



**Facultad de  
Ciencias Sociales y Humanísticas**

**PROYECTO DE TITULACIÓN**

**THE INFLUENCE OF ONLINE AUDIOS ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION  
FOR EFL A1 LEARNERS IN A HIGH SCHOOL OF RIOBAMBA.**

Thesis presented to Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral to fulfill the requirements  
for the ESPOL

**Master's Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language**

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## **Dedication**

I want to dedicate this work to my family who are the engine of my life, without them I would simply have no reason. I also dedicate this work to my brothers and sisters, who have supported me unconditionally to not give up, even when I fell ill, they forced me to continue fighting. Finally, I dedicate this work to my parents, who from heaven have sent me their blessings and even though they are not physically present, they always live here in my heart.

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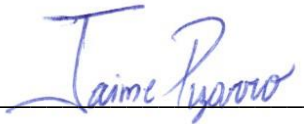
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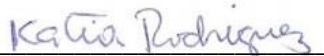
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## **Declaración Expresa**

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Jaime Ramiro Silva Verdezoto

## **Abstract**

This study was conducted to help students improve their listening comprehension with the aid of online audios. Participants were 10<sup>th</sup> graders from a public high school located in Riobamba. They were divided into two groups. One was the experimental group and the other the control group. A mixed-design study was carried out. Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered with instruments like pretest and posttest, surveys, interviews, and learning logs. Findings report that both groups (experimental and control) had very low results in the pretest. However, posttests results determined that the experimental group outperformed the control one. Students' perspectives towards listening in English changed from difficult to easy. They attributed the positive changes to the teacher's help and the practice they had with online audios. Among the difficulties, students mentioned that it was difficult to differentiate it was a name or a word in English, and that it was difficult to identify the accent. These difficulties were reduced with the intervention. Therefore, they suggest including online audios in regular English classes. Implications of these findings involve other teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) who like to improve their students' listening comprehension.

*Keywords:* listening comprehension, online audios, high school, EFL

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## **Resumen**

Esta investigación fue realizada para ayudar a los estudiantes a mejorar su comprensión auditiva con la ayuda de audios en línea. Los participantes fueron alumnos de décimo grado de una escuela pública ubicada en Riobamba. Ellos estuvieron divididos en dos grupos. Uno grupo corresponde al experimental y el otro al grupo control. Un diseño de investigación mixta se llevó a cabo. Se recogieron datos cuantitativos y cualitativos a través de instrumentos como pruebas iniciales y finales, encuestas, entrevistas y diarios de aprendizaje. Los resultados reportan que ambos grupos (experimental y control) obtuvieron puntajes muy bajos en la prueba inicial. Sin embargo, los resultados de la prueba posterior determinaron que el grupo experimental tuvo un mejor desempeño que el grupo control. Las perspectivas de los alumnos hacia los audios en inglés cambiaron de difícil a fácil. Ellos atribuyen los cambios positivos a la ayuda del docente y la práctica que tuvieron con los audios en línea. Entre las dificultades, los estudiantes mencionaron que fue difícil diferenciar las palabras en inglés, si eran nombres propios o palabras, también se les hizo difícil identificar el acento. Estas dificultades se redujeron con la intervención. Consecuentemente, ellos sugieren que se incluya audios en línea en las clases regulares de inglés. Las implicaciones de estos resultados involucran a otros docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera que desean mejorar la comprensión auditiva de sus estudiantes.

*Palabras clave:* comprensión auditiva, audios en línea, colegio, inglés como lengua extranjera.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

In our country, English is an important subject that is part of the curriculum since it allows communication with the rest of the world. Although the teaching of this language begins in the lower levels of education (Ministry of Education, 2016), students have not yet been able to develop communicative competence. When they reach higher levels, limitations in communication can be found. The Education First (2020) released a report about the proficiency level of countries worldwide. This includes South American. Ecuador is in the 93<sup>rd</sup> place under the very low proficiency.

Due to the appearance and application of technology in regular classes, English as a foreign language, could not be excluded. This has allowed a new way of learning this language. The exposure of students to direct communication through the use of real-life examples allows them to upgrade their proficiency level. Students can also interact with their peers. Many studies have been conducted on whether computer technology is effective in classrooms and helps students or not in their cognitive development (Gilakjani, 2014). These doubts have already been confirmed by technology-based courses (Li & Ni, 2012). Authors have also reported that technology is motivating to students (Amir & Kang, 2018).

Some researchers have mentioned that ICT (Information and Communication Technology) brings some benefits in foreign language teaching. Apple Education Inc. illustrated this point by saying that the contributions of the computer and different applications in teaching and learning are numerous (Gilakjani, 2014). Smidt and Hegelheimer (2010) reported that some resources that students have online are: videos, dictionaries, and interactive worksheets. Moreover, the global pandemic forced teacher

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and students to use several platforms and applications to teach and learn different subjects in 2020.

One use of technology in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom is to use online audios to improve listening comprehension. There are some studies that have implemented podcasting to improve listening comprehension (Abdulrahman, Basalama & Widodo, 2018). The authors describe podcasting as easy to download and play on mobile devices. They consider podcasting as an innovative technology to watch videos and listen to recordings.

Another research that tested online resources was conducted by Smidt and Hegelheimer (2010). They used authentic resources like academic lectures on English as a Second Language students to improve their listening comprehension and incidental vocabulary acquisition. These authors reported positive results in the acquisition of incidental vocabulary in intermediate students. This study was conducted in a higher education institution.

### **Justification**

Internationally, there is a problem with listening comprehension, especially in non-English speaking countries like China (Renandya & Hu, 2018), Indonesia (Abdulrahman, Basalama & Widodo, 2018), Iran (Ashraf, Naroozi, & Salami, 2011), Japan (Kobayashi, 2018), Saudi Arabia (Al-Nafisah, 2019) and Taiwan (Lu, 2009). Even students that live in English-speaking countries and study English as a second language have difficulties with this skill (Smidt & Hegelheimer, 2010). However, Vandergrift (2007) pointed out that this skill has not been completely understood or investigated. These studies have been conducted in higher education institutions and participants have low-intermediate and intermediate English proficiency level.

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Among the causes, the authors mention that teachers do not use English in the classroom for instruction, that students do not understand, teachers do not use authentic resources to teach English, there is a lack of commitment of teachers, students do not practice English outside their classrooms (Abdulrahman et al., 2018). Other problems are understanding recordings because of the speed of the delivery and lack of vocabulary knowledge (Smidt & Hegelheimer, 2010). Al-Nafisah (2019) stated that students are not able to participate because they do not understand what the teacher or their classmates tell them. So, they may ask for repetitions many times. This situation affects students' confidence in learning the language.

Due to the importance of English, Ecuadorian authorities have included this language from second grade. Their aim is that when students finish their high school studies they reach a B1 level (Ministry of Education, 2016). Students in the institution where this research was conducted have an A1 level, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR).

The importance of listening comprehension in learning English as a foreign language, the problem that has been identified with this skill internationally and nationally, the efforts that the local educational authorities are doing to upgrade the proficiency of the students, the little research that has been conducted to investigate how to improve this skill, there are very few or non-existing investigation developed with high school students, and the low proficiency of the participants of this study justify the implementation of this research. Next, the objectives, research questions, and the hypothesis are posited.

## **Rationale**

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In order to assist students to upgrade their listening comprehension, the general objective of this study was to apply online audios. The topics of the audios were selected according to students' preferences and observing the guidelines of the Council of Europe (2018) for A1 students. The topics were also aligned with the themes and objectives of the curriculum students were studying. The intervention lasted four weeks. Each week students have five hours of classes. This study tries to reduce the gap students had in their listening comprehension since they did not participate actively when they listen to recordings.

### **General Objective**

The main objective of this research is to examine the effect of using online audios on EFL A1 students' listening comprehension. This study was applied on tenth-grade students in the city of Riobamba.

### **Specific Objectives**

To determine students' current proficiency. This will help the researcher to choose the online resources according to student's level.

To report the effect of online resources in students' listening comprehension.

To determine the factors that prevent students to understand an authentic track.

To describe the perceptions of online audios on EFL A1 students' listening comprehension.

### **Research questions**

According to the specific objectives, the following research questions are posited:

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What is the effect of online audios in EFL A1 students' listening comprehension?

What are the factors that prevent EFL A1 students to understand an authentic track?

What are EFL A1 student' perceptions of online audios?

### **Hypothesis**

Null: Students do not improve their listening comprehension when they are exposed to authentic material.

Alternative: EFL A1 students that were exposed to online audios performed better than students that were not exposed to online audios.



## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### Listening

Vandergrift (2007) and Al-Nafisah (2019) highlighted that the heart of learning a language is in its listening. In this regard, Abdulrahman et al. (2018) shared that people listen about 45% when they communicate. Nonetheless, Al-Nafisah (2019) reported in his study that students barely understood 30% of what they listened.

Being listening the skill that is frequently used, Al-Nafisah (2019) sustained that is the hardest skill. As reading, listening is a complex process that integrates cognition skills (receptive, constructive and interpretative). Amari and Gorjian (2019) referred to it as a phenomenon in the area of psychology and the process is performed in people's head. Authors also stated that it integrated hearing and decoding speech. Cakir (2018) added that in this process people make meaning. Wolvin (2013) summarized this as receiving, making meaning and responding to the messages.

Despite its complexity and importance, it is the skill that has not been completely understood or investigated. Thus, Vandergrift (2007) argued that listening as a process needs more research attention focused on the interaction of the processes that are involved in this skill as well as the elements that make it successful. Al-Nafisah (2019) also considered that this skill has not received the attention that it needs in research.

Listening and reading are receptive skills. Due to this receptive approach, some teachers consider it a passive skill where students are sitting quietly while they listen to the recordings (Al-Nafisah, 2019). The CEFR described reception skill as not only receiving but also processing input. In this process, the users activate their prior

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knowledge to understand the meaning of the input. They also find cues in the input and search in their prior knowledge to understand the message (Council of Europe, 2018).

The CEFR included two types of listening according to the context: one is when the users receive the input of one or more people or sources; and, the other when the listening is accompanied by visuals like TV programs and movies. In the second type, there may be some aids like subtitles. There are also called one one-input because there is not any type of interaction (Council of Europe, 2018). Abdulrahman et al. (2018) highlighted that when teaching listening there should not be use of visuals prior to listening. Nonetheless, Al-Nafisah (2019) implied that being in front of the speaker or watching while listening the listener can take advantage of non-linguistic factors like: body language and tone of voice to grasp the main idea or the listening.

When people listen, there may also be interaction. That is people listen and respond. In this case, the listener has to understand the interlocutor. Nowadays, this interaction can be facilitated by technology. In that case, there can be live or online interaction (Council of Europe, 2018). In interaction, Al-Nafisah (2019) added that the listener should be able to anticipate and probably explain the interlocutor's intention.

In order to understand, there should be a type of accommodation (Council of Europe, 2018). This means the listener can ask for clarification or repetitions. However, this is not the case when listening to recordings, songs, webinars, or other type of listening that is played once. Some performance students should domain are listed in the scales of listening to a conversation in the CEFR: listening to specific information (words, or phrases), getting the main idea, determining the chronological sequence, identifying people's perspectives towards one topic (e.g. agreeing and disagreeing), and identifying sociocultural aspects. The skills are different to listening to a live webinar,

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for example. In this case, the listener has to use the visual aids to follow the talk, accommodate to the speed of the delivery, be familiar to the topic, and getting the main ideas.

Applied linguists refer to listening in more technical aspects. They consider linguistics components like phonemes and words. To this, they add the structure of the speech that is grammar knowledge. There are non-linguistics factors that come from the expectations of the listener (Al-Nafisah, 2019).

### **Listening Subskills**

The Council of Europe (2018) indicates that in order to listen and understand, students should develop the following skills:

- Pick up concrete information and connect words and phrases.
- Identify the topic, main points or essential information,
- Know when the interlocutor changes the topic.
- Be aware of the chronological order of a story, for example.
- Identify the perspectives of the people (e.g. different points of view, mood).

Heredia (2018) summarized listening sub-skills into the categories of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective. The first one is at the upper level of thinking. At this level, students have assertive predictions, activate their prior knowledge, and assess their success. In the second, students use basic techniques like inferences, and grasp misunderstandings, among others. The socio-affective ones involve the management of the levels of anxiety and the interaction with the speaker to ask for clarification, and negotiate meaning.

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### **Strategies to improve listening comprehension**

Strategies in listening skill must address students' comprehension of speech (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Al-Nafisah (2019) reported that a common teaching practice in listening is focused on listening exercises and assessing it rather in actually teaching the skill. Al-Nafisah sustained that if students can understand what they listen to they can transfer that knowledge to the productive skills: speaking and writing. However, if they lack understanding to what they listen this may refrain students' progress in acquiring or learning the new language. This may also result in low class participation.

According to recent research on how to teach listening in L2, two currents indicate that they compete to promote the listening skills of L2 students. On the one hand, there is the implicit argument (e.g., Renandya & Farrell, 2010) that advocates strong L2 exposure rather than instructional interventions to promote listening fluency. In a way, this approach follows an individual's experience in listening to the L1, so if one has had sufficient exposure to the L1, one will develop listening skills without explicit instruction.

However, there is an argument for explicit auditory instruction, in which L2 students are taught to listen by focusing on the development of listening strategies. Initially, awareness of the different listening skills required for effective listening is raised, then students are instructed or allowed to use one or a combination of strategies to achieve a given listening goal. There are some benefits to be found in the second stream. Through explicit training, students become better able to deal with phoneme, word recognition, and segmentation problems (e.g., Goh, 2000; Siegel & Siegel, 2015) in listening texts, increasing students' levels of confidence and motivation in their listening comprehension (Graham & Macaro, 2008; Kobayashi, 2018; Siegel & Siegel, 2015; Yeldham & Gruba, 2014).

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Whether the training is explicit or implicit, Al-Nafisah (2019) suggested a variety of materials including native and non-native speakers. Another recommendation is to train students in skills and sub-skills to improve listening comprehension. This will prepare students to make use of any skill when required to manage and understand the content of what they are listening to. This will also raise students' confidence and feeling of success.

Another process is the bottom-up versus the top-down. For Hedge (2000), they happen at the same time. The first means knowing each sound and word of the speech to decipher the message being listened to. On the other hand, the second talks about the listener's prior knowledge of the topic and context. Benefits from applying these processes are that students improve their word recognition in bottom-up while the top-down aid at experiencing similar to real-life situations.

Rost (2011) contributed with a list of strategies that teachers can rely on to help students become better listeners: students should develop concentration skills, there should be a variety of tasks, they can work on collaboration with their peers, they should respond to the recording, and they should be able to recognize different types of dialects. Al--Nafisah (2019) added that teachers should direct students' attention by helping them find a purpose for listening.

A mixed of these strategies will be applied to the intervention group. Regarding the listening material, McGrath (2013) and Polat and Eristi (2019) stated that its selection is paramount. They suggested the material should match students' knowledge and real life content. Recordings will be chosen according to students' preferences and to the guidelines of the Council of Europe (2018, p. 55) "can recognise concrete information (e.g. places and times) on familiar topics encountered in everyday life".

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## **Online Audios**

In this regard, the Council of Europe (2018) listed that the listening can come from: people in face to face or online settings, media (television, internet, movie), and recordings. In live interaction, there are two situations. The first can be a group interaction. The second is when the listener is not part of the conversation but is exposed to it. The challenge for the listener is to understand the assumptions or experiences he/she is listening to.

In classes, students may only listen to the teacher. In this case, teachers can speak slowly to make sure students understand, they sometimes alter keywords to provide hints to students, they can also modify the content to make it easier to students. These facilities experience in the classroom are far beyond different from the ones encounter in real life interactions or recordings (Al-Nafisah, 2019). Another limitation in classes, it expressed by Morales and Beltrán (2006). They refer to the graded texts students are exposed to. They highlighted that they are edited and not authentic. They are used mainly to practice a type of listening that is almost perfect and not found in real contexts. Even though they are recorded by native speakers, they are set in a very basic language use. This helps students to practice listening but should not be the primary source of listening activities.

A reason to implement online resources in the classroom is that in commercial texts, like the ones that are usually used to teach EFL, lack features of authentic material. Some features that people listen to in real life are: simplification and compensation, re-wordings, pauses in-between the recording, and rectifications (Al-Nafisah, 2019).

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There is a great number of research about the role that authentic materials play in the teaching of L2. Several researchers and staff from different educational institutions claim that by using authentic materials in the field of language teaching students effectively develop listening skills. Empirical studies have corroborated the positive results obtained by students who have the opportunity to interact and deal with authentic texts.

Miller (2005) and Thanajaro (2000) revealed that the incorporation of authentic materials leads to the development of auditory language in an optimal way. Otte (2006 cited in Al-Musallam, 2009) investigated the impact of authentic auditory texts on the listening comprehension skills of four adult ESL students at an American university. He concluded that exposure to authentic materials would lead to improved listening comprehension skills and motivation of the students.

### **Podcasting**

For some authors, it is an authentic resource for teaching listening. It integrates videos and audio recordings. They can be downloaded and played on a computer, MP3 player or mobile device. It is a compound word. “Pod” that comes from Ipod and “Cast” is an abbreviation of broadcast. It is user-friendly and students or users can choose the topic of their interest. They are found in an always-open repository. They offer authentic material. Students can access these resources at their convenience and pace (Abdulrahman, Basalama & Widodo, 2018).

Podcast has been used as a tool in various educational modes, e.g. blended learning (Dudenev & Hockly, 2007), independent learning (Bull & Reid, 2003), and collaborative learning (Hine, Rentoul, & Specht, 2004). Many academic institutions, including Duke University, Harvard University, MIT, and Stanford University, have

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already offered course materials via audio/video podcasts (Sorrentino, 2008). Podcasts have been used as a supplemental resource (Bryans-Bongey, Cizadlo & Kalnbach, 2006) and to support textbook materials (Stanley, 2006).

Language learning has been recognized as one of the fields about to get help from the rapid growth in podcasting (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). A few researchers have documented that podcast promotes second language learning, develops various skills of English language such as pronunciation (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009), vocabulary (Putman & Kingsley, 2012) and grammar (Istanto & Indrianti, 2011). Ashraf, Noroozi and Salami (2011) interviewed their students and they mentioned that podcasting favored learning because it is easily accessible, it can be accessed any time and place, there is low rate of speech delivery, there is a definition of unknown words and phrases, and students can listen to it as many times as they needed. They also reported that students with a higher level of proficiency indicated that they found podcasting tiring because they have to repeat it and because the speech rate was low.

Lu (2009) contributed with the process of podcasting. She mentioned it is a straightforward process. It is similar to blogging. It is actually an audio blog. So, the procedures are analogous. The motivation that can be raised by this application may be due to its facility of being created and accessed. It is user-friendly and thus it does not require much training or expertise. Jordan (as cited in Lu, 2009) added that there are three types of podcasts: audio, enhanced, and video podcasts. The first is available in MP3 format. That feature makes it the most common of the three. The enhanced one adds images to the podcasts. The last one refers to movies uploaded in a format called MPEG-4.



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Lastly, there are three types of podcasts. There are authentic ones. They are not aimed at teaching or learning. They are usually addressed to native speakers or people with an advanced level of English. There are some authentic podcasts created by non-native speakers. They are short in length and that makes them a good resource for EFL learners. The second type is the one made by teachers for their classes. They have different purposes: have students practice, introduce new vocabulary or topic. The last one is created by students. Most of them are developed with the teacher's help. The richness of this type of podcasts is that students can learn from students around the world not only English but also cultural issues.

### **Second Language Learning**

White (1987) indicates that students who achieve a high level of listening comprehension make greater progress in acquiring their second language. However, there is a debate that an L2 student who has not developed all four macro language skills will not understand the information very well and as a result will not be able to adequately perform some tasks (Harding, Anderson & Brunfaut, 2015; Vandergrift, 2007; Yeldham & Gruba, 2014).

Besides, there is the idea that most L2 teachers do not know how to teach L2 listeners effectively (Field, 2008; Graham, 1997, 2006; Graham, Santos & Vanderplank, 2010; Nation & Newton, 2009; Siegel, 2014; Siegel & Siegel, 2015). On the other hand, the methods and strategies used for teaching listening in L2 have not yet been developed, and some methods are obsolete (Siegel & Siegel 2015; White, 1987). White (1987) also noted that more research needs to be conducted to determine effective methods for teaching listening. They have to consider materials and equipment.

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Regarding obsolete methods, Al-Nafisah (2019) described a listening sequence as: the teacher introducing difficult words, playing the recording, reading the script, and checking the answers with the class. When the teacher read the script, there were sometimes that he could not replicate the tone of voice or stress. Even though students completed the exercises of the textbook, they said they did not fully understand the recording because they focused on the specific words that the teacher introduced not on the main idea of the recording. They experienced negative feelings towards the activity. Their confidence was reduced because they had to ask the teacher to repeat the recording several times. The previous sequence applied the pre, during and post activities usually seen in classes. Al-Nafisah (2019) concluded that it was not yielding positive results in learning. Thus, he recommended a change.

However, Kurniasari and Santoso (2016) emphasized the role of the teachers in making content comprehensible by connecting what students know and can do without the assistance of the teacher and what can do with assistance. This was introduced by Vygotsky as the Zone of Proximal Development. The authors recalled that teachers should consider how students learn and upgrade their learning before introducing challenging activities like listening. This should be done in order to reduce negative feelings like anxiety.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Methodology**

A mixed-design study was applied. It included qualitative and quantitative instruments. As described by Bryman (2012), qualitative research usually emphasizes on analytical field related to words. On the other hand, quantitative data gather information in terms of numbers. Both deal with theory, quantitative research tests theory whereas qualitative generates it.

### **Participants**

Due to a large number of students, approximately 100 between men and women, aged between 14 and 15 years old, the researcher divided the study group into three classes. Two of them were chosen for this study. In this research, a random selection was used, which provides the same opportunity for each of the students to be part of this study. It is worth noting that this study was carried out during class hours, so it was not necessary to create other extra or additional classes.

Two groups were chosen. They both had 20 students. One was the experimental and the other was the control group. The experimental received the online audios as part of the regular class. They were monitored to check the progress every weekend.

All participants received a Form informing them of their participation in this research. As they are teenagers, their parents were also informed through a letter, explaining the reason for this research.

The survey helped to describe the participants in terms of technology and their uses in English classes (Appendix 4). Regarding technology, students mentioned they all have a technology device to record their voices. Most of the intervention group (18) have listened to short stories. Even though they have a device to record their voices,

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almost half (9) of them have not recorded themselves for an English class. They stated that their preferred types of stories are fairy tales (13) and personal stories (18). Some of them (9) indicated they prefer to listen to songs and a couple liked the karaoke version of the songs.

The proficiency test taken shows that the level of the participants of this study was mainly beginner. There were few that were placed at the lower intermediate level. Both, the experimental and the control group, shared the same characteristics.

**Table 1**

*Proficiency level of participants*

Level/Group	Experimental	Control
Beginner	16	16
Lower intermediate	4	4

### **Description of the intervention in class**

Students listened to stories. The teacher scaffolded students' understanding of the stories. The teacher recorded a story and showed the recording to the students. Later, they had to create one similar to it. Then students created their own stories. The teacher provided feedback to improve the recording. Students shared the recordings with their classmates, so they listen to the stories.

Besides these stories, the listening resources uploaded to the platform were videos, dialogues, and other authentic material found online. These were aligned with the themes and objectives of the curriculum students are studying. Besides, it is valid to mention that students were evaluated weekly on the content given in classes. The platform used was Microsoft teams.

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## **Instruments**

To answer the research questions and attest the objectives proposed in this study, the following instruments will be used.

### **Proficiency test**

Students took a proficiency test to determine their English level and plan accordingly. The test was of free access. It is the one provided by EF (<https://www.efset.org/quick-check>). This tests include listening and reading activities. After the test, students get their proficiency level. This site is well-known for the report of proficiency worldwide.

### **Pre and posttest**

The test evaluated students' listening skills. It was an open-access test located on the Learn English Teens site. This is a test created by the British Council Organization. The instructor can choose the listening test according to students' level. Students listen to the audio. It is almost two minutes long. The audio plays with a picture related to the topic of the conversation. The topic of the pretest was "Eating Out". There was an interaction between the waitress and the customers. After listening to the audio, students had two types of exercises. The first was a True/False exercise. In the second exercise, students had to complete a sentence. There were six sentences in each exercise. The format of the posttest was the same. The topic was "Free time activities".

This test was piloted by the researcher before the intervention. The objective of taking a test before the intervention is to know students' listening comprehension before the intervention, it also helped to segment the students according to their level of understanding. Finally, this pre-test was compared with the exam that was done after the

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investigation. It determined whether the application of the research yielded positive or negative results.

The data was analyzed following these steps. Once the tests were graded, the scores were uploaded in an excel sheet. Descriptive statistics were run. In order to compare and contrast the results, some measures were calculated like: mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation. The test to determine the reliability of the results was also included.

### **Interview**

An interview was conducted at the beginning of the investigation to determine students' difficulties in listening comprehension, the distractors that impede to understand when they listen to somebody or a recording in English, and students' point of view of using podcasting. This interview was conducted to six students randomly chosen. Four questions were asked.

A post interview was conducted to describe students' opinion of the intervention. There were six questions about: podcasting, problems in listening for specific details, comprehension of longer audios, skills students developed during the intervention, and possible distractors while listening to recordings in English.

Due to students' proficiency level, the interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Students could answer in the language they felt most comfortable with. This raised the reliability and accuracy of the answers.

To analyze the data, the answers were coded into main and sub-categories to answer the research question. Some citations were added to support the interpretation of the researcher.

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### **Survey**

A survey was applied to know if students have devices to record their voices, if they have ever listened to a podcast, if they have recorded their voices for their English classes before, and the type of stories they prefer to listen to. This survey helped to describe the participants' background and to get information about their preferences to plan the class. This survey has four items. Students have to check Yes or No. This survey was adapted from Pinto (2019).

### **Class notes and students' reflections**

Weekly students answered questions about their experience with listening to the recordings. This was used to describe the process that students undergo. Their initial difficulties and the way they overcome them.

The teacher took notes of observations about behavior, challenges and gains during the intervention. These notes were taken during the implementation. They were focused on students' difficulties when listening, their performance and improvement in listening. It included the date, to organize the information and report them.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

This section summarizes the results. They are organized according to the research questions. Next the findings for the first research question. It was about the effect of using authentic online resources in students' listening comprehension. Table 2 displays the results of the pretest and posttest and the descriptive statistics obtained. Main findings from the tests are that there were students that at the beginning did not comprehend anything but they reached a minimum of 2 points at the end (the band of the test goes from 0-nothing to 5-excellent). There were students that understand but were not excellent. There was also an improvement in the maximum grade obtained. The mean improved more than half points.

The standard deviation was reduced in the posttest which indicates the scores were closer to the mean than in the pretest. The p value is a measure that indicates if the results obtained were due to intervention. If that is the case, it is expected that p is  $<0.005$ . In this case, the results were  $p=0.000$  which rejects the Null hypothesis: Students do not improve their listening comprehension when they are exposed to authentic material.

**Table 2**

*Experimental group: Comparison or pretest and posttest results*

	Min	Max	Mean	SD	<i>p</i> value
Pretest	0.00	3.00	1.50	0.8271	0.00
Posttest	2.00	5.00	3.35	.6708	



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Results of the control group determine some commonalities with the experimental group. There were students whose listening comprehension was null at the beginning. The same maximum grade was obtained. There are some differences too. First, the results of the minimum grade improved a little bit. The results of the maximum grade did not vary. The mean is higher in the posttest which indicates that the scores are dispersed. The  $p$  value indicates that these results are statistically significant.

**Table 3**

*Control group: Comparison or pretest and posttest results*

	Min	Max	Mean	SD	$p$ value
Pretest	0.00	3.00	1.25	0.9104	0.00
Posttest	1.00	3.00	1.55	0.6863	

These results confirm that the application of online resources improve students' listening comprehension. Both groups (experimental and control) had some similarities in the pretest. However, there are differences in the posttest. The experimental group outperformed the control group. Results are statistically significant. The alternative hypothesis is accepted: Students who are exposed to online audios perform better than students that are not exposed to online audios.

The second question (What are the factors that prevent EFL A1 students to understand an authentic track?) is answered with the learning logs students completed during the intervention, a pre and post interview, and teacher's field notes.

In the learning logs, students reported as a main difficulty that they could not differentiate between specific information (e.g. names and dates) and words in English. They wrote: *There are rare words used in other cultures.* This made it difficult for them

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to complete the activities after the audios. One student pointed out: *I did not know what detail I was asked in the activity*. Another difficulty was understanding the accent. At the beginning, they could not get the accent. They mentioned: *The accent of foreigners is different from Ecuadorians or the teacher*. They also indicated they were not used to listening to this type of recordings. Lastly, they said that the audios were too fast.

Another instrument was the interview. Two interviews were conducted one at the beginning and another at the end. Before the intervention, students mentioned the following difficulties: foreigners speak too fast and they cannot understand the pronunciation and the accent. One student mentioned that he did not get the main idea because he did not know much English. A couple of students stated that they had not practiced before. Another pair said that it is a new language and it is different from their L1 (Spanish). These difficulties result in students null or very low understanding of the recording. In the interview conducted at the end of the intervention, students recognized that they comprehend better the audios and they still have a little of difficulty when the audios are longer.

In the question related to distractors, they agreed that the external noise distract them easily. They mentioned the noise made by their relatives, that there were workshops nearby and they are noisy, besides the noise made by the cars that passed by their homes. Another distractor is internet. One student said he got distracted by Tik Tok. Lastly, a couple of students said their parents (mother or father) asked them to do house chores and that was also a distractor.

From the teacher-researcher's perspectives, students' difficulties were recorded in the field notes. At the beginning, students had some complications during the listening activities. The main stressor was connectivity. Some students had internet

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connection problems. They entered the class with their mobile data and not with wi-fi. The audios were difficult due to students' lack of exposition to authentic recordings during classes and outside them. This deficiency impacted students' performance in finding or identifying specific information like dates and places.

During the implementation, the first audios were difficult. A reason for that difficulty was the American and British accent because students are used to their teacher's accent mainly. Students were frustrated. To lessen students' difficulties, they got feedback after they listened to the audios. The field notes, the teacher wrote: *"Students asked for repetition. They did not understand the audio. Scaffolding and feedback were provided"*. Visuals were added to improve their comprehension of the content of the audios. Students' lack of vocabulary was a challenge. The teacher had to pre-teach vocabulary. The band width of internet reduced the quality of the audios, this was worsened in students with low economic resources. They did not have optimal resources to study. However, students showed a positive attitude. They collaborated and participated actively.

The last question (What are students' perceptions of online audios?) is also answered with the learning logs, interview and field notes.

In the learning logs, students showed positive reactions to the use of the audios. They all had comments like: good, important, interesting, useful, fun, and motivating. This feeling was also shared in the pre-interview, students demonstrated a positive attitude towards the use of short stories. They added that they were good if there were short and easy stories. One of the participants stated: *"It was easy if the recording is short"*.

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Among the benefits, they mentioned that listening to online audios motivate them to listen because the accent is real. They helped them differentiation between the accent of locals and foreigners. Students found positive the content. They mentioned that they learned about the culture of other countries. Another benefit is that they listen to other people not only the teacher. In the interview, they repeated they liked the stories and the activities. They said they were interesting and nice.

In the post-interview, they realized that they improved their listening comprehension due to their concentration, the repetition of the audios, and the constant practice. One student added that the graphics also helped to get a main idea of the audio. One student mentioned: *The repetition of the audios helped to recognized the information.*

In the field notes, it can be said that the benefits are that students improved their comprehension. Their performance was better at the end. The time to answer and do the comprehension activities was reduced. For most students, listening to online audios was an easy task. They expanded their vocabulary knowledge. Some teacher's notes were: *"I did not have to repeat the audios. Most students got the main idea in the first attempt."*

Regarding the challenges, they said that it is difficult to listen to foreigners. They added that something that facilitated their comprehension was the teacher support and the constant practice with authentic audios. They added: *we are not used to real audios.* Therefore, they suggested including them in their English classes. Lastly, they recognized that this practice helped them improve their listening comprehension in English and improve their grades in the evaluations.

Another factor that prevents students from understanding the audios are the distractors. In the post-interview, students mentioned that some distractors are external

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noise. They listed: noise at home, of siblings, of my parents' workplace, and of nearby businesses. One participant said "*the car workshop of next door was noisy*". They also said that their parents asked them to help with house chores. Internet was another distractor that was mentioned.

Lastly, the emotional status of students and their low motivation is a challenge reported in the field notes. This added to students' lack of vocabulary and lack of exposure to authentic material within and outside school boundaries. The teacher's notes indicate "*I had to motivate students to listen and try*".

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Conclusions

According to the results, authentic online audios have an impact on beginners EFL students' listening comprehension. These positive results agree with those of other others who used online audios in previous studies (Abdulrahman, Basalama & Widodo, 2018; Al-Musallan, 2009; Miller, 2005; Smidt & Hegelheimer, 2010; Thanajaro, 2000). Even though, Smidt and Hegelheimer (2010) implemented their study with intermediate studies. This research confirmed that beginner students can also benefit from online audio resources. As stated by students, online audios are interesting, and motivating.

The factors that prevent EFL A1 students to understand an authentic track are shared by the international community. One of that factor is the lack of exposure to audios that are real. Students are not used to listen to authentic audios in their regular classes. This is shared by Abdulrahman et al. (2018). Authors like Smidt and Hegelheimer (2010) added that other limitations are lack of understanding due to speed of the delivery and basic vocabulary knowledge. Participants of this study expressed those as difficulties they had too. They said that foreigners speak too fast. It was hard for them to differentiate the type of words or identify if it was a proper or common noun.

Results of this study match Abdulrahman et al. (2018) comments about the low percentage of understanding of students. The experimental and the control group of this study had low performance at the beginning. They understood almost nothing or very little. During the intervention, students with practice and feedback improved their comprehension. Students reported that they did not understand specific information. In this regard, Cakir (2018) mentioned that in the listening comprehension process people

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make meaning. It is inferred that participants of this study did not make meaning because they wanted to understand every single word of the recording. That means they were first decoding the audio, as stated by Amari and Gorjian (2019).

The low performance of the students may be due to the lack of exposure to authentic audios. Students in the interviews and in the learning logs indicated that they are not used to listening to authentic audios. Al-Nafisah (2019) warned of several features that commercial books have and some practices teachers do to make listening comprehension easy to students. Commercial books lack features of authentic material. In addition, the author said that teachers can speak slowly to make sure students understand, they can also highlight some words to provide hints to students, and they can adapt the content to the level of the students. This easiness of classroom “listening” make it very difficult for students to understand authentic audios. Additionally, some authors (Field, 2008; Graham, 1997, 2006; Graham et al., 2010; Nation & Newton, 2009; Siegel, 2014; Siegel & Siegel, 2015) coincided that most L2 teachers do not know how to teach L2 listening effectively.

To lessen the difficulties, the teacher-researcher added visuals and pre-taught vocabulary to aid students in the comprehension. Students recalled that visuals helped them to understand the general idea. The main idea or identifying the topic of a conversation is a listening sub-skill. The Council of Europe (2018) described that listening can be accompanied by visuals. However, this is not a practice that Abdulrahman et al. (2018) recommends. Al-Nafisah (2019) disagreed with that idea, because with visuals or interacting with others the listeners take advantage of body language and tone of voice to help themselves identify the main idea.

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Another strategy that may have resulted in the positive results are the repetitions. There was constant practice. Students could listen to the audio more than once. In this venue, the Council of Europe (2018) implied a type of accommodation that can be provided by repetitions.

In the bands of the Common European Framework of Reference, it is stated that students should listen for specific information and get the main idea (Council of Europe, 2018). These were mentioned by students as difficulties. The reasons were that English is very different from Spanish, the pronunciation of the speakers, and the accent of foreigners.

Regarding the content, Al-Nafisah (2019) pointed out that listeners have some expectations of the content. Participants of this study showed they were interested in listening to authentic recordings. They found interesting to know about other cultures and being exposed to other accents different from the ones they are used to. They were so motivated that they recommended the use of these audios in English lessons. This increase in motivation was also reported in Al-Musallam (2009).

It can be said that students did not understand at the beginning due to the lack of exposure to authentic audios. At the end, they improved their performance in the tests. The teacher-researcher observed that students reduced the times of the repetitions and the time to answer correctly the listening comprehension tasks. This was shared by Renandya and Farrell (2019). They advocated strong L2 exposure rather than instructional interventions. These authors compared the exposition to L1 can be applied in L2 to develop listening skills without explicit instruction.

Even though the positive results, there were some limitations due to technology. The economic level of some students prevent them from having a device to be used only



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by them. In some cases, they had to share with another member of the family. Others did not have a good internet connection. They used data from their mobile devices. These limitations resulted in poor quality of the recordings, frustration, and decrease students' interest in the class.

In conclusion, this study has shed light to reduce some gaps. First, students need to reach standards set by the authorities. International reports place Ecuador in a very low proficiency level of English. The results shared in this document determine that by including online audios students improve their performance in this receptive skill.

Second, the use of technology in this study confirmed that it is motivating to students. The easiness of using Podcast and its availability make it a user-friendly application. This can also aid students in reducing their difficulties when they listen to authentic conversations in English.

Third, the scope of this study was listening comprehension. Future research can focus on the impact of online audios in productive skills like speaking, especially in pronunciation; and, writing by measuring vocabulary development and accuracy in grammar.

Fourth, there are some challenges and difficulties but the benefits surpass them. Students are motivated and engaged in classes where they are exposed to the real accent of foreigners, to a pronunciation that is different from their teachers, and a content that they find interesting. They may be found difficult at the beginning but constant practice will help students overcome those difficulties.

Lastly, it was found that some research is needed in strategies and how to teach this skill. Al-Nafisah (2019) highlighted that the pre, during, and post activities usually

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seen in class are not yielding positive results. Teachers can bring some reality to their classes with the use of online authentic audios.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Pre and Posttest**

[https://www.examenglish.com/A2/A2\\_listening.htm](https://www.examenglish.com/A2/A2_listening.htm)

[https://www.examenglish.com/A2/A2\\_listening\\_describing\\_people.htm](https://www.examenglish.com/A2/A2_listening_describing_people.htm)

## Appendix 2

### Pre-Interview

1. What do you consider is the main problem when you are listening in English? (you don't understand the information/the topic; it depends on the person speaking: foreigner, a Latin person, or a classmate; you don't understand the pronunciation; people speak quickly.

*¿Cuál consideras es el principal problema cuando estás escuchando en inglés? No entiende la información/el tema; depende si es un extranjero o si es una persona latina o si es un compañero; no entiende la pronunciación; hablan muy rápido.*

2. When you listen, what things distract you easily? (other people, other sounds, it depends on where you are, it depends on what you are listening to.)

*¿Cuándo escuchas, qué cosas te distraen fácilmente? (otras personas, otros sonidos, depende de donde esté, depende de qué esté escuchando).*

3. If you listen a recording, can you recognize specific details? Do you understand the main idea?

*¿Si escuchar una grabación, puedes reconocer detalles específicos? ¿Entiende la idea principal/general del audio?*

4. Would you like to create a short story and share it with your classmates? Would you like to listen to your peers' stories?

*¿Te gustaría crear una historia corta y compartirla con tus compañeros? ¿Te gustaría escuchar las historias creadas por tus compañeros?*

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Post-interview**

1. Did you enjoy the different short stories?

*¿Disfrutaste las diferentes historias cortas?*

2. Do you still have problems when listening for specific details? Main ideas?

*¿Aun tienes problemas cuando escuchas detalles específicos? ¿la idea principal?*

3. Are you ready to comprehend longer audios?

*¿Estás preparado/a para comprender audios más extensos?*

4. During the process, which activity helped you to recognize specific details? Main ideas?

*Durante el proceso, ¿Qué actividad te ayudo a reconocer los detalles específicos? ¿idea principal?*

5. What distract you when you listen to English recordings?

*¿Qué lo distrae cuando escucha audios en inglés?*

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## Appendix 4

### Survey

Put a check (✓) on the box to select your answer.

Questions	YES	NO
1. Do you have access to a device to record voice to learn English (cellphone or voice recorder)? <i>¿Tiene usted acceso a un grabador de voz para aprender inglés (celular o grabadora de voz)?</i>		
2. Have you ever listened to short stories recording? <i>¿Alguna vez has escuchado grabaciones de historias cortas?</i>		
3. Have you ever used a device to record your voice in your English classes? <i>¿Alguna vez has usado un dispositivo para grabar tu voz en sus clases de inglés?</i>		
4. Which kind of short stories do you prefer? <i>¿Qué tipo de historias cortas prefiere?</i> <i>Fairy tale (cuentos de hadas)</i> <i>Personal stories (historias personales)</i> <i>Other (otros: por ejemplo: canciones)</i>		

0

Adapted from Pinto (2019).

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## **Appendix 5**

### **Class Notes**

Date:

Students' difficulties when listening

Students improvements

[Escriba aquí]

## **Appendix 6**

### **Students' Reflections**

After listening activities, students answered these questions. This was done once a week.

What distracts you when you listen to English?

¿qué me distrae cuando escucho en inglés?

What difficulties do you have to understand the audio? (main idea, specific ideas, details)

¿qué dificultades tengo para entender el audio? (la idea principal/general y detalles)

What should you do to improve those difficulties?

¿qué debo hacer para mejorar esas dificultades?



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## Appendix 7

### SPSS Results

T-test to determine if the results are statistically different. Experimental and control group are compared. The data from the pretest and posttest of both groups were used.

The screenshot displays the IBM SPSS Statistics Viewer interface. The main window shows the output of a T-Test for Paired Samples. The output is organized into three sections: Paired Samples Statistics, Paired Samples Correlations, and Paired Samples Test.

**T-Test**

T-TEST PAIRS=VAR00001 VAR00002 WITH VAR00003 VAR00004 (PAIRED)  
/CRITERIA=CI (.9500)  
/MISSING=ANALYSIS.

**Paired Samples Statistics**

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 VAR00001	1,5000	20	,82717	,18496
VAR00003	1,2500	20	,91047	,20359
Pair 2 VAR00002	3,3500	20	,67092	,15000
VAR00004	1,5500	20	,68633	,15347

**Paired Samples Correlations**

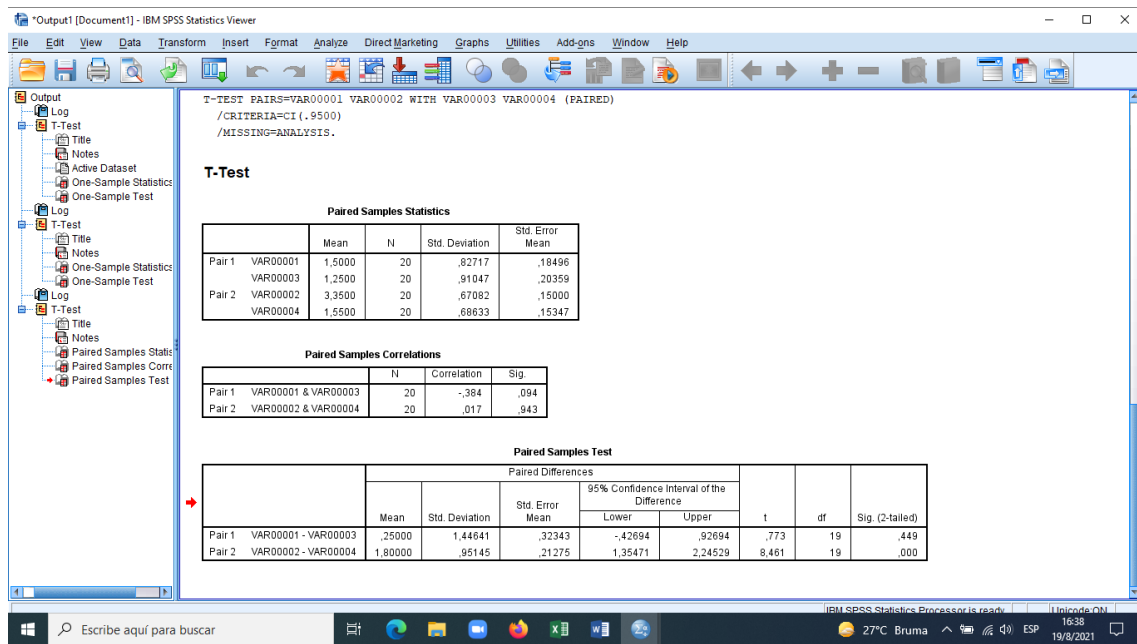
	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 VAR00001 & VAR00003	20	-,384	,094
Pair 2 VAR00002 & VAR00004	20	,017	,943

**Paired Samples Test**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Differences		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 VAR00001 - VAR00003	,25000	1,44641	,32343	-,42694	,92694	,773	19	,449
Pair 2 VAR00002 - VAR00004	1,80000	,95145	,21275	1,35471	2,24529	8,461	19	,000

Pretest and posttest results of the experimental group.

[Escriba aquí]



Pretest and posttest results of the control group.

