Topic:

A METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY THAT INTEGRATES ONLINE PLATFORMS TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS FOR INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH STUDENTS

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Author:

Ana Alexandra Solis Carrasco

Director:

Mg. Verónica Gissela Jarrín Escobar

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Author:

Ana Alexandra Solis Carrasco

Verónica Gissela Jarrín Escobar, Mg. f.....

MEMBER

María Augusta Villacrés Camino,Mg. f.....

MEMBER

Andrea Cristina Salazar Carranco,Mg. f.....

MEMBER

Juan Carlos Acosta Teneda,P.PhD. f.....

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RESUMEN

El presente trabajo de investigación nace de la necesidad de brindar a profesores y estudiantes del idioma inglés una estrategia metodológica innovadora para practicar y mejorar la destreza escuchar. Para cumplir el proceso de la comunicación es necesario comprender lo que el otro dice de forma que sea posible reaccionar a dichos mensajes. Los estudiantes que participaron en la investigación comprenden un grupo de 30 personas, 13 hombres y 17 mujeres del nivel intermedio, pertenecientes al Departamento de Lenguas y Lingüística de la Pontifica Universidad Católica del Ecuador sede Ambato. El método aplicado fue el empírico-analítico, el cual se basa en las experiencias de los estudiantes y porque se tomó en cuenta las variables que se analizaron en particular para resolver la problemática. La investigación cumplió un proceso descriptivo y explicativo bajo una investigación cuantitativa-cualitativa. Para la recolección de datos se utilizaron entrevistas y encuestas. Además, fue necesario un pre-test para conocer el nivel de comprensión al escuchar. Luego se aplicó la estrategia metodológica para finalmente aplicar un post-test para identificar los cambios luego de la intervención. Los resultados mostraron mejora en la comprensión al escuchar, además de altos niveles de motivación para continuar usando las plataformas en línea además de mejorar no solo la destreza de escuchar sino también las otras destrezas del lenguaje.

Palabras clave: estrategia metodológica, destreza escuchar, nivel intermedio, intervención, idioma Inglés.

ABSTRACT

This research work arises from the need to provide teachers and students of English language with an innovative methodological strategy to practice and improve students' listening skills. In order to fulfill the communication process, it is necessary to understand what the other person says, so that it is possible to react to those messages. The students who participated in this research comprised a group of 30 people, 13 men and 17 women at the intermediate level who belong to the Department of Languages and Linguistics of the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador, Ambato. The applied method was the empirical-analytical, which is based on the experiences of the intermediate level students because it took into account the variables that were analyzed in particular to solve the problem. The research fulfilled a descriptive and explanatory process under quantitative-qualitative research. The instruments used for data collection were interviews and surveys. In addition, a pre-test was necessary to know the level of listening comprehension. Then, the methodological strategy that uses online platforms was applied. Finally, a post-test to identify the changes after the intervention was required. The results demonstrated the improvement of the listening skills, as well as high levels of motivation to continue using the online platforms not only for listening skills, but also for the other language skills.

Keywords: methodological strategy, listening skills, intermediate level, intervention, English language.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization has encouraged people all around the world to try to be part of it. Communication is the tool to know what is happening everywhere and English is the language that is spoken and understood in many countries. It is the language for business, education, tourism and many other different fields. English does not belong anymore to native English speakers but to the people who use it. According to some studies, the majority of English users are non-native English speakers that is why in most countries it is mandatory to learn English. Another important mean of communication is definitely the technology; it has changed humans' lives in all aspects. The world is facing a terrible pandemic that has pushed every single person to find new ways to be communicated and continue working by using internet and make use of the variety of applications to make people's lives simpler. Education is immersed in these challenging changes. It has not been easier for educators to adapt their methodologies to the new generation's needs. However, teachers and students are doing their best to meet the goals.

Learning a new language requires effort and the challenge is bigger considering the fact that most of classes are taught virtually. It is important to analyze how the learning and teaching process of the English language is being affected by technology. Learning English involves a series of processes to develop the four skills. Each skill needs specific activities to be carried out so students accomplish the language´s aim, which is communication. Listening is the skill that most of students at intermediate level find difficult to develop. When people understand what others say they can react and then, the communication starts. Listening is very important to learn English because it provides input to language students.

Many investigations have been carried out in order to find new methodologies that can help to foster this important skill. Hassan (2000), mentions that listening comprehension helps the acquisition and development of other language skills. Nowadays there are many applications that provide students with input through videos, pod casts, games, music and some others, which help students to feel motivated to continue learning by making use of technology and innovative platforms

which is something they use very well. There is a need to carry out an analysis and to come up with new practical methodological strategies aimed to improve and overcome the shortcomings found in the acquisition of listening skill in intermediate students. Early foreign- language learning is also integrally link to the development of intercultural understanding, empathy, self-awareness and respect for others (Bland, 2015) This research pretends to give an alternative for students to practice and improve the listening skill using online platforms.

General Objective:

To validate the methodological strategy that integrates online platforms to improve listening skills for intermediate English students.

Specific Objectives:

1. To base the theoretical and methodological references that support the teaching of English as a Second Language based on the English Language Learning Teaching Process of the Listening skill.
2. To diagnose the degree of understanding of students when listening.
3. To design a methodological strategy that integrates online platforms to improve listening skills for intermediate English students.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of the methodological strategy that integrates online platforms to improve listening skills for intermediate English students.

The method to be applied is the empirical-analytical, which will be based on the intermediate students' experiences and analytical because it will take into account the variables that will be analyzed in particular to solve the problematic. The research is descriptive and explicative process under a quantitative and a qualitative investigation. A group of students that correspond to intermediate English level will take part of this investigation. The degree of listening understanding will be diagnosed in the group of students. Then, the intervention will take place, which consist on applying a methodological strategy that integrates online platforms to improve listening skills for intermediate English students. It will be used the guide suggested to follow to do listening activities in National Geographic Learning

textbooks Life. After this step, a post test will be applied to be able to measure the effectiveness of the methodological strategy. The expected results have to be with the improvement of students listening skill throughout the use of online platforms. Chapter I offers the theoretical framework about a Methodological Strategy that integrated Online Platforms in order to have a clear idea of the variables that have been considered for this study. Chapter II, which refers to methodology, describes all aspects taken into account. It includes type of research and research approach, population and sample, type of data collection, data processing and analysis and also, the research proposal. Chapter III presents the analysis of the results, which consist on the validation, analysis and evaluation of the results in relation to the application of the methodological strategy. In addition, the results achieved from the proposal are presented, considering the scope proposed in the general objective.

CHAPTER I: STATE OF THE ART

This research project contemplates two variables: methodological strategy that integrates online platforms which involves an analysis of the effectiveness of the application of a strategy. The dependent variable: listening skills, which is directly affected by the methodological strategy. The literature review goes through every single term that can help to understand how these two variables can work together to solve a problem that many students face every day when trying to understand what other people say in English.

1.1. Listening skills

Listening is one of the most important abilities to make communication happen. Its importance has been mentioned by many language researchers and one of them says that “Listening ability is one of the most important skills in foreign language learning” (Hamouda, 2013). It is a receptive skill and it is the first skill human beings do unconsciously and consciously. Listening helps to the language see and appreciate the beauty of the language (D.Renukadevi, 2014). Through listening people can receive, interpret and react to what others say. According to some authors, the listening skill contributes in a high percentage to the communication process. When people do not understand what other people are saying it is impossible to react to that message, so the communication is stopped.

The development of listening skills has been a topic to investigate for teachers and many people involved in the teaching and learning process of English as a second language. According to (Downs, 2008), listening can be defined as the effort to hear something by paying attention. However, it is relevant to differentiate the listening process and the hearing process, which is to absorb sounds. Based on this idea, the author says that although a person can hear well, he or she cannot be a good listener. There are many aspects to consider when talking about the development of listening skills because to be able to listen and understand is the result of a kind of complex process. Producing English language can simply not happen if the input people get is not understood or it is misunderstood.

There are some studies regarding to language acquisition that show that when people communicate, 45% of language competence is gained from listening (D.Renukadevi, 2014). Unfortunately, the time that is used in the classrooms to develop this skill is not enough. It is mandatory that teachers pay special attention to the development of listening skills making use of the different strategies that are found in the literature and based on the teaching experiences in the classrooms. It is important to make use of every tool so that students can develop the language competence is an easy and practical way and to do that, teachers must be interested in acquiring the competences to give students the opportunity to feel confident regarding to their language learning process.

In the exact moment a human being starts sharing with others the first skills that is developed is the listening. Babies don`t understand everything they listen but as much input they have as better their listening skills are. The process to communicate starts with listening. The developing of the listening process in English language learners starts in almost the same way people learn their mother's tongue, which means there is a silent time just to listen (input) without the necessity to produce the language and this process also happens with English language learners. When learners start studying a second language they get as much input as possible to understand and differentiate the sounds, the logical order of the words and everything that has to be with the spoken production before they start producing the language (Feyten, 1991).

To communicate in English properly it is very important to develop the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, the role of listening is definitely crucial. It is like the prerequisite that a second language student needs to make the language learning process easier and to be a successful English language user (Ockay & Wgner, 2018). Unfortunately, this is a skill which has been forgotten in the classrooms. Some teachers attribute little attention to the development of listening skills to the short time they have during the classes since sometimes they care more about grammar than to the skills development.

1.2. Listening Comprehension - Challenges

It is relevant to first be aware of what the word challenge means. A challenge is when someone faces a situation that needs a lot of effort to accomplish a goal such as testing a person's ability (Cambridge University Press, 2022).The listening skill is considered as the most challenging skill to develop. It has been an issue that worries teachers and students. Time ago some English teachers considered that the listening skill is something that students are able to develop by themselves. However, most teachers might agree that it is not a passive process but a complex active process. Thus, teachers must be aware of learners' listening difficulties to understand what they are saying or listening tracks used in the English classes.

Learners struggle with understanding what they listen because during the English classes, teachers seem to be more concentrated in English grammar, vocabulary, reading and speaking when they are designing their classes (Saraswaty, 2018). Unfortunately, what is happening is that teachers are just testing students listening skills although students are not trained in the developing of this skill. On the other hand, it can be also mentioned that some textbooks don`t pay attention to the development of the listening skills.

When reflecting about the moment the ability to speak happens, listening comes to discussion. To be efficient pronouncing the words, which involves having a good intonation, figuring out where to stress the words, being aware of how words sound isolated or in a phrase or sentence, then the importance of input by listening is valuable in the language learning process. The more a language learner understand other people speaking in English, the more proficiency is shown when producing a language. The importance of developing the receipting skills is a relevant aspect to the whole process in a way to have as much exposure as possible to the target language

Listening is considered as a mental process that includes the way the listener perceives the information, the attention, the cognition and also it can be mentioned

that the memory pays an important role. Some others aspects to consider is to know the speech sounds, understand the meaning of words and the sentence syntax is a factor that requires a lot of attention when trying to understand what is listened. When listening something and not be able to understand produces a lot stress to the learners and it is basically because there is not chance to listen it back as happens with reading. If a person does not get the message, he/she reads it is easier just read back, try to find the unknown words and then the learner can decode the message and understand it.

There are some other aspects that language learners express every time they share ideas of how difficult it is for them to understand English speakers. Rate, pronunciation, different accents, very limited vocabulary, the stress level learners face at the moment of trying to understand along with the lack of background information, poor teachers' methodologies to help students to develop the listening skills are the most common aspects that stop the listening process.

Learners' difficulties to comprehend what they listen can happen because of problems related to the listening task activities, listening text and lecture's methodology (Hamouda, 2013). Regarding to what has been mentioned before it is crucial that teachers can provide with new methodologies that can guide students to develop this skill which is considered the basis to acquire the other skills essential to learn a second language.

Another factor that is imperative to mention is the time language learners use to practice listening skills considering they are not living in an English environment, and they do not need the English language for their daily life. They just have a little or do not have any real listening, no memories or social experiences (Darti & Asmawati, 2017) which makes the development of listening skills a lot more difficult. The English language learning process is simpler if the person has the opportunity to be surrounded by people who speak the target language.

Sound discrimination, grammar structures, background knowledge, stress, pronunciation and intonation are some aspects that influence in the process of comprehend oral input (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). This study aims to help teachers and students to use a methodological strategy that can support learners to improve their listening comprehension in a way that they can make use of what is something they know well “technology”.

1.3. Teachers’ role

The different methodologies teachers used in the past to teach English has clearly changed since the moment teachers understood that the basis to start the language acquisition process depends on the quality of input that learners get. Nowadays teachers use English almost all of the time so that students have the opportunity to be exposed to the target language. Through the development of this receptive skill, learners are getting the tool they will need to go to the next step which is the advancement of the productive skills (speaking). Currently, listening has a very important role in the classrooms. (Solak & Erdem, 2016), consider that the listening skill is not a passive skill but an active one based on the premise that human’s brain is totally active during the hearing process. Based on this consideration, it is mandatory teachers use a wide variety of strategies to activate the hearing process as it was set before.

English teachers must be aware of some aspects to look at before teaching a listening class, such as:

1) Be a very good input resource for the students, which means to have good speaking abilities.

2) Classify the most suitable listening material to teach (textbooks, authentic material, tracks, recordings, among others).

3) Carefully check the listening material in advance before using it.

4) Teach any new vocabulary in advance to prevent misunderstandings or high stress levels.

5) Create a friendly learning environment for students.

1.4. Listening stages

As it was said before, listening is considered as a complex skill to develop reason why teachers must update their knowledge regarding to new strategies to teach this skill. Those strategies must be good enough to get students' attention. To develop a listening activity, it is relevant to give students a context before they do any listening activity because it makes a lot more difficult to understand if they have no idea of the topic they will listen about. Thus, pre-listening activities must be provided before doing listening activities. (Wilson, 2008), establishes that there are two stages to contemplate in the pre-listening stage: the first one is to activate the schemata so that students can predict what they will listen about. The teacher can use different material for this purpose (brainstorming, visuals, small talks, crosswords, among others) and the second one suggests that teachers have to be sure their students know very well the reason to listen in order to make it a meaningful activity.

After the pre-listening step, it comes the "while listening" step which basically consists on letting students to listen for the first time. At this step, it is convenient to ask students to check in pair or groups some essential information they could get, that makes them feel confident to continue developing the activity. Some authors have expressed that students should listen only once because that is what happens in real life. However, the students' anxiety level goes up and that can stop the learning process and their motivation could also be affected. Teachers' role regarding to the fact previously mentioned is to do a deep class analysis about the kind of group and the special necessities they have. It is suggested a maximum of three times to listen to avoid the lack of interest in the activity (Wilson, 2008).

To conclude the listening sequence, it is important to check any straits students may have had (vocabulary, pronunciation, accent, intonation). The recommendation is to do it with the whole class, in that way they would feel more confident. This last step is considered as a reflective stage since students go through a thinking, discussing, reflecting and also students deal with the developing of the asked activity (Underhood, 1989). The support teachers give at this step is far-reaching to meet the goal established for the listening lesson.

(Wilson, 2008), suggests some stages to be considered to complete properly a listening activity: reflecting, checking and summarizing, discussion, information exchange, deconstructing and reconstruction the listening text, among others are the stages to highlight for this research purpose. The listed stages mentioned requires teachers' effective lesson planning process to prevent a backbreaking work for both teachers and students. The idea is that after applying these post-reading stages, students can be motivated to keep on working in the listening skills improvement. Furthermore, the stress level would surely go down which is a positive factor to meet the goals.

1.5.. **Listening - Methodology**

The word methodology points out to different principles that a teacher uses to make the language learning process successful. Teachers are the ones who decide which methodology to use in their classes. Those methodologies could be the ones that some others teachers have already used and worked well or what happens most of the time teachers design their own methodologies based in their teaching experience. For this purpose, teachers must consider some aspects such as the group of students they have, students' age, and students' background just to mention some. Teachers are always trying to find the best methodology to help learners meet their language goals.

It is important to be well prepared teachers. Teachers must be people who are always ready to learn something new. There are some aspects to think about to

develop teaching skills. (Gebhard, 2006), highlights that a teacher needs to read a lot books, academic articles, attend to seminars to get knowledge on ESL teaching. Building a mentoring relationship with other teachers, which means to share experiences, give and receive support. This involvement would enrich the teaching process. Hence, this author recommends teachers to learn another language because in that way they would understand the different situations learners have to deal with during the classes.

The skill to transform the theories to the practice in the classrooms is a big challenge in the journey of looking for the best method. The book entitled “Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching” by (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), presents a review of the approaches and methods that starts when the communicative methodologies appeared: the Communicative Language Teaching, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Whole Language, Competency- Based Language Teaching, Task- Based Language Teaching, The Lexical Approach, Multiple Intelligences and Cooperative Language Learning are the ones which are analyzed. In the next lines, a review of each approach and their influence in the development of listening skills will be presented.

Communicative Language Teaching appeared in 1970s.This approach supports the idea that the communicative competence in a real-life scenario is the first that must be developed by providing students with real input (native English speakers, real TV news, real newspaper articles, etc). Also, teachers must be highly qualified to meet the learners’ language goals (Al Asmari, 2015). Something that is important to highlight is that the role of the teacher is different. It is a learner-centered approach, which is definitely a big challenge since the traditional approaches were still trying to survive.

Teachers become the facilitators of the learning process, which means to choose the best materials, to be a constant motivator, to organize very well classroom activities among other roles. (Savignon, 2007), thinks that CLT aim is to implement methodologies to boost the language learner’s ability by involving them in authentic

communication. In the development of listening skill, it means the necessity of giving students the chance to listen to English native speakers.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) firstly appeared in Europe in the 1990s.This approach defends the idea that the different subjects must be taught through a foreign language in this case English. It is worth noting that currently there are some schools, high schools and universities in Ecuador that are carrying out educational programs based on CLIL. The input students get to develop their listening skills are the teachers' lectures while teaching any subject (Mathematics, Literature, Chemistry, Science, etc.). (Arnó-Macia & Mancho-Barés, 2015) mention that since English has become the language mostly used in research and instruction the link between content and language is relevant even though there is still a debate on this topic.

The Whole Language approach is also an approach that started in the 1980's.It was so popular in America and it is still popular in some educational contexts. (Ling, 2012), affirms that "Whole Language" is not only a teaching method, it is considered as a whole theory regarding to language teaching, principles that are guiding classroom teaching processes. This author mentions that learners should put emphasis on understanding everything as a whole. In listening, it means to comprehend the general message and no only part of it. The teachers' role is to guide learners to actively acquire the language being not only a knowledge- passer. Instead, an encourager who is always trying to get the best from the students.

Competency- Based Language Teaching approach emerges from the necessity to innovate the teaching processes. According to (Makulova, et al., 2015) this approach aims is not to transfer knowledge only but, guiding learners to develop their competences to be able to acquire their own knowledge so that, learners can apply their knowledge by performing different activities. It is important to highlight that competence is a combination of three important aspects: knowledge, skills and abilities which would lead learners to notice by themselves how effective they can be in the moment of applying the knowledge in their daily learning process and in

the future in their professional life. Since the development of skills is an essential element of this approach, regarding to listening skills it is necessary that students can show how competent they are at the moment of comprehend what they listen.

Task- Based Language Teaching is an approach that came up contrary to the traditional methodologies which implies engage learners in different specific tasks in order to explore learners' natural language abilities. There is a communicative use of language, which entail an experiential process since the premise of learning by doing, which involves active learning and learners' own discoveries (Ellis, 2017). Constant feedback is an element of this approach. It pursues to make any kind of input comprehensible in that way learners are motivated to produce a coherent communication. Hence, this approach promotes the participation and cooperation between teachers and students in a natural language use. Listening comprehension occurs by input and also by the interaction that the designed task creates.

Lexical approach refers to a teaching methodology supported by Michael Lewis in the 1990's. This approach basically defends the idea that the language learning occurs when words are combined to make lexical phrases and not just based on grammatical structures (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). When second language learners are able to understand the different expressions while listening, then, they are ready to copy the pattern and use those expressions to communicate their thoughts and feelings. The human brain can store and process lexical chunks as individual wholes and it is easier for language learners to remember a piece of information (a word, an expression) than a group of words (Schmitt, 2000).

Multiple Intelligences approach tries to explain the many different ways learners acquire information or learn something. (Gardner, 1993), supports the idea that human beings are not born with all intelligences they need to perform different human activities. The author also is against to the idea that people have only one intelligence related to the knowledge. He explains that there are eight different intelligences: Logical-mathematical intelligence, Linguistic intelligence, Spatial

Intelligence, Musical Intelligence, Bodily-kinesthetic Intelligence, Intrapersonal Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence, Naturalistic intelligence.

(Armstrong, 2017), claims that is mandatory for teachers be aware of the different learning styles and strengths the students have in order to find the best methodology or strategy to help them in the language acquisition. Based on this multiple intelligences teachers should plan their classes trying a variety of activities so that every student have the opportunity to perform according to the intelligence that they possess because it is important to consider learners' own ability to comprehend what they listen in concordance to the intelligence that is mostly developed (Mahdavy, 2008).

Cooperative Language Learning refers to "a systematic instructional method in which students work together in small groups to accomplish shared learning goals" (Zhang, 2010). Many cooperative activities are used in the classroom. The teacher is a facilitator of the learning process. There is a lot of respectful interaction between students, which creates a friendly learning environment, reducing the anxiety levels. Listening is certainly a skill that requires concentration and it is important to provide students with a variety of resources (input) to motivate them to work in their groups. However, (Han, 2014), declares that listening materials can be difficult to understand for a group of students or very difficult for others, so, teachers' challenge is to find appropriate listening material to meet learners' language learning goals.

1.5. Listening skills-Process

Listening is a process where there is someone who sends a message, and also someone who receives it. To make listening process happen it is important to be attentive to different aspects that occur while listening such as receiving(hearing), learning(understanding), recalling(remembering), judging(evaluating), and answering (responding) (Tyagi, 2013). This author describes each process as follows:

Hearing is actually the first action that ears perceive produced by the sound waves. It is important to mention that hearing is considered as a passive activity and listening is an active activity, since it requires the person's concentration and attention.

Understanding is the step that involves analyzing the meaning of not only words but also sounds and signs. It is important to compare the sounds, the words and the symbols to understand what the message that the person wanted to transmit was.

Remembering is to be able to keep in mind the most important information (words or sounds) and really interpret and understand what the message was. The people's brain is selective and sometimes people might forget relevant information. That is why the attention plays a crucial role.

Evaluating means that the listener is aware if the information was really what he /she listened or maybe it was the previous idea the person had before performing the listening activity.

Responding is the step that gives the person who sent the message the idea of how successful he/she was in sending the message (if there is a coherent answer). It is actually the only evidence to know if the listener comprehended what he / she listened.

To help students to go step by step through the listening process it is essential to identify and apply some strategies for listening that include activities to get the main idea, to make predictions, to infer information and activities to summarize what listeners understood (Top-down strategies).

On the other hand, there are activities that are based on text, they are called Bottom-up strategies. The bottom-up strategy presents listening exercises that help English language learners the chance to identify words, sentences that make sense when they are together. Listening for specific details, recognizing cognates and recognizing word-order patterns are part of the listening activities that are guided by the bottom-up strategy (Tyagi, 2013).

There is not a specific method when acquiring a new language. Teachers will choose the method or methods based on the group of students' necessities; their learning styles must be taken into account.

1.6. Learning through Technology

The English language has become the language mainly used in most of the countries. It is the language for tourism, music, business, education, investigation and every single field of social coexistence. Based on what has been mentioned before, teachers have been investigating new effective strategies and methodologies to help language learners in the acquisition of the second language. Technology has taken place in every single aspect of human life. The world is connected, every activity seems to be easier to perform thanks to technology and education is definitely an area that is taking advantage of its benefits. Technology is contributing to universal access to education.

The technological devices such as laptops, tablets, cellphones and the variety of available Apps are part of the daily life activities. Learning a new language has never been as accessible as it is now. There are many educational apps that learners can use to learn any subject autonomously. Technology provides students with encouraging and enjoyable tools to make the language acquisition faster. However, because of this diversity of material, sometimes it is not easy to discriminate which learning tools can work for language acquisition. There is some evidence showing that the use of technology has greatly improved learners' performance in the teaching- learning process.

Unfortunately, the entire world is going through a terrible pandemic, somehow the virus covid-19 has obligated teachers and students to accelerate the process of integrating technology into the classrooms. Teachers could not decide when and how to do this integrating process. Some teachers are still trying to adapt themselves to this new normality that means teaching virtually and making use of technological

tools they may not have used before. However, most of teachers are doing their best to meet learners' technological and language learning needs.

This learners' generation is surrounded by technology, they have the skill to deal with almost all kinds of devices, apps, or technological tool. So, teachers need to reduce the digital gap between their generation and students' generation. (Famularsih, 2020), mentions that "many teachers and lecturers are not yet proficient in teaching using online learning applications". Nowadays it is mandatory for teachers to be well prepared in this field.

Communication is a lot faster now as a result of the advancement of technology (Amin, 2019). This communication happens when people can use the language properly which involves the development of all language skills. What people need to "be connected" is to have internet connection, a technological device and to understand the language. There are many advantages that can be mentioned about how positive for learners is to have the opportunity to virtually interact with English native speakers, attend to lectures of any interesting topic that is in English, watch movies or radio programs that are in English and all of these activities are possible by the use of technology. Furthermore, technology contributes to universal access to education

1.7. Technology – Listening skills

The listening skill is essential in a second language acquisition, the learning process of the other language skills such as reading, writing and speaking will be easier when the learners demostrate proficiency in the listening skills. There have been some studies about how the use of technology can affect the development of listening skills and so the language acquisition.The integration of technology into the English classrooms requires a lot of work since teachers must decide which apps, digital platforms or web –pages can help students get meaningful input to try to improve listening skills.

It is important to highlight that not all the technological tools that are found on line are the correct ones to teach and learn a new language. Motivation is a crucial aspect to think about when planning a class. Information and Communication

Technology(ICT) is part of everyday classes.Its effectiveness is still a big discussion among language teachers.Some teachers are for the use of technology and some others are not. Nonetheless, in todays'world situation ,the use of technology is not an option. In-person's classes are kind of a dangerouus situation because of the sanitary problem. Teachers are using every single platform,app or technological tool to make language teaching learning process happen.

Without doubt a great provider of authentic material is internet. Since students know very well how to use it, the use of this kind of authentic material can be a genuine motivation to learn. There are digital digital stories that students can use to improve their listening skills and also their imagination. (Sejdiu, 2017) mentions that "Exploiting technology in the teaching of listening skills tends to promote the achievement of participants. It tends to function as a facilitator in acquiring newly taught materials" which is a thought completely valid in the momento education is going through.

1.8. Online platforms & Listening skills

Nowadays there are some platforms that have been created to help language learners to improve their listening skills in a different and encouraging way. Most of the listening classes are based on textbooks' activities, which sometimes are not very attractive for learners. Hence, it seems students enjoy when they have the opportunity to use technology while learning. (Famularsih, 2020), in a study carried out with university students from Indonesia mentions in the conclusion of the study that students certainly had a positive attitude when using online learning activities. Furthermore, the use of online learning tools encouraged language learners to interact with their peers and also with their teachers.

Engagement is a key factor to contemplate in the English language learning process. For that purpose, it is essential that teachers find tools that can lead language learners to a comfortable learning environment. There is a study accomplished by (Dong & Liu, 2020) where a teacher asked students to use an interactive English learning platform for a complete semester. Even though students faced some problems with connectivity and some other factors related to technology it is said that they enjoyed the experience of working with online platforms.

For the acquisition of a certain level of English language proficiency, it is clear students need a lot of exposure to the target language through input they can have access to. That is the reason that for this study some online platforms have been taken into account since they were created to get students' interest to improve listening skills. Those online platforms are the following:



Source: https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/es

British Council is an organization from The United Kingdom that promotes cultural relationships among people interested in learning English. They call themselves as the world's English teaching experts. There are very interesting activities to develop all language skills. There is a section that is called "the audio zone" where language learners find many engaging audio recordings with topics that get learners' attention. Hence, the people who participate in the audio recordings are from different nationalities which gives learners the chance to listen to different accents. Language learners improve their vocabulary as well as their listening comprehension. After the student listen to the recording they do some activities based on the audio recording they have listened.



Source: https://www.esl-lab.com/

Randall's ESL Cyber listening lab's aim is to boost the English listening skills. This platform provides with a variety of listening comprehension activities for ESL and EFL language learners. The activities are based on content, voices, vocabulary and natural speed. Students have the opportunity to choose between easy, intermediate or difficult levels. Once the students get access to this free platform, they choose any topic that get their attention. There are pre-listening activities that include vocabulary and idioms. The students listen to the recording and answer some questions based on the audio recordings. After that, students do some practice with vocabulary. Finally, learners do post-listening activities that include reflections, and they are asked to do some research to extend the knowledge of the topic they listened about.



Source: https://www.eslvideo.com/

This platform offers a wide variety of listening activities based on videos. The topics have been selected in a way to make students be engaged. Beginners, low intermediate, intermediate, high intermediate and advanced levels' activities are available. There are activities that include stories, series, songs, documentaries, among others. Besides, learners have the chance to see their results and improvement. This platform is a great help for teachers since it offers a space to create quizzes an also other activities based on the videos.



Source: https://www.lyricsgaps.com/esp/

Lyrics Gaps is a platform created for language learners who enjoy music. Learners have a wide collection of songs in English at easy, medium and hard levels. Vocabulary is a very important part of the listening activities. If the students don't know the meaning of a word just clicking on the word a new window with the meanings, uses and word combinations appears. The learners must make the decision about the level they want to try. Music is the language of the world and a way to communicate, that is why language learners find it funny.



Source: https://www.elllo.org/

English Listening Lesson Library Online (ELLLO) is a platform for beginners, intermediate and advanced students who want to improve their listening skills. Students will find listening lessons of natural English conversations, videos, animated news stories, idioms, and also, short articles with academic English. Language learners listen to the recordings or videos and then they have to do the suggested activities. Something that is worth to mention is that each lesson includes a grammar explanation of the structure that is used which helps learners understand the topic better. After that, there is a listening quiz. Students can listen as many times as they need in order to accomplish the learning goal.



Source: https://www.esolcourses.com/

This online platform offers free digital resources for learning and also teaching English. There are so many interactive activities that engage language learners in the English world. There are different sections like: English for work, grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, songs and listening. In the listening section, there is a variety of activities that are classified into the different levels from beginners, intermediate and advance. Some of the activities include videos, podcasts and recordings. The listening activities follow the listening process that was mentioned in previous pages. Hence, there is a lesson plan for each listening activity making it easier for teachers to teach.



Source: https://www.esl-lounge.com/student/index.php

ESL lounge student platform is a great place for students who are likely to experience the English language learning process in a different way. The platform has been designed to guide language learners to work autonomously. The suggestion is to complete a placement test to know which of the five levels the learner can work on. The five available levels are: Beginner, Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate and Advanced. There is a specific section for each language skill. The exercises for the listening activities have a clear description of each. The topics used for the activities are interesting for learners.

Surely, there are many more online platforms that language learners can use to develop and improve their listening skills. However, the platforms that have been considered for this study are the ones that meet one of the learning goals which is to give students the opportunity to experience by themselves how rewarding it can be to work independently by making use of a tool that they know well “technology” and not just following teachers’ instructions and using only the activities provided by textbooks. Nonetheless, teachers must be aware of the quality of those materials, checking very well how difficult or easy can be for them to understand instructions as well as promoting students’ learning potential, their positive attitude towards online learning activities.

Listening as it has been cited before is a skill that requires a lot of time to develop as well as the interest of the English language learner. Since during the classes teachers must pay attention to the development of the other language skills(reading, speaking and writing) it is relevant to carry out some extra practice to optimize the learners’potential and the variety of provided resources shared with learners. Learning styles certainly is an aspect that requires teachers attention at the moment of planning extra activities. An issue that many language learners complain about is the lack of interaction with teachers and classmates, particularly in covid times when teachers and students have been forced to adapt to these new digital environments.

Hence that, it is mandatory for teachers to do their best in a way that students can feel their teachers are supporting them at any time. The use of online platforms does not mean students are going to be doing those activities to improve listening without the help of their teachers. Blender learning which means to use both face to face learning as well as online learning can give English language students a different experience, they will develop their learning responsibility and so the assistance of their teachers which will definitely give them the confidence of being constantly supported. (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008), mention that “poorly planned blended learning environment can result in lower satisfaction of students”.

In another study which aim was to find out what is the learners perception between blended learning in contrast to face to face learning and online learning, its advantages and disadvantages. Participants opinion regarding to the development of listening skills is that online learning is more advantageous. On the other hand, language learners thought that face to face learning helps students in getting knowledge and also it increases the interest in learning English (MarcadorDePosición1) which, is an aspect that can help teachers to guide their decisions at the moment of using these teaching options.

CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Approach

This research' general objective is to validate the methodological strategy that integrates online platforms to improve listening skills for Intermediate English students. To meet this research's goal some relevant aspects have been considered: the method to be applied is the empirical-analytical, which will be based on the intermediate students' experiences and analytical because it will take into account, the variables that will be analyzed in particular to solve the problematic. The research is descriptive and explicative process under a quantitative and a qualitative investigation. The quantitative method contributed to make possible the analysis and collection of data related to the study problem in a way that it is approached objectively. Besides, it allows to follow a deductive and sequential process as well as a cause –effect analysis.

On the other hand, this research is under a qualitative approach since its objective is to understand the phenomenon considering the point of view of the participants (intermediate level students) in their natural learning environment and in relation to the context that surrounds them (Hernández-Sampieri, Tórres, & C.P.M, 2018). The facility to interpret the findings based on the data as well as the flexibility and motivation to look for answers makes the qualitative approach a very important tool that contributes to this research.

For this study a pre-experimental investigation has been applied since it is necessary the application of pretests and posttests before and after the intervention phase. After seven weeks of the intervention phase, it was possible to make a longitudinal comparison between the pretest post-test from the data that could be collected.

2.2. Quantitative Research

Quantitative research was important since it tries to find out quantified information and simplifies the gathered information. The analysis and interpretation of numbers is easier to understand the obtained results. Furthermore, under this kind of research, it is possible to look at the cause –effect and also based on the gathered information the researchers can make predictions. The two variables considered for this investigation under quantitative research are well defined:

Dependent Variable (listening skills) which is affected by the action of the independent variable. Listening skills is the factor that has been observed to check if there was a change (improvement in the grades when assessing students' listening skills) after the intervention of the independent variable.

Independent Variable (methodological strategy that integrates online platforms) which is tested at an experimental level. It is important to reference that the researcher can manipulate it in order to notice in what level it can produce changes in the dependent variable.

It was important to bring the study to this quantitative research because it was required to measure students' listening skills by applying a test for this purpose. It was decisive to know the exact listening comprehension level at the beginning of the investigation process to be able to notice the difference after the intervention of the independent variable.

2.3. Qualitative Research

When a researcher uses qualitative research, it means he/ she relies on the participants views, there is going to be a detailed description of the collected data as well as to be able to interpret the results. There are different options to collect the data: interviews, reflections and observations. In this study, the researcher knows well the participants which makes it easier to get the participants point of view in a

direct way and also, to observe their behavior regarding to the application of the methodological strategy which is the independent variable. Considering qualitative research, the two variables are analyzed as follows:

Dependent Variable (listening skills) is analyzed in a way that the researcher has a clear idea of what aspects of this variable in being affected, the level of this affection and also, he/ she is able to interpret participants' behavior regarding to the experimenting phase.

Independent Variable (methodological strategy that integrates online platforms) which is the variable that is manipulated by the researcher in order to try meet the research's objective. Besides, for this study it was important to analyze the social interactions among participant to see different points of view as well as sharing their experience by answering a questionnaire.

As a consequence of the analysis previously made it can be concluded that because of this research characteristics it was necessary a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research. In the next lines it will be explained how this research process happened, its difficulties and its benefits in the path of finding a solution to the problem of the low proficiency level in listening skills.

Additionally, it is a bibliographic and documental research since the information that supports this study was gotten from journals, academic papers, books as well as previous investigations related to this one. Besides, this information helped a lot to sustain the analysis, comparisons and deductions regarding both variables.

Population and Sampling

The Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador is an institution that over time has gained recognition from the community due to the efforts of all its members to provide with the best academic offer. The Department of Languages and Linguistics at PUCESA offers to students who come from the center of the country the opportunity

to learn both English and French. The prestige of this institution has led to open the academic offer not only to university students but also to young people and professionals who want to broaden their horizons by learning a new language. Authorities and all members of the Language and Linguistic Department are always trying to find and implement the best methodologies to give the best service to the people who trust in the academic level that is offered. That is why this research takes place. For this study, 29 students who belong to the intermediate level were considered.

Table 1

Population

Level	Men	%	Women	%	Total	%
Intermediate	10	43,3	19	56,7	30	100

Source: Solis, A. (2021)

Data Collection

Techniques and instruments

Data collection is the process of gathering information. The main characteristics of a good data collection is that it has to be to clear, consistent, and reliable. To collect the data, it is very important to choose the best techniques and instruments according to the kind of investigation it is going to be. For this study, two techniques were used as sources for data collection: interviews and surveys. For the interviews, it was necessary to use a question guide so that the interviewer had a clear idea about the type of questions she was going to use and also the interviewed people had the chance to express their opinion which means it was a semi-structured interview. The question guide was validated by experts in the field of English language teaching as well as experts in the investigation methodology.

The second technique that was necessary to use was the survey and the instrument applied was a questionnaire to gather information from the participants. The surveys included close questions since they are easy to code, the interviewer didn´t need a lot of time to answer the questionnaire and the answers are clear so that there was not ambiguity in the provided answers. This instrument was also validated by experts in the English language teaching and in the investigation methodology field.

Data Collection Procedure

The procedure to collect the data is described as follows and based on five stages:

1) Interview: which aim is to get as much information as possible regarding to students' necessities. It was very important to listen to students' expectations as well as the activities they would like to do. A questions guide was used to get the information.

2) Pre-test: which allows to know what the level of listening comprehension is according to the participants' level. The test that was used was taken from the National Geographic Learning textbook (Life) which is the material the participants are used to using. The participants' performance was graded up to 10 points to measure numerically their scores.

3) Intervention: It consisted in sharing with the participants different online platforms where they could find a variety of activities to practice their listening skills. In the previous pages it was explained the characteristics of each platform. Furthermore, it is imperative to highlight that there was a process the teacher did in order to choose the best available online platforms which help students to improve their listening skills.

The topics on each online platform were interesting for the students and they could do those activities at any free time they had, without the pressure of the limited time during the classes. Participants worked with the online platforms for about 7 weeks of the academic semester. Regarding to the online platforms it is essential to mention that all of them are free- access which made it easier for the students.

4) Post-test: this instrument helped a lot to evaluate the effectiveness of the methodological strategy that integrates online platforms to improve listening skills for

intermediate English students. It was necessary to have a group's interview to gather some of students' opinions after the intervention.

5)Survey: google forms was used because virtual classes were carried out due to the pandemic. It was necessary to compare pre-tests and post-tests' results. The whole process was executed during the semester February –June 2020. The intervention stage started on April and finished on June. Microsoft Teams was the platform which was used to carry out each stage of the application of a methodological strategy to improve listening skills.

For the post-test it was necessary to use a similar one to the one that was taken into account for the pretest (textbook Life 4 from National Geographic Learning). The information gotten from the posttest gave essential information to the researcher to make comparisons and analysis of the results. The same rubric used for the pretest was used. Both the pre-test and post-test results will be shown in the next chapter.

6)Final interview: this instrument was very useful for the researcher to gather participants' experiences while using online platforms to improve the listening skills and avoid any kind of problems teachers might face while applying the methodological strategy in the future.

For the designing of the methodological strategy, it was used all information collected during the previous interview as well as from the pretest's results. In the next lines the methodological strategy is presented.

PROPOSAL

PROPOSAL

A METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY THAT INTEGRATES ONLINE PLATFORMS TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS FOR INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH STUDENTS

Ana Alexandra Solis Carrasco

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Introduction

Learning a new language requires a lot of effort and practice. It is a challenge for people who do not have much exposure to the language. English has become the language that is mostly used around the world. People involved in the English teaching field have constantly been trying to find the best methodologies to help English language learners to accomplish their goals. There are four language skills that need to be develop while learning English (listening, reading, speaking and writing). Each language skill has its own process to be acquired. However, the listening skill has been considered for some language learners as the most difficult one to develop. Comprehend what English speakers are saying and react to those messages can be a not easy task, especially if the language learner does not have the real necessity to use the language. It might happen because some many reasons, for example what happens in the Ecuadorian context, language learners study English because it is included in the curriculum of primary schools, high schools and at university level the situation is not very different. The educational system must encourage students to learn new languages since a person who speaks English will truly have better opportunities to study abroad as well as getting better job opportunities.

Human beings are living in a globalized world and that can be noticed a lot more now that the world is going through a pandemic. This pandemic has forced people to learn new ways to survive in the technological world. Education is not the exception, students and teachers are facing a big change in the teaching-learning processes. This research topic came out because of the necessity to give teachers and students a tool that can help to meet students' language goals. This methodological strategy puts forward a variety of free online platforms that teachers can make use to encourage students to improve their listening skills by the use of a tool young learners know well which is technology.

A METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY THAT INTEGRATES ONLINE PLATFORMS TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS FOR INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH STUDENTS

General Objective

The proposed methodological strategy that integrates online platforms to improve listening skills aims to provide teachers and students with a new tool that can help to accomplish teachers and students' language learning goals.

Methodological Strategy

How can the word methodology be defined? "The task of methodology is to enhance the process of teaching English by empowering and facilitating teachers to work proficiently" (Tamura, 2006, p. 169). The author also highlights that teaching implicates a constant analysis of teachers' own work and also the exercise of enriching their work by taking in consideration other teachers' experiences in order to improve their teaching.

This methodological strategy has been designed to give English teachers and students a new tool to explore the wide variety of digital options that are available online. Teachers can include any of the suggested activities in the online platforms that have been considered for this study.

Listening skills

Listening is a process where there is someone who sends a message, and also someone who receives it. To make listening process happen it is important to be attentive to different aspects that occur while listening: receiving (hearing), learning (understanding), recalling (remembering), judging (evaluating), and answering (responding) (Tyagi, 2013). This author describes each process as follows:

Hearing is actually the first action that ears perceive produced by the sound waves. It is important to mention that hearing is considered as a passive activity and listening is an active activity, since it requires the person's concentration and attention.

Understanding is the step that involves analyzing the meaning of not only words but also sounds and signs. It is important to compare the sounds, the words and the symbols to understand what the message that the person wanted to transmit was.

Remembering is to be able to keep in mind the most important information (words or sounds) and really interpret and understand what the message was. The people's brain is selective and sometimes people might forget relevant information. That's why the attention plays a crucial role.

Evaluating means that the listener is aware if the information was really what he /she listened or maybe it was the previous idea the person had before performing the listening activity.

Responding is the step that gives the person who sent the message the idea of how successful he/she was in sending the message (if there is a coherent answer). It is actually the only evidence to know if the listener comprehended what he / she listened.

To help students to go step by step through the listening process it is essential to identify and apply some strategies for listening that include activities to get the main idea, to make predictions, to infer information and activities to summarize what listeners understood (Top-down strategies). Besides, as much input language learners have to the target language as easier it would be to develop their listening skills.

Sometimes or most of the times it is difficult to make room to develop the language skills. Teachers spend a lot of time teaching grammar structures and vocabulary, which is good but the development of language skills must be the main part of every English class. This methodological strategy offers new options to improve the

listening skills in a way that students decide the best moment to practice and they also can choose the topic and activities they would like to listen about promoting a friendly learning environment.

Online Platforms

The globalized world where we live together with the pandemic that the world is suffering from, has forced extreme changes in all areas of life. Education has not been the exception that is the reason why both teachers and students have been looking for new ways of communication and new strategies that allow meaningful learning to happen.

The current situation has been somewhat more difficult for language teachers. Personal contact with students in the classroom is a determining factor in the process of learning English. It is important that the students observe the gesticulation of the words, the correct pronunciation, intonation, stress, and receive the continuous feedback from the teacher. However, the situation has encourage teacher to develop their capacity of reinventing their teaching strategies and methodologies by making use of the benefits of technology. This methodological strategy arise from the necessity students have to improve their own learning.

Although there is an ample variety of online platforms, the ones that were chosen fulfill with the set goals of this investigation.

In the following lines there is a summary of each of the selected online platforms so that teachers can make use of them according to students' necessities and interests.

The suggested online platforms are the following:



Source: https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/es

In this online platform students will very interesting activities to develop all language skills. There is a section which is called “the audio zone” where language learners find many engaging audio recordings with topics that for sure will get learners’ attention. Hence, the people who participate in the audio recordings are from different nationalities which gives learners the chance to listen to different accents. Language learners improve their vocabulary as well as their listening comprehension.



Source: https://www.esl-lab.com/

Randall’s ESL Cyber listening lab’s aim is to boost the English listening skills. The activities this platform offers are based on content, voices, vocabulary and natural speed. Students have the opportunity to choose between easy, intermediate or difficult levels. There are pre-listening activities that include vocabulary and idioms. The, students listen to the recording and answer some questions based on the audio recordings. Finally, learners do post-listening activities that include reflections and they are asked to do some research to extend the knowledge of the topic they listened about.



Source: https://www.eslvideo.com/

This platform offers a wide variety of listening activities based on videos. The topics have been selected in a way to make students be engaged. Beginners, low intermediate, intermediate, high intermediate and advanced levels’ activities are available. There are activities that include stories, series, songs, documentaries, among others. Besides, learners have the chance to see their results and

improvement. This platform is a great help for teachers since it offers a space to create quizzes an also other activities based on the videos.

Source: https://www.lyricsgaps.com/esp/

Lyrics Gaps is a platform created for language learners who enjoy music. Learners have a wide collection of songs in English at easy, medium and hard levels. Vocabulary is a very important part of the listening activities. If the students don't know the meaning of a word just clicking on the word a new window with the meanings, uses and word combinations appears. Music is the language of the world and a way to communicate, that's why language learners find it funny.

Source: https://www.elllo.org/

English Listening Lesson Library Online (ELLLO) is a platform for beginners, intermediate and advanced students who want to improve their listening skills. Students will find listening lessons of natural English conversations, videos, animated news stories, idioms, and also short narrated articles with academic English. Something that is worth to mention is that each lesson includes a grammar explanation of the structure that is used which helps learners understand the topic better. Students can listen as many times as they need in order to accomplish the listening learning goal.

Source: https://www.esolcourses.com/

This online platform offers different sections like: English for work, grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, songs and listening. In the listening section there is a variety of activities that are classified into the different levels from beginners, intermediate and advance. Some of the activities include videos, podcasts and recordings. The listening activities follow the listening process that was mentioned in previous pages. Hence, there is a lesson plan for each listening activity making it easier for teachers to teach.



Source: https://www.esl-lounge.com/student/index.php

ESL lounge student platform is a great place for students who are likely to experience the English language learning process in a different way. The platform has been designed to guide language learners to work autonomously. The five available levels are: Beginner, Elementary, Pre- Intermediate, Intermediate and Advanced. There is a specific section for each language skill. The exercises for the listening activities have clear descriptions. The topics used for the activities are interesting for learners.

Applying the methodological strategy that integrates online platforms.

The application of the methodological strategy requires to accomplish some previous requirements as well as ~~a~~ planning the lessons in a way that students can feel comfortable while doing the activities and they can notice the benefits of using the online platforms and by considering the following suggestions for teachers:

- Be sure to establish a preliminary conversation with the students to make them notice the importance of practicing the listening skills considering that sometimes it is difficult to do some extra practice during the classes.
- Let students be part of the planning.

- Have a previous meeting to find out what are students' needs according to their point of view, so that, you as the teacher choose the best available material to encourage their learning process.
- Take some time to present the objective that supports this methodological strategy by sharing with them some of the activities the platforms offer.
- Explain that any activity can become a habit if they are perseverant and do the listening practice every single day.
- Engage students in the development of this listening activities' proposal by helping them to plan a daily schedule (if possible, do that with every single student)
- Students need to see your motivation in trying something different to help them.
- Reflect with the students on the benefits that the development of the listening activities using online platforms will bring them in their language learning process.
- Follow the suggested stages of this methodological strategy but remember that each group is different and your creativity as a teacher must prevail.
- Remember that any adjustment to the process according to the individual needs is welcome.

2.3.Methodological strategy - Procedure.

This innovative methodological strategy focuses on the criterion of synchronous and asynchronous work. Understanding synchronous learning as the process where there is interaction between teachers and students. This type of learning involves master classes, debates, presentations and the teacher can give the feedback just in the same moment.

On the other hand, asynchronous learning implies a process in which the student-teacher interaction does not take place in the same time and space. Besides, the students have the control to their own learning which means be a lot more responsible with all aspects regarding to their language learning process.

The procedure to apply this methodological strategy requires to follow some steps in order to accomplish the learning goals which is to improve the listening skills as well as to encourage students to use online platforms that are available for this purpose.

1) Plan a meeting with the students to let them know that they will be doing some listening activities using some online platforms to help them to improve their listening skills. It is important to show your motivation and interest in using something different in your classes.
2) The second step is to show them the online platforms they will be using. Try to present them in a very didactic way, you can make a video or design a presentation that can really get students' attention. This step is very important, the idea is to engage them in these activities since the very beginning.
3) Guide students to design their own schedule to explore and do the online listening activities. The suggestion is to do the listening activities during the week and use at least fifteen minutes of their time.
4) Explain that most of the time the online activities are going to be done after class (the first week you can take some time from your classes to do with them the activities so that they can feel comfortable and can get engaged in the listening process' improvement. Remind students that these online activities are not replacing the listening tasks suggested in their textbooks.
5) Be sure all your students understand very well the learning objectives as well as every single detail about how to perform the variety of listening activities the online platforms offer.
6) At the end of each week, you need to make room to talk to students about their listening skills' learning progress, the difficulties they had while carrying out the listening exercises, as well as the benefits the online platforms provide such as improvement in pronunciation, the ability to identify different accents likewise the enhancement of new vocabulary among others.
7) As the teacher, you are the one who decides what platforms to use, the listening activities you consider are the best to meet your students' learning

goals as well as the time you want to ask your students to perform the online listening activities. You should consider your students' age and interest.

8) Be sure all the listening activities using the online platforms are included in your daily lessons' plan.

9) Students will do the listening activities of two different online platforms every week.

10) Students need to hand in the evidence of their work. They need to keep the evidence of their work in a digital folder. The evidence include screen captures of the process as well as the completion of the listening activities.

In the following pages, you will find the methodological strategy planning per week and the example of a lesson's plan, where the online listening activities are included.

Table 2

Methodological strategy- Use of Online platforms- Planning

Week	Online Platform	Online activites'link	Suggested time	Level & Instructions	Comments
1	**A**	**https://www.lyricsgaps.com/exercises/view/8047/Intermediate**	15 minutes	**Intermediate** Listen and then fill In the blanks. Press "Score "to check your answers. Click any word to get definition.	Students will develop their listening skills while they enjoy listening some music
	B	**https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening/intermediate-b1/a-team-meeting-about-diversity**	20 minutes	**Intermediate** Listen to a team meeting about diversity to practice and improve your listening skills. Do the preparation task first. Then listen to the audio and do the exercises.	Students will develop their listening skills by following a very detailed listening process
2	**A**	**https://www.esolcourses.com/content/topics/countries/france/paris/pre-intermediate/paris-beaches-listening-quiz.html**	15 minutes	**Intermediate** Watch the video ,listen for the main idea.Don't try to understand everything. Watch the video again and answer the questions.	Students will develop their listening skills by watching a video.
	B	**https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening/intermediate-b1-listening/favourite-things**	15 minutes	**Intermediate** Listen to the speakers describing their favourite things and do the exercises. While listening- Fill the gaps with the correct word from the box. Listen and decide if the sentences are the sentences true or false? Discussion	Students will develop their listening skills by following the listening process.

				Which people have been important in your life? Match the speakers with their favourite things.	
3	**A** 	**https://www.esl-lounge.com/student/listening/3L9-the-roommates.php**	15 minutes	**Intermediate** Two people who live in the same house have a "chat" about some problems. Listen to the conversation between Sasha and Jim, then complete the True/False exercise	Students will develop their listening skills by doing different activities to get main idea as well as comprehension.
	B 	**https://www.esl-lab.com/easy/clothing-styles/**	20 minutes	**Intermediate** Pre-Listening Exercise What kinds of clothes do you wear to school or work? Where do you buy your clothes? Do you ever buy used clothing? Listen to the recording and answer the questions. Post-Listening Exercise What are the advantages and disadvantages of buying clothing in a regular store as compared with purchasing something over the Internet? What have been your experiences in doing both?	Students will develop their listening skills by following a process to acquire the required information.
4	**A** 	**http://www.elllo.org/english/1301/T1308-sorie-money.htm**	20 minutes	**Intermediate** Sorie and Mark talk about how they plan to save for their retirment in the future. Listen and then answer the questions about the interview.	Students will develop their listening skills by doing some activities that involve learning new vocabulary and phrases,

				Do the extra Audio Lessons about Phrases and Vocabulary	which makes it easier comprehend the whole listening.
	B 	**https://www.esl-lounge.com/student/listening/3L7-love-is-in-the-air.php**	15 minutes	**Intermediate** Carolina talks about the great love story in her life. Listen to the mp3 file and answer true/false for each question. Then listen again to check.	Students will develop their listening skills by listening to a real love story and answering comprehension questions.
5	**A** 	**https://www.eslvideo.com/quiz.php?id=36961**	20 minutes	**Intermediate** Climate change- The young Swedish activist explains natural climate solutions. Listen carefully as many times as you need and choose the right option for each sentence.	Students will develop their listening skills by listening to a girl talking about climate problems There is a multiple choice activtity
	B 	**https://www.esolcourses.com/content/lifeintheuk/london/the-london-marathon/pre-intermediate/integrated-skills-lesson.html**	20 minutes	**Intermediate** Pre-listening- What do you know about the London marathon? Listening exercise- Why do people run marathons? .Listen to athlete David Weir talking about the London marathon in the video clip. Listening comprehension. Watch the video again and listen for the answers.	
6	**A** 	**https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening-skills-practice/important-people**	**20 minutes**	**Intermediate** Listen to the speakers talking about important people in their lives and do the exercises.	Students will develop their listening skills by following a very detailed listening process

				Fill the gaps with the correct word from the box. Listen and decide if the sentences are true or false. Discussion Which people have been important in your life?	
	B 	**https://www.esl-lab.com/easy/party-time/**	20 minutes	**Intermediate** Pre-Listening Exercise Imagine that you have been invited to a party. How would you dress for the occasion? What types of fashionable clothing can you purchase at local stores or even online clothing stores? Listen to the recording and answer the questions. Post-Listening Exercise Attending parties can be an enjoyable experience in a new culture as long as you understand the social rules of that country.	Students will develop their listening skills by following a very detailed listening process, which includes pre-listening activites as well as post-listening activities
				What are some cultural rules that a visitor to your culture should know in such cases? Think about dress, gift giving, and any special expression or language that are used in these situations.	

7	**A** 	**https://www.esl-lounge.com/student/listening/3L8-here-is-the-news.php**	15 minutes	**Intermediate** Bulletin of world news on the radio. Listen to the mp3 file and choose the best answer for each question. Then listen again to check.	Students will develop their listening skills by listening to a real news bulletin and answering comprehension questions.
	B 	**https://www.elllo.org/english/1301/T1342-paul-unplugged.htm**	15 minutes	**Intermediate** Dialed In vs Unplugged Paul and Aimee talk about how often they look at digital content and if they can go without it. Listen and answer the questions about the interview. Multiple choice activity	Students will develop their listening skills by listening to a conversation between two people about a social problem. Students need to answer some comprehension questions.

Source: Solis, A.(2021)

2.4. Methodological strategy – Procedure after doing the Listening activities

Since the proposed methodological strategy that involves the use of online platforms is focused on synchronous and asynchronous work, it is important to highlight that teachers have to accompany students in their process of improving their listening skills. Furthermore, teachers must be sure their students are engaged in the listening activities by following these suggestions:

- Teachers must assess their students' improvement in two moments.
- During each week teachers have to check that their students are following the schedule they had designed at the beginning of the intervention by asking them to hand in a weekly report which will be presented in a portfolio.
- At the end of the week, the teacher must have a meeting with the whole group of students to identify any kind of problems they may have had (access, instructions, audio or video recordings quality, time, etc.)
- Once the teacher is able to identify some individual problems, they must guide students to solve them.
- Have a very positive attitude towards the methodological strategy so that the students can also see the benefits of doing some extra practice to help themselves in the improvement of this skill.
- Teachers must keep a record of all observations, difficulties, positive and negative aspects students mention during the reporting sessions as well as in students' portfolios.

CHAPTER III. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

This chapter's aim is to examine the results gotten from pre-test and post-test applied to a group of intermediate level students of the Department of Languages and Linguistics of the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador, Ambato Campus to measure students' listening skills proficiency. An interview before the pretest was applied as well as an interview and a survey after the intervention stage to know their perception about the experience of using the online platforms. Finally, a post test was applied. This process was necessary to analyze if the methodological strategy worked well in order to improve the students' listening skills.

Besides, there was an interview with the participants to talk about their results and their perceptions about doing some extra practice to improve the listening skills. A question guide was used for this purpose. The aim of the application of the interview after the test was to analyze with the participants the necessity of finding new ways to improve the listening skills because the improvement process was even worse since the pandemic had started.

The question guide as well as the survey were validated by English teachers who are also interested in this kind of investigations. Some experts in the research field made some corrections to finally validate the instruments that were used to collect the necessary information for this study.

Interview

This chapter presents in detail the result gotten during the research process. For the investigation it was necessary to have a previous interview, so that the researcher could identify the main issues regarding to the listening skills problems students have. This stage was so important to choose the best activities that can meet students' expectations to the methodological strategy. The interview was held by using Teams platform and it was recorded. For the interview, a question guide was used. The question guide format is included in the annexes section. A summary of the results is presented in the next lines:

Question 1. - In your own experience what is the most difficult skill to develop during the English classes?

Table 3

Most difficult skill

Skills	Number of people	%
Listening	11	36,7%
Reading	5	16,7%
Speaking	9	30%
Writing	5	16,7%
	30	100%

Source: Solis, A. (2021)

Listening is considered the most difficult skill to acquire, in second place it is the speaking skill, reading and writing with the 16,7% are in their place. Students said it is very difficult to even understand their teachers, since every semester there is a new one for each group. They also mentioned that the speed and pronunciation are the main problems when trying to understand. Besides, they said there is not enough time to practice listening. If they don´t understand what they listen, it is difficult to react or answer questions, so speaking is difficult.

Question 2.-What did your teachers do to help you to improve that skill?

Most of the interviewed students said that unfortunately, teachers are mainly focused on grammar and there is not time to practice with listening exercises in class. Some students expressed that their teachers do some extra practice with them during tutorial hours, but not all students have access to those tutorials since teachers use those hours with some students only. However, some students said they have no time for tutorials or extra practice.

Question 3.- What do you understand by listening skills?

Fortunately, almost all students have a clear idea to what are the listening skills. They don´t know the technical words to express that, but they were clear in their definitions.

Question 4.- Do you understand when you listen to people speaking in English? How much?

Overall, there was a frustration feeling when answering this question. There were some answers. To facilitate the conversation, they were asked to choose between some percentages (from 100% to 0%). The next table summarizes the results.

Table 4

Listening comprehension

Nº of Students	%
2	100
4	75
14	50
7	25
2	10
0	0

Source: Solis, A. (2021)

The students who said can understand 100% mentioned that they have connections with relatives and friends who speak the English language and also they have travelled to English speaking countries more than once, which means they have a lot more exposure to the language than the other students. Students who said understand 75% of the information they hear mentioned it is because they love English and that they enjoy listening to music just in English. Almost half of the class

said they just understand 50% of what they hear (recording, videos, teachers). There are seven students who can understand just 25%, which a worrying situation because they are at the intermediate level. There are two students who have a lot of difficulty to understand specially the recordings. According to the students' answers it is clear the necessity to help students to practice their listening skills.

Question 5. - In your point of view. What is the main problem for English students when trying to understand English?

Many students mentioned that the main problem might be that they don't practice enough, the poor vocabulary and the virtual classes, they said it is difficult to be concentrated. At the same time, the students who can comprehend more English said that the exposure to the target language is an important factor. Some students also said the lack of motivation.

Question 6. - How much time did your English teachers use to use to practice the listening skills?

The majority of students expressed that their teachers just asked them to do the listening activities that are on their textbook and sometimes they just check answers with the teachers. Most times they copy the answers from the students who could understand. Students also complained about the little time they have to listen to the recordings and they highlighted that most of the time they have in class is to complete the textbook. However, there are a few students who mentioned that their teachers help them during tutorial hours (giving them another chance to listen the recording or video again). Furthermore, they said their teachers use some interactive extra activities like music to practice listening in class.

Question 7. - What activities do you think a teacher can use to practice listening skills?

Students said they would like to do not only the textbooks' activities, but also different once that include music. They showed a lot of interest in the music field. They said

they would like to understand the lyrics of their favorite songs in English. Moreover, they said sometimes they are bored and would like their teachers use games to practice listening or interesting documentaries with topics that can get their attention, because they have a lot of distractors during the English classes.

Question 8. - Do you like using technology during your English classes? Do you use it?

Most of students specified that the pandemic that the world is going through has pushed their teachers and also themselves to make use of some technological tools to teach and learn. They said they feel comfortable using technology. Nevertheless, it has been a challenge especially for some teachers they said. 70% of the students affirmed they like using technology because they know well how to use it. The other 30% said they like using technology, but at the same time, they feel that their teachers don't give them the support they need.

Question 9. - Do you know that there are some online platforms to practice the listening skills? Would you like to explore and use them?

Table 5

Online platforms-Listening skills

Questions	Yes / Nº of people	No / Nº of people
Do you know that there are some online platforms to practice the listening skills?	17	13
Would you like to explore and use them?	30	0

Source: Solis, A. (2021)

17 students said they know the existence of some online platforms to learn English, but they have not used them to practice their listening skills. On the other hand, 13 students mentioned they didn't know there are these platforms. To the question

related to their motivation to explore and use the online platforms, all students affirmed they would like to explore them to improve their listening skill.

Question 10. - Would you like to take the challenge of using a different tool and not only the textbook' listening activities?

All students showed interest on trying these online platforms to improve their listening activities. Despite being motivated to use the platforms, they were kind of afraid with the idea because that represents some extra time to practice. It was necessary to clarify that it was not going to be a lot extra time (just 20 minutes for most of the activities) twice a week and also that the teacher would guide them if any problem.

Interpretation

This first stage of collecting data was certainly helpful to make decisions about the process to follow and to make the best choices regarding to the online platforms to use and based on students' answers design the methodological strategy that includes the activities students said would like to do to improve their listening skills. On the other hand, students were engaged and curious about being involved in the planning process of constructing a methodological strategy that can help them to meet their language goals.

The students who participated in the study correspond to the intermediate level, which means they should have a good performance in the development of the four language skills. However, before the application of the methodological strategy that integrates online platforms it was necessary to know students' listening comprehension level to be able to notice if there would be an improvement or not. Students are using the textbook Life4 from National Geographic learning, so that textbook' listening activities were used for the pretest. It was necessary to use a rubric to evaluate students' listening comprehension level. The rubric basically aims to find out the listening understanding level in aspects related to understanding

teacher's instructions, recordings instructions, recordings questions and activities as well as understanding partners' talks. It is important to mention that after the listening test (pretest) it was planned to have a conversation to listen to students' main problems while performing the test. That conversation was guided by the teacher, but the principal purpose was to give them the freedom to reflect on their performance. In the next lines, there is the rubric that was used to record students' listening comprehension level results.

Pretest Results

There was a rubric adapted from TFU Foreign Language Assessment Rubrics to measure students' listening skills. The scale of grades was from 2 to 10 points, where 2 is the lowest grade and 10 is the highest. The rubric that was used is detailed in the next table.

Table 6

Rubric- Pretest

Criteria Skills	2-Not able to perform	4-Inadequate	6-Needs improvement	8-Meets expectations	10-Exceeds expectations
Understands teacher's verbal instructions	Could not understand and follow instructionsat all	Made significant mistakes in understanding instructions and needs others' help	Made some mistakes in understanding instructions but still needs clarifications	Made only a fewmistakes in understanding instructions and does not need help	Understood instructions precisely and followed them without problems
Understands recorded instructions	Could not understand and follow instructions	Made significant mistakes in understanding instructions and needs others' help	Made some mistakes in understanding the instructions but still needs clarifications	Made only a few mistakes in understanding the instructions and does not need help	Understood the instructions precisely and followed them without problems
Understands recorded questions and activities	Could not understand the questions, provided no responses at all	Made significant mistakes in understanding the questions and could only provideimprecise responses	Made some mistakes in understanding the questions but the responses are unclear	Made only a few mistakes in understanding the questions and could provide appropriate responses	Understood the questions precisely and provided sufficient responses.
Understands partner(s) in pair/group work	Could not understand the talks at and couldn't keep the communicative activity	Made significant mistakes in understanding others and could hardly keep the communicative activity	Made some mistakes in understanding, but could keep the communicative activity to certain extent	Made only a few mistakes in understanding and could keep communication with no problem	Understood precisely and actively kept the communicative activity.

Source: adapted from TFU Foreign Language Assessment Rubrics. **Elaborated by:** Solis, A. (2021)

The results gotten from the pretest by using the TFU Foreign Language Assessment Rubrics are described in the next table.

Table 7

Pretest- Grades Based on Foreign Language Assessment Rubric

Students' names [1]	Grades / 10 [2]
Aguilar Priscila	4
Altamirano Ximena	4
Álvarez Dayana	4
Bastidas Cristian	2
Bravo Andrea	4
Casco Katherine	6
Córdova Sheyla	6
Cortéz Belén	6
Flores Steve	4
Gallardo Valentina	4
Gallegos David	6
Gavilánez Alba	8
Hernández Nathaly	6
Jiménez Nicole	4
Jordán Kevin	6
Lema David	4
Loza Santiago	8
Maigua Bryan	4
Pórras Mayerli	4
Pozo Jonathan	2
Ramos Andrea	6
Salguero Lizbeth	8
Silva Doménica	6
Taday Lilian	4
Tapia Erick	8
Vallejo Nicol	4
Velasteguí Benjamín	6
Vilmonte Antonella	4
Zabala Camila	4

Notes:
[1] Intermediate level students
[2] Grades Based on Foreign Language Assessment Rubric

Table 7 describes the results gotten from the pretest. The highest score is 8, the lowest is 2 and the mean score is 5.03, which clearly showed the imperative necessity to help students to develop the listening skills considering the importance their development has for the English language acquisition.

After the interview and the pretest, the intervention stage took place as it was described in the previous lines and also, in the proposal section.

Post-test Results

The results gotten from the pretest by using the TFU Foreign Language Assessment Rubrics with the corresponding adaptation to the present study are described in the next table.

Table 8

Post-test- Grades Based on the Foreign Language Assessment Rubric

Students' names [1]	Grades / 10 [2]
Aguilar Priscila	6
Altamirano Ximena	6
Álvarez Dayana	4
Bastidas Cristian	4
Bravo Andrea	6
Casco Katherine	8
Córdova Sheyla	6
Cortéz Belén	8
Flores Steve	6
Gallardo Valentina	6
Gallegos David	6
Gavilánez Alba	8
Hernández Nathaly	8
Jiménez Nicole	4
Jordán Kevin	8
Lema David	6
Loza Santiago	10
Maigua Bryan	4
Pórras Mayerli	4
Pozo Jonathan	4
Ramos Andrea	8
Salguero Lizbeth	8
Silva Doménica	6
Taday Lilian	4
Tapia Erick	8
Vallejo Nicol	4
Velasteguí Benjamín	8
Vilmonte Antonella	4
Zabala Camila	4

Notes:
[1] Intermediate level students
[2] Grades Based on Foreign Language Assessment Rubric

Table 8 shows that there was an improvement in the development of listening skills. However, not all students got that improvement, some of them kept the same scores. The reasons why that group of students did not experience an improvement will be described lines after.

It is necessary to make a comparison between the pretest post-test from the data collected to find out if the application of the methodological strategy was successful or not. The comparison is presented in the next table.

Table 9

Comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test results

Students' names	Pre-test Results /10	Post- test Results /10	Improvement
Aguilar Priscila	4	6	+ 2
Altamirano Ximena	4	6	+ 2
Alvarez Dayana	4	4	-
Bastidas Christian	2	4	+ 2
Bravo Andrea	4	6	+ 2
Casco Katherine	6	8	+ 2
Córdova Sheyla	6	6	-
Cortez Belén	6	8	+ 2
Flores Steve	4	6	+ 2
Gallardo Valentina	4	6	+ 2
Gallegos David	6	6	-
Gavilanez Alba	8	8	-
Hernandez Nathaly	6	8	+ 2
Jiménez Nicole	4	4	-
Jordan Kevin	6	8	+ 2
Lema David	4	6	+ 2
Loza Santiago	8	10	+ 2
Maigua Bryan	4	4	-
Porras Mayerli	4	4	-
Pozo Jonathan	2	4	+ 2
Ramos Andrea	6	8	+ 2
Salguero Lizbeth	8	8	-
Silva Doménica	6	6	-
Taday Lilian	4	4	-
Tapia Erck	8	8	-
Vallejo Nicole	4	4	-

Velasteguí Benjamín	6	8	+ 2
Vilmonte Antonella	4	4	-
Zavala Camila	4	4	-

Note. *+ means the scale of improvement, while (-) means no improvement*

In the next lines it is shown the information regarding to maximum score, minimum score and the mean in both pre-test and post-test.

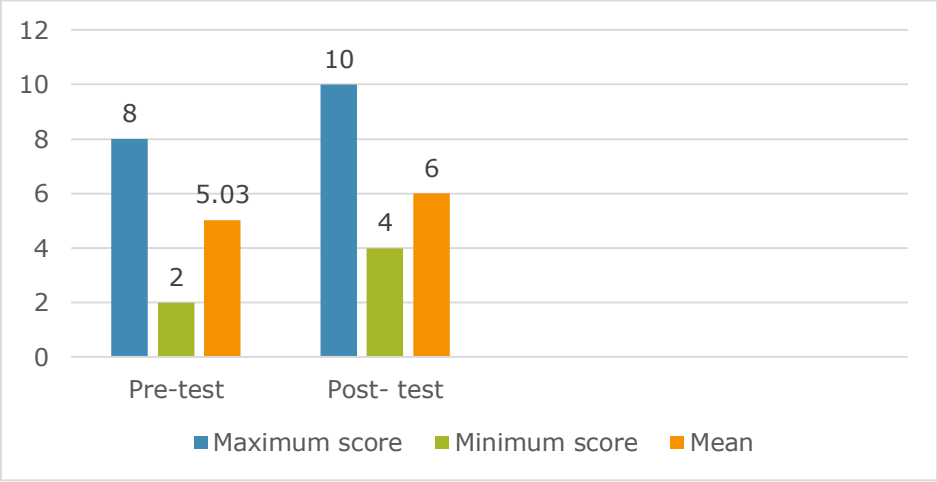


Figure: 1 Comparison Pre-test and Post-test

Figure 1 shows a summary of the results gotten in both, pre-test and post- test as well as the mean in each case. The improvement is evident, fifteen students have improved their ability to listen and understand what other people say in English. On the other hand, fourteen students maintained the same scores. Nobody got a lower score than the one in the pre-test.

Table 10

T – Test Study (Pre-test and Post-test)

T-Test - Paired Samples

Measure 1	Measure 2	t	df	p
Pre- test	Post- test	-5,477	28	< .001

Note:
For both tests, the alternative hypothesis specifies that Measure 1 (Pre-test) is less than Measure 2 (Post-test).

In table 10 there is the analysis made with the paired two-sample t-test for paired sample means, which means that the defended idea is accepted. The gathered information shows that the t-value of –5,477, df = 28 degrees of freedom and p <0.001, less than 0.001, so the students' listening skills level was lower in the pre-test and after the intervention and as it is shown in the post test, they are better not for all students, but for most of them yes. The results obtained, let the researcher say that the defended idea in this study is accepted.

A survey was addressed to the group of students to gather the satisfaction level while practicing listening skills by using the online platforms. There was also an interview to give students the opportunity to express their opinions after the intervention, as well as to get some extra information for teachers who would like to apply this methodological strategy with their students. The final interview along with the survey's results will be examined in the next lines.

The first question aim is to find how often students did the listening activities on the online platforms that were shared with them. The proposal's planning suggests to use two online platforms with their corresponding activities twice a week.

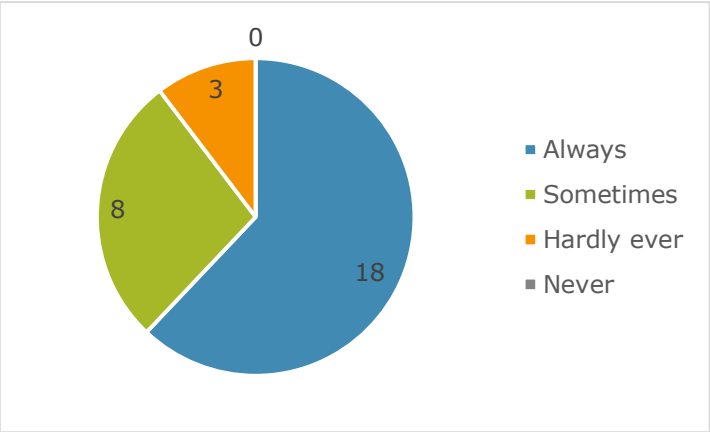


Figure: 2 How often did you do the suggested listening activities?

Analysis and Interpretation

The results show that eighteen students did the suggested listening activities using the online platforms, eight students said that they sometimes did the listening activities. On the other hand, three students said they hardly ever did them.

It is clear that most of the students were engaged in the development of the different listening activities that the online platforms offer, which demonstrates the commitment acquired since the very beginning of the process as well as their responsibility. A very important aspect to mention is that all students participated doing their best to make room in their daily schedules to improve their listening skills. In the interview the students who couldn't follow the planning that was suggested informed that it was because they didn't have time because they work and others mention the fact that some of the activities were difficult for them and they felt frustrated and decided to do just the ones they found easy and understandable.

The second question's aim is to know if students liked doing different listening activities that are not in their textbooks.

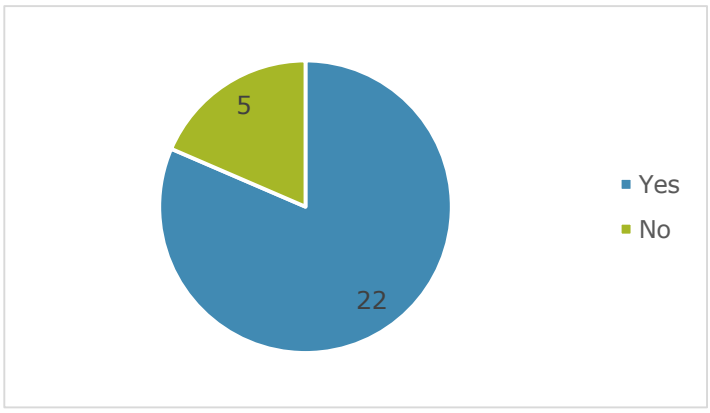


Figure: 3 Did you like doing different activities from the ones you have on your textbooks?

Analysis and Interpretation

Twenty-two students said they like doing not only the listening activities suggested by the textbook and only five students said they didn't like. This means that the idea of combining different listening activities to the ones on the textbook has a positive effect since students feel challenged to listen and understand other people with different accents and pronunciation. In the interview they expressed that sometimes they find boring some of the listening activities they have in their textbooks. They mention that the recordings' topics must be more interesting.

Question three refers to how interesting it was for students use the online platforms listening activities. In figure 3 there are the results.

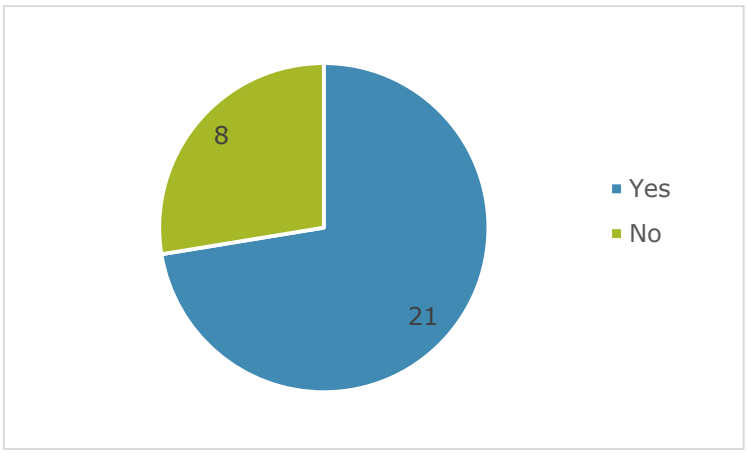


Figure: 4 Did you find the online' listening activities interesting?

Analysis and Interpretation

Most of the students (twenty-one) found the suggested online listening activities interesting, which is very important because they might continue using them in the future to improve their listening skills. Eight students said they didn't find them interesting. This means that the idea of combining different listening activities to the ones on the textbook has a positive effect since students feel challenged to listen and understand other people with different accents and pronunciation. Hence, they said it is a different way to learn by using technology and another benefit they mentioned in the interview is that they can do them at any time, while travelling, before to sleep, in a break are some of the moments they mentioned.

The fourth question aims to find out students' opinion about the efficiency of the methodological strategy. The results are shown in figure 4.

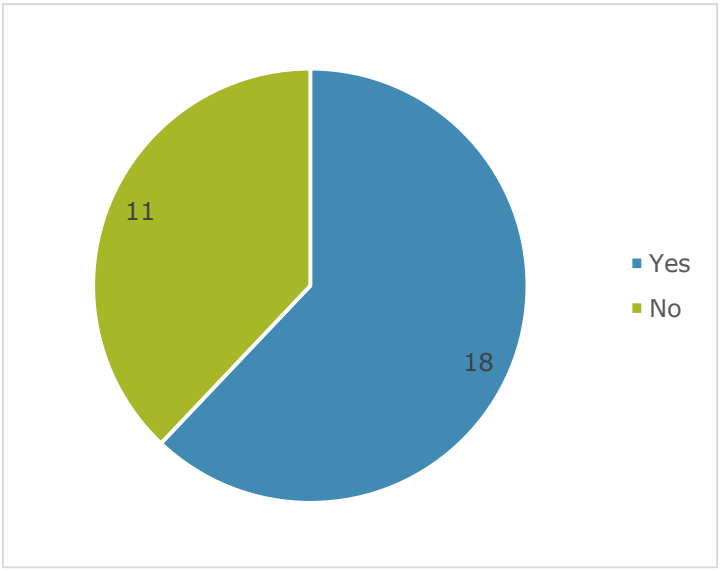


Figure: 5 Do you think using the online platforms helped you to improve your listening skills?

Analysis and Interpretation

The results shown in figure 4 explains that eighteen students that are the 62,07% of the group feel they have improved their listening skills, while eleven of them expressed the haven't improved. More than half of the group have experienced an improvement which means students are more motivated to the idea that as much more practice they have as better their listening skills become. Some of the students who said they haven't improved their listening skills' level mentioned that the lack of time to do some extra practice, the poor proficiency in vocabulary stopped their leaning process, the bad connectivity, the stress levels because of the pandemic, the complexity of some activities were some of the reasons they highlighted.

Question five refers to the advantages the use of online platforms in the improvement of the listening skills.

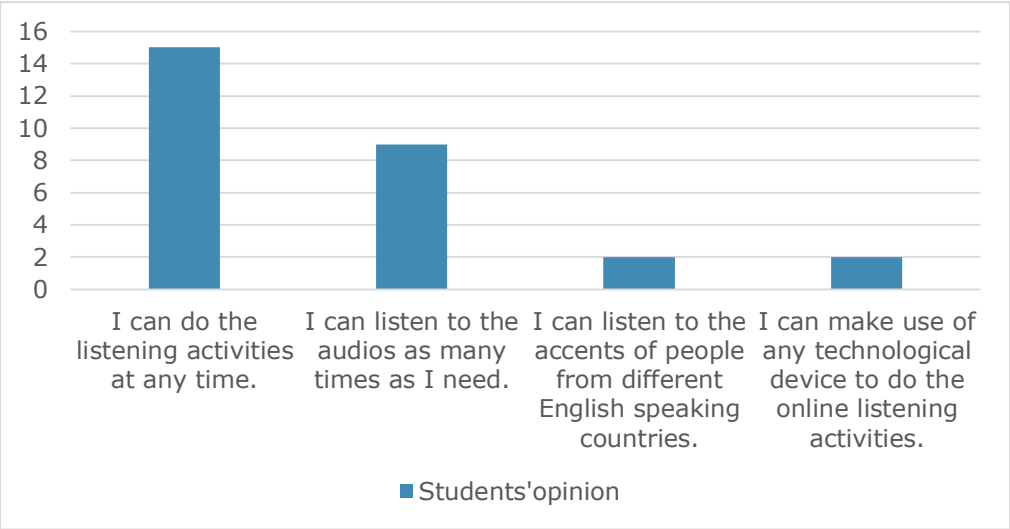


Figure: 6 Advantages of using online platforms

Analysis and interpretation

Figure 5 shows that fifteen students think the most relevant advantage of using the online platforms is the fact they can do them at any time they have. Nine students consider that having the opportunity to listen to the audios or videos as many times as they need is very important. Also, listening to different accents is an advantage for two students, while the use of technological devices to do the online listening activities is important for two students. Based on the results it is clear that students appreciate the chance to do the tasks at any time. The planning suggestion is to use two online platforms per week. In second place it is the advantage of being able to listen to the audios, podcasts, conversations or videos as many times as they need. In the interview the students mentioned that it is important to feel free to do some specific tasks like listening activities because the pressure and stress levels of getting answers in the classrooms cause a kind of mental block and it is difficult to be concentrated. Furthermore, they said that because of the lack of time during the classes, teachers don`t do listening practice or they just let them listen once or twice the recordings.

Question six attempts to identify the online platform(s) that students think are the most useful. Seven online platforms were used to apply the methodological strategy.

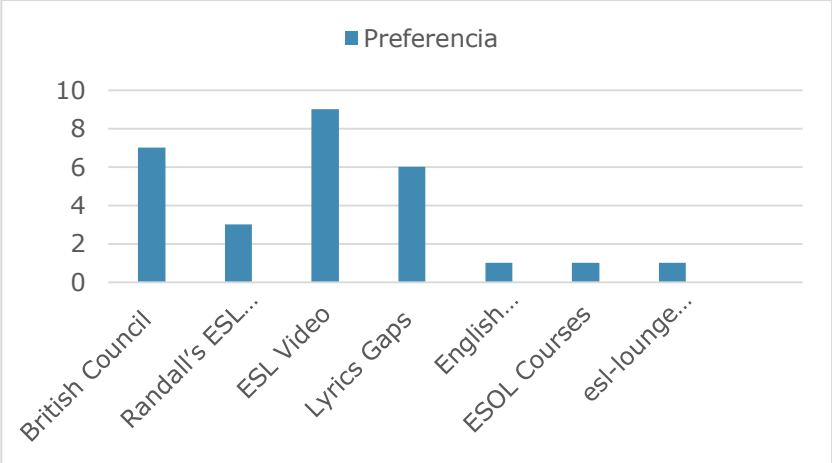


Figure: 7 The most useful online platforms

Analysis and interpretation

The results in figure 6 determine students' preferences about the different online platforms that students have used in the intervention phase to improve the listening skills. The ESL Video platform was definitely the most useful in students' opinion. In second place Lyrics Gaps which uses different music styles. British Council platforms is also very useful according to students' experience. In the interview they affirmed that this platform has very structured activities as well as interesting topics to listen to. Three students found Randal's ESL listening lab platform useful, they said the instructions are clear and the activities are not so long. ESOL Courses, ELLLO and ESL-lounge are not very useful, only 3 students found it useful. In the interview students mentioned that they had not heard about the existence of these technological tools that are free to use to improve not only the listening skills but all language skills. They said it was great to do the online listening activities without the pressure of the time or the stress of getting a good grade, but rather with the unique purpose of practicing the listening skill. They suggested to use only four or five platforms because they would have liked to do more activities from the most useful

platforms. They suggested not to include the platforms that they didn't find interesting or very useful.

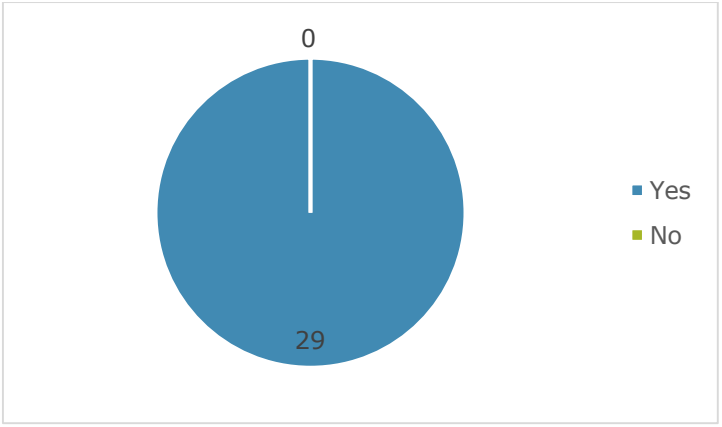


Figure: 8 *Would you recommend other students to use the online platforms to improve the listening skill?*

Analysis and interpretation

All participants in this study think they would recommend other English language learners to use the online platforms to improve their listening skills. Even though students said sometimes it was difficult to do the tasks because of the lack of time, they affirmed that it is a good option to practice the listening skills making use of these platforms. In the interview to analyze students' opinions after the intervention they stated that they have the feeling that now it is easier to recognize words and they are not afraid when they are doing the listening activities from their textbooks. They also said they are more confident and motivated. However, the results of their listening quizzes sometimes are not what they had expected.

The last question pretends to get information about students' desire to continue using the online platforms.

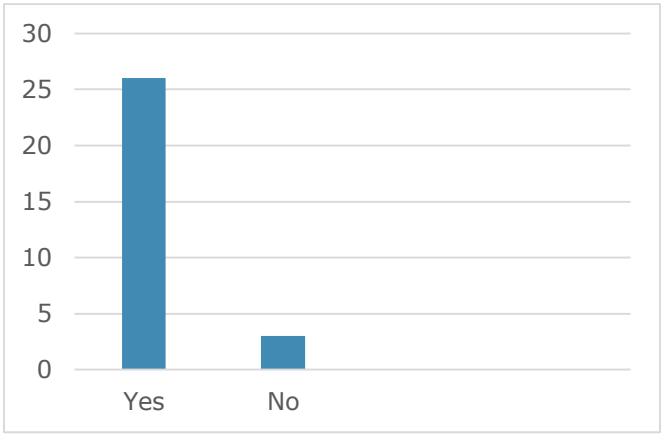


Figure: 9 Would you continue using the online platforms to improve your listening skills?

Analysis and interpretation

Almost all students said they would continue using the online platforms they have worked with, and three students said they would not use them. During the interview to gather some extra information regarding to the methodological strategy that integrates online platforms, students mentioned that it was a good experience to explore other learning' tools. On the other hand, the two students who said they wouldn't use the online platforms said they were disappointed because the activities were very difficult and one student affirmed that he doesn't even have time to do the mandatory assignments that's why doing extra activities is difficult for him. Hence, students said that while surfing through the online platforms, they found out that they can improve not only listening skills, but also reading, writing, grammar, pronunciation, intonation and some other aspects concerning to the proficiency of the English language.

Analyzing the results of the survey with the students through a final interview was very enriching because the students were able to express in a detailed way their opinion in relation to the intervention phase. In general, it can be said that the experience was satisfactory for both the teacher and the students.

CONCLUSIONS

A methodological strategy that integrates online platforms is the proposal of this research, which main objective is to provide teachers and students with a technological tool that can motivate as well as improve their development especially when they are listening what others are saying in English. Based on the gathered data and analyzing the results after the intervention phase, the most relevant findings of this research are:

- The bibliographic information that is found today in relation to the subject of this research is very extensive. Every day more and more researchers involved in the language educational field share their findings to contribute to the improvement of the level of the listening skills as a fundamental part of English language acquisition.

- A repetitive opinion when students are asked about the processes that teachers carry out to improve listening skills is that not enough time is assigned in the classroom for its development and that the priorities include a proficient use of grammatical structures, leaving aside the development of skills.

- After the analysis of the quantitative data, the conclusion is that the application of the methodological strategy that integrates online platforms is a very good option to encourage students to create self- learning habits as well as to improve their listening skills since the learning path is going so fast in that direction. It is important to provide students with materials that can help them in the language' learning process in an effective way.

- Students really enjoy when they fell their opinions are taken into account when teachers are planning their classes because they feel responsible for the teaching- learning processes. Sometimes just following a textbook planning can be boring for students. There is a wide variety of sources online that teachers and students can explore to communicate proficiently in the English language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The methodological strategy that integrates online platforms can be used in both virtual or In- person's classes. However, the different problems with technological devices and also with connectivity during the pandemic has been a big issue students had to deal with when developing the listening activities. It is recommendable to be sure students have everything they need to do a better job.

- After the analysis of this research's results, it is important to take some more time in the moment to choose the online platforms to use according to the students' opinion about the ones they found interesting and useful to use. In the future the recommendation is to do more listening activities using the platforms that students said they enjoyed the most.

- More investigation must be done to in the planning field to find out a way that more students can meet their language learning goals since some of the participants in this study have not experienced any improvement. It is necessary to try solving the problems students mentioned to avoid their disappointment.

- The experience that the teacher and the group of students had with the online platform deserves to be shared with other teachers and students so that they can also benefit from its benefits.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1

A METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY THAT INTEGRATES ONLINE PLATFORMS TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS FOR INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH STUDENTS

Interview- Questions Guide

The following question guide has been designed to have a group interview regarding to obtain essential information about the development of the listening skills during the English classes. The interview will be held by using the platform, Teams. It is a semi-structured question guide.

Considerations:

a) The interview will take place in the middle of the first partial of the semester.
b) It is important to have a certain level of confidence between teacher and students.
c) Create a friendly environment for the interview.
d) Let students feel free while they are speaking and take notes of the most important aspects they mention.

Questions:

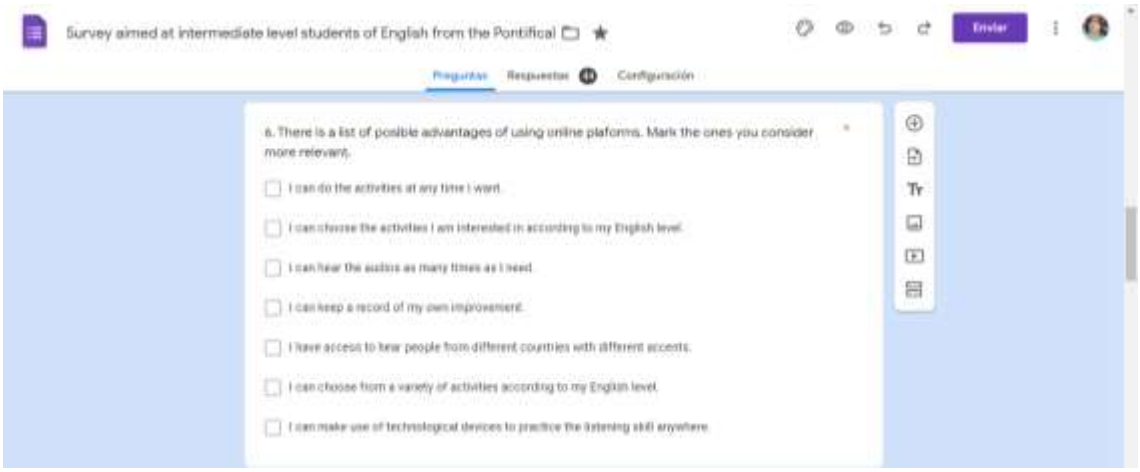
1) In your own experience what is the most difficult skill to develop during the English classes?
2) What did your teachers do to help you to improve that skill? (If the answer is listening be more specific when questioning)
3) What do you understand by listening skills?
4) Do you understand when you listen to people speaking in English? How much?
5) In your point of view. What is the main problem for English students when trying to understand English?
6) How much time did your English teachers use to use to practice the listening skills?
7) What activities do you think a teacher can use to practice listening skills?
8) Do you like using technology during your English classes? Do you use it?
9) Do you know that there are some online platforms to practice the listening skills? Would you like to explore and use them?
10) Would you like to take the challenge of using a different tool and not only the textbook' listening activities?

Elaborated by Ana Solis Carrasco.

Annex 2

Print screens of the survey, taken from google forms.





Annex 3

Survey aimed at intermediate level students of English from the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador to validate a methodological strategy that integrates online platforms to improve the listening skill.

Objective: Validate the effectiveness of the methodological strategy that integrates online platforms to improve the listening skill.

Instructions: Read every question and answer them by using a tick.

1. - How often did you do the suggested listening activities? Mark (✓) the option that reflects your opinion.

Always ( ) Sometimes ( )
Hardly ever ( ) Never ( )

2.- Did you like doing different activities from the ones you have on your textbooks? Mark (✓) the option that reflects your opinion.

Yes ( )
No ( )

3. - Did you find the online' listening activities interesting? Mark (✓) the option that reflects your opinion.

Yes ( )
No ( )

4. - Do you think using the online platforms helped you to improve your listening skills? Mark (✓) the option that reflects your opinion.

Yes ( )
No ( )

5. - There is a list of possible advantages of using online platforms. Mark (✓) the ones you consider more relevant.

a) I can do the listening activities at any time. ( )
c) I can listen to the audios as many times as I need. ( )
e) I can listen to the accents of people from different English speaking countries. ( )
f) I can make use of any technological device to do the online listening activities. ( )

6. There is a list of different online platforms that you have used. Mark (✓) the ones you found more useful.

( ) 

( ) 

( ) 

( ) 

( ) 

( ) 

( ) 

7. - Based on your own experience would you recommend other students to use the online platforms to improve the listening skill? Mark (✓) the option that reflects your opinion.

Yes ( )
No ( )

8. - Would you continue using the online platforms to improve your listening skills? Mark (✓) the option that reflects your opinion.

Yes ( )
No ( )

Thanks a lot!