



The Use of Digital Resources (e.g., YouTube) to Develop Listening Skills in English Language Learners

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Eloy Alfaro de Manabí. Trabajo de Titulación, presentado como requisito para la
obtención del grado de Magíster en Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros
Mención Inglés.

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23 de julio del 2026

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to analyze the influence of YouTube as a digital resource in the development of listening comprehension in secondary school students. The study was conducted in a private educational institution in Santo Domingo, Ecuador. It followed a mixed-methods descriptive design. Participants were 33 eighth-grade students and four English teachers selected through convenience sampling. The information was collected through semi-structured interviews, surveys and classroom observations focused on addressing YouTube videos in class, the strategies applied by teachers, and students' reactions during listening comprehension activities. The findings show that video use was associated with better listening comprehension, as well as higher levels of engagement and motivation among students. However, aspects such as internet connectivity and the selection of appropriate videos influenced how this resource

was used in practice. Overall, YouTube can contribute to the development of listening comprehension when it is incorporated into well-planned classroom activities and has teacher support during the learning process.

Keywords: *YouTube, listening comprehension, English as a Foreign Language, digital resources*

RESUMEN

La presente investigación tiene como objetivo analizar la incidencia de YouTube como recurso digital en el desarrollo de la comprensión auditiva en estudiantes de secundaria. Por ende, se llevó a cabo en una institución educativa privada de Santo Domingo, Ecuador. Se siguió un enfoque mixto con un tipo de investigación descriptivo. Los participantes fueron 33 estudiantes de octavo grado y cuatro profesores de inglés seleccionados mediante muestreo por conveniencia. La información se recopiló a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas y observaciones en el aula enfocados en abordar los videos de YouTube en clase, las estrategias aplicadas por los docentes y las reacciones de los estudiantes durante las actividades de comprensión auditiva. Los hallazgos muestran que el uso de videos se asoció con una mejor comprensión auditiva, así como con mayores niveles de participación y motivación entre los estudiantes. Sin embargo, aspectos como la conectividad a internet y la selección de videos apropiados influyeron en cómo se utilizó este recurso en la práctica. En general, YouTube puede contribuir al desarrollo de la comprensión auditiva cuando se incorpora a actividades de aula bien planificadas y cuenta con el apoyo del docente durante el proceso de aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: *YouTube, comprensión auditiva, inglés como lengua extranjera, recursos digitales*

INTRODUCTION

English proficiency has become an indispensable skill for academic, professional, and international communication, but in Ecuador, English learning outcomes remain below expected levels compared to regional standards. Many students face difficulties in developing effective communicative competence. Recent international indicators place Ecuador among the lower-performing countries in English proficiency within Latin America (Angelis, 2022).

Of the four language skills, listening comprehension remains one of the most difficult for students of English as a foreign language when exposed to unfamiliar accents. The main problem may be related to the scarce opportunities for interaction with the language in the learning process. Verdecia et al. (2019) point out that listening comprehension has not received enough attention in teaching practice, despite being important in language acquisition. As a consequence, learners may experience frustration, which often leads to demotivation and discontinuity in learning.

Ecuadorian students in communicative practice rarely interact with spoken English because they have limited exposure to English-speaking environments outside the classroom. For example, many of the learners are not able to understand the speed of speech or dialectal variations present in conversations with native speakers because several of these elements are usually absent in traditional school materials, generating a gap between the knowledge acquired in learning and the communicative competence necessary to communicate in the target language.

Listening comprehension, in the process of learning English, requires more than recognizing sounds, namely, it needs processes such as interpreting and

analyzing what is heard. However, current teaching practices show limitations, largely due to the lack of constant exposure to authentic language.

Given the limitations students face in the development of their listening comprehension, digital resources are shown as an alternative to bring the classroom closer to real communication. Social media platforms such as YouTube stand out for their accessibility and variety of content, which expose students to the language in a prolonged way. Along the same lines, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) argue that listening comprehension is an active process of meaning construction, which can be strengthened through the use of multimedia resources.

While existing literature supports the learning outcomes of digital resources in foreign language acquisition, there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding the pedagogical use of YouTube for developing listening comprehension in educational contexts in Ecuador. In particular, research is limited in its impact on listening comprehension performance within the classroom.

Consequently, this study aimed to analyze the influence of YouTube as a digital resource for the development of listening comprehension among secondary school English learners in Santo Domingo, Ecuador. The results are intended to provide practical guidance to English teachers seeking to integrate audiovisual resources into the teaching of listening comprehension in similar educational settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Resources in Education

While technology is often presented as a solution for educational improvement, its academic performance in classrooms depends largely on how digital

resources are pedagogically integrated. Authors such as Heine et al. (2023) mention that digital tools have democratized access to information, from a pedagogical perspective, the educational value of technology lies in its ability to provide multimodal learning experiences that can enhance student engagement and understanding. In other words, the challenge within the learning process is not only to incorporate the resource, but to mitigate digital divides through an integration that prioritizes language learning over the simple use of devices.

Digital Resources for Language Learning

Digital materials could generate cognitive overload when students are exposed to complex information without adequate pedagogical support (Mourad et al., 2024; Párraga et al., 2025). Under strategic teaching accompaniment, multimedia platforms expose students to diverse accents, pronunciation patterns, and authentic spoken language (Echeverría & Molina, 2022; Carranza et al., 2024). Listening comprehension develops when students actively process and interpret spoken information rather than passively listening to it. Therefore, more than a simple familiarity with the language, a technical balance must be sought that guarantees that the authenticity of the resource enhances, and does not hinder, communicative competence.

YouTube as a Digital Resource

Limitations such as uneven content quality, the risk of distraction, and the lack of an intrinsic pedagogical filter are often the weak points of open platforms (Balderas & Moreno, 2021; Velázquez & Solis, 2025). When rigorous teaching curation is applied, YouTube functions as a useful educational resource when incorporated into structured learning sequences, in particular in the encounter phase as it provides exposure to authentic language use (Nóquez & Obando,

2021; Azzara et al., 2023). According to Colás and Quintero (2023), the popularity of YouTube is undeniable, but its learning impact in developing listening comprehension depends on how it is integrated into structured classroom activities that guide the student in their independent practice. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to know at what times of the class they should introduce YouTube videos in their lesson plans in order to achieve satisfactory results in student performance.

Listening Skills in English Foreign Language Learning

Although it is the least formally practiced skill in the classroom (Verdecia et al., 2019), listening comprehension is considered a fundamental skill in language learning because it fosters communication and linguistic development. It is not simply about hearing, but about an active process of meaning-building and interaction (Rodat, 2020). Good listening skills could contribute to improved oral performance and pronunciation awareness (Abreus et al., 2020), which stimulates the student to recognize sound patterns and retain key information (Zambrano et al., 2024). That is to say, listening should be prioritized for comprehensive cognitive growth in order to move the student away from theoretical instruction instead to bring him closer to the daily communication of the language.

Use of Digital Resources in Listening Development

Unlike the traditional view that reduces the use of technology to a simple motivational factor, Lara and Vilema (2022) and Chhong et al. (2025) in their research establish that the adaptability of technological resources depends on the ability to foster a genuine commitment to the language, that is to say, that it goes beyond generating enthusiasm, the use of digital content makes students

navigate the complexity of spoken language with greater confidence, as long as these tools are articulated within an instructional design when the activities promote student autonomy and active listening strategies.

Although previous studies have reported benefits of digital resources for language learning, evidence on the use of YouTube for listening comprehension in English as a foreign language context in secondary education in Ecuador is limited, but few studies have combined the teacher's perspective, the student's perceptions, and classroom observation within the same research.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed methods design, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same phase and integrated during interpretation to address the relationship between the use of YouTube and the development of listening comprehension. A mixed methods approach was chosen to obtain additional evidence on the pedagogical use of YouTube for listening comprehension. On the one hand, the analytical component, the educational phenomenon is broken down into its constituent variables; On the other hand, the synthetic component is used to integrate the findings obtained in both aspects of the parallel design

The study was carried out in a private educational institution in Santo Domingo, Ecuador, during the academic period 2025-2026. Out of a total of 720 students, through non-probability convenience sampling, considering availability within school hours, 33 eighth-grade students (18 women and 15 men) and four English teachers were chosen to collaborate in the observed sessions.

To obtain information from different perspectives, three main tools were used. First, as part of the qualitative component of information collection, the semi-

structured interviews, which consisted of eight open-ended questions, explored teachers' criteria for video selection, classroom strategies, perceived benefits, and implementation challenges.

Secondly, in the quantitative approach, a classroom observation checklist was used to record student behavior during video-based listening comprehension lessons, where the attention of the students, their level of participation and the way in which they interacted with the audiovisual content of YouTube were recorded in an orderly manner. Finally, a questionnaire was administered to the scholars to examine their perceptions of the usefulness of YouTube for practicing listening comprehension.

Before putting these instruments into practice, three specialists in English language teaching reviewed all the instruments to assess their clarity, relevance, and coherence with the study objectives. Minor revisions were made to the wording based on their feedback.

Throughout the process, care was taken to ensure that the research respected the dignity and comfort of the participants. The participation of the students and teachers was completely voluntary, and before starting, informed consent was requested from the rector of the educational unit, who afterward informed both the teachers and the legal representatives of the students. The purpose of the study was clearly explained and it was guaranteed that no one would be directly identified. Subsequently, the present research does not allude to the name of the institution to maintain the anonymity of all participants.

The study was analyzed on two complementary levels. Interviews with teachers were systematically reviewed and categorized to reflect their perspectives on the variables studied. The findings were structured into four main categories related

to the use of YouTube videos as a resource for developing listening comprehension in English classes: resource selection, teaching strategies, perceived impact on learning, and implementation challenges.

In contrast, the survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages in SPSS. The interview responses were thematically coded into four categories: video selection, pedagogical strategies, perceived impact, and implementation challenges. The observational data were organized in Excel to summarize recurring classroom behaviors related to listening activities.

RESULTS

Results of surveys

Table 1.

It is easy to find videos on YouTube to practice English

	N	%
Agree	8	23.5%
Strongly Agree	22	64.7%
Lost System	4	11.8%

According to Table 1, most students indicated that YouTube is an accessible platform for practicing English; on the other hand, a smaller group states that they agree since there are no dissenting opinions.

Table 2

I can repeat YouTube videos when I don't understand somewhere

	N	%
Agree	9	26.5%
Strongly Agree	21	61.8%

Lost	System	4	11.8%
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Table 2 shows that a large part of the participants fully agree with the possibility of repeating YouTube videos when they do not understand some content; in contrast, a smaller percentage of students agree with what was proposed.

Table 3

YouTube allows me to practice English anytime, anywhere

	N	%
Agree	8	23.5%
Strongly Agree	22	64.7%
Lost System	4	11.8%

Based on Table 3, it can be seen that the majority of respondents express total agreement with the idea that YouTube allows you to practice English at any time and place. In contrast, to a smaller proportion of the surveyed student population that agrees with the item.

Table 4

YouTube videos motivate me to pay more attention when I hear English

	N	%
Neutral	8	23.5%
Agree	14	41.2%
Strongly Agree	8	23.5%
Lost System	4	11.8%

Table 4 shows that a significant part of the students agree that YouTube videos increase their attention when listening to English; nevertheless, there is also a

considerable group with a neutral position and a minority that expresses total agreement.

Interview results

Selecting YouTube assets

Teachers mentioned that YouTube videos should be adapted to students' language proficiency levels and include visual elements that complement the auditory information. For example, one teacher suggested that videos should contain representative graphics, as these help students associate sounds with meaning. Another teacher mentioned using short, simple videos (5 to 10 minutes), considering students' attention spans. The combination of visual and auditory elements plays a crucial role in facilitating comprehension for students with lower language proficiency; hence, short videos should be selected given the importance of maintaining student attention.

Applied pedagogical strategies

The teachers reported using strategies focused on the pre-listening, during, and post-listening stages.

In the first stage, pre-listening, they activate prior knowledge through images, simple questions and instruction check questions, with the intention of enabling students to make predictions and preparing them for the content.

In the second stage, during listening, the teachers mentioned pausing to ask questions aimed at monitoring student attention, they regularly use comprehension-check questions.

In the final stage, post-listening, the teachers use activities focused on asking comprehension questions or holding debates. They do this to check students' understanding from the listening stage, based on what the teachers mentioned,

videos should be presented using strategies so that the entire listening process is structured and effective results can be obtained.

Perception of the impact on learning

Teachers consider YouTube videos to be a pedagogical tool that can be both effective and engaging for language learning. They believe that consistent exposure to videos improves students' listening comprehension and can increase their motivation. In other words, the integration of audiovisual resources can transform traditional listening comprehension activities into more dynamic experiences. In particular, greater student motivation appears to be linked to higher levels of participation when the videos relate to students' interests. Therefore, motivation emerges as a key factor influencing students' willingness to participate in listening comprehension tasks prompted by video exposure.

Challenges and projections in the use of YouTube videos

Teachers acknowledged that YouTube offers numerous learning benefits, but also noted challenges such as poor internet connectivity and difficulty selecting appropriate videos. One teacher specifically mentioned downloading videos beforehand, while another emphasized the importance of considering students' preferences. Effective implementation of YouTube videos requires careful planning and adaptability. Teachers must anticipate technical limitations and select materials that align with students' interests and learning levels. Thus, the success of this resource depends not only on the videos themselves but also on the teacher's ability to strategically integrate them into the learning process.

Results of classroom observation

Listening comprehension

During the observed sessions, approximately 70% of the students demonstrated an understanding of the main idea of the videos by responding appropriately to the teacher's questions. Improved comprehension was also observed when English subtitles were turned on. Students demonstrated better understanding when subtitles were used. That is, videos with subtitles provide students with more resources because they can relate the words and sequences, they see to what is being said in the video.

Attention and concentration

In almost 75% of the observations, the students followed the teacher's instructions and remained focused during the video playback. They remained focused on listening to and watching the video for a significant portion of the time. The students maintained their attention throughout the video viewing, and also because the teacher constantly monitored them to prevent distractions. One technique the teacher used was to ask questions of students who were diverting their attention from the video. Consequently, for learning to be effective, the video must be enjoyable for the students, and the teacher must maintain constant monitoring during playback.

Participation and response

After watching the videos, around 75% of learners participated in post-listening tasks, mainly by answering comprehension questions. In particular, students seem more willing to participate when the content is presented in a dynamic format that they can understand, which becomes a great advantage in the learning process.

Interaction and learning behavior

The majority of students, between 85% and 95%, expressed satisfaction with the video content. High levels of student satisfaction were observed with YouTube video content. Moreover, a finding observed in 65% of the classes was that when teachers included interactive elements, such as multiple-choice questions, during the video, student attention increased. The students maintained their attention during the videos with integrated questions. Therefore, it is important for educators to consistently integrate strategies to maintain a high level of student participation and thus maximize the benefits of the digital resource used.

DISCUSSION

The present research establishes that YouTube can serve as an important resource for listening teaching in the English learning process, but its educational value depends to a large extent on the pedagogical expertise possessed by the teacher, taking into account that technology-oriented approaches often attribute learning advances to digital tools while overlooking the instructional processes that shape their use.

A consistent pattern described in the data from the three instruments is the perception of accessibility and flexibility of the platform, by providing students with auditory and visual material in English, which is easy to reproduce content and practice that can be carried out beyond class hours as shown in the surveys, since a high percentage of students agreed that YouTube videos should be used to make the videos available in the they can play anytime, anywhere. Previous research has reported a similar stance, with social media platforms now easily accessible, making it easy for students to use them at any time, which stimulates self-learning (Alenezi & Brinthaupt, 2022; Martoredjo, 2023).

Especially in Ecuador where opportunities for authentic interaction outside the classroom are often scarce, on-demand audiovisual input can partially compensate for restricted contact with the target language, but its access should not be equated with learning. Although the platform has multiple opportunities to practice, progress depends on the students' ability to select appropriate materials and engage strategically with them, as stated by Casillas et al. (2024) and García (2024).

Motivation emerged as a substantial dimension in which it was determined through interviews that students pay greater attention during video-based listening tasks, a fact that was confirmed in classroom observations where it was perceived that students showed sustained concentration that resulted in active participation during follow-up activities. Previous studies identified comparable results, platforms that provide audiovisual resources that tend to increase learner interest by combining sound, image, and contextual cues (Nomlala, 2025)

Conversely, it is important to note that the current data indicate that the motivation in the classroom observed was conditional and not automatic because in the surveys some students expressed neutral perceptions, which is why the teachers emphasized the need to select content aligned with the interests and levels appropriate to the students' competence. obtained a similar result, for Trujillo (2024) point out that the commitment can derive less from the novelty of the technology itself than from the relevance, comprehensibility and pedagogical use of the material. Consequently, student motivation seems to depend more on the pedagogical relevance of the resource than on the technological appeal of the platform itself.

The use of subtitles is a determining factor when employing YouTube videos because students appeared to understand the content more effectively when English subtitles were activated, written support accompanied by visual sequences can reinforce auditory processing reinforcing lexical recognition that stimulates the construction of meaning. The pedagogical use of subtitles is debatable, authors such as Torralba (2020) and Rodríguez and Hernández (2022) states that although English subtitles can improve comprehension and perception of vocabulary, over-reliance on written text can divert attention from the phonological features of speech. The current results support a balanced view: subtitles can be especially beneficial for students with lower proficiency or when introducing challenging content, but their use should be progressively adjusted as listening proficiency develops.

On the other hand, in interviews, teachers mention that they use strategies based on the pre-listening, while listening, and post-listening stages, which include several activities. In the observations it was evident that when the videos were incorporated into guided sequences in the classroom, benefits can be obtained due to the involvement of the students around the interaction of the authenticated input stimulated by the platform. The data obtained are consistent with those found by Solórzano et al. (2022) and Valera et al. (2023), teachers must employ several resources and strategies that completely the digital resources around the learning of listening competence. It is for this reason that it is feasible that if educational platforms are used, approaches are used that have activities that keep students active during listening.

The study identified practical limitations that could limit the learning outcomes of integration with YouTube as a pedagogical resource because teachers reported

unstable internet connectivity accompanied by difficulties in selecting videos aligned with students' curricular objectives and language levels. A result that is aligned with Criollo et al. (2022) and Fernández et al. (2026) who have exposed by educational technology must be evaluated in terms of pedagogical potential in relation to institutional preparation and digital teaching competence. In consequence, the benefits commonly associated with digital innovation can be difficult to achieve in routine classroom conditions.

Finally, the study states that the academic performance of digital resources is conditioned by various factors, suggesting that the successful integration of YouTube requires not only teacher initiative but also institutional support. Therefore, future research could address the learning impact of the strategies identified in this study for employing technological resources and professional development in digital pedagogy.

Conclusions

The effectiveness of YouTube videos is influenced by the pedagogical strategies applied by teachers and by comprehension-focused activities to direct students' attention and facilitate meaningful processing of the teacher's audiovisual material. In short, the pedagogical value of the resource platform depends on teacher mediation and structured planning.

On the other hand, the opinions of the students were favorable towards the use of YouTube to improve listening comprehension due to the ease of accessing videos, repeating them when they did not understand and practicing outside the classroom, in addition to showing greater motivation during the activities. The platform can provide multiple benefits in learning, but there needs to be teacher intervention, otherwise the educational impact of the platform may be affected.

Therefore, it is suggested that if you want to use the technological resource in class, activities aimed at keeping you focused on the auditory content should be carried out.

Consequently, in the development of listening comprehension, YouTube contributes mainly to the global understanding of the message during listening activities, but for it to be effective, certain aspects must be considered, such as visual supports such as subtitles or images, adapted content and the time of the videos. As a limitation, it is recognized that the sample is small, so there could be biases around the interpretation of the data. For this reason, it is recommended that for future research a larger sample be considered³ or that experimental research be carried out where the platform is the main resource of instruction.

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