
Students' perceptions on the benefits of authentic materials through technology in English listening comprehension

Percepciones de los alumnos sobre los beneficios de los materiales auténticos
a través de la tecnología en la comprensión auditiva de inglés

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RESUMEN

El uso de materiales auténticos ha sido considerado como una herramienta efectiva durante el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma inglés, especialmente para el desarrollo de las destrezas de la escucha. En este sentido, la presente investigación tiene como objetivo analizar las percepciones que tienen los estudiantes de séptimo grado sobre los beneficios que el uso de materiales auténticos mediados por la tecnologías han provocado en el desarrollo de su escucha. La investigación se efectuó en una escuela primaria de la ciudad de Loja durante el año lectivo 2022-2023. Las investigadoras aplicaron el modelo de investigación-acción y se apoyaron en un cuestionario para recopilar datos cuantitativos y cualitativos, los cuales se interpretaron y analizaron mediante estadística descriptiva y análisis temático. Los resultados mostraron que los estudiantes estuvieron de acuerdo en que los materiales auténticos como canciones, dibujos animados, conversaciones, charlas TED y documentales les ayudó a aprender el idioma, mantenerse motivados, desarrollar interacción con sus compañeros, sentirse cómodos y mejorar sus habilidades auditivas. Por lo tanto, se concluyó que los alumnos de séptimo percibieron positivamente el uso de materiales auténticos proporcionados a través de la tecnología.

Palabras clave: Materiales auténticos, aprendizaje del idioma inglés, destrezas de escucha, percepciones, tecnología

ABSTRACT

The use of authentic materials has been considered an effective tool during the English language teaching-learning process, especially for developing listening comprehension skills. In this sense, the present research aims to analyse the seventh-grade students' perceptions on the benefits of authentic materials through technology in the improvement of their listening comprehension skills at an elementary school in Loja city during the 2022-2023 school year. To do this, the researcher applied an action research model approach with a questionnaire to gather quantitative and qualitative data, which were interpreted and analysed by using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The results showed that students agreed that authentic materials like songs, cartoons, conversations, TED talks, and documentaries helped them to learn the language, keep them motivated, develop their interaction with their classmates, feel comfortable, and improve their listening skills. Therefore, it was concluded that seventh-grade students perceived positively the use of authentic materials provided through technology.

Keywords: Authentic materials, English language learning, listening comprehension skills, perceptions, technology



■ INTRODUCCIÓN

Currently, technology has had a strong impact on the English language teaching-learning process because of its multiple benefits. According to Ahmadi (2018), this tool has enabled students to become independent learners, build their own knowledge and engage with the language. At the same time, it has provided students with access to a wide range of digital platforms and authentic materials such as songs, cartoons, conversations, TED talks, and documentaries, which help them to learn in an interactive, creative, and dynamic way. From these advantages, it can be stated that technology is an effective resource to make teaching more entertaining, productive, and interesting.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the use of authentic materials through technology has facilitated the development of listening comprehension skills. Researchers such as Tran and Duong (2020) have found that students often struggle with this skill since it involves a complex process of understanding verbal messages transmitted by native speakers. In that sense, authentic materials have been considered a suitable solution, as they allow students to interact and learn the language in real-life situations (Codina, 2020); likewise, they motivate them and make them feel comfortable during the listening process (Alimbaev & Shamuratov, 2022). Thus, it is concluded that these materials are necessary to improve students' listening comprehension skills in the classroom.

Given the above, this study aims to analyse the seventh-grade students' perceptions on the benefits of authentic materials through technology in the improvement of their listening comprehension skills at an elementary school in Loja city during the 2022-2023 school year. Therefore, the researcher has formulated the following research question: what are the perceptions on the benefits of authentic materials through technology for the development of English listening comprehension skills among seventh-grade students at an elementary school in Loja city?

The present research was developed in order to show teachers the students' perceptions on the benefits

of using authentic materials such as conversations, songs, TED talks, documentaries, and cartoons to improve their listening comprehension skills during the English language teaching-learning process.

To carry out this study, the researcher applied action research, which was developed through an intervention proposal for eight weeks. The research instrument was a questionnaire that included one ordering question and five closed multiple-choice questions to collect quantitative data and six open-ended questions to gather qualitative information related to students' perceptions on the benefits of using authentic materials to develop their listening comprehension skills.

■ THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Technology

What is technology?

Technology refers to systems and devices designed and invented through scientific knowledge to meet human needs. Coccia (2019) states that "Technology is a complex system made and/or used by living systems, that is composed of more than one entity or sub-system" (p. 154). Based on this definition, it can be pointed out that technology and science are related since both enable the creation of resources and tools that help people to be more productive in their daily activities.

Importance of technology in education

Nowadays, technology plays an important role in the educational field since it allows teachers to adopt innovative, creative, and entertaining classroom activities that stimulate students to learn interactively. Raja and Nagasubramani (2018) claim that "Thanks to technology; education has gone from passive and reactive to interactive and aggressive" (p. 34). Undoubtedly, technology has revolutionized the quality of education by facilitating an efficient and effective teaching-learning process.



Moreover, technology applied to education has enabled students to have the possibility of acquiring their knowledge according to their interests. Ahmadi (2018) states that “The use of technology has changed the methods from teacher-centered to learner-centered ones” (p. 119). This has provided students with meaningful learning to develop their critical thinking skills which will benefit their personal and professional life.

Technology for English language teaching

Currently, technological resources such as computers, speakers, projectors, and laptops are widely used for English language teaching since these allow teachers to design their classes with interactive activities in which students can actively participate and collaborate with each other. Nawaila et al. (2020) mention that “technology presents such a significant number of alternatives for making teaching more productive and interesting” (p. 19). In this sense, it can be said that technology is a key resource for improving English teaching methods within the classroom.

Technology and authentic materials

The use of authentic materials through technology helps students to develop their four language skills and increase their curiosity and motivation. Alimbaev and Shamuratov (2022) state that “Utilizing technologies and authentic materials together leads to more advantages that are positive: increasing critical thinking, integrating skills, and learning perspectives, feeling comfort, and mastering a second language as their L1” (p. 214). From this point of view, it can be mentioned that the combination of authentic materials and technology is crucial to provide students with meaningful learning outcomes.

Authentic materials

What are authentic materials?

Authentic materials are written and spoken materials created by native speakers which provide the audience with real-life situations in different contexts. Codina (2020) claims that “Typically, authentic

materials are considered language samples that naturally occur in contexts where native speakers use the language” (p. 4). Therefore, this type of material is an excellent resource for exposing students to real discourse in which they can learn vocabulary and expressions commonly used by speakers in their daily lives.

Likewise, it is essential to point out that authentic materials refer to resources that are not produced for educational purposes as they are obtained from real communication between native speakers. Shaxzoda (2022) explains that “they aren’t structured in a special way and they don’t use specific grammar or vocabulary” (p. 1427). These materials are primarily focused on social function; nevertheless, they can also be applied in the educational field to stimulate students’ learning and connect the real world with the classroom.

Advantages of authentic materials

The application of authentic materials in the classroom provides students with a wide range of benefits that make the teaching-learning process more meaningful, interesting, and motivating. Jaelani (2021) mentions that “By using authentic materials in the classroom, it will help students bridge the gap between the classrooms and outside the classroom and also it can motivate students to learn” (p. 14). Based on this author, it can be pointed out that authentic materials are crucial for fostering English learning in real contexts and increasing students’ motivation, creativity, and interest.

Another positive aspect of authentic materials is that they are created with words and expressions frequently used by native speakers, which helps students significantly improve their language skills. Torenizyazova and Otegenova (2022) claim that “They naturally encourage students to be better readers and listeners” (p. 1805). From the advantages mentioned above, it can be said that authentic materials primarily develop the students’ receptive skills, such as reading and listening, and enable them to learn new cultural aspects of the target language.



Disadvantages of authentic materials

Although previous studies have found many advantages of using authentic materials for the teaching-learning process, there are other research works that are against them. According to these reports, authentic listening materials are difficult to understand, as they are produced with various dialects and accents (Anvarovna, 2022). The diversity of these dialects will lead students to feel frustrated since they will not be able to accurately understand and interpret the messages conveyed by the speakers.

Another disadvantage of authentic materials is that they are designed with advanced grammar and vocabulary which can hinder students' listening comprehension skills. Abdillajonovna (2022) notes that "The biggest problem with authentic materials is that if the wrong type of text is chosen, the vocabulary may not be relevant to the learner's needs and too many structures can create difficulty" (p. 78). This refers to the fact that not all authentic materials have an academic vocabulary as they are not created specifically to teach the language.

Types of authentic materials

There are three types of authentic materials that can be used depending on the students' level and the content of the subject. As Fachraini and Sartika (2019) state "Authentic materials can be in the form of printed, video and audio that can be found around them such as newspapers, magazines, photos, reality shows, soap operas, short films, radio broadcasts and others" (p. 277). Together, these authentic materials allow students to be exposed to a variety of real-world situations and become familiar with the language.

Authentic listening materials

The first type of authentic material refers to auditory materials such as radio news, radio advertisements, songs, conversations, and podcasts which are created to convey a message to the listener. Haricha (2019) considers that "audio authentic materials have positive effects on students in the foreign language classroom because they expose

students to real language and they feel that they are learning the real language and they focus more on students' needs" (p. 37). Undoubtedly, these auditory materials are necessary for the teaching-learning process, as they help students to have direct contact with the target language.

Authentic video materials

The second type of authentic material is related to audio-visual materials like television programs, TV series, cartoons, and movies which are considered effective tools for learning English. This view is supported by Iskhokovna and Erkinovna (2021) who emphasise that "When watching video fragments, students see how words are pronounced, see articulation and assimilate it unconsciously" (p. 2995). Overall, this author highlights the importance of using authentic video materials to create a positive learning climate for students.

Authentic printed materials

Finally, the third type of authentic material is material written on paper that includes lyrics of songs, newspapers, restaurant menus, maps, and tourist information brochures. Owiti et al. (2019) assert that "Bringing authentic printed materials into the classroom will definitely support language acquisition. This is because exposing learners to authentic text enables them to focus on language details and internalize generalisations for themselves" (p. 161). There is no doubt that these resources are useful for the teaching-learning process since students can learn useful words, phrases, and expressions for the outside world.

Authentic materials to develop listening comprehension skills

The selection of authentic materials for the development of listening comprehension skills must be based on the students' needs, interests and levels, as well as their relevance to the teaching-learning process. According to Nurkholida (2018), "Teachers need to design material which meets the students' potential needs" (p. 59). In this sense, it is important



that teachers choose appropriate authentic materials, such as videos on YouTube and songs since these resources motivate students to acquire and learn the English language in a real context.

Videos on YouTube

In English, listening comprehension is a complex process that needs to be developed through interesting authentic materials such as videos on YouTube since they have a strong effect on students' level, motivation, and interest. Qomariyah et al. (2021) in their research study mention that "YouTube is a rich source of authentic materials especially in English lessons which could motivate students to interact in an educational capacity through English language videos" (p. 68). In the same vein, Al Harbi (2021) asserts that "Using YouTube videos as a pedagogical tool in English language lessons, would give students a better understanding of the presenting material" (p. 3). Collectively, these writers show that videos on YouTube can make learning more fun, meaningful, innovative, and creative, which would help learners improve their listening comprehension skills in English.

In this sense, it is worth mentioning that the YouTube platform offers students a wide range of authentic video materials which can be classified into the following categories:

Table 1
Classification of videos on YouTube

| Videos on YouTube | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| CATEGORY | CONCEPT | EXAMPLES |
| Informative | Informative videos are focused on informing people about relevant topics around the world. | BBC News Documentaries |
| Educational | Educational videos are aimed at educating viewers through academic knowledge. | TED talks |
| Entertainment | Entertainment videos are intended to entertain and catch learners' attention and interest. | - English conversations - Cartoons |

Songs through Lyrics Training website

Songs are useful resources for developing students' listening comprehension skills since they are produced with different grammatical structures and vocabulary. Jumadullayeva (2020) claims that "Song is a great language package that bundles culture, vocabulary, listening, grammar and a host of other language skills in just a few rhythms" (p. 185). Based on this statement, it can be concluded that songs are effective to make students feel more motivated and interested in learning the target language.

Furthermore, it is fundamental to mention that there are various websites that use music videos to improve listening comprehension skills, one of them is "Lyrics Training" in which students can fill in the lyrics of their favourite songs. Medina (2019) states that "Lyrics Training is a website that helps to perfect the listening skill, thanks to the production of music videos, the ease of acquisition or rapid comprehension of the pronunciation of each word belonging to their respective language" (p. 16). This website is definitely a great tool for education because it allows students to become familiar with new words, phrases, and expressions.

METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out during the 2022-2023 school year with seventh-grade students at an elementary school in Loja city, who were divided into four males and twenty-three females. The students were an average age between 11 and 13 years old. They all have an A2.2 level of English language proficiency according to the Ecuadorian National Curriculum. This sample was selected using the convenience method in which the students were chosen on the basis of their accessibility (Bhardwaj, 2019). However, due to the age, it was necessary to use informed consent signed by the parents to authorize the application of different techniques and instruments throughout the research process (Geier et al., 2021). Therefore, the researcher provided participants with a code of anonymity to follow ethical principles of privacy.



The study was conducted through the mixed method to collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data (Gihar, 2022). In that regard, the survey technique was used with the instrument of a questionnaire which was designed with the Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Gay et al., 2012). This allowed the researcher to gather the students' perceptions on the benefits of implementing authentic materials to improve their listening comprehension skills, language learning, motivation, peer interaction, and comfort.

The design of the study was based on practical action research established by Efron & Ravid (2019) in which the researcher followed some steps. Firstly, a problem was identified within the classroom. Secondly, background information was gathered from the seventh-grade students. Thirdly, a study was designed based on the characteristics of the participants to provide an effective solution to the problem. After that, a proposal was implemented with authentic materials such as songs, cartoons, conversations, TED

talks, and documentaries. Then, quantitative and qualitative data were collected by applying the survey technique with the instrument of a questionnaire. Subsequently, the information collected was analysed through different statistical tables and graphs. Finally, results were shared with the educational community to show the students' perceptions of the authentic materials.

The quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire were presented through descriptive statistics (Creswell, 2012) and illustrated with a table and a bar graph that showed the students' perceptions of authentic materials in the development of their listening comprehension skills, motivation, language learning, comfort, and peer interaction. On the other hand, the qualitative information was analysed based on thematic analysis (Creswell, 2012), which allowed the researcher to corroborate the findings by selecting the most important narrative data obtained from the open-ended questions.

RESULTS

The present section will show the results and findings obtained by the researcher about the students' perceptions on the benefits of implementing authentic materials through technology. In that sense, these results will be explained by using the numerical and narrative data gathered from the questionnaire. Therefore, the data will be presented in a table and bar graph with their corresponding interpretation and analysis.

Table 2

Seventh-grade students' perceptions of the use of authentic materials through technology at an elementary school

| STATEMENTS | SA | | A | | N | | D | | SD | | T | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|---|----|-----|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| The use of English conversations through the YouTube platform allowed you to acquire language. | 4 | 15 | 12 | 44 | 8 | 30 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 27 | 100 |
| The songs used on the Lyrics Training website enabled you to dynamically interact. | 10 | 37 | 8 | 30 | 8 | 30 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 27 | 100 |
| The BBC news documentaries helped you to improve your listening comprehension. | 7 | 26 | 10 | 37 | 7 | 26 | 3 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 27 | 100 |
| The cartoons used through the YouTube platform made you feel comfortable. | 12 | 44 | 9 | 33 | 5 | 19 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 27 | 100 |
| The application of different TED talks motivated you to learn English language. | 5 | 19 | 9 | 33 | 12 | 44 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 27 | 100 |

Note. SA = Strongly agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly disagree, T = Total



The above table presents the students' perceptions on the benefits of using different authentic materials to improve their listening comprehension skills, peer interaction, language learning, motivation, and comfort.

According to Table 2 results, 44% of the participants agreed that the use of conversations via the YouTube platform allowed them to acquire the language, as these provided them with new vocabulary on different topics. On the other hand, 30% of them had a neutral stance, since they mentioned in the open-ended questions that conversations were useful resources but too complex to understand due to the advanced lexical range used by the native speakers. In that sense, 15% of the participants strongly agreed because the videos helped them to learn words and expressions applied in real-life contexts. Last but not least, 7% of the students strongly disagreed and 4% disagreed with the statement. In fact, one of the students supported his answer by saying "Hay palabras que no sabemos y eso nos confunde" [There are words we don't know and that confuses us] (S-05).

Likewise, the data table shows that 37% of the participants strongly agreed that songs through Lyrics Training website helped them to dynamically interact with their classmates while developing their listening comprehension skills, which was supported by one student who mentioned "Las canciones nos permitieron pensar e interactuar" [The songs allowed us to think and interact] (S-18). On the other hand, 30% of the students chose the options "agree" and "neutral" because they felt that the songs enabled them to learn words in a motivating and entertaining way; however, these sometimes had complex grammar and vocabulary that confused them several times. In contrast, 3% disagreed since they considered that songs did not encourage collective participation within the classroom.

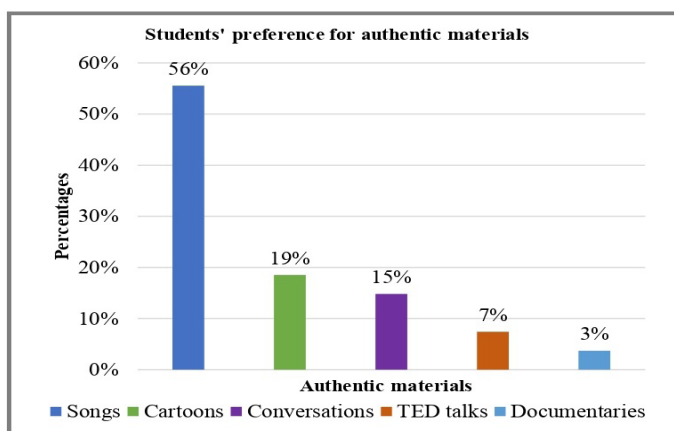
Furthermore, it is interesting to note that 37% of the surveyed students agreed with the documentary provided by BBC News since it helped them improve their listening comprehension sub-skills such as listening for predicting, listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for understanding

vocabulary, and listening for sequencing. In this sense, one student pointed out "Si porque aprendimos palabras nuevas y eran relacionadas con el contenido" [Yes because we learnt new words and they were related to the content] (S-27). What is more, 26% of them strongly agreed and had a neutral stance as this authentic material presented relevant information about a historical event which included advanced words for the students' age. In contrast, 11% of students disagreed with the statement because they did not understand it.

In response to statement 4, it could be said that 44% of the students strongly agreed that watching cartoons provided through the YouTube platform aroused their curiosity and made them feel comfortable during the listening process. Conversely, 33% of them agreed because they liked to watch, learn and have fun with the characters and the plot. Nevertheless, 19% of the participants had a neutral point of view since they enjoyed the cartoons but did not consider these as resources for teaching English, as one participant noted "Es solo para divertirse" [It's just for fun] (S-05). Lastly, 4% of the surveyed disagreed, describing cartoons as weird.

As shown in Table 2 outcomes, 44% of those who responded to item 5 had a neutral opinion about TED talk to increase their motivation since it provided them with meaningful information that included advanced expressions. In contrast, 33% of them agreed with this type of content because it enabled them to acquire useful words in real-life situations. On the other hand, 19% of the students strongly agreed as they indicated that their interest increased when they listened to a speaker from another country. Last but not least, 4% strongly disagreed due to its lexical complexity in understanding the main idea and details, which was corroborated by one student who argued the following "Porque es muy difícil" [Because it is very difficult] (S-25).

Figure 1
Seventh-grade students' preference for authentic materials at an elementary school



This bar graph illustrates the seventh-grade students' preferences for different authentic materials like songs, cartoons, conversations, TED talks, and documentaries to develop their listening comprehension sub-skills such as “listening for predicting”, “listening for gist”, “listening for specific information”, “listening for understanding vocabulary” and “listening for sequencing”.

As seen in figure 1 results, 56% of the students preferred songs to improve their listening comprehension skills since they made the English lessons more dynamic and interesting, as mentioned by some participants in the open-ended questions. Instead, 19% selected cartoons as these included animated characters and stories according to their level. On the other hand, 15% of the surveyed chose conversations as their favourite for learning words because they involved vocabulary commonly used by native speakers in their daily lives. In contrast, 7% of them liked the TED talk for being easy and informative. However, 3% opted for the documentary provided by BBC News due to the fact that it allowed them to learn about relevant aspects from around the world.

DISCUSSION

What are the perceptions on the benefits of authentic materials through technology for the development of English listening comprehension skills among seventh-grade students at an elementary school in Loja city?

The results indicated that 44% of the surveyed participants agreed that conversations used on the YouTube platform allowed them to learn English since these included a wide range of new words, phrases, and expressions. In that sense, Codina (2020) confirms that this type of authentic material is a helpful resource for learning the English language because the students have the possibility to listen to real-life situations.

At the same time, 37% of the students strongly agreed that songs through the Lyrics Training website were their favourite authentic material because they enabled them to interact dynamically with their classmates while the video was playing. This is consistent with Jumadullayeva (2020), who describes songs as a perfect linguistic package to promote students' participation since these materials stimulate their curiosity, motivation, and interest in understanding the content.

Likewise, these results showed that 37% of the students agreed that the documentary provided by BBC News helped them to improve their listening comprehension skills since they could easily predict the content, identify the general idea, recognize the key information, and sequence events. In this regard, Torenizyazova and Otegenova (2022) have found that documentaries are effective authentic materials to encourage students to be better listeners, as they have the opportunity to be exposed to real news from around the world.

Additionally, 44% of them strongly agreed that cartoons made them feel comfortable since they included simple and entertaining conversations between the animated characters. In accordance with the previous finding, studies carried out by Alimbaev and Shamuratov (2022) have shown that the use of these authentic materials is appropriate for children because it helps them feel comfortable and motivated to improve their listening comprehension skills.

Finally, 33% of the respondents pointed out that the TED talk motivated them to learn English despite its advanced vocabulary. This supports the ideas of Jaelani (2021), who states that authentic materials serve to motivate students within the classroom since these help them to realise the importance of learning a universal language like English to communicate with people from other countries.

Nevertheless, one of the limitations of the research work was the lack of technological resources for each student since most of them did not have their own devices to develop their listening activities.

CONCLUSIONS

From the previous results and findings, it is concluded that the seventh-grade students perceived positively the use of authentic materials such as conversations, songs, documentaries, TED talks, and cartoons. In general, these resources were accepted by the majority of students because they learned the language in real-life situations, increased their motivation, and actively interacted with their classmates during the development of the listening activities.

Authentic materials were useful tools for teaching English because they boost the development of the students' listening comprehension sub-skills. Specifically, the students were able to predict the content of listening through it, recognize the main idea of the listening source, identify the key vocabulary about the topic, and sequence the events during the listening process. Therefore, it is evident that authentic materials have a significant impact on students' listening skills.

It is advisable for teachers to apply a wide variety of authentic materials with technology. This will allow students to arouse their interest in learning the English language in a motivating way. At the same time, it is recommended to use songs as authentic material according to the students' level and age, as these will make the listening process more entertaining and interesting. What is more, these materials give enough exposure to the students into the English real language by adapting their ears to several accents.

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