spanish, and they told me the meaning of it. I attribute this to my Mexican accent because I barely did anything different to pronounce the word: I said it at a normal speed and with a regular tone of voice, so there is not any other characteristic that could influence their understanding but my accent. Regarding the different accents once more, it did not matter if it was American or British, students were focused on the speed of the speaker, as it can be read in the next extract:

The American accent was not a problem for them to understand the videos, but the way of talking and the speed of the speech had a negative effect on their comprehension of the videos. (Reflection 6)

I can argue that using different accents in an English as a Foreign Language class is not problematic, no matter the proficiency level of the students. What really matters, however, is to design previous activities in which the students start to know or remember the vocabulary that they are going to hear in the audio or video. Another aspect that is important to pay attention to is the speed of the audio: if the speaker is talking fast, it could be counterproductive for students with a low English level, and they may need some extra help with certain words to help them comprehend it.

Conclusions

After carrying out this research, I noticed some important aspects that changed the way I perceived the use of different accents in English as a Foreign Language classroom. Firstly, warm-up activities are important for students to know what to expect when listening to the audio and, in that way, they do not struggle a lot when listening to it or watching a video. By implementing these previous activities related to vocabulary, the students do not pay much attention to the accent of the speaker, even if it is strong or obvious, but to the content of the task. Secondly, listening comprehension relies on students' level of English rather than on the accent of the audio; as can be expected, students whose level of proficiency is higher tend to understand easier the audios –in spite of the accent that is being used in it– in contrast with the ones that have a lower level of English. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the lower-level students cannot understand what is being said but they experience more difficulties doing it.

I can argue that American or British accents barely shaped the students' listening comprehension. The students were focusing on other aspects of the audio recordings such as speed or manner of deliver rather than the accent itself because it is known that “English native speakers shorten or omit some letters when they speak, exaggerate the production of vowels and consonants, sound more nasalized and speak spontaneously” (Sumalinog, 2018,

p.615). Students listening to American or British accent did little difference as long as they practiced the vocabulary with warm-up activities.

As mentioned before, the best way to prepare them for this type of exercise is by having previous activities prepared by the teacher. These findings encourage teachers to try implementing different materials in their classes when they want to practice listening skills. It is true that preparing different types of previous activities and seeking authentic videos or audio recordings can mean extra work, but the results, at least in this investigation, show only positive aspects from the students. Additionally, and as it was mentioned previously, teachers should take into account that accents carry cultural value. So, warm-up activities that include cultural aspects might help students with their comprehension as Tous and Haghighi (2013) mention: "Building cultural knowledge and familiarity with the culturally-oriented materials would be resulted in successful comprehension" (p.70).

I decided to investigate this topic since I noticed that people near me struggled when they heard different accents and, when I was reading to get familiarized with this area, I could notice that accents have not been widely studied either in Mexico or Latin America.

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