Percepciones y prácticas de los profesores efl sobre la enseñanza de habilidades de escucha activa

Efl teachers' perceptions and practices on active listening skill teaching

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RESUMEN

Teaching active listening in EFL environments has been a challenge for English teachers. The objective of this quasi-experimental study is to measure how Round table 2.0 changed and enriched teachers´ practice. Twenty-nine EFL teachers with a B2 English proficiency level were the sample, and the data was obtained through a survey and a questionnaire. The research questions were 1. What are the perceptions regarding teaching active listening before and after Round table 2.0? and 2. Which practices have been more effective for EFL listening teaching? According to the surveys, perceptions about teaching active listening before and after the Round Table 2.0 are highly positive. The results showed that the teachers before the training had a low perception of the importance and benefits of active listening and at the same time they did not use specific techniques, presenting a very low frequency. Moreover, according to teachers´ experiences, the most effective active listening

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strategies were top-down, conversations, podcasts, movies, and series. This study concluded that teachers were not aware of the importance of teaching active listening before the training or the different existed strategies or how to apply them to their lessons. Finally, this study proposes future research regarding authentic resources used to teach active listening to EFL learners.

Keywords: Active listening, EFL, listening comprehension, perceptions, teaching.

ABSTRAC

Enseñar la escucha activa en entornos EFL ha sido un desafío para los profesores de inglés. El objetivo de este estudio cuasi-experimental es medir cómo la Mesa Redonda 2.0 cambió y enriqueció la práctica docente. Veintinueve profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera con un nivel de dominio del inglés B2 fueron la muestra, y los datos se obtuvieron a través de una encuesta y un cuestionario. Las preguntas de investigación fueron 1. ¿Cuáles son las percepciones sobre la enseñanza de la escucha activa antes y después de la Mesa Redonda 2?0? y 2. ¿Qué prácticas han sido más efectivas para la enseñanza auditiva de inglés como lengua extranjera? Según las encuestas, la percepción sobre la enseñanza de la escucha activa antes y después de la Mesa Redonda 2.0 son muy positivas. Los resultados mostraron que los docentes antes de la formación tenían una percepción baja de la importancia y los beneficios de la escucha activa y a la vez no utilizaban técnicas específicas, presentando una frecuencia muy baja. Además, según las experiencias de los docentes, las estrategias más efectivas fueron Top-down, conversaciones, podcasts, películas y series. Este estudio concluyó que los docentes no eran conscientes de la importancia de enseñar escucha activa antes de la formación ni de las diferentes estrategias existentes ni de cómo aplicarlas en sus clases. Finalmente, este estudio propone futuras investigaciones sobre los recursos auténticos utilizados para enseñar la escucha activa a los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: Escucha activa, EFL, comprensión auditiva, percepciones, enseñanza.

INTRODUCCIÓN

In the last century, English has become a relevant part of education centers' curricula being a requirement for students to get their scholar degrees. English is not only important to get a formal education paper but to get better studies and employment opportunities being English considered the international language. Teaching English as a foreign language in developing countries can be demanding and challenging at the same time as Akbari (2015) stated in his study. Actually, statistics have shown that developing countries mostly in Latin America have the lowest English proficiency level scores being Ecuador the 90 of 112 countries worldwide (EF English proficiency index, 2021). EFL teachers in Latin American countries are fighting with their native language environment and the fact that students are not willing to look for situations in which they can improve their second language. EFL teachers are chosen to figure out what are EFL learners' problems and how to overcome them. That is why EFL teachers´ perceptions and practices that they apply based on their experiences are the cornerstones of this study.

Listening is a basic skill that is highly related to other skills such as speaking, reading, and writing. Renukadevi (2014) stated that "listening plays a vital role, as it helps the language learner to acquire pronunciation, word stress, vocabulary, and syntax and the comprehension of messages conveyed can be based solely on tone of voice, pitch, and accent; which is only possible when we listen", being listening truly important for communicative goals.

Teaching listening skills in EFL backgrounds for young learners could be demanding but research and daily teaching practice have recognized better the problems and also suggest modern strategies to get over them. According to Yagang (1994), the issues in listening are related to these factors: the message, the speaker, the listener, and the physical stage. Thus, strategies and resources must be aligned to make sure all these are well carried out creating a productive and enjoyable listening learning experience.

Rost and Wilson (2013) established a complete concept of what active listening really means. They define active listening as a base to discover key principles, apply them and keep researching. They express that active listening is when learners are willing and motivated to listen. Additionally, the teachers are enthusiastic to see how their specific

resources influence learners to analyze and conduct better practices in the future. So they infer that active listening converges cognitive and emotional patterns.

Hamouda (2013) defined listening comprehension as a dynamic process in which listeners construct the meaning by understanding spoken language. This process involves speech sounds, word meaning, and syntax.

Hence, this study conducted the following research questions:

•What are the perceptions regarding teaching active listening before and after Round table 2.0?

•Which practices have been more effective for EFL listening teaching?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aldukhayel (2021) carried out a study to analyze teachers´ and learners´ perceptions regarding the use of vlogs to improve listening comprehension inside and outside the classroom. This study was applied to 389 EFL college students for four weeks, teachers were also part of this research. The instruments to measure the variables were questionnaires, focus group-based discussions, and interviews. The results showed positive perceptions from students and teachers in the use of vlogs to improve listening skills, mentioning these vlogs were catching and updated to them.

Alshraideh (2021) also made a study about EFL students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the use of videos in English classes. This mixed study included 120 EFL college students and 6 EFL teachers. The data was obtained through one questionnaire and interview. The results showed that most of the participants think videos made classes more captivating. Furthermore, among all the skills listening was better rated for teachers and students, this means they think that videos were more beneficial for this skill specifically.

Liando, Sahetapi, and Maru (2018) made an investigation about students´ perceptions of the use of movies to improve listening and speaking skills. The participants were 67 major students. A questionnaire of three parts was conducted to obtain the answers to the research questions. Findings showed that students consider listening skills to be used the most in their daily English practice, most of them watch movies on their own to improve their language skills using English subtitles. Thus, they are aware that watching movies help

them to get better in their L2, even more than any other resource included or not in the textbook.

Spataro and Bloch (2018) analyzed some strategies to teach active listening to 108 college students. Data were obtained through pre and post-surveys. Results showed that the post-survey mean was significantly higher than the pre-test mean which means that the method they proposed to teach active listening was effective.

Emerick (2019) analyzes the beliefs that college teachers have regarding the use of authentic material in English listening instruction. Participants were teachers from 8 different universities, this sample was 66 instructors in total. The instruments to gather data were one questionnaire and some interviews. Findings stated that teachers strongly believe explicit listening instruction is essential to reach listening competence in learners. But it also discovered that teachers need the training to choose proper authentic material.

Trần (2020) made a study about how dictation could infer learners´ listening skills. The sample was 40 college students and data were obtained through questionnaires. Results established that students think dictation motivates them to listen, self-assess and self-correction. In addition, they ponder that dictation increases their concentration by paying attention to every single word and its pronunciation.

Anggraini and Fauzi (2019) developed a study about the use of the Joox application to enhance listening skills through songs and their lyrics. This research was aimed at 25 university students. Data was gotten from 25 listening assignments and one questionnaire. Findings showed that students experienced an improvement in their listening skills, and also in their vocabulary range.

Safa and Motaghi (2021) made a comparison between cognitive and metacognitive scaffolding strategies for EFL learners' listening enhancement. The sample was 90 young EFL learners divided into three groups two experimental and one control. The beginner TOEFL test was used as the pre-test and post-test, and an interview to measure perceptions was also applied. The participants of the first experimental condition received cognitive scaffolding strategies, and the second experimental group obtained metacognitive scaffolding strategies, the control group got non-scaffolding instruction. Finding demonstrated that metacognitive scaffolding strategies had more and better effects than

cognitive scaffolding strategies and non-scaffolding instruction. Besides, results indicated that EFL learners felt more comfortable with the metacognitive scaffolding strategies.

METODOLOGÍA

Research questions

1. What are the perceptions regarding teaching active listening before and after Round table 2.0?

2. Which practices have been more effective for EFL listening teaching?

To address these research questions, a quasi-experimental research design was used. It applied a mixed method. This study has three variables, two dependent ones, which are teachers' perceptions, and practices of teaching active listening; and the dependent is roundtable immersive training. According to Sheperis, Young, and Daniels (2017), in a quasi-experimental study, researchers determine the effect of an intervention or program in which a non-random method is used to select the group. In addition, control groups are not always required.

Mixed data were collected through a survey and a questionnaire applied before and after the program "The roundtable training 2.0". The purpose of the first one was regarding the perceptions of the group of study toward teaching active listening skills; and the second one aimed at the effect of the program on the teachers' practice.

Participants

Twenty-nine participants formed this target group. It was composed of thirteen men and seventeen women, who are teachers at a public university in Babahoyo, Ecuador. The process of selection was done by convenience. These teachers enrolled in the program "The

roundtable training 2.0", which was mandatory. The sample ranges in age from 24 to 67 years and has 4 to 25 years of teaching experience. According to their English proficiency certifications, most of them have an English proficiency of b2 level, according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages.

Instruments

To answer the first research question *What are the perceptions regarding teaching active listening before and after Round table 2.0?* the instruments applied were a pre and post-survey to analyze the teachers' perceptions of teaching active listening before and after the program. The pre-survey presented a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.905 and 0.901 in the post-survey. The pre-survey consisted of 10 elements, which were grouped into two constructs: general aspects and techniques & skills. The items of the first construct were analyzed with a Likert scale: 1 Strongly agree to 5 Strongly disagree. They are based on the importance, benefits, and barriers of active listening. In the second construct, the Likert scale was composed of 1 (very high frequency) to 5 (very low frequency). They focused on their perception toward the application of techniques and skills necessary to conduct an active listening lesson.

To address the second research question *Which practices have been more effective for EFL listening teaching?* a questionnaire was administered at the beginning and the end of the program. It examined the study of the most effective practices by the group for EFL listening teaching. It was formed by three open questions aligned to the listening strategies and techniques applied in virtual classes. A panelist of 4 experts validated the instrument.

Data Analysis

RQ#1. What are the perceptions regarding teaching active listening before and after Round table 2.0?

Teachers' data obtained from the survey at the beginning and at the end of the program was tabulated in an Excel spreadsheet. The responses were grouped in regard to the similarities in perceptions. The results were organized by frequencies.

RQ#2. Which practices have been more effective for EFL listening teaching?

Data obtained through the questionnaire was analyzed in a qualitative way. It was categorized and codified into different constructs. The main categories were: teaching strategies (the most used – the least used), teaching techniques (the most used – the least used), and perceptions toward their practice teaching experience in regards to active listening after the training program (To a large extent – not at all).

RESULTS

The reliability analysis was carried out through a pre and post-survey to analyze the teachers' perception of the teaching of active listening before and after the program. The pre-survey presented a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.905 and a post-survey of 0.901. Values are in the maximum expected range, indicating excellent internal consistency and high reliability.

Table 1 Cronbach's Alpha

Internal Consistency	Cronbach's Alpha	Pre-survey	Post-survey
Excellent	$\alpha \geq 0,9$	0,905	0,901
Good	$0,8 \leq \alpha < 0,9$	-	-
Acceptable	$0,7 \leq \alpha < 0,8$	-	-
Questionable	$0,6 \leq \alpha < 0,7$	-	-
Poor	$0,5 \leq \alpha < 0,6$	-	-
Unacceptable	$\alpha < 0,5$	-	-
Source: The authors			

RQ#1: What are the perceptions regarding teaching active listening before and after Round table 2.0?

From the surveys applied to determine the perception of teachers regarding teaching active listening before and after the round table 2.0, the following results were obtained:
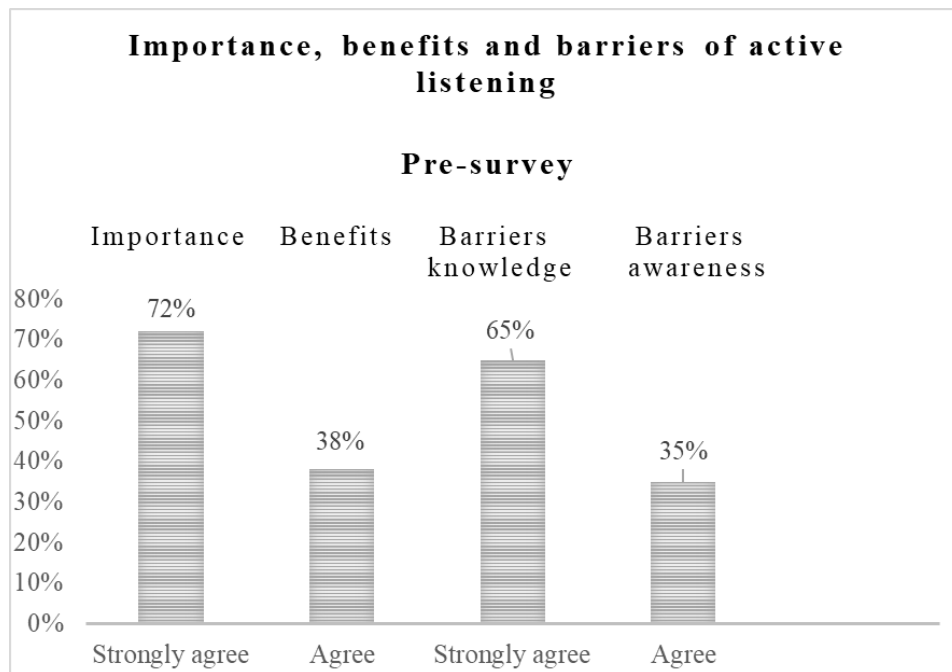

Figure 1. Chart based on the importance, benefits and barriers of active listening Pre-Survey.
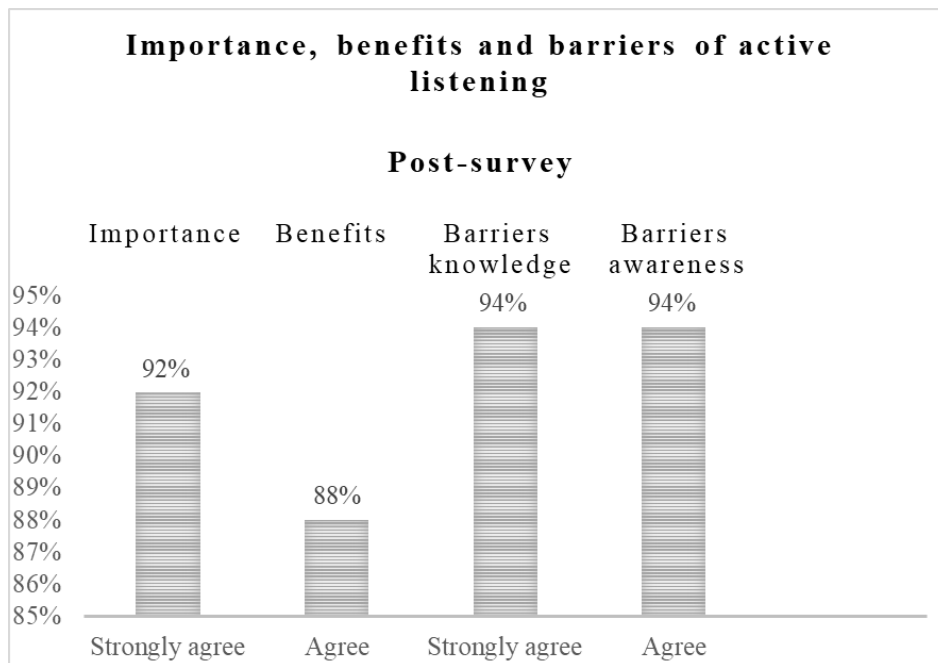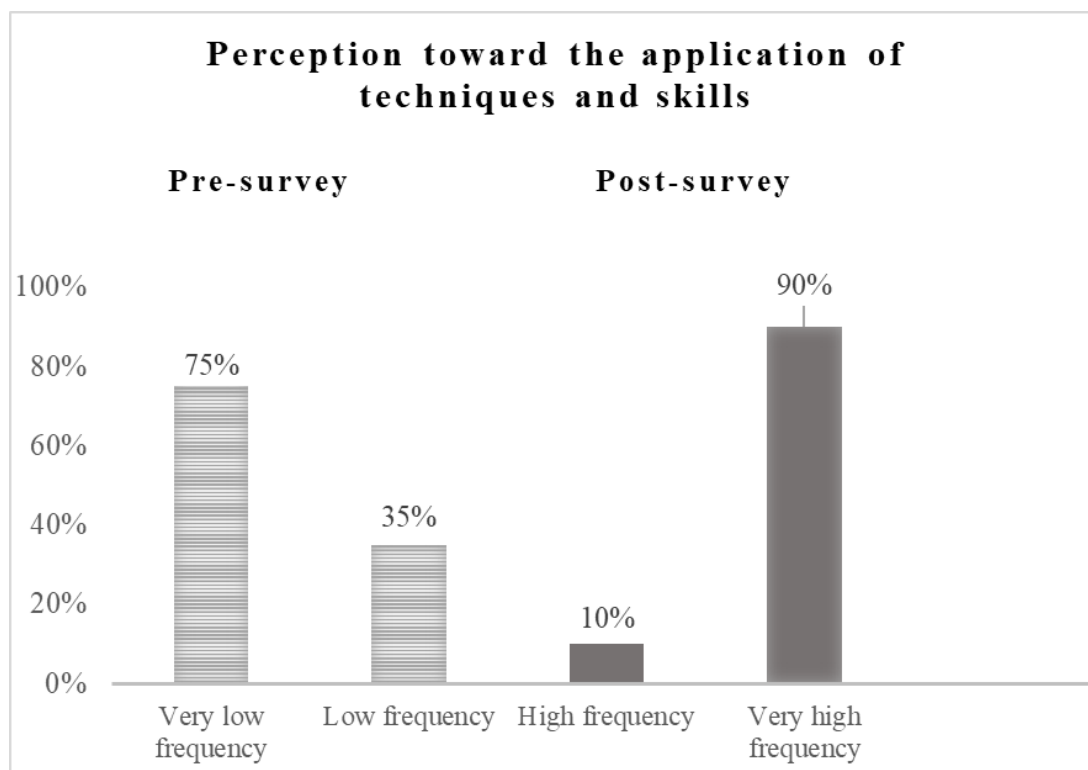
Source: The authors

Figure 2. *Chart based on the importance, benefits and barriers of active listening Post-Survey.*

Source: The authors

Figure 1 displayed the teachers' answers, which were grouped based on the importance, benefits, and barriers to active listening. Results of the pre-survey showed that most participants 72% strongly agreed with the importance of active learning and were aware of its benefits whereas 38% agreed about it. Also, 35% of them had a general knowledge of its barriers. However, the majority of educators 65% were aware of them. On the other hand, the post-survey figure 2, showed an increase in the importance by 92%, benefits by 88%, and barriers of active listening by 94%; improving in a positive way the perception that teachers have regarding the teaching of active listening after the Round Table 2.0.

Figure 3. *Chart focused on teachers´ perceptions toward the application of techniques and skills necessary to conduct an active listening lesson.*

Source: The authors.

Regarding the perception toward the application of techniques and skills necessary to carry out an active listening lesson, the answers were grouped, resulting in 75% with a very low frequency followed by 35% with a low frequency in the pre-survey and in the post-survey 90% of very high frequency followed by 10% with high frequency, that is, a 15% increase in the perception that teachers have regarding the application of techniques and skills in active listening after the training.

RQ#2: Which practices have been more effective for EFL listening teaching?
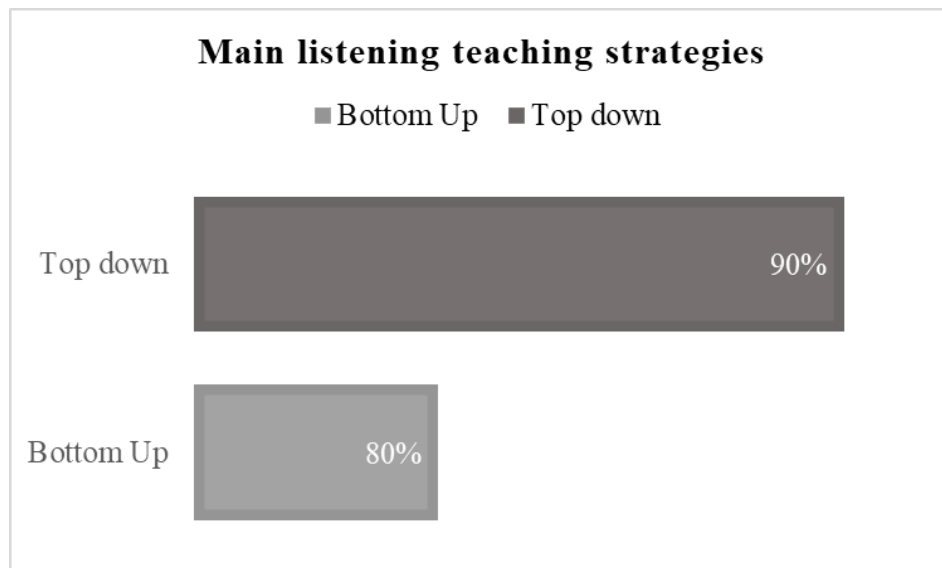
Figure 4. *Chart based on the main teaching strategies.*

Source: The authors.

The strategies provided by the teachers were grouped, resulting in two main strategies such as the top-down strategy with 90% application, this being the highest percentage, and followed by the bottom-up strategy with a percentage of 80% application.
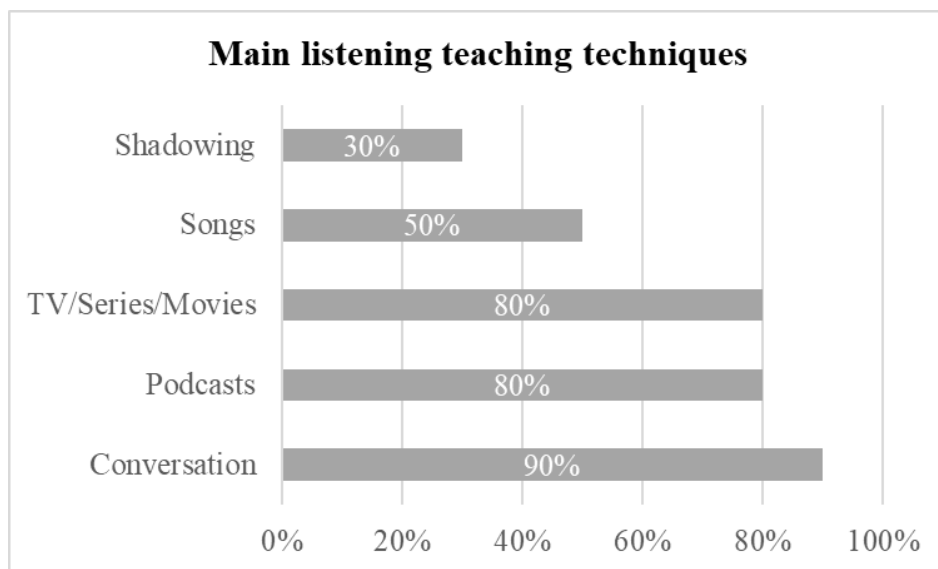

Figure 5. *Chart based on the main listening teaching techniques.*

Source: The authors.

Among the most used teaching techniques by teachers, conversations lead with 90% followed by podcasts and movies with 80%, and in a lower percentage song with 50% and shadowing with 30%.
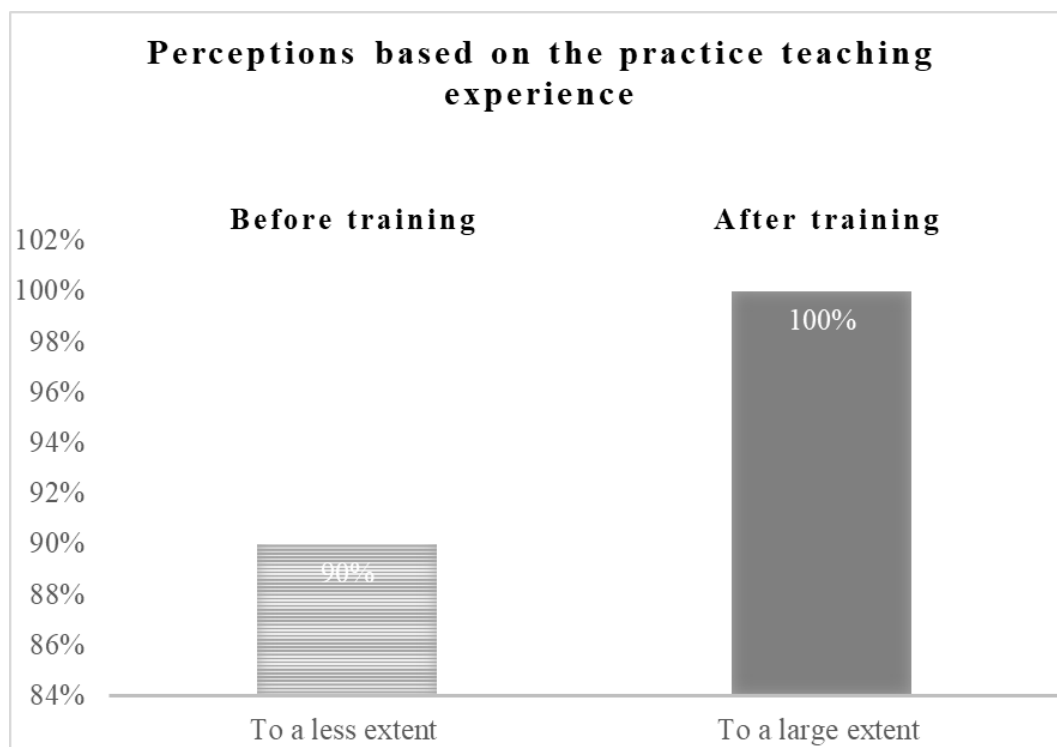

Figure 6. *Chart about the teachers´ perceptions based on their teaching experience in active listening.*

Source: The authors.

Regarding the perceptions towards their practice, and teaching experience in relation to active listening after the training program, the answers were grouped, resulting in 90% less extent before the training and a 100% large extent after the training. After the training program, all the respondents improved their perception of the practice and application of techniques and skills in active listening.

DISCUSIÓN Y RESULTADOS

The results obtained from the surveys can corroborate that the perceptions about the teaching of active listening before and after Round Table 2.0 are highly positive. The tools provided in the training had an impact on the teachers' practices, enhancing their application through the integration of multimedia tools and the creation of virtual spaces with a greater educational impact. As indicated Orquera (2011), virtual spaces are formed from the integration of technological tools plus the pedagogical direction where the main characteristics are precise content, innovation, creativity, and collaborative participation among students and the use of technology.

In the techniques applied by the teachers, the main ones were the conversations, podcasts, and TV/series/movies where the internet has become a fundamental piece for the development of the activities. The integration of technology and content updating allows us to offer the student a more dynamic and entertaining environment in order to facilitate learning. Alshraideh (2021) establishes videos make classes more captivating. Furthermore, among all the skills listening was better rated for teachers and students, this means they think that videos were more beneficial for this skill specifically.

Within the development of active listening, there are barriers that influence the use or not of a given tool, therefore it is vitally important to keep in constant learning new strategies that allow the teacher to teach the student more effectively. After the training program, the perception of the practice and application of techniques and skills in active listening increased. Promoting existing strategies and showing new techniques and applications for the development of listening skills. Emerick's (2019) findings, stated that teachers strongly believe explicit listening instruction is essential to reaching listening competence in learners. But it also discovered that teachers need the training to choose proper authentic material.

CONCLUSIÓN

The implementation of round tables to improve specific topics among professionals has not been new in study fields; it has been largely used to enhance and reflect on specific issues which need our attention. Round table 0.2 helped teachers to learn from each other and gain

more confidence when planning and applying strategies in their classes. Even though all English skills are important Listening is the one that comes first to allow the others to grow as well. When learning a language, listening is the first thing to do. The main objective of this study was to show how Round Table 2.0 program changed teachers´ perspectives regarding active listening in EFL students. Results demonstrated that before this training teaching active listening was not seen as so important, nor the use of some strategies that according to many studies enrich active listening lessons greatly. As young EFL learners prefer some specific resources, teachers must be aware of the last trends. This study concluded that conversations, podcasts, and movies-series are preferred by this audience. Moreover, teachers prefer to apply the top-down listening strategy since it makes lessons easier and better understandable for students with low English proficiency levels due this strategy establishes some background before they listen. Lastly, even though this study did not analyze the resources used to elaborate an efficient active listening class, this research suggests a future investigation aligned to authentic listening resources elaborated by teachers in charge.

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