

Colección **MONOGRÁFICOS**

Understanding EFL students' learning through classroom research: Experiences of teacher-researchers

Sandy T. Soto
Compiler





Ediciones UTMACH

117 pág: 21x29,7cm

Colección Monográficos

Title: Understanding EFL students' learning through classroom
research: Experiences of teacher-researchers - Sandy T. Soto

(Compiler)

First edition 2020

ISBN: 978-9942-24-137-5

CDD 607

1. Education,

2. Research

3. EFL teaching

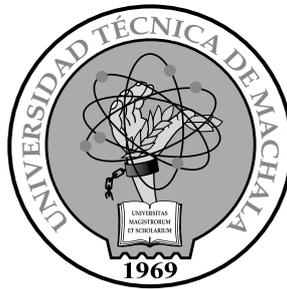
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Understanding EFL students' learning through classroom research: Experiences of teacher-researchers

Sandy T. Soto

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Colección Monográficos

Original title:

Understanding EFL students' learning through classroom
research: Experiences of teacher-researchers

ISBN: 978-9942-24-137-5

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© Chapter authors

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.48190/9789942241375>

First edition 2020

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Dedication

To those EFL teachers who, day by day, give the best of their own
for helping their students construct their knowledge and learn
English in meaningful and effective ways.

Sandy T. Soto

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Introduction

What should foreign language teachers do to help their students improve their linguistic skills? Many are the ways how teachers can support their students' learning process. There are a variety of methods, strategies, techniques, as well as materials and resources we can rely on in order for our students to succeed in the development of their skills.

Teachers can get ideas on what to do from published research, presentations at academic events, informal conversations with colleagues, online resources, and their own language learning experience. It is just a matter trying these ideas out and evaluate the extent to which they favor the enhancement of students' linguistic competences in the target language.

In line with these ideas, this book is intended to inform pre-service and in-service EFL teachers about the result of investigations conducted by English as foreign language teachers. The book is composed of five chapters which demonstrate how these teachers have taken a step further by taking the role of teacher-researchers to understand and boost their students' performance.

The first chapter of this book reports on a study conducted at the university level where students majoring in Hospitality and Tourism participated as principal users of videos to develop vocabulary of their field. The study aimed to find out the opinions of students about the use of English subtitled videos or movies to develop tourism vocabulary and to explore the benefits of using English subtitled videos in a context where there is no practice of the target language outside the classroom.

The second chapter of this book focuses on the development of listening skills through the use of podcasts as a strategy and resource in EFL classes. The aim of the study was to discuss the importance of podcasts for teaching English as a foreign language and to analyze the results of using them to improve listening comprehension in university students.

The third chapter digs into the writing skill. It is based on an interuniversity investigation in which the authors identified the most common errors made by EFL beginning level college students in their written discourse. The identification of these errors can guide EFL teachers to make methodological decisions to improve their students' writing performance.

The fourth chapter also addresses writing. In this case, this chapter discusses how a group of college students developed their writing skills through the writing of paragraphs and peer correction. Students wrote e-mails, blogs, reviews and posts and used rubrics to evaluate their performance with the help of their peers.

Finally, chapter seven examines the use of cell phone games within English classes. The chapter seeks to introduce these games as a valuable resource to encourage the practice of English through mobile phones in and out of the classroom. Concepts of mobile games and the reasons to use them in EFL classes are addressed. The chapter also provides some suggestions of game applications developed to support the learning of EFL.

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Chapter 2

Implications of the use of
podcast in the
development of listening
skills at a university level

Implications of the use of podcast in the development of listening skills at a university level

Silva Elizabeth Cárdenas Sánchez
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Implications of the use of podcast in the development of listening skills at a university level

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Is a qualified EFL teacher at ESPOCH Morona Santiago Campus. Because of her own experience as English learner and her empathy towards students, she believes that everybody is capable of learning and hopes to make a difference in the lives of most of her students as she has been doing for more than 15 years now. She got a Master degree in European and extra European languages and literatures at Università degli Studi di Milano in Italy in 2010. From her formal education, she has a broad overview of the cultural context in which English is used and she is familiar with a wide range of spoken and written styles of English. Through her work she has come into contact with different working cultures and a diverse range of English speakers in private companies and academia. She has worked with people for whom British English or American English is their first language or second language. She speaks many languages such as Italian, English, Spanish, German and French and she understands from first-hand experience many of the issues connected with learning a second language at any age.

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.48190/9789942241375.2>

Abstract

A second or foreign language acquisition is a process in which learners develop and enhance different skills such as listening. However, students still struggle to comprehend L2. For instance, when a trainee works on a language proficiency, English listening material such as audios/videos and different pronunciations or sounds is difficult to analyze. Therefore, researchers have been investigating about techniques that work in classes and they found out that podcasting is increasingly being exploited by language teachers as a new popular and dynamic method to inspire learning inside and outside the traditional classroom (Stanley, 2006). This paper deals with student's listening difficulties, podcasts' technique and suggestions to be implemented in other settings. The aim is to analyze the mentioned technique in English teaching as a foreign language. Data were collected from pre and post questionnaires as well as interviews to understand better how the podcast-based practice influences university students' way of learning. The subjects were 59 students enrolled in a second-level English language course at the Universidad Politécnica de Chimborazo – Campus Morona Santiago during the academic term September 2018 – February 2019. Students have been listening to different podcasts during six weeks, reinforced by varied activities proposed by the researchers. Likewise, 30 of the participants, majoring in Zootechnics, had to train watching videos with English subtitles; instead, 29 students from Accounting and Auditing listened to the podcasts, while reading the transcripts. The results demonstrated that podcast usage has some implication in English language acquisition.

Keywords: podcast, SLA, listening comprehension, motivation

Introduction

Teaching a second language has been transformed in relation to the technological developments of information and communication (ICT). The use of technological tools through didactic strategies optimizes the learning processes by converting them into meaningful processes of good quality, evidencing effective results at the listening level within the student population.

It is surprising that listening skill, which is most often used in communication, has been shifted to a secondary position after speaking and writing. Yet, in spite of its critical role in language acquisition, it is accepted that listening skills have to be taught like any other language skills.

Due to the high technology developments, the activities and the way of learning in the classroom become an innovative approach of interaction and communication of contents. Nowadays, teaching is not only considered a traditional way of lear-

ning; but it is also a more active and interactive strategy that includes applications or digital programs, which are used to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge.

Podcasting is one of the greatest technology developments that has emerged and has the possibility to transform learning into a new approach to educate better and enhance learning. Furthermore, it contributes to the integration of digital skills and at the same time all the other language learning skills (Brittain, Gllowacki, van Ittersum & Johnson, 2006). Podcasting is a portmanteau word, formed by combining “iPod” developed by Apple and “broadcasting”, the traditional means of receiving information and leisure content on the radio or television. The term ‘podcast’ was first coined in 2004, and it means the publishing of audio or video via the Internet, which are designed to be downloaded and listened to on a portable device of any type.

Listening to audio is nothing new or innovative to the Web. Podcasting differs from other ways of delivering audio online by the idea of automatically downloaded content.

Podcasting offers language teachers and students a wide range of possibilities for extra listening practice both inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, podcasts enable students to practice listening in a self-directed manner and at their own pace. By 2005, the concept of ‘podcasting’ reached its top point: thousands of podcasts were created, and The New Oxford American Dictionary named a ‘podcast’ its official ‘Word of the Year’.

The main purpose of this research work is to analyze the use of podcast as a strategy to encourage the development of listening comprehension in English at the Universidad Politécnica de Chimborazo- Sede Morona Santiago (Second Level A2/B1, students from different specializations) and how the same strategy can be used to develop activities assigned by the teacher and at the same time encourage self-study at home. Other aims no less important than the main one are to examine the challenges that students face in listening to various authentic English podcasts, and analyze learners’ self-assessment data on various ways of improving listening skills.

As a methodology of work, class observation will play a fundamental role in allowing students to qualify their reactions when developing various activities related to the podcast and students’ reflections on their experience of listening activities posted in a survey of students’ self-evaluation of their listening comprehension using podcast.

The intended outcome of research is to formulate the tips for good practice in improving learners’ listening skills.

Surveys contribute to the determination of how the podcast turned out to be more significant in the enhancement of it as a listening comprehension innovative strategy.

The development of digital competence should not only be directed to the development of linguistic intelligence, but it can also be effective in other areas of

knowledge, creating bases and tools for the integral formation of the individual, so the student can use the class contents, adapt them appropriately and strategically in a digital context under the recourse of the podcast.

Literature review

Teaching and tools

Listening consists of choosing necessary information, remembering it, and connecting it to the process between sound and form of meaning (Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). In this sense, Rost (1994) told that listening is an active mental ability. It helps us to understand the world around us and is one of the necessary parts in making successful communication (Pourhosein, Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). On the other hand, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) stated that listening includes listening for thoughts, feelings, and intentions and this needs active involvement, effort, and practice. According to Morley (2001), throughout the 1990s, attention to listening in language instruction increased dramatically. Listening comprehension is now considered as an active skill that involves many processes. In order to understand clearly a conversation and spoken language, students need to connect instantaneously information listened, so that is why it makes listening “complex, dynamic, and fragile” (Celce-Murcia, 1995, p. 366). This is what we call “listening comprehension”, that is a sequence of different processes of understanding the spoken language. These include knowing speech sounds, comprehending the meaning of individual words, and understanding the syntax of sentences (Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). According to Hamouda (2013), listening comprehension refers to the understanding of what the listener has heard and it is his/her ability to repeat the sounds without real comprehension. O’Malley, Chamot, and Kupper (1989) said that listening comprehension is an active process in which the listener figure out the meaning of the message starting from the context and existing knowledge, in order to be able to do the required task.

Students should participate in their own learning as much as possible, which is the most important feature that makes learning effective. The traditional idea of the passive teaching method such as listen and repeat, listen and memorize, listen and imitate, has given a new way of learning that motivate students to learn a second language (Pinker, 1994). Foreign language acquisition is a skill acquired with practice; therefore, key factors are motivation and innovative strategies. Podcast is the answer because meets the criteria for effective language learning in a number of ways.

Podcast definition, background and usage.

The term podcast first appeared in a newspaper article from The Guardian from 2004 (Hammersley, 2004). Nowadays, we refer to varied recorded audios or videos, posted regularly online and accessible to a wide range of audience. Rozema (2007) describes a podcast as “a blog in audio form” (31). There are many sources of sound on the Internet; but, not all audios are podcasts and not all podcasts are simply audios.

Although audio programs have existed on the Web for a few years already, podcasts were originally audio files uploaded to the internet, but an important feature makes them unique, which is the possibility of “subscription”. Through an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed, listeners can subscribe to their favorite podcast and can be alerted when new episodes have been posted and are available to be downloaded onto a computer or transferred to a mobile device, such as an MP3 player or mobile phone. (Mancini, 2006).

A podcast can also include videos or pictures, and listeners have the possibility to comment on the ones which are stored on the web; this is what it is called “show notes”.

Podcasts topics can be varied and used for any purpose, stories can be shared and commented on recent events, inform listeners about a topic, and as a result, they are valuable tools for teaching students to use spoken language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. (Solano, 2013). The idea of using podcasts as an educational tool dates back to the year 2004, when a North Carolina University decided to experiment and distributed 20 iPods to students to use them in their courses for podcasting. It was a success, the following semester, the number of courses using podcasts had increased, especially in foreign language and music ones. Three years later, video podcasting was a reality and was being introduced at universities across the United States so that researchers could focus their attention on this new learning strategy.

With reference to foreign language teaching, recently, it has been preferable using authentic materials, instead of prepared and intentionally arranged for EFL classroom activities. Generally, that means involving materials based on native speaker contexts and communication, or rather those where Standard English is the norm, such as newspaper or magazine articles, advertisements, cooking recipes, horoscopes, etc. Most of the teachers worldwide agree that authentic materials are beneficial to the language learning process, but it is not already clarified and accepted how to use it in an EFL classroom.

It is known that podcasts cover a wide range of topics, which are developed or represented throughout varied ways, such as improvisation, with a script prepared or a recorded talk, with music, comments or sound effects (Solano, 2013).

Teachers can now make use of podcasting throughout varied strategies and use it as a digital tool that guides learning by promoting cognitive skills and producing

knowledge from reality (Vygotsky, 1978). From the above, this research project aims to improve the learning of listening in English, under self-evaluation work and communication through the podcast. Prado (2002) stated that technology is very important within the processes of teaching and language learning, as it also connects all participants in the educational process: teacher, student, context, objectives, contents and methodology. For this reason, it's a fortune and essential that technology has overcome the traditional way of teaching and learning in the way it stimulates students' intelligence by making use of pedagogical tools that until now have not been implemented. On the other hand, students need to get trained in digital competences so that they can be independent in learning by using podcasts (Adell, 2013). These aspects can be seen first-hand in academic activities carried out, in the development group within the class and also individually.

The idea of podcast-based teaching grew out of teaching practice; researchers have focused on their attention to understanding the approach to take advantage of hi-tech tools in learning, especially a second language and there are many theories that can support the use of podcasting (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). This kind of strategy is based on student-centered approach and it is justified oriented to the constructivism and in particular to the work of Piaget and Vygotsky – see e.g. Bishop and Verleger (2013).

The theory is based on the main idea that students can construct their own knowledge structures through interaction with technology, in this case podcasts. Mathiasen (2010) and Jahnke (2015) are researchers that had the idea of “digital didactics”. A consequence of this view is that the student and the digital teaching environment are separated and there is no transfer of knowledge between them. Constructivism perspective tells us that knowledge is not an object that the teacher transfers to the learner, but it is built by learner's process of language acquaintance throughout teacher's assignments. As a result, the more stimulating the teaching/learning environment is, the easier will be for students to learn. Finally, podcasting also shares characteristics with the more recent notion of mobile learning (Kukulska-Hulme, 2005); which is considered as a nomadic way of learning, as it does not always take place in a fixed location.

Advantages of podcasting in education

At first glance, there appear to be numerous advantages of podcasting information to students in the academic environment, as it is also considered the latest trend. More schools are opting to use podcasting in their classroom as it stimulates learning through creativity and open lines of communication. Students can download audio recordings from university course websites, to clarify areas that they may not have understood in the lectures or just to practice or fulfill the assigned tasks. With relevance to cognitive theories, the use of podcast by students enlists with reported advantages of learning through multiple senses (Mayer & Moreno, 2003).

This paper indicates that information is better received and processed through both auditory and visual channels.

Podcasting is an effective tool that can be used to do what just mentioned. In fact, some students learn most effectively by listening to audio and reviewing taking notes (Boulos, Maramba & Wheeler, 2006) or listening to it repeatedly, others learn more effectively by active listening and watching videos.

Podcasts provide additional resources for students who are unable to attend face to face classes due to sickness, work or family responsibilities; in the way they can listen to podcasts commonly at home or traveling.

Podcasting, as mentioned in this Project, requires only a computer or mp3 player. Students can download podcasts and listen to them directly from home or University computers or in the street. Therefore, students do not have to buy new equipment or learn sophisticated technologies in order to access podcasts. Most of them now have a mobile phone or MP3 player available for this kind of activities (Kennedy, Judd, Churchward, Gray & Krause, 2008).

A closer look at podcasting reveals the following benefits, such as the already mentioned ease of accessibility, archive of lessons, updates, learn on the go and especially what this paper wants to focus on is the creative way of learning a second language and its effects on student's enhance.

As already mentioned, one of the most obvious facilities is the easy access to the information at any time and any place. Students can also download a podcast to their own device and listen/watch whenever they are free as it requires only basic technical knowledge and skills. Moreover, in case teacher or students misses a class, audios or videos can be posted online and be available on the institute's online platform.

One of the most important peculiarities that makes an audio or video a real podcast is the possibility to subscribe and receive notifications if there is an update. A major advantage of podcasting is that students who have subscribed will be sent information constantly, unlike a virtual learning website that students have to be motivated to visit it.

The aim of this paper is showing how learning is no longer a sedentary activity, but up-to-date and especially pleasant to practice both in the classroom and at one own pace and this makes a secure on-the-go learning process. It stimulates different types of learners as students can learn visually through videos and PDFs, auditory through audio clips, and also by doing it physically. Thus, students are motivated to learn and excel. Consequently, the research is due to analyze the student's perception on students' perception practicing podcasting and see if their listening comprehension skills get better.

Unlike the traditional pedagogic strategies, podcasting gives way to new strategies like guest lectures, interviews, video demonstrations, etc. It encourages students to develop their own podcasts, improves their listening skills and enhances learning by targeting each child's interest.

Potential disadvantages of using podcasts

There are a number of possible disadvantages for using podcasting. One of the main problems that may arise, if not monitored, is that podcasting can be misused by its users. Students may not be dedicated or pay much attention when listening to it; just because they're free to use it any time they want, does not mean it is easy to understand it or easy to prepare for an exam based on the podcasted material.

Podcasting has also been argued to lead to passive learning with students focusing on the audio facility rather than actively engaging with the content (Palmer & Devitt, 2007). This perception is considered a disadvantage, based on the constructivism point of view, as it estimates that a learner gets to the point and deep learning only when is actively engaged in learning activities.

Although listening to podcasts may be considered to be a passive skill, recent work on language learning values it as an active and creative process of interpreting information from auditory clues. (Kavakiauskiene, 2008). Brittain et al, (2006) surveyed students' preferences for different kind of learning tools and surprisingly they found out that students prefer the podcasts, possibly because they could listen to the podcasts while engaging in other tasks. An understanding of the way in which students use podcasts will inform the way in which podcasts can be used most effectively.

A very famous song called "Video Killed the Radio Star" (1979) by British band The Buggles, deals with modern technology, specifically video, and its effects on radio. There is a repeated line "We can't rewind we've gone too far," but just like fashion, radio stars have resurfaced in a new digital form: podcasters.

The rise of podcasting presents a great opportunity for teachers to create a unique approach. Many students are more auditive and are able to absorb more information when they are listening than reading. The aim of this paper is to understand if the role of podcasts is fundamental in improving the listening comprehension skills of students at second level from different specializations at Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo Campus Morona Santiago. This approach stimulates and encourages creative thinking and open communication among teachers and students. Podcasts as a learning tool is in honing the language skills of non-native English speakers. Listening to unfamiliar words helps students learn proper pronunciation and contextual meaning, especially if they can follow along with a transcript. Recently, teachers have been encouraged by listening researchers to do more to educate learners about how to listen and be innovative in their way of teaching. One way of achieving this is through metacognitive instruction, a deep learning process as listeners in a second language context and their understanding of the challenges of L2, as well as improving their listening comprehension (Goh, 2008).

While such teaching technique seems undoubtedly valuable for developing learners' listening comprehension, it can also have disadvantages and limits in the way learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) are exposed to it just for limited

hours in the classroom, and they have less opportunities to practice and improve the language. The solution is obviously podcasting, which offers and enables learners to free access to listening material from within authentic L2. (Robin, 2007).

Anytime and anywhere, learners can select from, subscribe to, and download podcasts via the internet according to their needs and interests and this is pointed out by different publications (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007), which stated aspects like facilitating learners' comprehension of grammar (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007), and abilities (Robin, 2007) such as operating play, pause, reverse, and fast forward controls on a media player.

In conclusion, it is evident that there is growing support for making the use of podcasts part of learners' regular L2 listening routine outside the classroom.

The aims of this research are to examine the challenges that students face in listening to various authentic English podcasts and analyze learners' self-assessment data on improving listening skills. The intended outcome of research is to formulate the tips for good practice in listening skills.

It has been argued that by using different modes of presentation such as text, sound, video, etc. learners process the information through different channels and as a consequence they memorize it in different ways. This will help learners to improve their comprehension skills (Mayer, 2000).

Students' learning styles should be taken into account as well so that the process of teaching and learning becomes more effective. Therefore, should be considered mentioned ways of learning through perception channels like auditory, visual, tactual and/or kinesthetic (Dunn & Dunn, 1999). More specifically, podcasting is especially beneficial for those who prefer to learn through the auditory channel. It has become a popular new medium worldwide. Stanley (2006) suggested that "podcasts could be used as a supplement to textbook material, a source of authentic listening materials, a way for students to gain information on specific aspects of the language such as idiomatic expression or grammatical construction" (as cited in O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007, p. 165). Chan et al. (2011) asserts that a "podcast can support students' learning not just in listening but in other language skills and areas as well such as grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, speaking and learning strategies" (p. 34).

General Objective

To evaluate the podcasts effectiveness as a strategy in the improvement (development) of listening skills with students at college level.

Specific objectives

- To diagnose the relevance of podcasts in English classes at university level.
- To establish the audio and video podcasts as an additional strategy to develop listening skills.
- To analyze the student's perceptions about the use of podcasts in listening comprehension.
- To determine the connection between the video and audio podcasts in listening comprehension.

Methodology

This quasi-experimental study was conducted in a university setting where students are majoring in different areas. In the first years of instruction, students need to attend English classes and pass four English levels in any of the four areas of majoring. In other words, students attend general English classes with the same curriculum and use the same materials; even though, they are not majoring in the same area. English is mandatory and at the end of fourth level, students have to demonstrate a command of English at least of level B2 band in the Common European Framework of Reference for language. So, students who participated in this research used

American Jetstream pre-intermediate English book, attending level II (A2/B1).

There were 59 participants in the study. 30 of them majoring in Zootechnics and 29 in Accounting and Auditing respectively. Although the participants are from two different careers, the teacher who was the active researcher worked with both groups from the beginning until the end of this project. Moreover, the students attended the same period of classes during the semester. That is to say, during a week, students took 8 periods of English with a length of 60 minutes each period. Besides, students not only listened to the audio or video podcasts, there were further activities that were developed after the exposure to the listening elements. Completing cloze tests, matching, identifying words, short answers and dictation were techniques that helped to control students' independent work. Additional tasks were added in order to have students understand the importance of podcasting so that they could feel motivated to keep listening until getting familiarized with the vocabulary.

Students who used the video podcasting had to watch it at least five times. Complementary activities were developed at home and in classes. It is important to mention that the selected videos had subtitles so students could understand better the vocabulary and grammar structures. Conversely, students who were exposed to audio podcasting used transcripts to understand the vocabulary and check pronunciation.

Materials and methods

During English classes undergraduate students had to use the book and the books' platform to complete all the tasks presented and approved in the syllabus at the beginning of the semester. However, to conduct this research, accommodation was required to work on the podcast activities inside and outside classes.

The teacher selected carefully the podcasts from webpages with topics related to news that were going on local and around the world. Also, the length of the audios was also carefully checked. The audios or videos were no more than 5 minutes length since it was an additional task to complete and students could feel overwhelmed by the amount of tasks. Voice of America English News (VOA) was the main web page from which the audios and videos were used. The information provided in this web page is relevant and educational ("Voice of America - Learn American English with VOA Learning English", 2019). This webpage was selected since there are videos and audios based on interviews, lectures or demonstrations to be able to watch in class or in any other place or time. Furthermore, there were two groups and those students who are in Zootechnics were exposed to videos podcasts; on the other hand, participants from Accounting and Auditing were exposed to audio podcast. Copley (2007) conducted a study and concluded that video podcasts impact is better than audio podcasts. However, this study tends to compare if students improve their listening skill with the use of audio or video podcast and see if there is a difference in the use of these two types of podcasts.

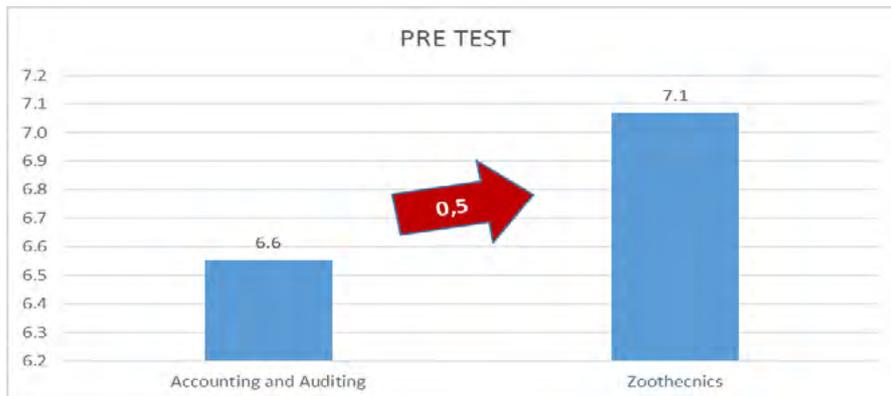
As well as, two tests were used to conduct this research. The Preliminary English Test (PET) from Cambridge served as pretest and posttest. This one was selected since includes the four language skills. Eventually, only the listening part was chosen in both stages. Students only listened twice each part with a total of 25 questions because these are the instructions to apply this test ("Examen PET Cambridge | Guía de Certificados de Inglés", 2019).

In addition, interviews were applied at the end of the study to understand students' perceptions about the mentioned strategy and to reach clear conclusions and further recommendations.

Results and discussion

The pretest and posttest were applied to all participants in order to diagnose how the use of video or audio podcasts affects student listening comprehension. With 59 participants a pretest was administered at the beginning of the semester and after six weeks there was a posttest to compare results. The pretest showed a mean of 6.6 in Accounting and Auditing group, and 7.1 in Zootechnics students (see Figure 1).

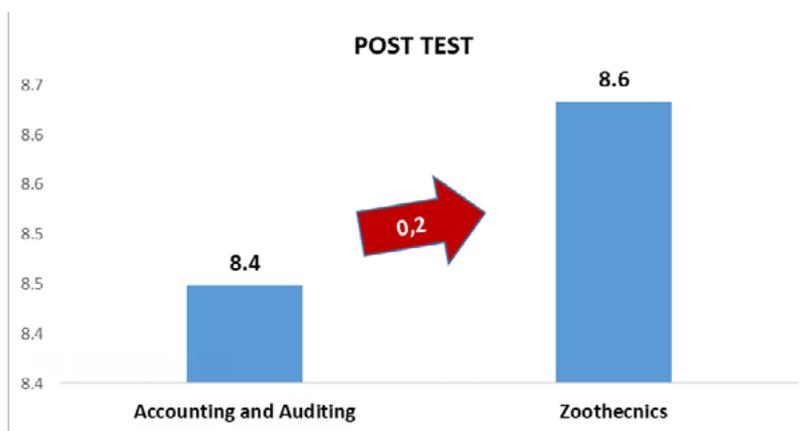
Figure 1: Accounting and Auditing and Zootechnics mean in the pretest of listening skills (PET)



Note: There were 30 participants from Zootechnics and 29 participants from Accounting and Auditing.

After completing the application of the use of podcast as a listening activity, the results in the posttest demonstrated that students improved their abilities to listen to the foreign language and there was a slight difference in the use of video podcast and audio podcast. Students from Accounting and Auditing differ from Zootechnics participants with 0.2 points. The difference is not relevant (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Accounting and Auditing and Zootechnics mean in the pretest of listening skills (PET)



Note: There were 30 participants from Zootechnics and 29 participants from Accounting and Auditing.

However, the most important point in this analysis is that students improved their listening comprehension (see Table 1).

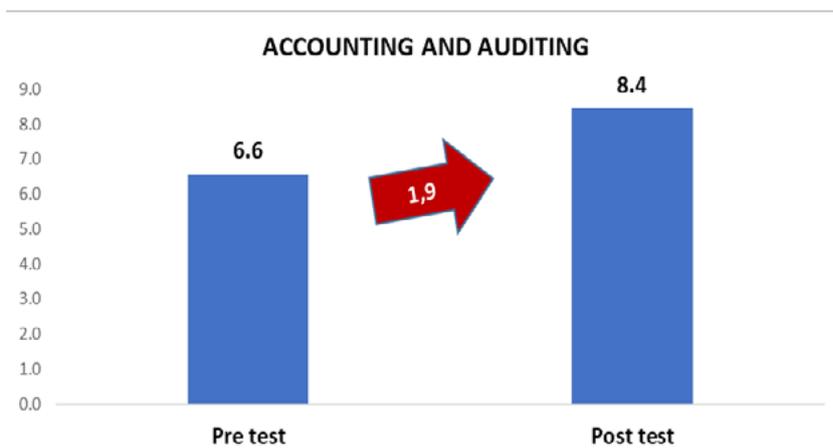
Table 1: Pretest and Posttest results

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Pretest	59	2	16	6.85
Posttest	59	4	17	8.5

Note: the total score is 25 according to the test used (PET)

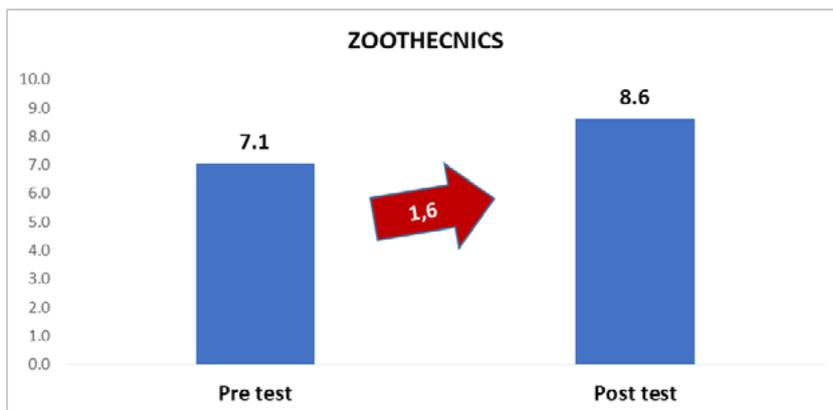
Accounting and Auditing participants improved about 1.9 points comparing the results from the pretest and the posttest (see Figure 3). On the other hand, Zootechnics results differ from the pretest and posttest with 1.6 points (see Figure 4).

Figure 3: Accounting and Auditing mean in the pretest and posttest of listening skills (PET)



Note: the total score is 25 according to the test used (PET)

Figure 4: Zootechnics mean in the pretest and posttest of listening skills (PET)



Note: the total score is 25 according to the test used (PET)

Since students demonstrated that their scores improved compared with the pretest, it can be concluded that the use of podcasts is beneficial for students in a setting where English is learned as a foreign language and the exposure to this language is not common. However, it has to be clear that the total score of the test used in this study is 25 and the mean is 8.5 in the post test which differs from the pretest which was 6.85. So, 8.5 out of 25 is not considered as a good level of listening comprehension.

In addition, students' interviews were recorded and code to understand how students felt during the application of this activity. The codes used to cite students opinions are ZS= students from Zootechnics career and AS= Accounting and Auditing students.

Students' responses that were more relevant are:

ZS1) "This activity was interesting and we need to understand the importance of English since it depends on our effort."

ZS2) "I think that listening videos was motivating; however, I consider that the videos must be about our needs and career. I am studying the animals and plants and in the future I would like to research about those topics and the information is in English. I need to help my people (locals) to improve their life style and here there is a lot to do but the English language knowledge is my limitation to access information."

ZS3) "the pace of the videos was not helpful because it was too fast and I did not understand at all. It is also the reason why I did not listen at home as you suggested from three to five times."

AS1) "the audio was not clear and it was not interesting to hear news with a transcript. The information was not relevant for me."

AS2) "the audios should be easier to understand since I did not understand well and I really need more help from my instructor to understand it in a better way."

As it was mentioned before, the audios and videos were chosen according to the daily situations that are occurring around the world; however, students noticed that the audios and videos should be related with the area they are majoring in because this selection can help them to increase their knowledge. Many of the interviewees perceived the importance of listening comprehension while learning a language and their poor command in listening skills. They noted how important is to comprehend what others say in order to communicate ideas and mostly comprehend messages.

Finally, the use of video podcasts was better than audio podcast since students who were exposed to only listen with a transcript got a lower score compared with those students who were exposed to video podcasts.

Conclusions

The results of this study demonstrated that using extra materials like podcasts can be beneficial for those students who are pretending to improve their language skills. Not only listening, but also vocabulary can be improved through listening podcasts. It is necessary to consider that the topics of a podcast must be relevant for students. Participants' contributions demonstrated that sometimes it was not meaningful to listen or watch videos since the information was meaningless. Moreover, the instructors in language classes must consider how students work inside and outside classes since some students do not like English and they avoid following suggestions and instructions to progress in their new language acquisition. In other words, teachers must be aware that some students will not listen to podcast since they are not motivated to hear them outside classes and sometimes they are reluctant to listen during classes. So, the recommendations made by students in the interviews must be considered as compulsory when including podcasting activities in a foreign language classroom.

Also, these recommendations can lead to further research related with students' interests and more external factors that can affect listening skills development in an EFL setting.

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Universidad Técnica de Machala

Ediciones UTMACH
Primera edición en inglés 2020
PDF interactivo



Universidad Técnica de Machala
Dirección de Investigación

ISBN: 978-9942-24-137-5



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