



Analysis Of English Language Platforms Effectiveness Such As Cambridge For The Development Of Listening Skills Among Higher Education Students. A Case Study In A Technological Institute In Ecuador

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ABSTRACT

Learning to listen to the target language enhances linguistic competence. The language sound, rhythm, intonation, and stress can only be perfectly adapted through listening. This research focuses on identifying students' listening skill and determining the relationship between the receptive skill (listening) and English Language Platforms use. The study was conducted with a sample of 84 higher education students from a private technological institute in the city of Loja - Ecuador, using a quantitative, descriptive, correlational and exploratory approach. A multiple linear regression model was used to analyze the relationship between the variables under study and the level of significance of the English platforms in the improvement of listening skills. The results indicate that Cambridge Platform is effective for the development and improvement of listening skills compared to the British Council platform. In addition, a joint linear relationship was found between the enhancement of listening skill and English Language Platforms used in the technological institute. Additionally, the use of a survey, observation sheet and field notes indicate that students prefer the Cambridge platform in the development of listening skills since it offers a wide range of benefits. In conclusion, the research highlights the importance of promoting the development of listening skills and its integration with the use of English Language Platforms in the language learning process to improve students' listening comprehension and strengthen the communicative competences.

Keywords: English Language Platforms, Listening skills, Multiple Linear Regression (MLR).

1) INTRODUCTION

Currently, learning the English language is very important because it is known as the language of the world's dominant countries. Every day, many people try to learn this language for personal or professional development. Work, research, and economic relations with the rest of the world are dependent not only on the development of effective communication skills in terms of understanding the spoken language, speaking, reading, and writing, but also on general cultural knowledge that allows knowledge to be adapted to different communicative contexts.

Since new paradigms are being created in the teaching-learning process through information and communication technologies, where society makes extensive use of them, virtual platforms have generated significant changes in education, resulting in new ways of knowledge transfer. Education is constantly

changing and to be a great teacher, the classes must be innovated in concordance with the rapid advancement of technology and changes in society, teachers have to incorporate technology into the classroom to get students engaged who are considered digital natives. Online learning platforms are broadly used by English teachers in the teaching-learning process. The learning platforms are also used as complementary resources to endorse independent learning (Cakrawati, 2017).

Listening has an important role in learning English as it is one of the two receptive skills in language learning. It is held that listening rouses the perception of the language since it is a skill that human beings initially acquire and learn (Renukadevi, 2014). Morley (2001) acknowledges that the process of teaching listening comprehension lessons “is a vehicle for teaching elements of grammatical structure and allow new vocabulary items to be contextualized within a body of communicative discourse” (p. 70)

Currently, it is said that there is a huge existence of online-based resources that allow the enhancement of EFL teachers' and learners' listening skills. It is claimed that there are some websites designed precisely to provide students an opportunity to practice and improve their listening as well as encourage and engage them in the learning process (Mohammad & Dr. Ahmad, 2020). Furthermore, it is emphasized that the virtual platform is a valid didactic resource for applying English skills, particularly listening activities, which aid in word intonation, accentuation, and pronunciation, as well as autonomous work, innovation, motivation, and communication with the teacher. That is why it has been said that the English language is recognized as the global language, and much attention has been paid in the last decade to the use of social media platforms in language learning, especially with the use of computers or mobile devices (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012; Fischer, 2013; Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013). However, because social media has only been around for a few decades, it can be considered a relatively new form of communication. As a result, its effects on language learning have yet to be adequately evaluated, and many research gaps exist (Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, et. Al., Freynik, 2014); (Zourou, 2012).

The Superior educational institutions in Ecuador have considered that online learning platforms are the most suitable way of practicing and reinforcing English language skills, especially listening because students can access to the resources on the platform at any time and wherever they are, thus conserving independent learning supported by a good educational platform.

The proposed hypothesis is based on the idea that there is a correlation between the effectiveness of using the Cambridge platform as opposed to the British Council platform in improving listening comprehension skills in EFL students. This correlation is based on the A2 level of students' listening comprehension. Similarly, there is a positive significative improvement in students' final grades as well as in their perceptions when they use Cambridge Platform. To obtain the results, a general objective was established to analyze the effectiveness of the use of English teaching-learning platforms such as Cambridge and British to compare learner success rates on the development of listening skills through data collection and data analysis. With the perception to achieve the general aim, there are some specific objectives, such as determining the relation that exists on both platforms using suitable software with the development of listening skill. The second objective emphasizes on measuring the effectiveness of the English teaching-learning platforms through the development of listening activities. The last objective focuses on identifying the students' perceptions of English teaching-learning platforms in the learning process using virtual activities such as conversations, videos, and, recorded audio.

Online learning offers unparalleled accessibility, enabling students worldwide to engage in educational pursuits irrespective of geographic location, in that way widening access to suitable courses or degree programs from the comfort of their homes. This modality further facilitates personalized learning tailored to individual students' learning styles, content preferences, and current knowledge, fostering motivation, confidence, and self-esteem while enhancing the e-learning experience and promoting the development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills (Dhull & Sashi, 2016: 32). Additionally, online learning cultivates cognitive abilities by providing students with extensive access to information sources, enabling them to enhance their academic references and share insights effectively. Moreover, it proves cost-effective by reducing expenses associated with traditional learning materials, such as books, while equipping students with essential technical competencies, enhancing their proficiency in utilizing computers for educational purposes.

The effectiveness of online learning depends on its proper planning and teaching to improve the quality of learning and the overall student outcome. Online learning can satisfy the needs of both active and passive learning. It aims to provide students with complete knowledge that can be accessed anywhere and anytime. Students and teachers can communicate and interact with each other outside the classroom. This management of learning and teaching goes beyond the classroom, allowing students to practice thinking and research skills, as well as obtain new knowledge that can be transferred to innovation (Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021).

The benefits of using English learning platforms are various since they help students to practice and master the skills, especially listening as well as practicing new English words. In addition, Chapelle (2003) says that enhancing students' linguistic input is one of the most important benefits when professors use computer technology in class. That is why it is important to make available plentiful resources in order for students can practice de linguistic skills.

Additionally, the learning platforms change the students' learning routine and encourage them to interact and exchange information with their classmates. Furthermore, by using these platforms teachers and students are involved in interpersonal communication (Al-kathiri, 2015). The learning platforms, with their unique features, encourage students' confidence and motivation and also facilitate shy students to interact more with teachers and their classmates (Cakrawati, 2017).

Besides, students who are considered as digital natives, feel really motivated when teachers bring up and include technology into the classroom, activities where needed from smartphones or computers. Moreover, Mulyono (2016) states that the interaction between students on online platforms facilitates the learning process. In line with this, the advantages of learning English with the learning platforms are various, since they provide students practical exercises wherever they are and at any time, which facilitates the practice and the understanding of the language.

Some benefits of using online learning platforms help students to improve their understanding of the lesson taught by the teachers, especially in reading and listening skills. That's why students argue that online platforms can help them in gaining new vocabulary. Also, students feel that online learning platforms can motivate them to learn more. By integrating technology, they do not feel bored and experience a new learning atmosphere.

On the other hand, sometimes platforms lead with less interaction between teachers and students, lacking timely and effective feedback, which is not conducive to stimulating students' enthusiasm for learning, and greatly reduces the quality of teaching (Qunfei, 2020). But also, students are the main part of learning, due to they learn autonomously; the teacher become just a guide and tutor carrying out the necessary organization, guidance, and examination for the students. So, teachers are asked to be transformed from instructors and indicators of knowledge into instructors, facilitators, and organizer of student learning (Roth,1994). Therefore, it is very urgent to adapt a teaching platform with strong interactivity, effective feedback, and rich expression (Ramos, 2020).

After the above analysis, the English virtual teaching platform for garden design majors is constructed. Combined with the advantages of the above scholars' research, the original virtual teaching platform for English teaching is improved to improve the performance of the English virtual teaching platform for garden design majors.

Research Questions

To achieve the purpose of this study, the survey and analysis were on the lookout for answering the following research questions:

1. Is there a relation between listening skill and the use of English teaching-learning platforms?
2. What is the level of effectiveness of the English teaching-learning platforms through the development of listening activities?
3. What are students' perceptions of the effectiveness of English teaching-learning platforms in the learning process using virtual activities such as conversations, videos, and, recorded audio?

2) METHODS

A. Pedagogical Settings and Participants

Participants. The participants in this research are 84 students in Centro de Idiomas Sudamericano, its acronyms CIS at a Higher Technological Institute in Loja, Ecuador, who all have the A2.2 level of English Proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The 84 participants were divided into three research groups, In the parallel "A" there were 32 students, the parallel "B" had 15 students, and in the parallel "C" there were 31 students. For four weeks, learners at the A2.2 English level use the Cambridge and British Council Platforms with various online listening exercises like as audios, visuals, videos, and quizzes.

Setting. The setting of the study is a higher technological institute in Loja, Ecuador. The name of this educational place is Instituto Superior Tecnológico Sudamericano Loja, it is recognized as a provider of education in the South of the country, known as Zone 7 (Loja, El Oro, and Machala provinces). This institute has its center of teaching English annexed, and this is called Centro de Idiomas Sudamericano, its acronyms CIS.

Design of the Study. In order to comply with the objectives proposed in the research, the participants selection was not random due to this quasi-experimental study which needed to apply similar groups as part of the variables. Therefore, data were collected from 3 classes, whose English proficiency level was A2.2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In addition, the research was of a correlational nature for the reason that it was identified whether there is a relationship between the variables through multiple linear regression model. That is to say, it made it possible to determine the linear relationship between the variables under study, variable Y (Listening Skill) and variable X (English Platforms).

Based on the information provided, statistical programs such as SPSS, Gretl and Minitab were used to analyze the data of the variables to determine the effectiveness of the platforms in improving listening skills through

correlation analysis. Figure 2 shows the global grading scale used to process the data obtained in the listening skill tasks in order to determine the effectiveness of each of the platforms worked on; this scale is governed by the CEFR.

A multiple linear regression model was performed using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method, since according to Cruz and Fernández (2013) the OLS method minimizes the errors between each of the observations of the variables and residuals. Therefore, the variables under study were identified where the dependent variable is Listening skill and the independent variables are: the English platforms (Cambridge Platform and British Platform).

B. Econometric Model Specification

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + U_i$$

$$Lis_ski = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Cam_i + \beta_2 Bri_i + U_i$$

Where:

Y= Listening skill

X₁= Cambridge Platform

X₂= British Council

U_i= Stochastic Error

Furthermore, spreadsheets were applied for the manipulation of mathematical data, formulas and functions. Likewise, the present study was exploratory in nature since primary information was obtained through the use of observation sheets, field notes, and the application of surveys to A2.2 English proficiency level students of the Instituto Superior Tecnológico Sudamericano Loja, leading to the analysis and students' interpretations of the use of the English learning platforms in the improvement of listening skills.

3) RESULTS/FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. Econometric Model Estimation

Table I: Global multiple linear regression model with the dependent variable (Listening skill).

Label	Coefficient	T-statistic	P-value
(Constant)	4,131	18,207	2,30e-30
Cambridge Platform Scores	0,652	14,437	4,13e-24
British Council Scores	-0,065	-1,623	0,108
R ²	0,874		
Adjusted R ²	0,871		
Test F			0,000
No. Observations	84		

B. Econometric Model Evaluation

$$Lis_Ski = 4,131 - 0,652 Cam_i + U_i$$

Regarding the intercept analysis and taking into consideration the chart 2, the dependent variable Listening skill is significant within the model, since it has a p-value of 2.30E-30 which is less than 5% of the significance level. Therefore, the listening skill measured from 1 to 100 is on average 4.131 without the intervention of the Cambridge Platform.

Regarding to the analysis of the parameters and their signs of the equation, the following is established:

β₁ Cambridge Platform Scores: As a student's use of the Cambridge platform rises, his or her listening skill improves by 0.652 points on average. Furthermore, the Cambridge platform for listening skill applications has a direct association with this variable.

It is worth mentioning that the explanatory variable British Council Scores is not interpreted because it is not significant in the model. On the other hand, the negative sign shows that the listening skill will decrease, due to the fact that the listening activities being worked on are more complicated than the task described, there is an unfamiliar and advanced vocabulary, the procedure of entering the listening exercises is lengthy and difficult, and the activities are not entirely focused on developing students' listening comprehension.

In terms of the R² coefficient, the listening skill is explained in 87.74% by the independent variables and adjusting the coefficient of goodness of fit to reduce the impact of the increase of variables in the model, it was reduced by 87.71%. Finally, the variables adjust to the model, which is reliable and will be used to make future estimates.

Joint linearity test for the econometric estimation of the listening skill

The subsequent hypothesis tests, null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis, are proposed:

H_0 : $\beta_1 = \beta_2 = 0$ There is no joint linear relationship between listening skill and English platforms (Cambridge and British Council Platforms).

H_1 : *At minus a* $\beta_i \neq 0$ There is a joint linear relationship between listening skill and English platforms (Cambridge and British Council Platforms).

Where:

α = Level of significance 5% p-value = 0,000

Decision making: Taking into consideration the p-value obtained in Chart 2 and being less than 5%, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It is concluded that there is a joint linear relationship between the listening skill and the English platforms (Cambridge and British Council Platforms). This research includes a section where there are several questions focused on knowing students' perspectives regarding the use of these platforms.

Figure 1a: Listening Skill Tasks

Cambridge Platform

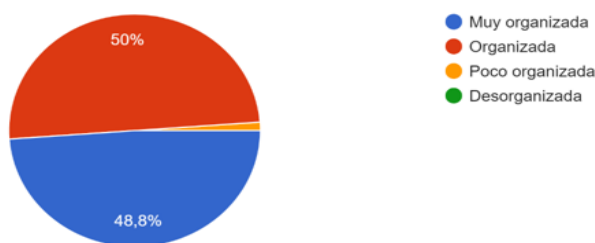


Figure 1b: Listening Skill Tasks

British Council Platform

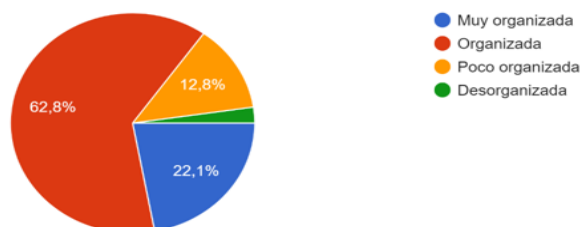


Figure 1a shows that 48.8% of the total students consider that the tasks on the Cambridge platform are well-organized and adequate, while only 22.1% of participants say that the listening activities are well-organized on the British Council platform (Figure 1b). Therefore, it is evident that there is a significant preference on the Cambridge platform, as it allows all the ESL content to be found in one easy-to-access place and provides data and feedback on students' listening progress. Furthermore, the listening activities on Cambridge are designed to simulate real-world conversation and to assess learners' genuine English abilities, consequently improving students' listening skill.

Figure 2a: Difficulty of Listening Activities

Cambridge Platform

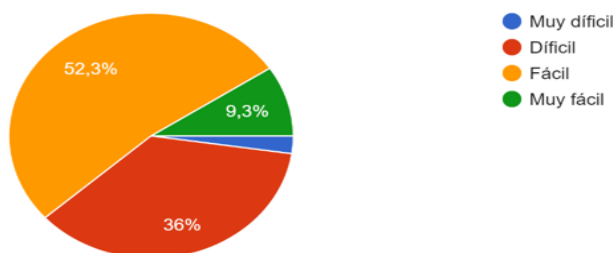
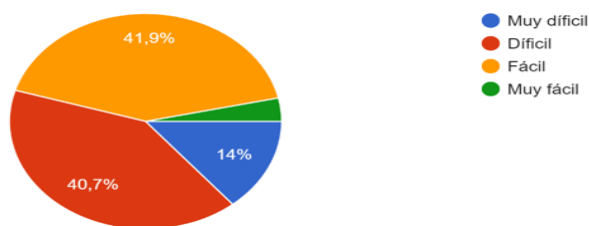
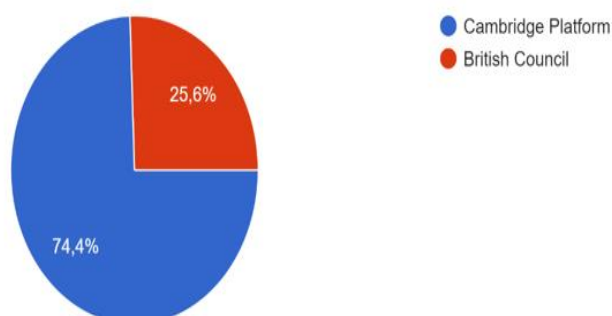


Figure 2b: Difficulty of Listening Activities
British Council Platform



Regarding the level of difficulty in the development of the listening activities, it was identified that in the Cambridge platform the students present less difficulty (2.3%) in the development of them since it is considered that it is an easy-to-use platform, which represents 52.3%. However, on the British Council platform it was distinguished that its degree of difficulty is 14%, likewise, it is demonstrated that it is also a platform of easy access (41.9%). Therefore, it shows that Cambridge platform has easy, dynamic, comprehensible and clear activities that allow students to enhance and develop their listening comprehension of a second language (L2).

Figure 3a: Students' platform preferences
English Platforms



From the total number of students surveyed, 74.4% points out a greater preference for the use of Cambridge platform, whereas the remaining percentage (25.6%) for the British Council platform. As a result, in Cambridge, students are provided with convenient access to all instructional materials in one place, along with small but useful exercises, gamified experiences, and time-saving features.

C. Discussion

Asif, Sheeraz & Sacco (2022) state that, English teaching-learning platforms have increased prominence as valuable tools for language acquisition. This research paper delves into three key aspects related to English teaching-learning platforms: the relationship between listening skills and their use, the effectiveness of these platforms in developing listening activities, and student's perceptions of their effectiveness in virtual language learning.

One of the crucial skills in language learning is listening. Proficiency in listening skills is essential for effective communication and language comprehension (Shariyevna & Israilova 2020). The first question is aimed to address if there is a relationship between listening skills and the use of English teaching-learning platforms. To carry out this research, it is employed a multiple linear regression model. The hypothesis is that there is a positive correlation between the use of English teaching-learning platforms and the enhancement of listening skills. Cambridge University's English teaching resources are renowned globally, making them a prime choice for students.

The second aspect under study is the effectiveness of English teaching-learning platforms in fostering the development of listening skills. Listening activities are a cornerstone of language learning, and platforms play a fundamental role in facilitating them (Kumar, Malabar, Benyo & Amal, 2021). It also employs a multiple linear regression model to assess the level of effectiveness. The hypothesis suggests that English teaching-learning platforms, with Cambridge leading the way, significantly contribute to the improvement of listening skills.

Moreover, incorporating students' perspectives is essential when evaluating the impact of teaching-learning platforms (Cacheiro, Medina, Dominguez & Medina, 2019). Therefore, this research focuses on understanding how students perceive the effectiveness of these platforms in their language learning journey, particularly concerning virtual activities such as conversations, videos, and recorded audio. The employment of a targeted

survey approach is designed to gauge students' comprehension of listening tasks, the difficulty they encounter in honing their listening skills, and their platform preferences. By gathering this information, it is aimed to gain insights into the student experience and identify areas where platforms, including Cambridge's materials or resources, can be improved.

CONCLUSION

English teaching-learning platforms have revolutionized the way people learn languages, and their impact on listening skills is a topic of paramount importance. Through statistical analysis and student feedback, it is intended to shed light on the relationship between listening skills and platform uses, assess the efficacy of these platforms, and understand the student perspective. With a focus on Cambridge as a prominent platform, it is hoped to provide valuable insights for both, educators and learners in the ever-evolving process of language education.

As conclusion it is noticed that there is a significant relationship between listening skills and the use of English teaching-learning platforms, especially Cambridge platform, as it offers vary resources that engage students and allow them fostering their level of English language, since the listening activities are easy to comprehend and develop according to their level.

A higher level of Cambridge LMS platform effectiveness has been detected in the listening skills through the econometric model. Cambridge LMS virtual learning offers students various activities to improve their listening skills such as real conversations, videos, recorded audio, a great quality of images and some activities that are easy to adapt to their learning process, also it favors their exposure to natural language in different communicative contexts with the forest language is used, through such exposure, not only will students have access to different linguistic components such as grammar, vocabulary, intonation, stress and rhythm, which are necessary for reaching and acceptable level of language proficiency; they will also be able to access interesting and updated topics related to their study areas or social cultural environment.

The findings concluded that the majority of students have positive feelings about the Cambridge platform. In addition, they feel more confident when performing listening tasks on the aforementioned platform than on the British Council platform, because of the variety and updated topics and activities according with the students' needs and academic linguistics, it also allows students work in a place where they relax, have easy access to the listening activities and can solve doubts. The Cambridge platform helps EFL students to recognize the mistakes they commit and improve the vocabulary as well as familiarize with the grammar and English usage.

Digital platforms contribute significantly to professors in different areas, especially in learning English language. When using the Cambridge LMS platform, it is of great help and supports to optimize time, also facilitates the development of activities, provides more digital resources, easily management, innovative and accessibility, reinforcing what has been learned and generating thus greater interest in the different topics, the Cambridge LMS platform has allowed students to achieve an effective and updated learning.

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