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TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN PREVIO A LA OBTENCIÓN DEL TÍTULO DE: LICENCIATURA EN PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS, MENCIÓN INGLÉS

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DEDICATION

Adamaris Arévalo

"Because people don't have wings, we look for ways to fly." - Haruichi Furudate

Above all, I dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents, whose love, sacrifice, and steady support made this dream possible. Thank you for the opportunity to study, for trusting me even in the moments I doubted myself, and for staying by my side through every difficulty along the way. The patience, guidance, and encouragement you gave me shaped who I am today. This accomplishment belongs to you just as much as it belongs to me, because every page of this work reflects the love and values you instilled in me.

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Pakary Anrango

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"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." — Proverbs 3:5–6.

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ABSTRACT

Listening comprehension plays an important role in the acquisition of English as a foreign language; however, it continues to be one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners to develop, largely due to the lack of structured listening practice within the classroom. In response to this situation, the use of Ecuadorian Legends Audiobooks was proposed as an alternative resource to strengthen this skill. Thus, the following research was carried out with ninth-grade students and English teachers at the Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" High School. The different needs and perceptions regarding listening comprehension were ascertained using the mixed method. Consequently, with the support of the research tools of the questionnaire, applied to 67 students, and the interview, conducted with two English teachers, the results confirmed that listening comprehension represents one of the greatest challenges for this group of students, and that, while teachers already incorporate audiobooks occasionally into their classes, there is a clear opportunity to integrate them more systematically into curricular planning. These findings led to the design of Ecuadorian Legends Audiobooks, a pedagogical resource composed of a Teacher Guide and a Student Book, structured around three units featuring exercises, interactive activities, and AI-generated audio recordings, aimed at strengthening listening comprehension while connecting English instruction to students' own cultural context.

Keywords: Listening comprehension, audiobooks, Ecuadorian legends, ninth-graders, didactic guide.

RESUMEN

La comprensión auditiva desempeña un papel importante en la adquisición del inglés como lengua extranjera, sin embargo, continúa siendo una de las destrezas más desafiantes de desarrollar para los estudiantes de EFL, debido en gran parte a la falta de práctica auditiva estructurada dentro del aula. En respuesta a esta situación, se propuso el uso de audiolibros de leyendas ecuatorianas como un recurso alternativo para fortalecer esta destreza. Así, la presente investigación se llevó a cabo con estudiantes de noveno año y docentes de inglés de la Unidad Educativa Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo". Las diferentes necesidades y percepciones respecto a la comprensión auditiva se determinaron mediante el método mixto. En consecuencia, con el apoyo de los instrumentos de investigación del cuestionario, aplicado a 67 estudiantes, y la entrevista, realizada a dos docentes de inglés, los resultados confirmaron que la comprensión auditiva representa uno de los mayores desafíos para este grupo de estudiantes, y que, si bien los docentes ya incorporan audiolibros ocasionalmente en sus clases, existe una clara oportunidad para integrarlos de manera más sistemática en la planificación curricular. Estos hallazgos condujeron al diseño de audiolibros de leyendas ecuatorianas, un recurso pedagógico compuesto por una guía del docente y un libro del estudiante, estructurado en tres unidades con ejercicios, actividades interactivas y grabaciones de audio generadas con inteligencia artificial, orientado a fortalecer la comprensión auditiva mientras se conecta la enseñanza del inglés con el contexto cultural propio de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: comprensión auditiva, audiolibros, leyendas ecuatorianas, estudiantes de noveno año, guía didáctica.

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INTRODUCTION

Research context

Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) remains one of the major challenges facing educational systems, particularly in contexts where learners have limited opportunities to use English beyond the classroom. In today's globalized world, English proficiency has become an essential competence for academic success, professional development and participation in international communication. Therefore, educational institutions are still in search of evidence-based and contextually appropriate pedagogical approaches that meet the needs of learners and increase the effectiveness of teaching English language. Listening is the foundation of second language acquisition among the four language skills because it gives the learners the linguistic input needed to develop vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, pronunciation and discourse competence.

Listening is one of the four language skills and is thought of as the foundation of second language acquisition. This is because it provides learners with the linguistic input, they need so that they can acquire vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, pronunciation and discourse competence. This perspective originates from Krashen's (1982) Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, which proposes that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to input slightly beyond their current level of proficiency. Although proposed more than four decades ago, this theory continues to receive empirical support. Recent studies have confirmed that instructional approaches based on comprehensible input significantly improve learners' listening performance compared with more traditional forms of instruction (Luo, 2024; Dorris Lourdes & Gnana Gandhi, 2024).

Listening is crucial to learning a second language, yet it remains one of the least developed language skills in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Listening is different from teaching reading or grammar in that learners must interpret the spoken language as it is produced, and must identify sounds, understand meaning, and activate background knowledge. This means that many learners have ongoing problems with speed of speech, unknown vocabulary, connected speech and exposure to authentic oral input. In the past few years, these factors have been cited frequently as major obstacles to successful listening comprehension, especially where meaningful interaction in English is scarce in EFL contexts (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021; Panthee, 2024; Zhu, 2021).

Faced with these challenges, researchers have increasingly turned to audiobooks as an alternative resource for listening instruction. Audiobooks rather than traditional listening materials provide learners with more exposure to authentic pronunciation, natural intonation and meaningful discourse within the framework of a meaningful narrative. According to Elgendy (2020), the

activities based on the audiobook can help to develop the critical listening skills of the secondary stage EFL learners as well as developing more positive attitudes toward listening. Audiobooks can aid in developing EFL learners as competent readers by internalizing the narrator's pace, expression and prosody, therefore improving their reading comprehension and fluency (Khalmatova et al., 2024). A study of tenth graders who learned using "Storynory" audiobooks reported a significant increase in listening comprehension scores and also showed increased motivation (Purba et al., 2023). Likewise, Sharma et al. (2025) pointed out that audiobooks provide significant benefits to language learners, including more accurate pronunciation, improved listening and reading comprehension, and greater motivation to engage with texts. Taken together, this accumulated evidence suggests that audiobook-based instruction not only improves listening comprehension but also enhances pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, learner motivation, and engagement, while offering greater opportunities for repeated exposure to spoken language.

While the language benefits of audiobooks are undisputed, recent research has found that the pedagogical benefits of audiobooks go beyond language development, especially when the audiobooks contain culturally meaningful content. Using culturally familiar materials in EFL teaching helps learners to understand by activating their prior knowledge, decreasing cognitive loads and enhancing emotional engagement in the learning process. Mahmoudi (2017) claimed that the effect of activating cultural schema on listening comprehension depends on the language proficiency level of the learners, i.e. the more proficient learners benefit more than lower-level learners from the culturally familiar input. In the same vein, Sun and Tan (2023) discovered that targeted cultural knowledge considerably improved listening comprehension proficiency among Chinese EFL learners exposed to culturally emphasized lessons. Sujatha and Rajasekaran (2024) argued tha**t** providing learners with contextual background knowledge before a listening task reduces cognitive load and thereby supports the development of listening skills. Consequently, integrating local cultural narratives into listening activities represents an opportunity to strengthen both language learning and students' connection with their own cultural heritage.

Schema theory offers a theoretical explanation of the effectiveness of culturally familiar listening materials. This perspective lends itself to understanding when learners are able to link new information to existing cognitive structures from past experiences and cultural knowledge. Mahmoudi (2017) reported that the extent to which background knowledge facilitates comprehension is closely associated with the ability of learners to activate relevant cultural schemata, which is contingent on their general language proficiency. According to Sun and Tan (2023), the inclusion of cultural dimensions in language teaching is essential in improving the learners' understanding. Similarly, Sujatha and Rajasekaran (2024) argue that activating students' background knowledge before a listening task reduces the cognitive load of processing spoken input and thus frees up attentional resources for linguistic features. When the listening materials are similar to learners' own cultural background, less cognitive resources are used to understand

the context, so more cognitive attention can be used to process the linguistic features of the target language.

Considering these theoretical and pedagogical foundations, the present study responds to three complementary educational needs: the persistent difficulties EFL learners experience in developing listening comprehension, the growing body of evidence supporting audiobooks as an effective instructional resource, and the importance of incorporating Ecuadorian cultural heritage into English language teaching (Fan et al., 2025; Sharma et al., 2025). The present research proposes to develop Ecuadorian Legends Audiobooks as a contextualized pedagogical strategy to reinforce students' cultural identity while strengthening English listening comprehension. Although the study is contextualized in the Ecuadorian educational context, it can also inform English language teachers and researchers working in multilingual, culturally diverse educational contexts across Latin America.

Research problem

The development of listening comprehension in English as a Foreign Language remains one of the most important pedagogical challenges in Ecuadorian secondary education. The teaching and learning of EFL has gained more and more importance in modern education systems all over the world, since communicative competence in English is regarded as a necessary skill for academic, professional and social development in a globalized world. Of the four core language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening), the latter is crucial in language acquisition, as it is through auditory input that learners build meaning, internalize phonological patterns and build vocabulary in the target language (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

Meanwhile, at the national level, English language proficiency remains a constant challenge for Ecuador. According to the EF English Proficiency Index (EF Education First, 2025), Ecuador ranked 83rd among 123 countries and territories evaluated worldwide, with an overall score of 466 points, below both the global and regional averages for Latin America. Significantly, the same report states that listening was the weakest of the four language skills tested for Ecuadorian test-takers, performing lower than reading, writing and speaking. This finding is especially pertinent to the present study because it shows that the problems encountered in secondary education are not isolated pedagogical issues, but that they fit into a larger national pattern of listening comprehension consistently trailing other language competencies.

At the provincial level, the same situation can be seen. In a secondary school in Ibarra, Imbabura province, listening comprehension was identified as a problematic area. Institutional efforts to improve academic outcomes had not been successful in addressing students' difficulties in understanding spoken English, which had a negative effect on their participation and motivation in class. This pattern is consistent with broader findings across the country. Abad (2023) found that even among trained EFL teachers in Ecuadorian universities listening was one of the skills most

inconsistently addressed in actual classroom practice despite teachers' stated beliefs about its importance. This suggests that the challenges observed are not limited to one institution only but are a wider trend among secondary and even higher education institutions in the province and the country, which highlights the need to study instructional strategies that can improve listening outcomes in this particular educational setting.

Similar difficulties are to be found at the institutional level. In the case of a municipal secondary school that serves students from both the basic and upper secondary education levels, informal classroom observation shows that listening activities are often viewed as repetitive or disconnected from students' personal interests, and thus are met with low motivation and little engagement. This absence of motivation affects not only students' willingness to engage actively in listening tasks, but also their ability to process meaningful auditory input, thereby slowing their natural development of listening skills. This institutional reality reproduces, at a smaller scale, the pattern identified at the provincial and national levels, and constitutes the specific context where the present research aims to explore alternative strategies capable of increase both motivation and listening comprehension performance.

However, listening comprehension is still one of the least systematically targeted skills in EFL teaching at the secondary level. The skill is often placed under the umbrella of teaching grammar and written production (Panthee, 2024). In the pedagogical practice of many secondary institutions in Ecuador, the teaching of listening is performed in an incidental and instrumental way, with scarce provision of authentic, meaningful and varied auditory input (Argudo-Garzón, 2024). This situation deprives students of exposure to natural spoken English and constrains the development of the cognitive and strategic listening skills necessary for real communicative performance. The consequences of such imbalance are reflected in the persistent difficulties that students have with spoken word identification, connected speech processing, and inferential listening comprehension difficulties that have been empirically attested in the local context by Cango Patiño et al. (2026).

Listening comprehension problems are not only a matter of vocabulary or grammatical knowledge but also a reflection of learners' limited control of the listening process. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) argue that effective listening instruction should include metacognitive awareness, which enables learners to plan how they will listen, monitor their understanding while listening, and evaluate outcomes after listening. If students are predominantly given listening activities as comprehension tests (students listen and then answer without guidance), they may not develop the strategic competence needed to cope with comprehension breakdowns. This is especially true in EFL contexts where learners are expected to process fast, connected speech and infer meaning under time pressure. In this way, the lack of systematic strategy development may be a factor in chronic problems such as poor word recognition, limited processing of reduced forms, and difficulty with the interpretation of implied or inferential meaning (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

Furthermore, the development of listening depends on exposure to spoken language that reflects authentic communicative situations such as pronunciation patterns, speech rate and discourse organization. According to Field (2008), listening is a constructive process in which learners use not only bottom-up information (sounds and word boundaries) but also top-down knowledge (context and expectations) to construct meaning. However, if classroom practices are heavily dependent upon scripted or simplified audio, students may not become accustomed to the characteristics of authentic spoken English such as linking, reductions and varying intonation that affect word recognition. In this respect, limited use of varied and meaningful auditory input may diminish the learners' opportunities to practice the working of spoken language, which in turn affects their ability to successfully understand connected speech and derive meaning through inference. Thus, it seems that the improvement of listening outcomes in Ecuadorian secondary education probably depends on instructional design which includes authentic listening materials and tasks which promote both comprehension processing and strategic interpretation (Field, 2008).

Justification

In EFL contexts, the development of listening comprehension requires instructional approaches beyond provision of recorded texts and multiple-choice questions. To teach effective listening, it is necessary to use authentic input, the development of metacognitive strategies and motivating materials that engage learners' attention and connect language learning to personally and culturally relevant contents (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). This research is a response to this need, where the use of audiobooks of Ecuadorian legends is proposed as a structured pedagogical strategy for the development of the English listening skills of ninth-grade students of the Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" High School.

The pedagogical value of audiobooks as a listening resource is well-documented in the applied linguistics literature. Audiobooks expose learners to authentic pronunciation, rhythms and a variety of language patterns within meaningful narrative contexts, creating an immersive experience that allows for language acquisition in its all-encompassing nature (Sharma et al., 2025). Elgendy (2020) confirmed in a quasi-experimental study with secondary EFL learners that the use of audiobook-based activities leads to significant improvements in critical listening skills and more positive attitudes towards listening as a language skill. The results provide a robust empirical basis for the use of audiobooks in the institutional context of this study.

The cultural aspect of the proposed resource adds another pedagogical dimension which is not accessible in any other listening resources. The proposal aims at activating cultural schemata that have already been acquired by the learners by grounding the audiobooks in Ecuadorian legends, stories from the students' own cultural background heard since childhood in their mother tongue. This would reduce the cognitive load regarding thematic understanding and liberate attentional resources for linguistic processing in English (Mahmoudi, 2017). This schema

activation approach has been found to be effective in developing the listening comprehension skills of learners with different levels of proficiency and cultural backgrounds (Öksüz et al., 2024).

Culturally familiar material also appeals to something more personal for EFL learners, the motivation. Specifically, for secondary students in Ecuador, the degree to which a learner can imagine themselves as a competent speaker of English, their 'ideal L2 self,' seems to predict motivation and materials that are reflective of their own culture seem to reinforce that self-image (Andrade-Molina et al., 2022). Darvin and Norton (2023) put this in terms of investment, arguing that learners are more likely to invest effort if language learning is viewed as congruent (rather than incongruent) to who they are. Legends based on students' own cultural heritage do just that; learning of language and cultural belonging are mutually reinforcing rather than pulling in opposite directions, which is the very condition under which the affective filter drops and learners become more receptive to new input (Krashen, 1982, as cited in Luo, 2024).

The proposed approach is entirely feasible from the practical point of view within the resource contraints of the Ecuadorian public education. The audiobooks produced for this research can be applied in classrooms with only speakers and printed activity sheets, thus allowing the proposal to be replicated in different institutional contexts without requiring commercial materials or specialized technological infrastructure. The above accessibility, combined with the theoretical and empirical background, renders the proposed strategy a pedagogically appropriate, culturally relevant and institutionally feasible contribution to EFL listening instruction in Ecuador.

Regarding the instructional design, the proposed strategy is grounded on the three-phase model frequently adopted in listening instruction, namely pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Prior to listening, students are introduced to important vocabulary and cultural background information related to the legend to activate prior knowledge. In the while-listening phase, students listen to the audiobook and complete guided tasks, including bottom-up processing (word and sound recognition) and top-down processing (inference based on context) as explained by Field's (2008) model of listening comprehension. And there's a post-listening phase. This involves discussion and comprehension activities that consolidate understanding and connect the narrative to students' own cultural knowledge.

The present research was developed in the specific context of the Municipal Alfredo Albuja Galindo High School, Ibarra, Ecuador, where ninth grade students show recurrent difficulties in English listening comprehension. The initial classroom observations and teacher consultations suggest that listening activities at this institution rely heavily on textbook recordings and subtitled video materials, which provide limited exposure to naturalistic spoken input and little systematic instruction in the cognitive and metacognitive strategies underlying effective listening. It is therefore high time for a new, pedagogically sound and culturally relevant approach to the teaching of listening.

The research is expected to be beneficial for a range of stakeholders within the education community. The direct beneficiaries will be the students of the ninth grade of the Municipal High School "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" who will have the opportunity to develop their listening comprehension skills through the proposed strategy "Audiobooks of Ecuadorian Legends", which combines authentic auditory input with culturally relevant content to increase comprehension and motivation. It will also have an indirect benefit to the institution's English teachers who will have at their disposal a replicable, low-cost pedagogical resource that can be easily integrated to their existing listening lessons without the need for specialized technological infrastructure. In a broader context, the institution itself will gain from improved English learning outcomes, which will raise the institution's academic quality standards, and the local educational community will benefit from a strategy that strengthens cultural identity in conjunction with language learning, fostering a teaching model that can be adopted by other institutions in the province facing similar circumstances.

Impact of the research

The objectives proposed in this study will generate applied knowledge and a methodological proposal related to the Ecuadorian educational reality. Moreover, the findings of this research could also be useful to enhance the teaching and learning process of English due to it uses culturally relevant materials to improve listening comprehension and students' communicative competence. The relevance of this study can be appreciated at five levels of impact which are interrelated in the present study.

This research contributes to student learning by proposing a listening instruction model based on Krashen's comprehensible input theory (Krashen, 1982, as cited in Luo, 2024), which demands that learners receive input that is meaningful and slightly above their current level. This is not just theoretical, Dorris Lourdes and Gnana Gandhi (2024) found statistically significant listening gains when structured comprehensible input replaced traditional instruction in engineering students in India. The stakes are especially high in Ecuador as EF Education First (2022) ranks the country's overall proficiency as "Low" at 466 compared to a global average of 502, ranking it 18th in Latin America. In this sense, this proposal seeks to reinforce students' phonological recognition, word level comprehension and overall listening performance through audiobooks of Ecuadorian legends based on comprehensible-input principles, addressing the gap that national data clearly indicate.

It is a useful work for teachers of English as a second language, as it presents a practical and reproducible methodological proposal that can be applied to the teaching of listening and shows how audiobooks can be incorporated in a systematic way in the teaching of listening. Empirically, Sharma et al. (2025) and Kartal and Simsek (2017) showed that the use of audiobooks improves pronunciation, comprehension and learner motivation. This evidence gives teachers a research-

based rationale for incorporating audiobooks into their listening instruction. Listening activities developed in the present research can be a practical example, easily accessible and adaptable for the teachers of the High School Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo", and other Ecuadorian schools, in any grade, legend, and thematic unit, without the need of significant amounts of money on commercial materials or advanced technological infrastructure.

This pedagogical proposal for the Alfredo Albuja Galindo Municipal High School will generate benefits at the institutional level, since it will be designed specifically for the students and the educational context of this institution. According to Panthee (2024) and Vandergrift and Goh (2012), the continued neglect of listening skills instruction demands a balanced English curriculum in the institution giving equal weight to listening, reading, writing and grammar. This is particularly the case given that a study by Andrade-Molina et al. (2022) revealed that the research on L2 motivation has been quite restricted with Ecuadorian secondary students and the Ideal L2 Self (students' mental representation of themselves as proficient L2 speakers) is a significant predictor for language learning motivation in this community. This motivational dimension can be increased by means of a listening proposal based on culturally significant content. The relation now suggested is a pedagogical hypothesis and is not proven directly by this study. Improving the teaching of listening in schools is of great importance for the students' comprehensive ability and their study and career prospects.

The main objective of this research is to contribute to the preservation and promotion of the Ecuadorian oral cultural heritage, specifically the Ecuadorian legends in the English listening training. This study will be based on the premise that language cannot be learned without contact with the culture in which it arises. This is why traditional stories from coastal, Andean and Amazonian culture will be made accessible and relevant for the new generation of students. Vehicular content will be based on national legends. This is in line with the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO, which officially recognizes oral traditions and expressions such as legends as an important cultural heritage that should be passed on to new generations through education. In this way the proposal will ensure that students have a better sense of cultural identity and pride while working on the acquisition of an international language making the language learning part of cultural continuity rather than a disjointed objective.

This study contributes to a still small but growing body of applied linguistics research at the crossroads of cultural identity, authentic materials, and listening development. Öksüz et al. (2024) have already shown that culturally responsive authentic materials can turn listening outcomes in a positive direction, and Purba et al. (2023) offer more recent, classroom-level confirmation of the underlying premise about audiobooks specifically their study of tenth-grade EFL students found a statistically significant improvement in listening ability after audiobooks entered the instruction mix, strengthening a case for audiobooks' pedagogical value that goes back decades but continues to hold up in current classrooms. The results of this study could offer a point

of reference for similar research in other parts of Ecuador and in other Latin American contexts with strong oral traditions and there is potential for further research using digital audio resources and storytelling-based instruction.

Objectives

General objective

Analyze Ecuadorian legends audiobooks as a strategy to enhance English listening skill in 9th graders at Municipal Alfredo Albuja Galindo High School.

Specific objectives

To achieve this general purpose, the study is organized around three specific objectives:

- Identify the current level of English listening comprehension skills in 9th graders students at Municipal Alfredo Albuja Galindo High School.
- Describe the teaching strategies and methodologies currently used by English teachers to develop listening comprehension in 9th graders students at Municipal Alfredo Albuja Galindo High School.
- Design a didactic proposal based on Ecuadorian legends audiobooks to strengthen English listening comprehension skills in 9th graders students.

CHAPTER I: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Listening Comprehension

Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis, first proposed in the early 1980s, remains one of the more influential frameworks in second language acquisition. Even today, it continues to generate active discussion in SLA research, as Luo's (2024) recent review demonstrates. At its core, Krashen (1982) argued that acquisition occurs naturally when learners are exposed to input slightly beyond their current level of competence, a principle that underlies his broader theory of how second languages are learned.

The practical application of this theory to listening instruction has been supported by experimental research. Dorris Lourdes and Gnana Gandhi (2024) conducted a study with 64 intermediate ESL students divided into experimental and control groups, in which the experimental group received listening materials. The results showed that the experimental group performed significantly better on post-tests, with increased motivation following the treatment, confirming that comprehensible input delivered at the right level of difficulty produces measurable improvements in listening skills.

1.1.1 Foundations of comprehensible input

Acquisition proceeds most effectively when input is both comprehensible and pitched slightly above a learner's existing level (Dorris Lourdes & Gnana Gandhi, 2024; Tariq & Malghani, 2026) a claim that, more than 40 years after Krashen first made it, keeps showing up in contemporary classroom research (Luo, 2024).

This theory has had a significant influence on EFL pedagogy, as it establishes the importance of offering students authentic linguistic materials that are comprehensible without being trivial. In listening instruction, comprehensible input is equivalent to audio materials that present real language supported by contextual elements that facilitate comprehension, such as familiar topics, visual supports, or anticipation activities (Zeng, 2025). Recent studies have empirically confirmed the effectiveness of comprehensible input in the development of the listening skill, with experimental groups showing statistically significant improvements in oral comprehension tests compared to control groups (Dorris Lourdes & Gnana Gandhi, 2024; Tariq & Malghani, 2026).

1.1.2 Role of the affective filter in listening comprehension

Krashen's affective filter hypothesis adds a psychological layer: high anxiety, low self-esteem, or weak motivation raise a mental filter that blocks input from being processed, even when that input is otherwise comprehensible (Krashen, 1982, as cited in Luo, 2024; Zeng, 2025). When the learning environment feels safe, engaging, and culturally relevant instead, that filter drops, and input reaches the learner's acquisition mechanisms far more effectively.

1.1.3 The importance of listening in second language acquisition

Listening is recognized as the cornerstone of second language acquisition because it constitutes the primary source of linguistic input through which learners construct their knowledge of the target language. Before learners are able to produce language effectively, they must first receive and comprehend meaningful spoken input that enables them to develop vocabulary, grammatical competence, pronunciation, and discourse awareness. Consequently, listening represents the foundation upon which the remaining language skills are progressively built (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021).

This perspective is strongly supported by Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, which proposes that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to input that is slightly beyond their current level of linguistic competence (Krashen, 1982, as cited in Luo, 2024). Within this theoretical framework, listening functions as the principal channel through which comprehensible input is received and processed, allowing learners to internalize new linguistic structures in meaningful communicative contexts. Therefore, listening should not be regarded as a passive receptive activity but as an active cognitive process that facilitates language acquisition through continuous interaction with spoken language.

Beyond its direct contribution to comprehension, listening also plays a crucial role in the development of other language skills. Nunan (2003) emphasizes that listening provides learners with exposure to spoken language and helps them develop awareness of vocabulary, grammatical forms, pronunciation, and interaction patterns. He also highlights the importance of integrating listening with speaking, reading, and writing to support broader language development.Recent research has added to this view by showing that systematic listening instruction can lead to increased communicative competence, enhanced confidence among learners and improved overall language proficiency (Panthee, 2024; Goh & Vandergrift, 2021).

In addition, listening provides opportunities for authentic interaction allowing learners to interpret speakers' intentions, infer implicit meanings and respond appropriately. These skills are particularly relevant to current communicative approaches to language teaching in which the success of communication depends not only on linguistic accuracy but also on the learners' ability to understand spoken discourse in a wide range of social and cultural contexts. Therefore, listening

should be given a prominent place in English language teaching, especially in EFL contexts where learners have little opportunity to be exposed to real English speech outside the classroom.

1.1.4 Schema theory in listening comprehension

Schema Theory holds that learners' prior knowledge organized into mental structures called schemas plays a determining role in how they comprehend spoken and written input. These schemas span formal knowledge (textual and discourse structures), content knowledge (concepts about the world), and cultural knowledge (values, customs, and traditions) (Mahmoudi, 2017). Sujatha and Rajasekaran's (2024) findings on cognitive load add further weight to this framework, showing concretely how the presence or absence of relevant background knowledge shapes listening performance.

In the domain of listening comprehension, the activation of cultural schemas can significantly facilitate comprehension of the oral message. Sun and Tan (2023) demonstrated that cultural knowledge positively correlated with the oral comprehension of EFL learners, insofar as this knowledge activated content schemas that supported the decoding of the message.

Consequently, by using Ecuadorian legends as the content of audiobooks, the cultural and narrative schemas that students already possess about these stories in their mother tongue are activated. This activation reduces the cognitive load required to understand the thematic content of the message in English, freeing attentional resources for linguistic processing itself (Mahmoudi, 2017; Sun & Tan, 2023). In this way, culturally familiar content operates as cognitive scaffolding that facilitates access to input in the target language.

1.2 Methods and approaches

Foreign language teaching has passed through a number of methods and approaches. Each of them reflects different assumptions about the way learners acquire a second language . An approach is described by Richards and Rodgers (2014) as the theoretical principles and beliefs about the nature of language and language learning that are the basis for a method, which is an overall plan for the systematic presentation of language material.

This distinction is particularly relevant to listening instruction, as it has implications for the strategies adopted by teachers, depending on whether listening is viewed as a passive skill for reception or as an active skill of construction (Rost, 2016). The following sections analyze the most relevant methods and approaches for the development of listening comprehension. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is the pedagogical basis for the design of the proposed instructional material and is specially considered.

1.2.1 Methods and approaches for listening development

The traditional view of listening instruction has shifted from a bottom-up perspective, in which comprehension is the result of decoding smaller units of language, such as sounds, words, and grammatical structures, to a top-down perspective, which emphasizes the use of prior knowledge, context, and expectations to make sense of what is heard (Field, 2008). Modern approaches recognize that effective listening instruction should include both processes to allow learners to draw on their contextual and background knowledge, as well as to develop accurate perceptual skills (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

The most widely used methods to develop listening are the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which situates listening in meaningful, real-life communicative contexts rather than isolated drills (Richards, 2015), and the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis which states that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to input just above their current level of competence but the exposure must remain accessible and engaging (Krashen, 1985). More recently, task-based approaches have become particularly salient as they organize listening practice around the completion of meaningful tasks rather than the study of language forms in isolation, and position the learner as an active participant in the construction of meaning (Ellis, 2003).

Among these approaches, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has been singled out as especially appropriate for the design of the present pedagogical proposal because of its emphasis on well-organized, sequenced activities that mirror the natural steps of the listening process.

1.2.2 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an instructional approach which organizes language learning around the completion of meaningful tasks, where language is used as a tool to achieve a communicative outcome rather than as an object of study in itself (Ellis, 2003; Richards, 2015). Willis (1996) proposes a framework that includes three interrelated phases: (a) the pre-task phase, in which learners are introduced to the topic and activate relevant background knowledge; (b) the task cycle, in which learners perform the task, plan how they will report their outcomes, and report their results; and (c) the language focus phase, in which specific linguistic features are analyzed and practiced on the basis of the language that arose during the task.

The staged structure of this has direct pedagogical implications for listening instruction, mirroring the widely accepted pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening sequence used in listening comprehension pedagogy (Field, 2008). Skehan (1998) further states that well-designed tasks should balance fluency, accuracy and complexity. That is, learners should be cognitively challenged but not overwhelmed, which is especially relevant to the selection of authentic or semi-authentic listening materials for EFL learners.

Bygate (2015) notes that a task where the outcome and purpose are clear will enhance learner involvement and create a natural context for the employment of listening strategies, because learners must extract specific information to be able to do a subsequent activity. This task-based logic is the basis for the design of the Ecuadorian Legends Audiobooks proposal, where each unit is structured around a series of pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening tasks that guide learners through purposeful engagement with the narrative content, while at the same time promoting the metacognitive strategies discussed in the following section.

1.3 Metacognitive processes

Besides the choice of instructional approach, effective listening development also depends on learners' ability to regulate their cognitive processes while performing comprehension tasks. Flavell (1979) first described this ability, called metacognition, as the knowledge and control that people have over their own cognitive activities. Metacognition in second language listening means that learners are not passive recipients of spoken input, but instead they can plan how they will approach the listening task, monitor their comprehension during the listening process, and reflect on their performance after the task is over (Goh, 2008).

The following subsections address the contribution of metacognitive strategies and processes to the development of listening comprehension in EFL contexts, and the integration of these strategies and processes in the design of instructional materials such as the proposed audiobooks.

1.3.1 Metacognitive strategies for the development of listening comprehension

Metacognitive strategies have been increasingly recognized as a powerful tool for developing listening comprehension in EFL contexts. Quynh (2025) conducted a literature review on the impact of metacognitive strategies in EFL listening instruction and found that these strategies, specifically planning, monitoring, and evaluating, are especially effective for improving learners' understanding, confidence, and autonomy. The same study emphasizes that metacognitive strategies transform listening from a passive reception activity into an active, self-regulated process, which is fundamental for meaningful language development in foreign language learning environments.

Empirical research has provided strong evidence for the effectiveness of metacognitive instruction in improving EFL listening outcomes. Alfahad (2025) conducted a mixed-methods study with 100 Saudi female EFL students divided into experimental and control groups, in which the experimental group received metacognitive instruction through a pedagogical cycle over ten weeks. The results showed that learners in the experimental group improved their listening achievement and increased their metacognitive awareness in areas such as directed attention, planning, and evaluation, confirming that structured metacognitive instruction produces measurable gains in listening performance.

Despite the proven benefits of metacognitive strategies, their implementation in EFL classrooms is not without challenges. Alfahad (2025) identified key difficulties faced by EFL learners during listening tasks, including the speaker's speed and accent, unfamiliar vocabulary, long or unengaging listening materials, lack of concentration, and poor-quality recordings. These findings reinforce the importance of designing listening materials that are not only cognitively appropriate but also engaging and accessible to learners, and suggest that metacognitive strategy instruction should be accompanied by carefully selected, high-quality audio resources that reduce affective and cognitive barriers to comprehension.

1.3.1 Metacognition in EFL listening

Metacognition, understood as the learner's capacity to think about their own learning processes, monitor their comprehension, and regulate their strategies, plays a crucial role in the development of the listening skill in EFL (Alfahad, 2025; Syahfutra et al., 2023). Syahfutra et al. (2023) and Quynh (2025) present the metacognitive listening model as a central theoretical framework for listening instruction in second languages, arguing that learners who develop metacognitive awareness achieve better oral comprehension results than those who are only passively exposed to input.

Among the most effective metacognitive strategies for listening comprehension are the following: prior planning, through which the student anticipates the content of the oral text before listening; monitoring during listening, which allows the student to detect comprehension problems in real time; and subsequent evaluation, in which the student reflects on their performance and adjusts their strategies for future tasks (Quynh, 2025; Syahfutra et al., 2023). Metacognitive Pedagogical Cycle has demonstrated genuine potential in developing these skills among secondary and university-level EFL learners (Alfahad, 2025).

These strategies go quite well with the use of Ecuadorian-legend audiobooks. Teachers can help students anticipate what the story may involve before listening by drawing on their cultural background knowledge. Students use their prior knowledge of the story to check their own understanding while listening. Then they can look at what they got, what they missed and think about which strategies worked and which did not.This metacognitive cycle, integrated with audiobook use, enhances the development of active and self-regulated listening (Quynh, 2025; Alfahad, 2025).

1.3.2 Types of processing in listening comprehension: Bottom-up and Top down

Contemporary research in applied linguistics distinguishes two complementary and interacting modes of auditory processing in listening comprehension: bottom-up processing and top-down processing. Both operate simultaneously during real listening tasks and must be

addressed explicitly in effective listening instruction (Sulistyowati, 2019; Utomo & Sulistyowati, 2022).

Table 1

Types of processing in listening comprehension

Type	Description
Bottom up	Bottom-up processing operates from the smallest linguistic units upward toward meaning. Listeners decode individual phonemes, recognize syllables and words, and progressively assemble larger language units to construct comprehension of the global message from its constituent elements. Such a process is much dependent upon the listener's phonological and lexical knowledge and is important in situations where the learners have to make sense of the spoken input without the aid of visual or contextual clues (Sulistyowati, 2019; Utomo & Sulistyowati, 2022). This framework shifted the focus of listening research from the text to the listener, and from mere recognition to true understanding. Knowledge is not passively received but actively built by the learner through attentive processing of the input's phonological properties, notes Sulistyowati (2019).
Top down	Top-down processing operates in the inverse direction: the listener draws on prior knowledge of the topic, contextual information, and familiarity with discourse structures to anticipate the content of the

	message and guide its interpretation. Rather than waiting to decode each word sequentially, top-down listeners use existing cognitive frameworks, including cultural schemata, to predict meaning and fill comprehension gaps (Utomo & Sulistyowati, 2022). In EFL contexts, difficulties in listening comprehension often arise precisely when bottom-up processing is disrupted by unfamiliar vocabulary or excessive speech rate, generating a cognitive overload that simultaneously impairs efficient top-down processing (Kim, 2025). Harmer (2007) affirmed that frequent exposure to authentic, contextualized listening materials progressively develops both processing modes, enabling learners to become more flexible and autonomous listeners over time

Note. Own elaboration. Adapted from Sulistyowati (2019), Utomo and Sulistyowati (2022), Kim (2025), and Harmer (2007).

These two modes of processing do not occur in isolation they work together feeding each other in the course of actual listening tasks. That back-and-forth is what it takes to understand spoken language well: The learner decodes the incoming sounds and words, but also uses what they already know, the surrounding context and their own inferences to make meaning. As Panthee (2024) states, the two processes are alternated by listeners with skills depending on the demands of a given listening situation. Likewise, Utomo and Sulistyowati (2022) argue that effective listening instruction should intentionally integrate both approaches, enabling learners to strengthen their linguistic decoding skills while strategically applying contextual and background knowledge. Such an integrated approach not only enhances listening comprehension but also fosters greater learner autonomy, flexibility, and confidence when interpreting spoken language in diverse communicative contexts.

1.4 English in the Ecuadorian basic education curriculum

In Ecuador, teaching English as a foreign language is part of the official General Basic Education curriculum from fifth grade onward, with a minimum teaching load regulated by the Ministry of Education. The national English curriculum is articulated with the Common European

Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), with the objective of ensuring that students progressively achieve communicative competence levels throughout their educational trajectory. It is expected that upon completing tenth grade of Basic Education, students will reach an approximate level of A2 to B1 on the CEFR (Patiño et al., 2026).

However, research conducted in the Ecuadorian context shows that the actual English proficiency levels of secondary school students frequently do not reach the expected curricular standards, especially in the receptive skills of listening and reading comprehension (Patiño et al., 2026). Factors such as the lack of technological resources in educational centers, limited teacher training in communicative methodologies, and the scarce exposure of students to English outside the classroom are identified as determinants of this deficit (Panthee, 2024).

1.4.1 Ecuadorian educational context and English language teaching

In Ecuador, English is taught as a foreign language at the secondary level, where classroom instruction represents the primary, and often the only, source of auditory input available to learners. Patiño et al. (2026) highlight that in Ecuador, EFL learners usually rely on the classroom as their primary, and sometimes only, source of meaningful language input, which makes listening instruction especially relevant there. But even after years of compulsory English classes at the secondary level, the gaps in comprehension remain. Students still struggle with making inferences from what they hear, their vocabulary is often shallow and, they just don't get much exposure to natural, unscripted spoken language.

Empirical research conducted within Ecuadorian secondary schools has documented specific patterns of difficulty in listening comprehension among EFL learners. Patiño et al. (2026) conducted a quantitative correlational study with tenth-grade EFL students in Loja, Ecuador. Learners demonstrated moderate ability in recognizing explicit information; however, they struggled significantly with inferential listening and understanding connected speech, which obtained the lowest performance scores. These findings confirm that Ecuadorian EFL learners at the secondary level face consistent challenges in deeper processing skills.

This highlights the urgent need for pedagogical strategies that go beyond surface-level listening practice. Consistent with this need for stronger processing skills, the study also found a statistically significant positive correlation between listening skills and vocabulary acquisition, indicating that students with stronger vocabulary knowledge tend to demonstrate higher listening comprehension performance (Patiño et al., 2026). These findings underscore the importance of designing EFL listening instruction that integrates vocabulary development with exposure to meaningful, contextualized audio input. In this regard, the use of culturally relevant materials such as Ecuadorian-legend audiobooks represents a pedagogically sound strategy, one that can simultaneously address listening development and lexical growth within the specific sociolinguistic context of Ecuadorian secondary education.

1.4.2 Definition and nature of listening comprehension

Listening comprehension, commonly referred to simply as listening in the field of language teaching, is considered one of the four fundamental macro-skills of language learning, alongside speaking, reading, and writing (Macasandag et al., 2025). It is nevertheless frequently underestimated in formal instruction, largely because of its transient and cognitively complex nature, which makes it harder to observe, measure, and teach than the productive skills (Calis et al., 2025). As Richards (2008) explains, listening is an active and dynamic process through which the listener constructs meaning from the sounds and messages received from the communicative environment, a construction that requires not passive reception but active and simultaneous cognitive processing in real time.

Listening comprehension is very demanding for the brain. Learners need to perceive sound sequences, hold information in working memory, use previous knowledge and construct meaning, all at once and under the pressure of real-time. It is a metacognitive process in which the students plan how to do the task, monitor their comprehension while doing it, and evaluate how well they did it in order to improve strategically (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021, as cited in Syahfutra et al., 2023). More recent evidence to support this comes from Sujatha and Rajasekaran (2024) who demonstrate that the cognitive demands of processing input spoken in real-time are not just theoretical but can be observed in classroom outcomes, once background knowledge support is added or taken away.

From the perspective of cognitive processing, listening comprehension consists of three closely linked stages; namely, perceptual processing, in which the listener detects and segments the speech sounds, parsing, in which linguistic units are assembled into units of meaning, and utilization, in which the processed input interacts with the prior knowledge of the listener to create a coherent interpretation (Sulistyowati, 2019). Sujatha and Rajasekaran (2024) place this very same sequence within the framework of Cognitive Load Theory, and find that learners who had been given background-knowledge support prior to listening move through each of these stages more efficiently than those who had not, confirming just how taxing listening in a foreign language is on a linguistic and cognitive level.

1.4.3 Listening skill in foreign language learning

Listening is recognized as one of the most fundamental yet frequently underestimated skills in foreign language learning. Listening is not only a receptive language skill but also the main channel through which learners get authentic language input for developing vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, pronunciation and communicative competence. According to recent studies, successful listening involves not only the comprehension of spoken messages but also the development of self-confidence, social interaction, critical thinking and problem solving of learners in the target language. Panthee (2024), for example, found that learners with stronger listening skills exhibited greater communicative competence and confidence when interacting in English,

highlighting listening as a cornerstone of overall language development rather than a mere decoding process.

Despite its pedagogical importance, listening has historically received less instructional attention than other language skills in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Traditionally, English instruction has emphasized grammar, reading, and writing, while listening activities have frequently been limited to assessment rather than systematic skill development. Zhu (2021) argues that this imbalance has contributed to persistent listening difficulties among EFL learners, particularly in relation to unfamiliar vocabulary, rapid speech, connected speech, and spoken word recognition. These challenges are especially relevant for secondary school learners, who often have limited opportunities to engage with authentic spoken English beyond the classroom. Consequently, strengthening listening instruction has become a priority in contemporary language education.

In fact, exposing learners to auditory input alone is insufficient to ensure successful listening comprehension. Current research emphasizes that learners also require explicit instruction in the cognitive and metacognitive strategies necessary to process spoken language effectively. In this regard, Goh and Vandergrift (2021) advocate for a learner-centered approach that conceptualizes listening as a strategic process that can be explicitly taught and continuously improved. They stress the significance of fostering metacognitive awareness to help students manage their own listening processes more effectively using instructional strategies including planning, monitoring, assessing comprehension, and utilizing self-assessment tools such as performance checklists. Therefore, effective listening instruction requires meaningful input as well as strategic guidance to help learners become active and autonomous listeners. In the literature, listening is generally accepted as a multidimensional process involving linguistic knowledge, cognitive processing and strategic regulation.

Rather than functioning solely as a receptive skill, listening constitutes the foundation upon which communicative competence and language acquisition are developed. These theoretical perspectives provide the basis for examining listening comprehension in greater depth and justify the implementation of instructional strategies aimed at improving learners' listening performance in EFL contexts.

1.4.4 Common difficulties in EFL listening comprehension

Developing listening comprehension in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) remains one of the greatest challenges learners face throughout the language acquisition process. Unlike reading, listening requires learners to process spoken language instantaneously, leaving little opportunity to revisit or verify information. Consequently, successful listening depends on the simultaneous coordination of multiple linguistic, cognitive, and affective processes, making it particularly demanding for EFL learners.

The literature consistently identifies several factors that hinder listening comprehension. Vandergrift and Goh (2012, as cited in Syahfutra et al., 2023) highlight rapid speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, diverse accents and dialectal variations, and limitations in working memory as the most common obstacles experienced by language learners. These factors increase learners' cognitive load and frequently interfere with their ability to recognize words, segment speech, interpret meaning, and retain relevant information while listening. More recently, Kim (2025) emphasized that listening anxiety represents an additional affective barrier, as excessive anxiety reduces learners' attentional resources and negatively influences real-time comprehension.The findings demonstrate that listening problems are not just a language issue but also have significant psychological and cognitive components.

Another major challenge that is frequently reported in EFL settings is the limited exposure that learners have to authentic spoken English outside the classroom. As English is not commonly used in learners' regular environments, opportunities for students to get familiar with natural pronunciation, connected speech, rhythm, stress and intonation patterns are still limited. According to Panthee (2024), the lack of exposure to sound hinders learners' capacity to attain automatic word recognition and listening fluency, which in turn impacts their overall comprehension. This is compounded in educational environments where English teaching still focuses on grammar drills, vocabulary drills and writing tasks instead of systematic listening training. Consequently, a lot of students spend several years of English learning without acquiring the listening skills that are needed for real communication.

In light of these challenges, there is an increasing demand in current EFL research for pedagogical approaches that offer learners frequent, authentic and contextualized listening experiences. Authentic listening materials, explicit strategy instruction and learner-centered pedagogies have shown great potential to reduce listening difficulties with increased confidence, motivation and comprehension (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021; Panthee, 2024). Thus, it is important to take into account the cognitive, linguistic and affective factors that affect the listening comprehension in an effort to improve the learners' communicative competence in foreign language contexts.

It is important to realize that listening is not only a difficult language skill, but also a basic part of second language acquisition, and this realization comes from understanding the problems involved in listening comprehension. The theoretical rationale for prioritizing listening instruction within EFL classrooms is provided by the examination of the contribution of listening to language development. Accordingly, the following section discusses the importance of listening in the process of second language acquisition.

1.5 Challenges in teaching listening in Ecuadorian secondary schools

In the specific context of listening instruction in Ecuadorian secondary education, the challenges are multiple and complex. The limited availability of relevant auditory materials adapted to the local context, the prioritization of grammar and exam preparation for written assessments, and the lack of explicit strategies for developing oral comprehension constitute significant barriers to students' progress in this skill (Panthee, 2024; Alfahad, 2025).

Faced with this panorama, the incorporation of Ecuadorian-legend audiobooks as a pedagogical strategy represents a situated, economically viable, and culturally pertinent response. By employing narratives from the oral heritage of Ecuador, the proposal not only provides quality auditory materials in English but also revalues the cultural identity of students, establishing a meaningful bridge between their mother tongue, their culture of origin, and the learning of the foreign language (Mahmoudi, 2017; Wulandari et al., 2025). This articulation between language, culture, and identity is recognized in the literature as a factor that strengthens the motivation and engagement of adolescent learners with English language learning (Wulandari et al., 2025).

1.5.1 Listening comprehension subskills in EFL

Listening comprehension is not a single or isolated ability but a complex, multidimensional competence composed of several interrelated subskills that EFL learners develop progressively through continuous exposure and purposeful practice. This view is supported by recent empirical studies that suggest that the achievement of effective listening performance depends on the coordinated development of a variety of cognitive, linguistic and metacognitive processes. For example, in a correlational study with Ecuadorian secondary EFL learners, Patiño et al. (2026) found that listening proficiency is strongly related to the mastery of specific listening subskills. Likewise, Alfahad (2025) who conducted research with Saudi female university EFL students notes that metacognitive instruction, delivered through a structured pedagogical cycle, has a significant effect on improving listening performance by increasing learners' strategic awareness and self-regulation during listening tasks.

Complementing these empirical findings, Goh and Vandergrift (2021) argue that effective listening instruction should explicitly target the development of individual listening subskills, as each involves distinct cognitive operations and strategic processes that contribute to successful comprehension. Consequently, listening pedagogy should adopt a systematic approach that fosters the integrated development of these complementary abilities. Among the listening subskills most frequently identified in the specialized literature are the following:

Table 2

Listening comprehension subskills in EFL

Listening subskill	Definition	Key findings
Listening for specific information	The capacity to extract concrete data from an oral message, such as names, numbers, dates, or places, without needing to understand the totality of the discourse.	In Patiño et al.'s (2026) study, which involved Ecuadorian tenth graders learning EFL, this particular subskill was rated the highest among the other subskills that were evaluated. This would suggest that it is the easiest one for students who are still acquiring the language. However, Alfahad (2025) argues that the learners who are good at understanding surface details are typically poor in other aspects of listening comprehension. This means that a person can score well on this subskill yet not be a good listener overall.
Listening for gist	The capacity to grasp the central idea or general topic of an oral message without focusing on specific details, requiring top-down processing to activate background knowledge and contextual awareness (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021).	Patiño et al. (2026) found that understanding the speaker's purpose, a skill closely related to listening for gist, received a relatively higher mean score compared to inferential tasks. Alfahad (2025) does not directly address this subskill, focusing instead on the metacognitive processes underlying global comprehension, such as planning and directed attention strategies.
Making inferences	The ability to infer implicit information from context, tone and previous knowledge of the listener	This is one of the most cognitively demanding subskills, according to Patiño et al. (2026) and Alfahad (2025). Patiño et al. (2026) noted it had the lowest mean score of Ecuadorian secondary learners who struggled to interpret implicit meaning. However, Alfahad (2025) attributes listening difficulties to external factors (speaker's speed and accent, unfamiliar vocabulary, poor-quality

		recordings) rather than the inferential nature of the tasks.
Understanding the speaker's purpose	The capacity to identify the communicative intention behind an oral message, such as whether the speaker is requesting, informing, warning, or persuading.	Patiño et al. (2026) found Ecuadorian learners performed moderately well, partly supported by contextual and pragmatic cues. Goh and Vandergrift (2021) emphasize that this subskill requires active engagement with discourse structure and knowledge of communicative conventions, a position complemented by Alfahad (2025), who notes that directed attention is essential for learners to sustain focus on communicative intentions.
Processing connected speech	The ability to understand continuous speech which exhibits the phonetic features of reduction, elision and linking typical of natural speech.	This subskill was the one that yielded the highest standard deviation and the greatest variability among the learners (Patiño et al., 2026). The speed and accent of the speaker are also the most common listening problems reported by Alfahad (2025) which confirms that the phonetic features of natural speech still pose a barrier in EFL contexts. Both studies are consistent in that one of the most challenging and variable sub-skills is connected speech processing.

Note. Own elaboration. Adapted from Patiño et al. (2026), Alfahad (2025), and Goh and Vandergrift (2021).

1.5.2 Audiobooks as a pedagogical tool in EFL

English teachers have more and more adopted audiobooks as a way to enhance their teaching, since they offer flexibility and a level of immersion that is difficult to reach with traditional materials. Sharma et al. (2025) investigated the use of audiobooks in EFL classrooms and found significant results. Students who experience audiobooks gain authentic pronunciation, natural intonation patterns and a wider variety of sentence structures than they generally would have. That exposure gives teachers more room to design lessons that seem lively and interactive, moving students' overall proficiency forward. The same study highlights that since listening is a fundamental skill that supports the development of speaking, reading, and writing abilities, the incorporation of audiobooks into language instruction directly contributes to students' comprehensive English language development.

Research specifically focused on the use of audiobooks for developing listening comprehension has produced encouraging results. Elgendy (2020) investigated the use of audiobook-based activities with EFL secondary-stage students and found that such activities were effective in developing critical listening skills, as well as in improving learners' attitudes toward listening as a language skill. This is of particular importance in secondary level EFL classrooms where students often do not receive sufficient exposure to audio input which is both meaningful and genuinely challenging for their level of comprehension.

Audiobooks also seem to promote multisensory learning not to mention listening comprehension. Khalmatova et al. (2024) looked at Kazakh EFL learners who listened to audiobooks while doing the activities and found that this combined approach helped students process written and spoken input at the same time, which, in turn, supported their language acquisition more generally.

This bimodal input, combining auditory and visual channels, represents a particularly powerful application of audiobooks in EFL instruction, as it engages multiple cognitive pathways and supports deeper processing of the target language.

1.5.3 Definition and characteristics of audiobooks

According to Sharma et al. (2025), audiobooks are audio recordings in which a text, whether literary, narrative, informational, or otherwise, is narrated by one or more speakers. In the educational context, audiobooks have evolved from simple analog recordings to high-quality digital resources accessible through mobile devices, educational platforms, and technology-equipped classrooms. Their most relevant characteristics for EFL teaching include the following:

Table 3

Characteristics of audiobooks relevant to EFL teaching

Characteristic	Description	Supporting findings
Exposing students to authentic pronunciation and natural intonation	Allows learners to develop sensitivity to the phonological features of the target language by hearing it as naturally spoken by professional narrators.	Sharma et al. (2025) point out that audiobooks give students real exposure to spoken language in a way that helps them work through pronunciation problems and build fluency over time. This lines up with what Aydin and Tunagur (2021) found: when audiobooks are narrated by professionals with

		clear articulation and natural emphasis, students show more interest and understand what they're hearing better narration quality, it turns out, has a direct effect on how well learners can process spoken input.
Linguistic structures in a real narrative context	It embeds grammar, vocabulary and discourse patterns into meaningful stories. In this way, learners acquire linguistic structures in a natural and contextual manner rather than through isolated drills.	Sharma et al. (2025) note that audiobooks enable learners to interact with authentic dialogues and cultural elements that closely mirror real-world language use. Aydin and Tunagur (2021) add that audiobooks improve students' comprehension, vocabulary, critical thinking, and analytical skills, developing their ability to examine textual elements such as theme, characters, and plot.
Allowing the listener to repeat and pause according to their own pace	Gives learners control over their listening experience, enabling them to replay difficult segments and process input at their own rhythm without the time pressure of live speech.	Aydin and Tunagur (2021) identify the absence of temporal and spatial limitations, accessibility everywhere, and low cost as key advantages that make audiobooks particularly suitable for independent and repeated listening practice. Sharma et al. (2025) add that this flexibility allows students to incorporate language study into their everyday lives, extending listening practice beyond the formal classroom setting.

Combining narrative, emotional, and cultural elements that enhance comprehension and engagement	Integrating emotionally engaging narratives and culturally meaningful content activates learners' prior knowledge and sustains motivation throughout the listening experience.	As Aydin and Tunagur (2021) stated, the results of their study indicated that the audiobook applications increased students' desire to listen more, they enjoyed listening, they helped them to understand the content better and improved their attitudes toward listening. Moreover, Sharma et al. (2025) mention that audiobooks reduce students' anxiety and help control their affective filter which results in better language acquisition conditions if the content is interesting and meaningful.

Note. Own elaboration. Adapted from Sharma et al. (2025) and Aydin and Tunagur (2021).

Audiobooks that integrate emotionally engaging narratives and culturally meaningful content activate learners' prior knowledge and sustain their motivation throughout the listening experience. Aydin and Tunagur (2021) found that audiobook applications increased students' desire to listen more; students reported that listening was an enjoyable activity that helped them comprehend content better, and that their attitudes toward listening improved significantly after audiobook-based instruction. Sharma et al. (2025) further emphasize that audiobooks lower students' anxiety levels and help regulate their affective filter, creating conditions more favorable to language acquisition when the content is engaging and meaningful.

1.6 Pedagogical benefits of audiobooks in listening instruction

The literature points to several concrete benefits of audiobooks in language teaching. First, they deliver comprehensible input in line with Krashen's principle (1982, as cited in Luo, 2024), since narrative context helps learners work out unfamiliar vocabulary as the story unfolds (Zeng, 2025). Second, they build listening fluency: hearing a narrator model rhythm, prosody, and natural expressiveness helps learners internalize these patterns without needing explicit instruction (Khalmatova et al., 2024).

Third, repeated exposure to vocabulary embedded in meaningful stories supports incidental lexical acquisition without rote memorization (Krashen, 1982, as cited in Zeng, 2025). Fourth, narrative content legends especially activates top-down processing, since familiarity with how stories are built lets learners anticipate what comes next and construct meaning from context (Sulistyowati, 2019; Utomo & Sulistyowati, 2022). Purba et al. (2023) offer direct classroom

evidence to support these claims by finding a statistically significant improvement in tenth-grade EFL students' listening ability when audiobooks were included in the instruction mix. Sharma et al. (2025) add that audiobooks also reduce the level of anxiety of the students and helps in regulating their affective filter, thus creating more conducive conditions for language acquisition when the content is engaging and meaningful. Moreover, audiobooks' flexibility means they work both inside and outside class, supporting learner autonomy well past the classroom door.

1.6.1 Audiobook based listening activities: phases and purposes

The design of listening comprehension activities based on audiobooks must contemplate three fundamental pedagogical phases: pre-listening activities, while-listening activities, and post-listening activities (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).This sequence permits us to exploit all the pedagogical potential of the auditory material and to approach progressively the different subskills of oral comprehension.

Pre-listening activities are designed to activate students' prior knowledge on the topic, key vocabulary and cultural context so that they are ready to receive the oral message (Alfahad, 2025). In the case of the Ecuadorian legends, this phase may include a group discussion of the narrative in Spanish, presentation of relevant vocabulary in English using images or glosses and the formulation of hypotheses about the content of the audiobook.While-listening activities seek to guide the student's attention toward specific aspects of the oral message: identifying the central idea of the narrative, extracting specific information about the characters, recognizing the sequence of events, or inferring the meaning of unknown words from context (Patiño et al., 2026). These activities directly correspond to the development of the listening subskills identified in the previous section.

Post-listening activities serve a dual purpose: on one hand, they verify and consolidate comprehension of the oral message; on the other, they extend learning toward other linguistic skills and critical thinking (Elgendy, 2020). Activities such as reconstructing the narrative, debating the cultural values implicit in the legend, or comparing the legend with other known narratives are examples of post-listening tasks that integrate listening comprehension with the development of oral expression and higher-order thinking.

1.7 Cultural content in EFL teaching: the role of schema and identity

The role of background knowledge in comprehension has long been studied through Schema Theory, and recent work keeps confirming just how central cultural schemata are to EFL listening specifically. Sujatha and Rajasekaran (2024) documented that learners with relevant background knowledge before a listening task engaged in significantly less mental effort when processing the spoken input than learners without such background knowledge. To summarize,

familiar content makes comprehension easier, and unfamiliar content makes it difficult even for learners who have a good overall command of the language.

Empirical research has consistently demonstrated the positive relationship between cultural knowledge and listening performance in EFL contexts. Sun and Tan (2023) conducted a study with two groups of intermediate-level Chinese EFL learners, in which one group received instruction that included target cultural knowledge alongside regular English lessons, while the other received only standard language instruction. The results showed that the group exposed to cultural content performed significantly better on listening comprehension assessments, confirming that target cultural knowledge has a measurable and positive impact on learners' listening competence.

The activation of culturally familiar schemata has also been shown to directly influence listening comprehension outcomes at different proficiency levels. Mahmoudi (2017) investigated the relationship between cultural schemata and listening performance with EFL learners of varying proficiency levels, finding that an unfamiliar text, even when conceptually similar to a familiar one, cannot activate a culturally familiar schema in lower-proficiency students. This finding has important pedagogical implications, suggesting that EFL teachers should incorporate culturally relevant and locally meaningful content into listening instruction, such as legends and stories from students' own cultural heritage, in order to activate prior knowledge and support more effective comprehension.

In this sense, the use of Ecuadorian legends as the content of audiobooks functions as a reducer of the affective filter, since these are stories familiar to students, narratives they have heard since childhood in their mother tongue, the subject matter generates a sense of belonging and confidence that favors openness to learning (Mahmoudi, 2017). Familiarity with the narrative content frees cognitive resources that would otherwise be used for thematic decoding, allowing the student to focus attention on the linguistic elements of English (Mahmoudi, 2017; Sun & Tan, 2023).

1.7. Motivation and cultural content in EFL learning

Motivation sits at the center of most theories of foreign language learning. Darvin and Norton (2023) distinguish investment the effort learners commit when language learning feels compatible with their identity from motivation more broadly, arguing the two interact in ways that matter for how instruction gets designed. In contexts where English is a distant cultural reference point, that investment can be lost if the materials do not resonate with students' own identity.

In this sense, the inclusion of local content like Ecuadorian legends is a direct response. Research with adolescent EFL learners has shown that narrative materials linked with the students' own identity increase emotional engagement, foster more active participation and help learners perceive the material as truly relevant to their lives (Wulandari et al., 2025; Sharma et al., 2025).

This lines up with what Krashen (1982, as cited in Luo, 2024) described as a reduced affective filter: a culturally inclusive, meaningful learning environment makes learners more open to input in the target language (Zeng, 2025).

1.7.1 Ecuadorian legends as a pedagogical resource

Legends are oral narratives that form part of the intangible cultural heritage of a people. In the Ecuadorian case, legends such as La Caja Ronca, La Viuda Negra, El Chuzalongo, La Dama Tapada, and El Diablo Huma, among others, are stories rooted in the collective memory of various regions of the country, combining historical, mythical, and moral elements characteristic of the Andean, coastal, and Amazonian worldview. These narratives possess structural characteristics that make them especially suitable for use in the EFL classroom: they have a clear plot, well-defined characters, a narrative conflict of high emotional charge, and an ending that invites reflection.

Legends bring several concrete advantages as vehicles for English instruction. Their familiar narrative structure activates learners' formal schemas, making oral discourse easier to anticipate and follow (Sulistyowati, 2019; Fan et al., 2025). Because they're tied to cultural identity, they also tend to generate stronger emotional and motivational engagement than decontextualized materials (Wulandari et al., 2025). And their relative brevity and narrative density make them practical building blocks for listening activities graded by difficulty from global comprehension tasks through to inference and critical analysis.

The incorporation of Ecuadorian legends in audiobook format in English thus represents a proposal that synthesizes the richness of the local cultural heritage and the pedagogical effectiveness of authentic auditory materials in foreign language teaching.

1.7.2 Research on audiobooks and listening comprehension in EFL

Various studies have empirically documented the positive effect of audiobooks on the development of listening comprehension in EFL contexts. Elgendy (2020) conducted a quasi-experimental study with secondary school students using audiobook-based activities to develop critical listening skills. The results indicated significant improvement in the listening skills of the experimental group compared to the control group, as well as more favorable attitudes toward listening in English.

Similarly, Sharma et al. (2025) reviewed the literature on the pedagogical use of audiobooks in English instruction and concluded that these resources not only improve listening comprehension but also increase learner engagement with the subject, resulting in greater motivation and persistence in learning. Research on extensive listening has also reported that groups participating in extensive listening programs significantly outperformed control groups on oral comprehension tests (Thao & Trang, 2021). These collective findings suggest that abundant

and contextualized auditory exposure, such as that provided by narrative audiobooks, is a determining factor for progress in the listening skill.

1.8 Previous relevant studies

Research on the use of authentic and culturally relevant auditory materials in teaching the listening skill in EFL has grown steadily over the last decade. **Table 4** summarizes the most relevant studies that precede the present research:

Table 4

Summary of previous studies on audiobooks and listening comprehension in EFL

Author(s) and year	Context	Methodology	Main results
Khalmatova et al. (2024)	University, EFL, Kazakhstan	Experimental	Reading and listening with audiobooks outperformed listening only group in multisensory comprehension (Khalmatova et al., 2024)
Yen and Thao (2021)	Language center, Vietnam	Experimental	Extensive listening significantly improved oral comprehension versus control group (Yen & Thao, 2021)
Wulandari et al. (2025)	Secondary, EFL, Indonesia	Quasi-experimental	Authentic materials improved listening comprehension and exposure to real English (Wulandari et al., 2025)
Goh and Vandergrift (2012)	Theoretical framework	Review	Metacognitive listening cycle improves achievement, strategic awareness, and self-efficacy (Goh & Vandergrift, 2012)

Note. Own elaboration. Adapted from Khalmatova et al. (2024), Yen and Thao (2021), Wulandari et al. (2025), Goh and Vandergrift (2012).

These antecedents point convergently toward the effectiveness of contextualized and culturally relevant auditory materials for the development of listening comprehension in EFL, which substantiates the pertinence and theoretical soundness of the present research proposal.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodological framework used to carry out this research. It describes the research design, approach, methods, and instruments applied to examine the current state of listening instruction and to evaluate the use of audiobooks as a strategy to develop students' listening skills. It also provides information about the study setting, participants, and sampling procedure.

2.1 Type of research

This study follows a mixed-methods approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative techniques to obtain a complete and balanced understanding of the research problem. This combination has become increasingly common in education research precisely because it compensates for what either approach misses on its own. Gierus et al. (2025), in a systematic review of nine flagship education journals, found that studies integrating both approaches produced richer and more defensible findings than those relying on a single method, particularly when the research examined both learner perceptions and measurable outcomes together.

More specifically, a convergent mixed methods design was utilized in the current study, involving concurrent collection and separate analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, followed by integration to compare and interpret convergence or divergence of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This design was deemed appropriate for the current study because it enabled the researchers to collect students' perceptions through the questionnaire and teachers' perceptions through the interviews within the same time frame, and later on, to triangulate both types of data collection to obtain a more holistic view of the current listening comprehension needs.

2.1.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is the collection and interpretation of non-numerical data to understand meanings, perceptions and real-life experiences in natural settings. Busetto et al. (2020) argue that this approach is particularly well-suited to answering questions of why something is or is not observed and to in-depth investigation of complex, multi-component situations. Denny and Weckesser (2022) also note that qualitative methods are particularly adept at capturing participants' own language and framing of a phenomenon, rather than reducing their experience to pre-determined categories, which is precisely why interviews are useful for understanding how teachers talk about listening instruction themselves. In the present study, the qualitative part was performed to explore the opinions of English teachers about their present teaching strategies and the problems they face when enhancing listening comprehension in the classroom.

2.1.2 Quantitative research

The present study employed a quantitative approach as part of a mixed-methods design. The strategy adopted uses numerical data gathered from the use of pre-set instruments to identify patterns and produce statistically measurable outcomes (Apuke, 2017). Ghanad (2023) frames this as an issue of objectivity, the reliance of quantitative methods on structured, standardized instruments allows researchers to generalize their findings to a larger group of respondents with less risk of interpretive bias than open-ended methods alone. In this study, a quantitative approach was employed to measure students' perceptions, difficulties and responses towards listening comprehension and the use of audiobooks.

2.2 Research methods

In this study a deductive and an inductive description was applied. The reason for this twofold approach is that it allows the results to be interpreted from two complementary angles, minimizing the possibility of drawing one-sided conclusions. The deductive method begins with theories already established in the field of language teaching, with the guidelines of the Common European framework of reference (CEFR), with the pedagogical principles related to listening comprehension and makes comparisons with the data collected in the field. In like manner the inductive method starts with particular data collected in the school and arranges that data so as to reach more general educational conclusions. As stated by Yuwono and Rachmawati (2024), the combination of the deductive and inductive approaches increases the accuracy and precision of the research results and produces more transparent and relevant research results than using either approach alone.

2.2.1 Deductive method

The deductive method moves from the general to the specific: it starts with an established theory or framework and tests whether the data collected in the field align with what that theory would predict. Yuwono and Rachmawati (2024) note that this approach is especially useful for studies aiming to identify cause-and-effect relationships or correlations, since it allows researchers to verify assumptions drawn directly from existing theory against real classroom data. Kumar (2024) adds that deductive reasoning gives a study a clear analytical starting point, since it draws on established frameworks such as CEFR guidelines and second language acquisition theory to interpret findings within a structure that has already been validated elsewhere. In this study, the deductive method was applied by using Krashen's (1982) comprehensible input theory and CEFR listening benchmarks as a reference against which students' and teachers' reported difficulties and practices could be interpreted.

2.2.2 Inductive method

The inductive method works in the opposite direction: it starts from specific, concrete observations and gradually builds toward broader patterns or conclusions. Kumar (2024) explains that this approach is particularly valuable when a researcher wants findings to emerge organically from the data itself, rather than forcing observations into categories defined in advance by theory. In this study, the inductive method was applied by analyzing the responses gathered from the student questionnaire and the teacher interviews to identify recurring patterns, such as shared difficulties with native speech rate or common attitudes toward audiobooks, which were then used to draw broader conclusions about the state of listening instruction at Municipal Alfredo Albuja Galindo High School.

2.3 Techniques and instruments

Data collection was organized through two selected instruments designed to ensure accurate and reliable information. According to Bans-Akutey and Tiimub (2021), drawing on more than one data source helps a study avoid being skewed by a single sampling choice, a single procedure, or a single researcher's perspective, which in turn strengthens the overall validity and credibility of the findings.

2.3.1 Interview

Interview is a data collection technique that allows direct interaction between the researcher and participants, encouraging open and detailed responses. According to Adams (2015), the semi-structured interview combines closed and open-ended questions, often with why or how prompts. This type of interview is especially helpful when exploring complex issues that cannot be fully addressed through closed-ended questions alone. Likewise, Nazim and Alzubi (2025) reported that when investigating EFL teachers' instructional practices, semi-structured interviews revealed subtleties in pedagogical reasoning that a questionnaire alone did not capture as teachers were able to explain what they did and why they made those choices in the classroom.

The research presented here developed and implemented a structured interview guide containing open academic questions to two English teachers in the institution. This technique allowed the researcher to go beyond what a questionnaire alone could reveal: it made it possible to understand not only what strategies and resources the teachers used, but why they chose them and how they perceived their effectiveness in practice, offering a level of pedagogical insight and contextual detail that a purely numerical instrument would not have captured.

2.3.2 Survey

Survey allows researchers to collect standardized data from a large group of participants in a short period of time, producing quantitative results that can be compared and statistically analyzed. Ponto (2015) states that survey research is a useful approach for describing and evaluating patterns of behavior, and it can incorporate quantitative strategies, qualitative strategies, or both. Sharma and Ruikar (2025) add that a well-crafted survey instrument is what ultimately determines the quality of the data collected, since poorly worded or ambiguous items can distort participants' responses regardless of how large or representative the sample is. Nazim and Alzubi (2025) further note that pairing a questionnaire with a smaller, complementary qualitative instrument allows researchers to confirm whether patterns observed at scale are also reflected in participants' own explanations, strengthening the overall reliability of the findings.

In this study, a structured questionnaire was administered to 67 ninth-graders at Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" High School to gather information about their learning experiences, difficulties, and preferences related to English listening comprehension. This instrument made it possible to reach the entire target population efficiently and to identify shared patterns in how students perceive their own listening difficulties, providing a broad, generalizable picture that then could be interpreted alongside the more detailed perspective gathered from the teacher interviews.

2.4 Research questions

- What is the current level of English listening comprehension and what are the main difficulties experienced by ninth-grade students at Municipal Alfredo Albuja Galindo High School?

- What teaching strategies and methodologies do English teachers currently use to develop listening comprehension in ninth-grade students?

- What structure, content, and pedagogical sequence should a didactic proposal based on Ecuadorian legends audiobooks include in order to strengthen English listening comprehension in ninth-grade students?

2.5 Description of the Study Area

This research was carried out at Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" High School, located in the urban area of Ibarra, Imbabura Province, Ecuador. This institution operates under municipal funding and serves a diverse student population. The specific group selected for this study belongs to the 9th grade of the Basic General Education level.

2.6 Population and sample

The target population includes all students and English teachers working at the 9th-grade level of the institution. Given the specific scope of this study, a non-probabilistic purposive sampling technique was used, dividing participants into two groups. According to Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024), purposive sampling makes sense when a researcher deliberately chooses participants who have the specific traits most relevant to the study, rather than trying to randomly represent a broader population. In this case, that meant narrowing the focus to the ninth-grade cohort and the teachers responsible for their instruction, since they're the ones most directly affected by the listening difficulties this study set out to investigate. This approach is consistent with what Ary et al. (2019) describe as a deliberate, non-random selection strategy suited to studies where the research question requires information from a specific, identifiable subgroup rather than a broadly representative sample.

The first group consisted of 67 students enrolled in the active 9th-graders courses at Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" High School. These students provided the quantitative data related to their listening comprehension difficulties, interest in audiobooks, and learning preferences. Similarly, the second group included two English teachers assigned to the 9th-grade level. These teachers provided professional insights regarding their pedagogical approaches and the challenges they face in teaching listening comprehension. Because this study aimed to diagnose the current state of listening instruction rather than generalize findings beyond this specific school context, this two-group purposive design offered exactly the kind of information-rich, targeted data the research questions required (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). **Table 5** presents the distribution of the student population by parallel, along with the total sample size considered for this study.

Table 5

Student population

Class	Number of students
9th "A"	33
9th "B"	34
Total	**67**

Note. Own elaboration. This table presents the population which consisted of 67 ninth-graders from Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" High School.

2.7 Procedure

Research was carried out in three sequential phases. The first phase involved the instrumentation and validation, in which the student questionnaire and the teacher interview guide were designed and validated to ensure their suitability for the research objectives. Similarly, the

second phase consisted of the field application. Authorization was obtained from the school administration of Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" High School to apply the research instruments, and the survey was completed by the 67 students during regular class time. Individual interview sessions were also conducted separately with the two English teachers. The third phase then focused on data processing. The quantitative data from the student surveys were organized and analyzed using basic descriptive statistics, whereas the qualitative responses from the teacher interviews were transcribed and categorized for subsequent analysis.

CHAPTER III: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results that were obtained from the two data collection instruments that were used in this research. The first one was a semi structured interview with the two English teachers of the Municipal “Alfredo Albuja Galindo” High School. It consisted of six open ended questions about the methods and strategies they apply to promote English language learning. The second was a survey applied to 67 ninth-grade students of the same institution, composed of twelve closed questions, with the purpose of identifying students’ perceptions about listening comprehension in English, their experience with audiobooks, the activities currently implemented in the classroom and the activities they would like to implement to improve their listening skills.

3.1 Qualitative interpretation

This section presents the qualitative findings obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with the two English teachers in charge of ninth-grade instruction at Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" High School. The interviews investigated their present strategies and resources for developing listening comprehension, the difficulties they observe among students, their past experience with audiobooks, and their interest in including Ecuadorian legends in their listening classes. Each question is followed by a reported-speech summary of teachers’ responses and an analysis relating teachers’ perspectives to relevant literature on listening instruction, audiobooks and culturally grounded materials in EFL contexts.

3.1.1 Teacher's interview analysis

Question 1: What strategies do you commonly use to develop English listening skills with your 9th graders students?

- **Teacher A** explained that he commonly used the shadowing strategy to help students improve their listening skills, describing how, through this technique, students listened to a recording and repeated what they heard immediately after the speaker.
- **Teacher B** mentioned that she usually used songs and stories that were interesting and relevant to students, adding that these resources helped create a more enjoyable learning environment and encouraged students to pay closer attention during listening activities.

Analysis

Regarding **Question 1**, the shadowing technique used by Teacher A reflects a bottom-up, phonologically driven technique, which aligns with Hamada's (2016) findings that shadowing strengthens phoneme perception and helps learners become more comfortable processing continuous spoken input. By contrast, Teacher B uses songs and stories, which is in line with the findings that music-mediated activities increase the levels of affective engagement, decrease the

levels of anxiety, and increase the levels of attention sustainment during listening activities (Vallejo & Pérez Ortega, 2024). Together the two teachers develop listening from complementary perspectives: one consolidating phonological decoding, the other developing motivation and sustained engagement.

Question 2: What resources do you usually use to improve listening skills in 9th graders students?

- **Teacher A** reported that he usually used a variety of resources such as videos, songs, and podcasts, noting that these materials were engaging for students and helped maintain their interest during listening activities, and that they exposed learners to different accents and vocabulary.
- **Teacher B** indicated that the institution currently used videos with subtitles as one of the main resources for listening practice.

Analysis

This difference points to a meaningful gap in the range of materials available to each teacher. The use of videos, songs and podcasts by Teacher A is consistent with the broader literature on authentic materials podcasts especially have been found to expose learners to a variety of accents and vocabulary as well as enhancing both comprehension and confidence (Andriani et al., 2024). Teacher B's dependence on subtitled videos, which she referred to as an institutional standard, is also supported by the literature, but with a crucial caveat. Li (2025) found that lower-proficiency learners often find themselves spending more time reading the captions than processing the audio, which can ultimately sabotage genuine engagement with the spoken input. Consequently, one group of students may be developing broader auditory discrimination skills, whereas the other may be depending more heavily on visual support than on listening itself.

Question 3: What difficulties do students commonly present during listening activities?

- **Teacher A** stated that one of the main difficulties students faced was understanding native speakers because of their speaking speed.
- **Teacher B** pointed out that students often experienced difficulties maintaining concentration during listening tasks, adding that understanding recordings spoken at a native speed was a further challenge, since students found it difficult to process information quickly and identify key ideas in the audio.

Analysis

Both teachers identified native speech rate as a central barrier, a finding well documented in the literature. Chiu and Chen (2023) found that slower delivery rates significantly improved young EFL learners' listening comprehension scores compared to native-speed input. Additionally,

Teacher B pointed to difficulties sustaining concentration, which reflects the cognitive-load dimension of listening, because listening requires learners to decode sound, hold information in working memory, and construct meaning simultaneously, it places a distinct attentional burden that text-based tasks do not (Ghanipour & Bozorgian, 2025). This indicates that students' listening difficulties in this context are not purely linguistic, but also involve limits in sustained attention.

Question 4: Have you ever used audiobooks as a strategy in your English classes? Explain your answer.

- **Teacher A** shared that he had used audiobooks on some occasions in his classes, explaining that although students initially showed interest in listening activities, some of them found it challenging to maintain their attention for extended periods, which made it important to select engaging content and combine audiobooks with interactive activities to keep students motivated.
- **Teacher B** noted that audiobooks had been used occasionally in class as well, but pointed out that some students experienced difficulties maintaining their concentration while listening for extended periods.

Analysis

Both teachers reported limited but similar experience using audiobooks, and both independently identified sustained attention, rather than comprehension, as the main limitation. This matches findings on auditory processing more broadly, because auditory learners rely primarily on sound rather than visual anchors, maintaining focus over extended listening periods is cognitively demanding, and shorter, more structured segments tend to produce better engagement (Oladele & McCall, 2024). This convergence between the teachers' classroom observations and the broader literature strengthens the case for using audiobooks selectively, in shorter segments, and paired with interactive tasks rather than as an extended stand-alone activity.

Question 5: Do you think audiobooks can help to improve English listening skills in students? Why?

- **Teacher A** explained that he believed the effectiveness of audiobooks depended on students' learning preferences and abilities, noting that some students benefited greatly from listening activities because they enjoyed learning through audio resources, while others preferred visual activities, and that audiobooks could be useful when combined with different teaching strategies.
- **Teacher B** emphasized that audiobooks could be beneficial for students who enjoyed auditory learning, but pointed out that not all students learned in the same way, so their effectiveness might vary according to individual learning styles and preferences.

Analysis

Teacher A and Teacher B share the view that audiobooks are not universally effective, but rather that their impact depends on individual learning preferences. This is consistent with research on learning-style variation in listening comprehension, which shows that students respond differently to purely auditory input depending on whether they are predominantly auditory, visual, or kinesthetic learners, and that instructional design should account for this variability rather than assume uniform benefit (Wandah et al., 2024). This reinforces the pedagogical implication that audiobooks should be combined with complementary strategies rather than used in isolation.

Question 6: Would you like to use Ecuadorian legends audiobooks in your English classes? Why or why not?

- **Teacher A** indicated that he would like to use Ecuadorian legends audiobooks in his classes, mentioning that he had previously used Ecuadorian legends in printed books and believed that presenting them as audiobooks could make the content more attractive and engaging for students, while also helping them learn English and become more familiar with their own cultural heritage.
- **Teacher B** stated that she would also like to use Ecuadorian legends audiobooks in her English classes.

Analysis

Both teachers expressed clear willingness to adopt this proposed resource, with Teacher A offering a more elaborated rationale that connects language learning directly to cultural identity. This position is strongly supported in recent research on culturally relevant materials: integrating local folklore into language instruction has been shown to increase engagement and motivation by connecting content to students' own cultural background (Fauzi et al., 2026), while also reinforcing cultural pride and identity formation among learners (Miravalles, 2025). This convergence between the teachers' openness and the documented pedagogical value of culturally grounded materials reinforces the relevance and feasibility of the proposal developed in this research.

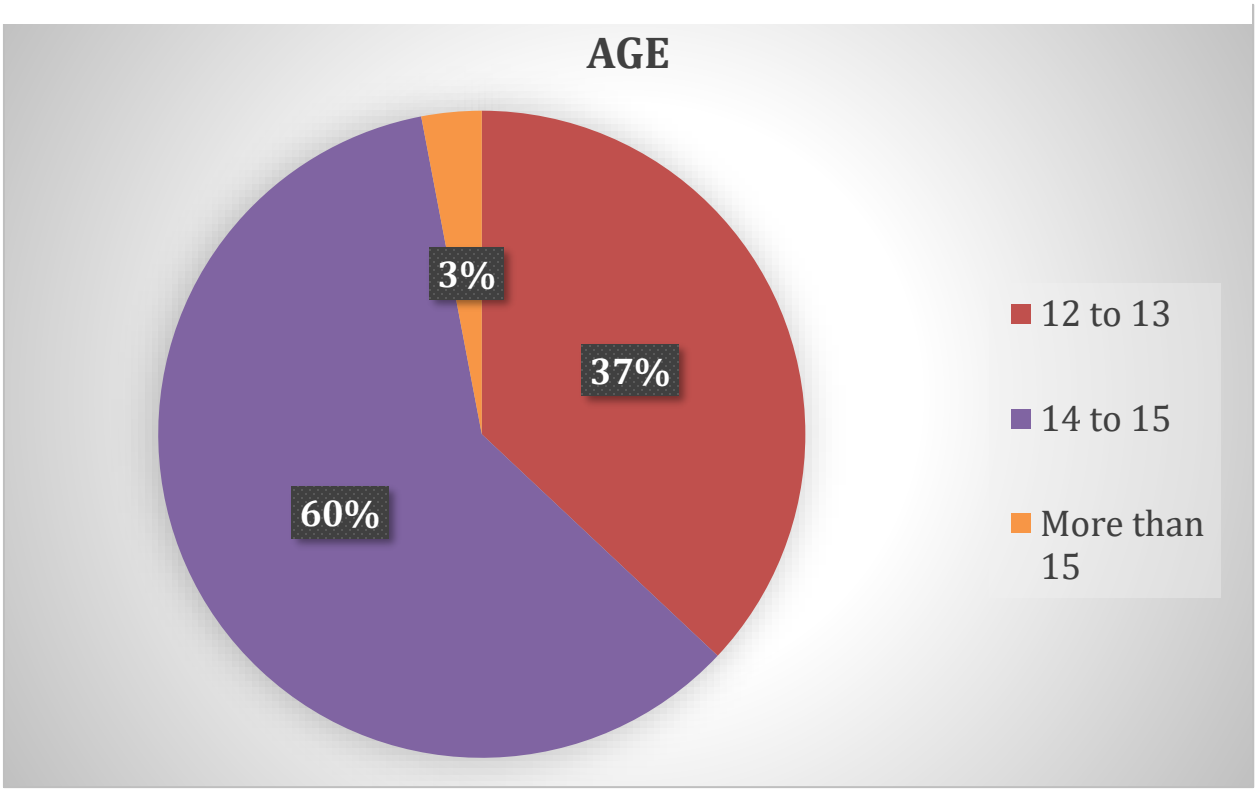
3.2 Students Questionnaire Analysis

This section presents the quantitative findings obtained through the structured questionnaire administered to the 67 ninth-graders at Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" High School. The instrument gathered information about students' perception of English learning, the challenges they associate with listening comprehension, their exposure to listening activities and audio materials, their familiarity with audiobooks, and their receptiveness toward Ecuadorian legends as a

pedagogical resource. Each figure is accompanied by a short interpretation of the results and, where relevant, relates to existing research which can help to explain or contextualize the patterns observed.

Figure 1

Population of Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" High School



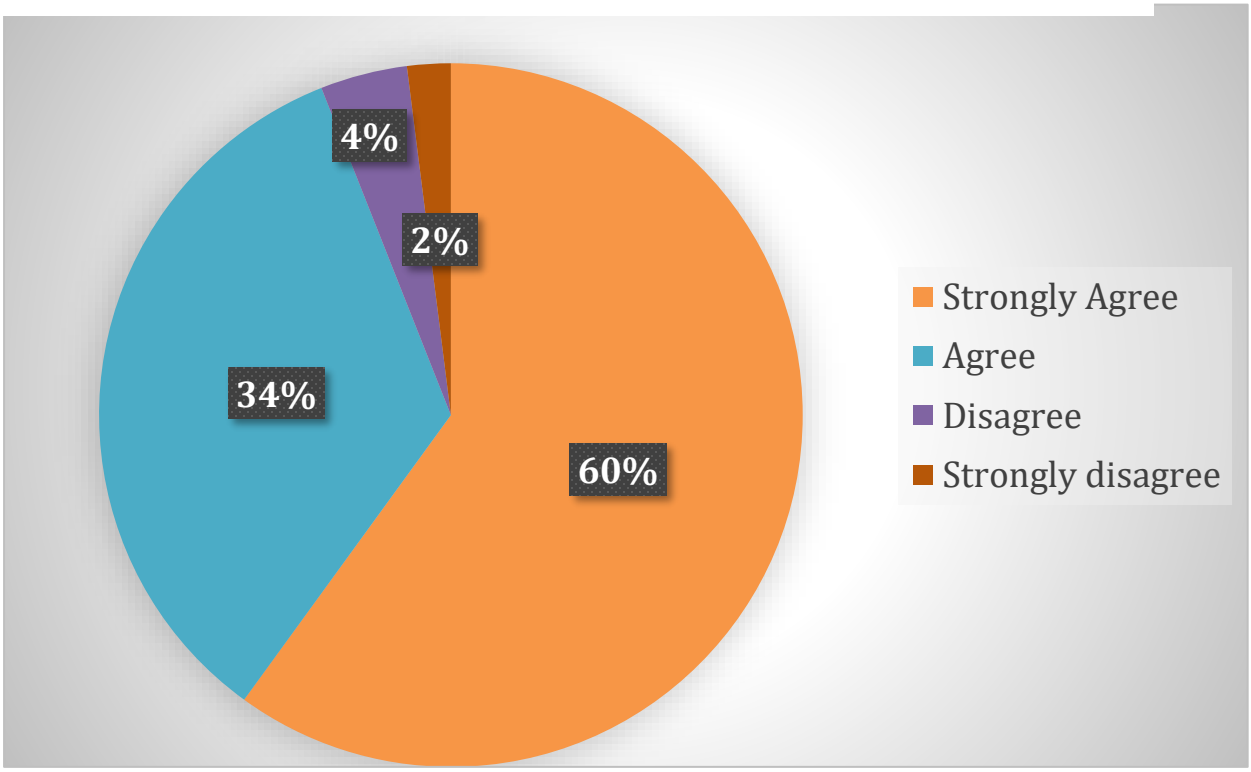
Note. Elaborated by the authors.

The age distribution of participants is shown in **Figure 1**. Most of the students were 14-15 years old (60% of the sample). 37% of the sample were students aged 12-13 years old and only 3% were older than 15 years. This shows that the participants were mostly within the expected age range of ninth grade students, thus supporting the representativeness of the sample for this particular grade level.

Question 1: Do you think learning English is important for your academic and personal development?

Figure 2

Importance of learning English



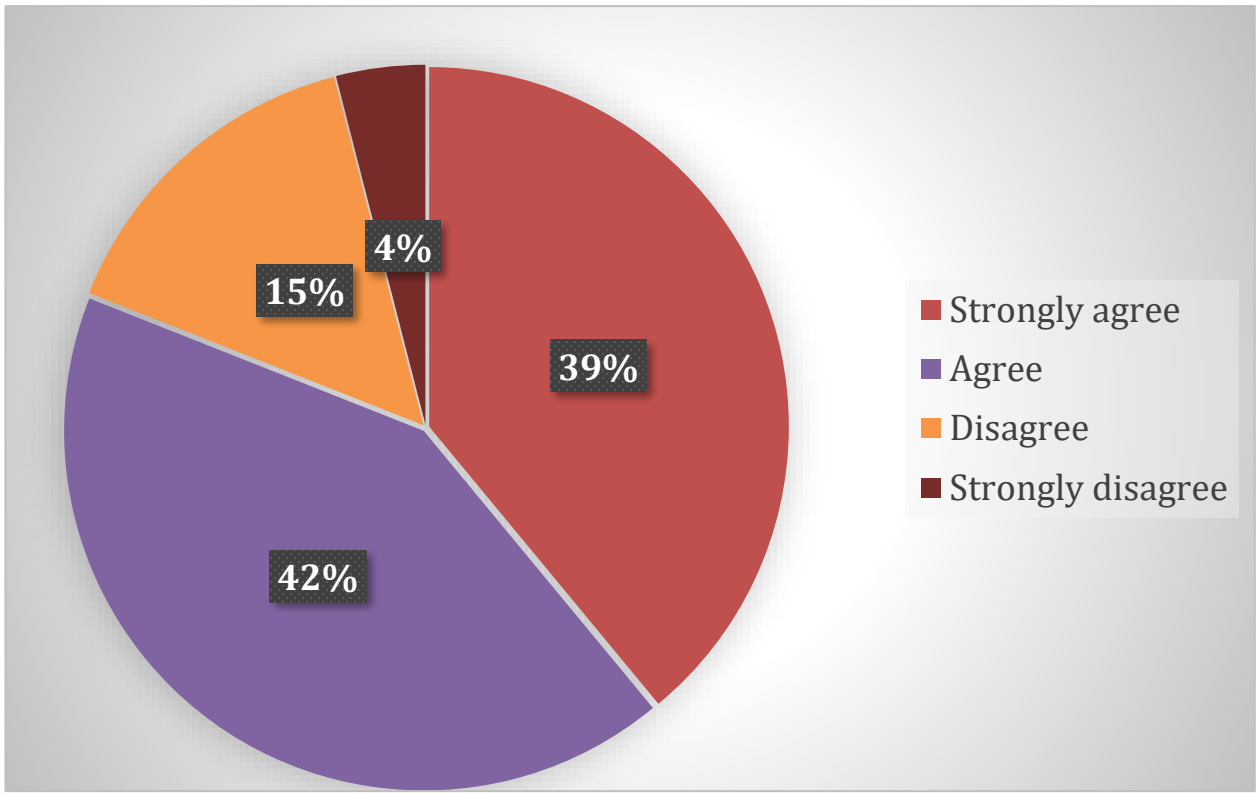
Note. Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 2 shows the level of importance students assign to learning English. First, the most popular choice was "strongly agree" with 60%, followed by "agree" with 34%, together demonstrating an overwhelmingly positive perception of the language among ninth graders. Only 4% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed. Therefore, taking these results into account, it can be said that motivation is not the primary barrier standing between students and stronger listening outcomes. This near-unanimous recognition of English's importance is consistent with Ishida et al. (2024), who found that students' motivation to learn English is closely tied to how clearly, they can see the language as relevant to their future academic and personal goals. As later questions in this survey reveal, the real barrier lies more specifically in the listening skill itself.

Question 2: Do you consider listening one of the most challenging English skills?

Figure 3

Listening as a Challenging English Skills



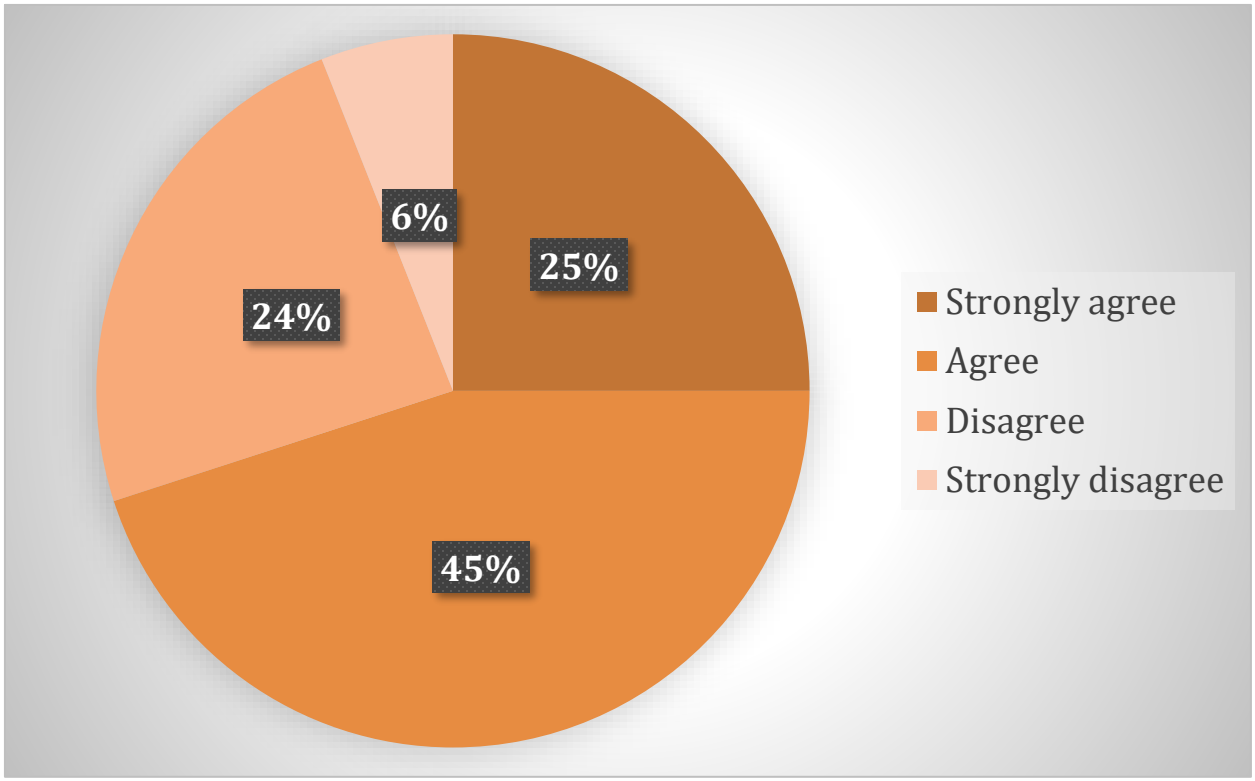
Note. Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 3 reveals students' perceptions of listening as a challenging skill. The two strongest categories, "strongly agree" and "agree," accounted for 39% and 42% respectively, together representing over 80% of the sample. Meanwhile, just 15 percent disagreed and 4 percent strongly disagreed. This high agreement level indicates a shared difficulty with this skill, which confirms the relevance of the difficulties previously reported by both teachers during the qualitative interviews. This finding is in close agreement with Panthee (2024) who found that listening is commonly perceived among EFL learners as one of the hardest skills to develop, mainly because it requires real-time processing in conditions beyond the students' control, such as the speech rate and unfamiliar pronunciation.

Question 3: Does your English teacher use listening activities regularly in class?

Figure 4

Use of listening Activities in English Classes



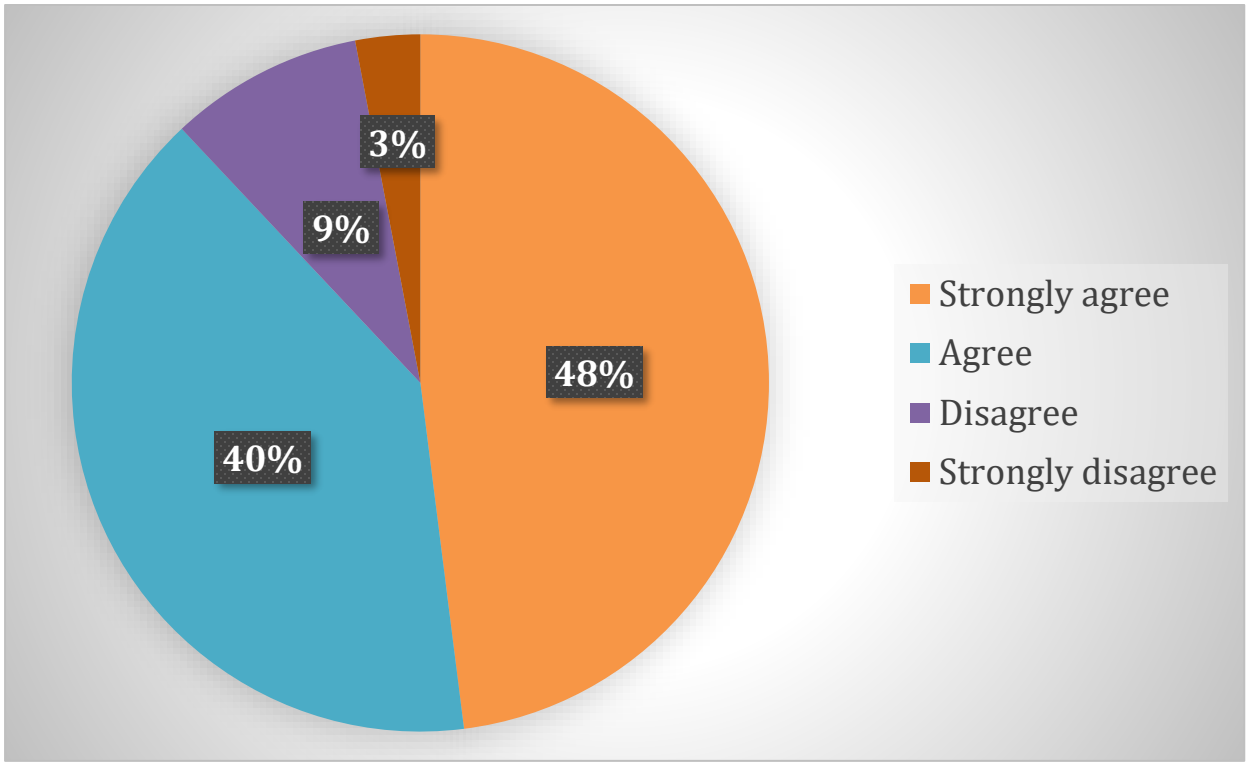
Note. Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 4 indicates the frequency of listening activities in class as perceived by students. A majority, 25% who strongly agreed and 45% who agreed, reported regular exposure to listening tasks. Nevertheless, nearly a third of the sample, 24% who disagreed and 6% who strongly disagreed, suggested that this exposure is not consistent for everyone. This gap is consistent with Goh and Vandergrift's (2021) observation that listening instruction, despite its acknowledged importance, is frequently treated as a secondary skill in EFL classrooms compared to grammar- or vocabulary-focused activities. Overall, these results point to uneven implementation across the ninth-grade cohort.

Question 4: Do listening activities help you improve your understanding of spoken English?

Figure 5

Effectiveness of Listening Activities



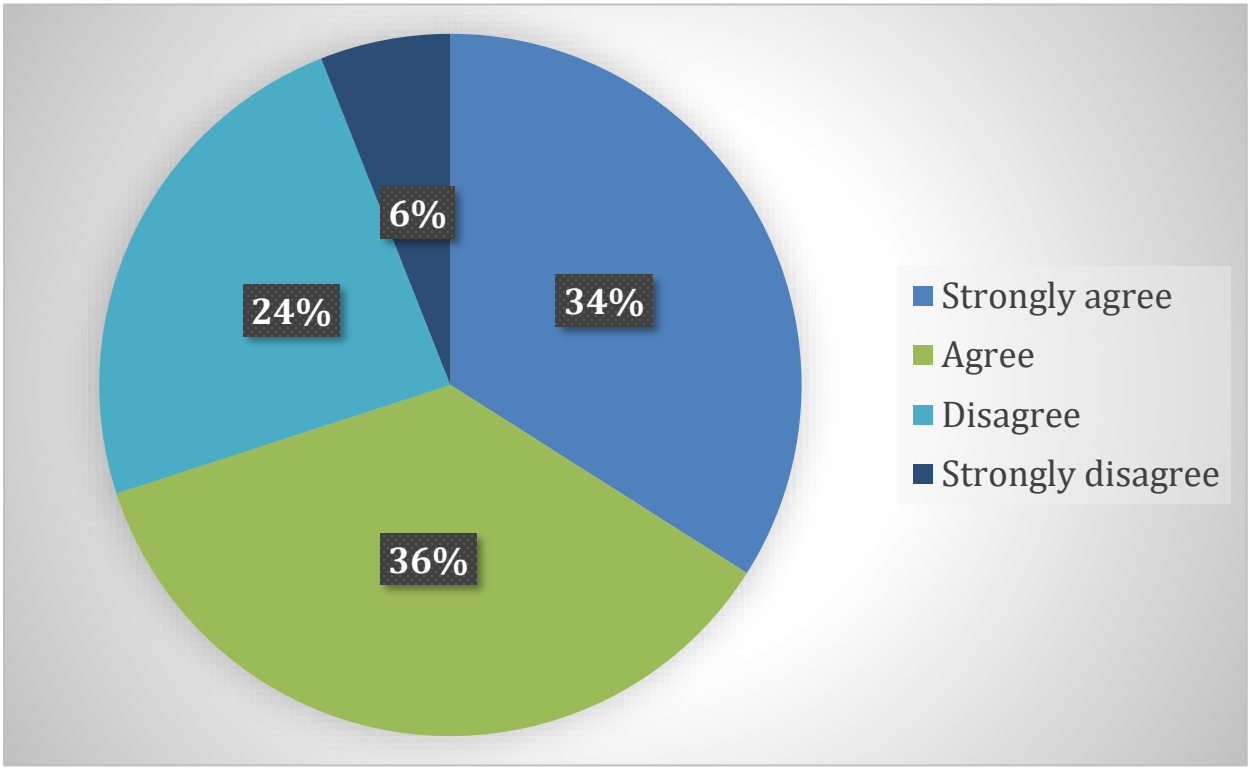
Note. Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 5 shows students' perceptions of the effectiveness of listening activities. The results indicate that most students recognize their value: 48% strongly agreed and 40% agreed that these activities help them improve their understanding of spoken English. On the other hand, only 9% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. This strongly positive perception supports Sujatha and Rajasekaran's (2024) findings that structured listening practice measurably improves learners' ability to process spoken input. This suggests that, when listening activities are actually implemented, students themselves recognize their benefit.

Question 5: Is understanding spoken English difficult for you?

Figure 6

Difficulty Understanding Spoken English



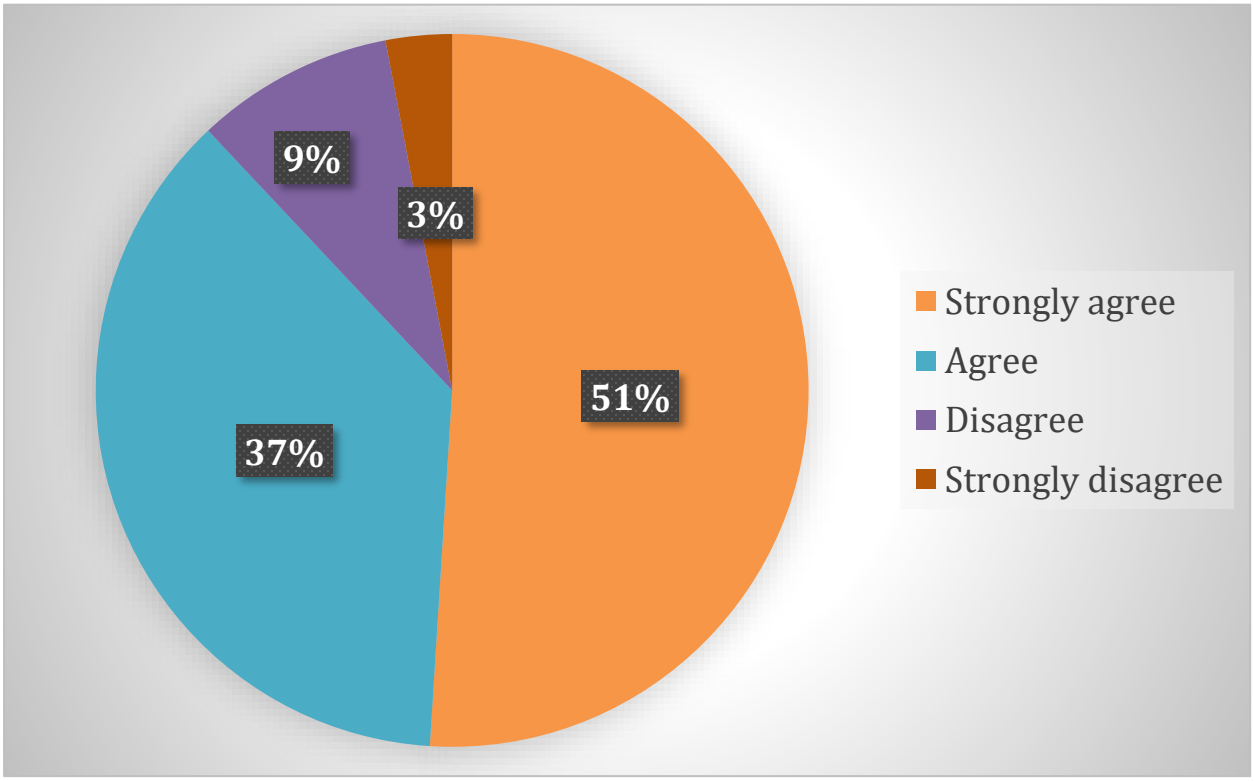
Note. Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 6 reveals the degree of difficulty students associate with understanding spoken English. First, 34% strongly agreed and 36% agreed that it is difficult for them, meaning that roughly seven out of ten students report some degree of difficulty. In contrast, 24% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed. This is consistent with Chiu and Chen (2023), who found that native speech rate remains one of the most persistent obstacles for young EFL learners. Interestingly, this pattern mirrors what both teachers identified independently in their interviews, reinforcing the consistency between students' and teachers' perceptions.

Question 6: Do audio materials help you pay attention during English classes?

Figure 7

Usefulness of Audio Materials in English Classes



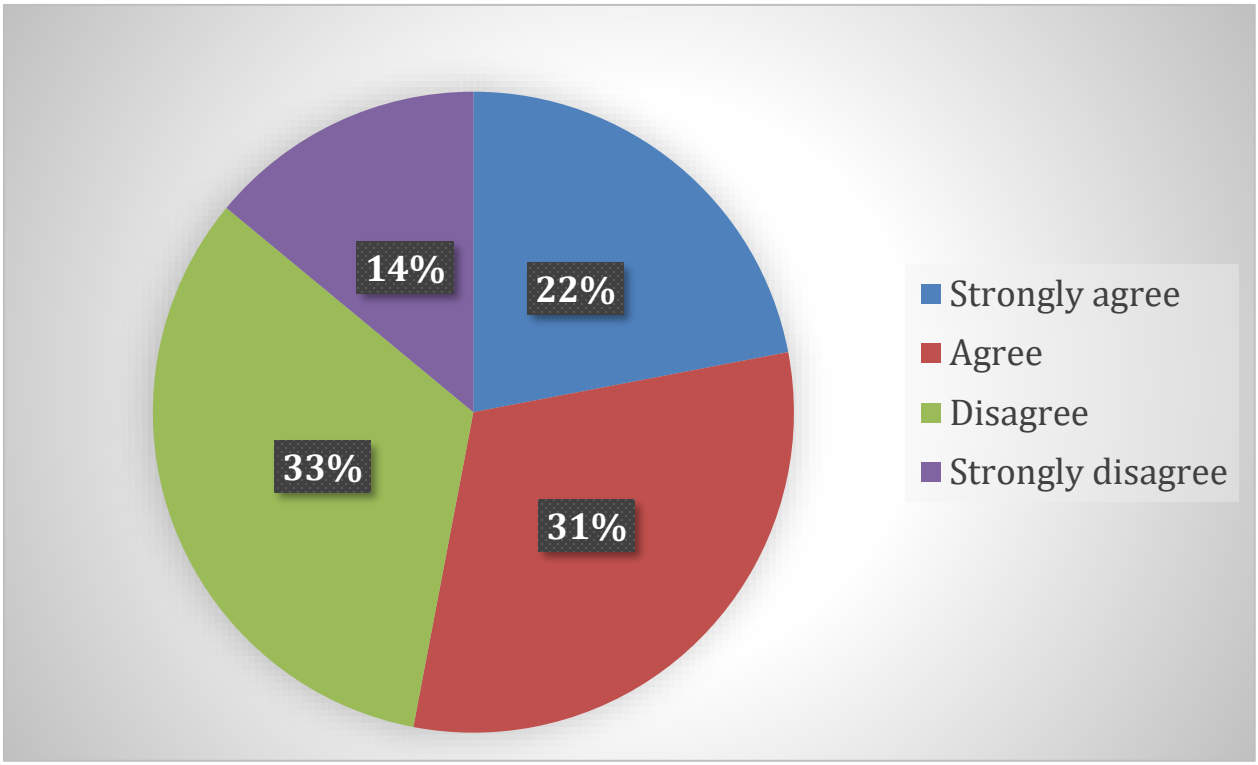
Note. Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 7 shows students' perceptions of the role of audio materials in sustaining attention. The two strongest categories, "strongly agree" and "agree," reached 51% and 37% respectively, demonstrating a high level of acceptance. Meanwhile, only 9% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. This finding is consistent with Zeng's (2025) discussion of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis (1982, as cited in Luo, 2024), which holds that engaging, well-selected input helps sustain learners' attention and lowers the psychological barriers that typically interfere with listening comprehension. Moreover, this suggests that audio materials are already functioning, at least partially, as a tool to reduce that filter in the classroom.

Question 7: Are you familiar with audiobooks?

Figure 8

Familiarity with audiobooks



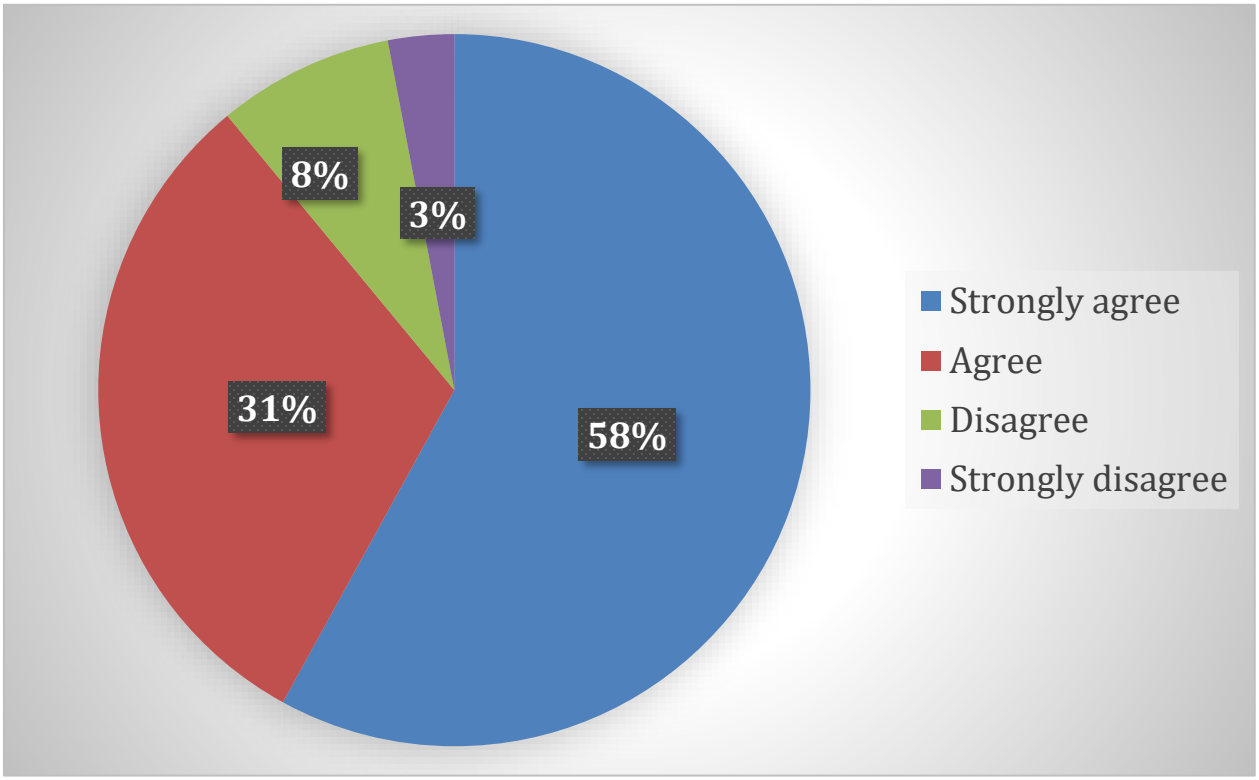
Note. Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 8 indicates students' familiarity with audiobooks as a learning resource. Unlike the previous results, the responses were considerably more divided: only 22% strongly agreed and 31% agreed that they were familiar with audiobooks, while 33% disagreed and 14% strongly disagreed. This means that nearly half of the sample reported limited or no familiarity with this resource. This gap is consistent with Purba et al. (2023), who similarly found that audiobooks remain an underused and relatively unfamiliar resource in many EFL secondary classrooms despite their demonstrated pedagogical potential. Interestingly, this lack of familiarity reinforces the innovative value of the pedagogical proposal developed in this research.

Question 8: Do you think audiobooks can improve English listening skills?

Figure 9

Audiobooks and Listening Skills



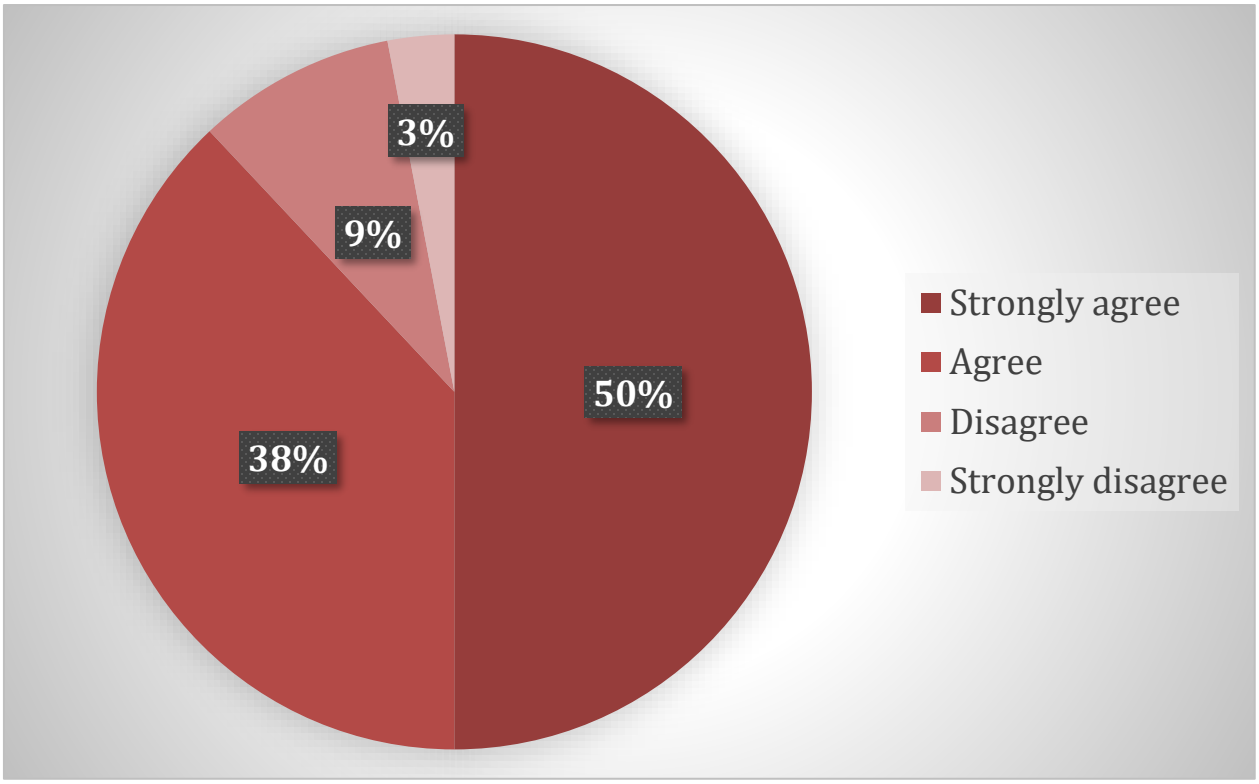
Note. Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 9 revealed a strongly positive perception of audiobooks' potential, despite the limited familiarity reported in the previous question. First, 58% strongly agreed and 31% agreed that audiobooks can improve English listening skills, while only 8% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. This pattern is consistent with Sharma et al. (2025), who found that audiobooks are generally well received by EFL learners once introduced, even among students with little prior exposure to the format. Therefore, taking this into account, it can be said that unfamiliarity does not necessarily translate into skepticism.

Question 9: Do listening activities motivate you to learn English?

Figure 10

Motivation Through Listening Activities



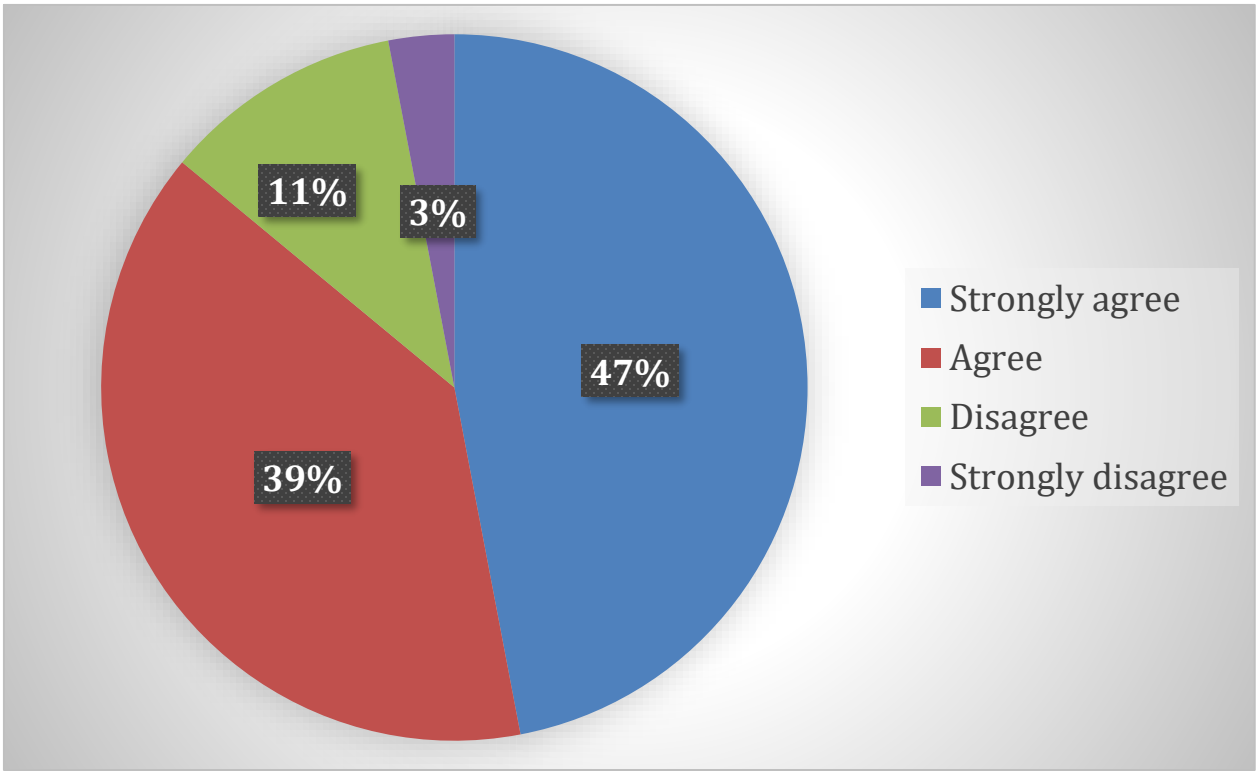
Note. Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 10 shows the motivational role of listening activities. The results indicate that most students feel motivated by them: 50% strongly agreed and 38% agreed, while only 9% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. This finding supports Krashen's (1982, as cited in Luo, 2024) affective filter hypothesis, which holds that engaging, comprehensible input lowers anxiety and increases learners' willingness to participate. This dynamic appears clearly reflected in students' own reported motivation toward listening tasks.

Question 10: Do you think Ecuadorian legends can be useful for learning English?

Figure 11

Ecuadorian Legends for Learning English



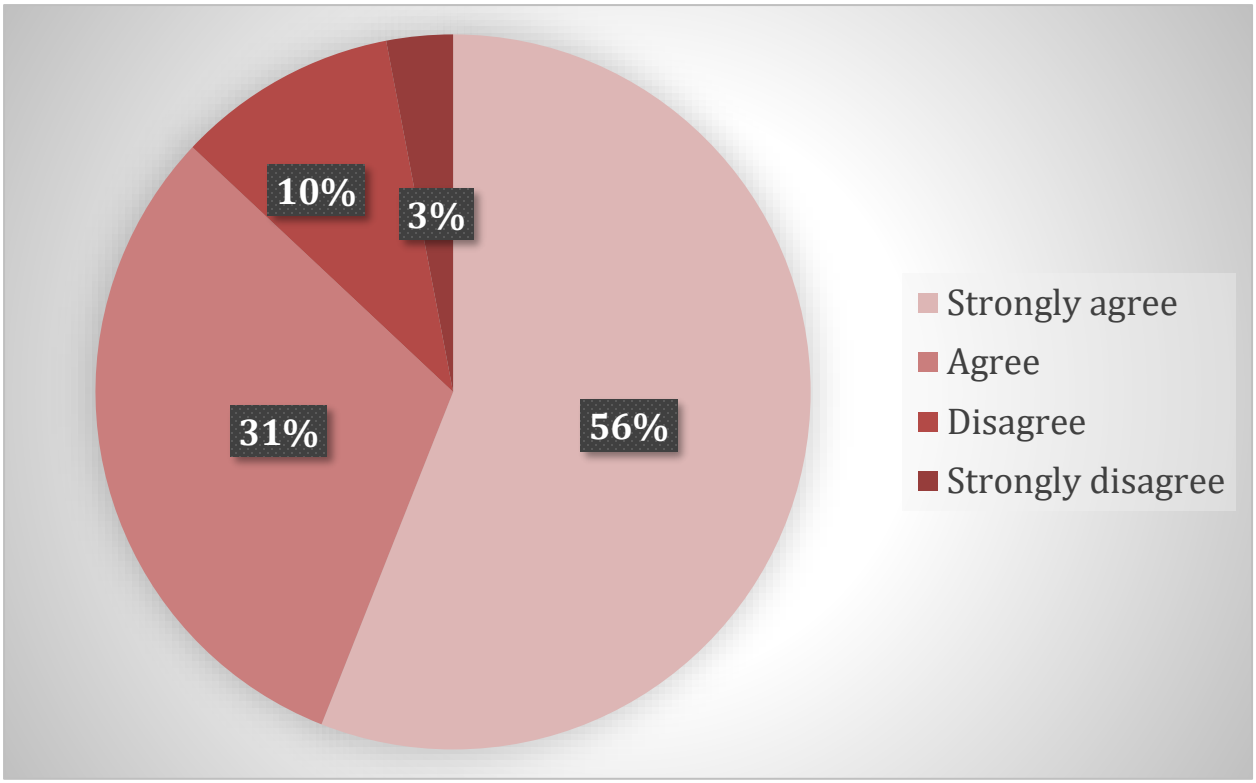
Note. Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 11 revealed students' perceptions of Ecuadorian legends as a learning resource. First, 47% strongly agreed and 39% agreed that legends can be useful for learning English, together representing the vast majority of the sample. On the other hand, only 11% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. This strongly positive response is consistent with Fan et al. (2025), who found that EFL instruction grounded in local cultural content helps learners engage with the language as something that belongs to them, as well as with Andrade-Molina et al. (2022), who found that Ecuadorian secondary students' motivation is closely tied to how well instructional materials reflect their own cultural identity.

Question 11: Would you like to use Ecuadorian legends audiobooks in English classes?

Figure 12

Use of Ecuadorian Legends Audiobooks



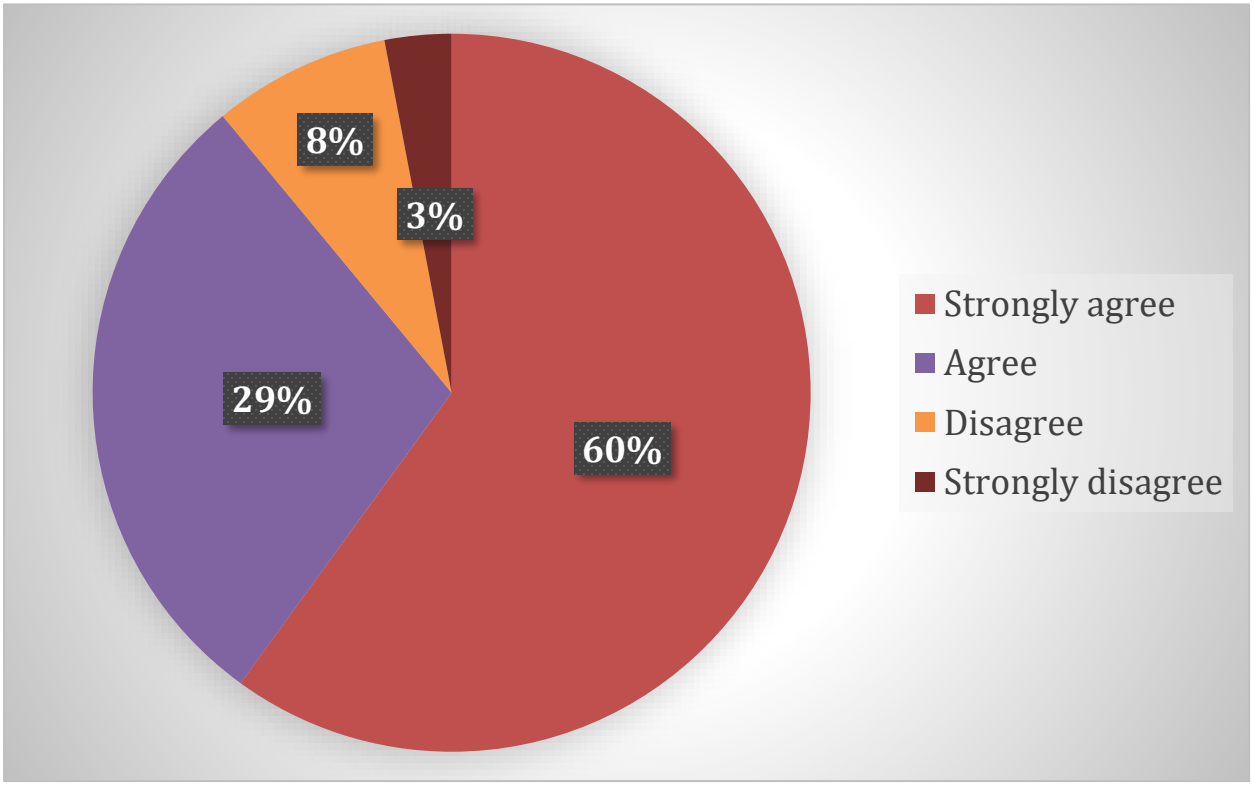
Note. Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 12 indicates students' willingness to use Ecuadorian legends audiobooks in class. The two strongest categories, "strongly agree" and "agree," reached 56% and 31% respectively, demonstrating a high level of acceptance among students. Meanwhile, only 10% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. This high level of acceptance mirrors the willingness both teachers expressed in the qualitative interviews and is consistent with Fauzi et al. (2026), who found that integrating local folklore into language instruction significantly increases learner engagement and motivation.

Question12: Do you think Ecuadorian legends audiobooks could make English classes more enjoyable?

Figure 13

Enjoyment of English Classes Through Audiobooks



Note. Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 13 shows students' perceptions of enjoyment associated with Ecuadorian legends audiobooks. First, 60% strongly agreed and 29% agreed that this resource could make English classes more enjoyable, together representing the vast majority of responses. Only 8% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. This finding is consistent with Miravalles (2025), who found that culturally grounded materials reinforce learners' sense of identity and pride, and with Wulandari et al. (2025), who found that narrative materials tied to students' own cultural background tend to generate stronger emotional engagement than decontextualized content. Taken together, these results provide strong quantitative support for the pedagogical proposal developed in this research.

3.3 Discussion

Listening comprehension is still one of the hardest skills to develop for EFL learners and the data collected from ninth grade students at Municipal “Alfredo Albuja Galindo” High School shows it clearly. Both the student survey and teacher interviews indicate that listening is one of the most challenging skills to develop. This finding aligns with the results of Panthee (2024), who found that strong listening skills are strongly associated with learner confidence and meaningful communication, primarily because they are so difficult to develop in the first place. Both teachers identified the speed of native speakers as a major problem, while one added that they also had

problems with concentration. This is consistent with recent cognitive-load research that confirms that listening involves perceiving sound by learners, retaining it in their working memory and making sense of it simultaneously (Sujatha & Rajasekaran, 2024). This load is vividly enacted in what Sulistyowati (2019) calls the perceptual and parsing stages where learners must be able to identify sounds before they can generate meaning from them.

Despite these challenges, the students held a positive attitude towards listening instruction, acknowledging that listening activities help them understand spoken English and encourage them to continue to learn the language. In this way, the difficulties reported are not due to a rejection of the listening tasks, but rather to the way in which these are currently performed. This is corroborated by the teachers' answers: one teacher uses shadowing and a variety of authentic materials, such as videos, songs, and podcasts; the other teacher mainly uses subtitled videos provided by the institution. This contrast suggests that the availability of resources for students differs a lot depending on the teacher, which could explain why students feel that listening activities are present in the classroom, but not always frequently enough. As Guevara-Betancourt (2023) explains, the effective use of teaching resources related to students' interests is a key factor in promoting meaningful English learning, which suggests that resource variety alone is not sufficient without taking into account student engagement.

Regarding audiobooks specifically, both teachers confirmed that they have used this resource occasionally, but each independently noted that sustained attention, rather than comprehension itself, was the main limitation. This is especially relevant when compared to the students' answers. The students stated that they have little experience with audiobooks but most of them agreed that this resource can help them improve their English listening skills and help them pay attention in class. Overall, these findings suggest a disconnection between students' limited exposure to this resource and the high potential they see in it. Audiobooks seem an under-utilized strategy with a lot of potential for pedagogical development. This is in line with Zhu (2021) who found that listening has been neglected in formal EFL instruction over time despite being considered essential by researchers. Likewise, Yen (2025) argues that resources such as audiobooks work better with regular and systematic use, while Taylor (2024) explains that frequent, structured repetition strengthens memory and listening efficiency. This suggests that the sporadic use of audiobooks identified in this study may itself explain why students have not yet reaped the full benefits of this resource.

The results concerning Ecuadorian legends audiobooks were the most consistent across both instruments. Students agreed that Ecuadorian legends can be useful for learning English and expressed a strong willingness to use legends audiobooks in class, believing that this resource would make classes more enjoyable. Likewise, both teachers expressed clear willingness to incorporate this material, with one of them adding that these audiobooks could help students learn

English while becoming more familiar with their own cultural heritage. This convergence between student acceptance and teacher willingness supports Wulandari et al. (2025) and Sharma (2025), who found that narrative materials familiar to a learner's identity increase emotional engagement, active participation, and the perceived relevance of the learning task. From this perspective, the cultural relevance of Ecuadorian legends is not only a motivational advantage but also a pedagogically grounded strategy for addressing the specific gap identified in this study. This is further supported by Patiño et al. (2026), who found a significant relationship between listening skills and vocabulary acquisition among Ecuadorian learners, suggesting that culturally grounded audiobooks could simultaneously support both listening development and lexical growth within this specific context.

Current strategies to improve listening comprehension implemented with ninth gradersstudents at Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" High School include valuable resources and activities. Nonetheless, there is a considerable gap in their consistent use, and teachers' perceptions differ from those of students in certain aspects. Given this, Ecuadorian legends audiobooks are presented as a powerful tool for significantly improving listening comprehension skills. Regular, guided practice with this resource could help students strengthen their listening abilities while increasing their confidence and cultural connection to the language. Additionally, it is fundamental that these audiobooks be integrated systematically and adapted to students' needs, complemented by a variety of resources that maintain motivation and interest, which maximizes their effectiveness in the teaching-learning process, as Alfahad (2025) similarly found when metacognitive instruction was applied systematically to improve listening achievement among EFL learners. This can become a sustainable strategy for strengthening English listening skills at the institution over the long term.

CHAPTER IV: ACADEMIC PROPOSAL

This chapter presents a pedagogical guide designed to address the listening comprehension difficulties experienced by ninth-graders in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The proposal is grounded in theoretical and methodological principles that integrate culturally relevant audiobooks with metacognitive listening strategies. Through this combination, the guide provides a variety of engaging and meaningful activities aimed at fostering active, reflective, and strategic listening throughout the English language learning process.

4.1 Rationale

Listening is considered one of the most challenging language skills to develop because it requires learners to process vocabulary, pronunciation, speech rate, and contextual information simultaneously. Panthee (2024) found that learners with well-developed listening skills communicate more confidently, participate more effectively, and build stronger relationships with their peers. In contrast, bad listening skills may affect academic performance and also personal development. For this reason, developing listening comprehension has become a priority in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms, especially at the ninth-grade level where learners generally need extra support to understand spoken English correctly.

With this challenge in view, it is essential to employ teaching methods which expose students to listening activities and equip them with strategies for self-monitoring of their comprehension. Metacognitive strategies offer an effective framework for accomplishing this goal. Goh and Vandergrift (2021), state that "learners enhance their listening comprehension through the use of strategies that allow them to plan, monitor and evaluate their own comprehension". Listening is an active and self-regulated learning process, not a passive act of information reception by means of tools such as prediction activities, monitoring checklists and self-evaluation tasks. As a result, learners develop deeper comprehension together with greater autonomy and strategic awareness.

This proposal addresses a common limitation of traditional listening materials, which often present generic topics that bear little connection to students' personal experiences or cultural backgrounds. In contrast, audiobooks based on Ecuadorian legends provide familiar and culturally meaningful content that helps sustain learners' interest and motivation throughout the listening process. Narratives that are connected to learners' cultural identity improve emotional engagement, promote active participation, and improve perceived relevance of learning activities (Wulandari et al., 2025; Sharma, 2025). Also, recent studies show that students are more engaged in listening tasks when the material is meaningful and pleasant, and finally increase their confidence and willingness to communicate in English. Therefore, incorporating culturally relevant audiobooks

into regular classroom instruction can contribute to creating a more engaging and effective English learning environment for ninth-graders.

Based on these principles, this pedagogical guide proposes the use of Ecuadorian legends presented as audiobooks together with a sequence of listening activities that promote planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation throughout the listening process. The guide provides teachers with a practical set of classroom activities designed to improve listening comprehension among ninth-grade EFL learners. The selected legends, language level, and learning tasks were carefully aligned with students' English proficiency and the curricular guidelines established by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. By integrating culturally relevant content with self-regulated listening practices, the proposal seeks to enhance students' listening skills while promoting meaningful, engaging, and contextually relevant learning experiences.

4.2 Theoretical foundations

This pedagogical guide rests on second language acquisition theories that treat listening as active and strategic rather than passive. Ghanipour and Bozorgian (2025) describe listening comprehension as demanding that learners recognize spoken sounds, hold information briefly in working memory, draw on prior knowledge, and construct meaning all at once which underscores the importance of explicit strategy instruction: learners often need guidance to manage these processes well.

This comprehension process unfolds in three connected stages: perceptual processing, where learners distinguish the sounds of spoken language; parsing, where those sounds get organized into meaningful units; and utilization, where the interpreted message merges with what learners already know (Sulistyowati, 2019). Sujatha and Rajasekaran (2024) showed this in concrete terms, drawing on Cognitive Load Theory to demonstrate that giving learners relevant background knowledge before a listening task eased their processing at every one of these stages. Metacognitive strategies build on that by pushing learners to pay attention to how they're perceiving, processing, and interpreting spoken language, instead of just leaning on repeated exposure alone.

Successful listening comprehension also requires that the listener activates prior knowledge through top-down processing. In this regard, top-down processing is different from bottom-up processing in that in top-down processing learners use their background knowledge, previous experiences, familiarity with the topic, and knowledge of the communicative context to predict meaning, while in bottom-up processing, the focus is mainly on decoding the linguistic information. These mental frameworks help in interpretation and help in better understanding (Utomo & Sulistyowati, 2022). Ecuadorian legends are especially suitable for triggering this process because students are mostly acquainted with its characters, settings, and cultural references,

which makes it easier for them to concentrate on the English narration comprehension and lessen cognitive load.

Apart from the cognitive aspect, it has also been found that learners' motivation, engagement and cultural identity affect listening comprehension. Guevara-Betancourt (2023) states that the selection of instructional materials that are related to the interests and cultural backgrounds of students is an important aspect in promoting meaningful learning of the English language. Likewise, Patiño et al. (2026) reported a significant relation between the development of listening comprehension and vocabulary in Ecuadorian learners, indicating that culturally contextualized audiobooks can improve both language skills simultaneously in the local educational context.

Moreover, systematic metacognitive instruction has been repeatedly demonstrated to be effective in enhancing listening performance in previous studies. The effect of a systematic metacognitive instructional cycle on learners' listening achievement and the difficulties faced during the process was investigated by Alfahad (2025). The results provide a strong theoretical rationale for the inclusion of the structured metacognitive activities of prediction, monitoring, verification and self-assessment in listening lessons and thus support their integration into this pedagogical guide.

4.3 Objectives

General objective

- Design a didactic guide based on Ecuadorian legends audiobooks and metacognitive listening strategies to improve listening comprehension in ninth-graders at Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" High School.

Specific objectives

- Select Ecuadorian legends appropriate for strengthening listening skills in ninth-graders.
- Design audio materials suited to students' listening level for practicing metacognitive strategies.
- Develop three thematic units, each containing two lessons, applying Ecuadorian legends audiobooks according to students' level and learning needs.

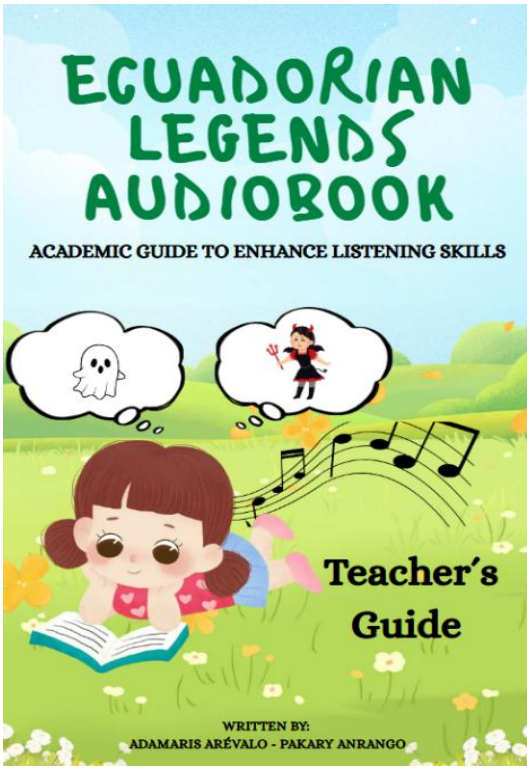
4.4 Development

Ecuadorian Legends Audiobooks consists of the development of two complementary resources: a Teacher Guide and a Student Book, both designed to enhance the listening comprehension skills of ninth-grader EFL students through the use of Ecuadorian legends audiobooks and metacognitive listening strategies.

The **Teacher's Guide** has been developed as a comprehensive pedagogical tool to support teachers in implementing the proposed instructional intervention. It gives detailed methodological guidance, step-by-step instructions and practical recommendations for the organization of each stage of the listening process. Moreover, the guide offers teachers the necessary techniques and materials for the successful application of metacognitive listening teaching in the EFL classroom. **Illustration 1** presents the cover page of the **Teacher´s Guide**. (**see Illustration 1**)

Illustration 1

Teacher´s Guide



Note. Elaborated by the authors.

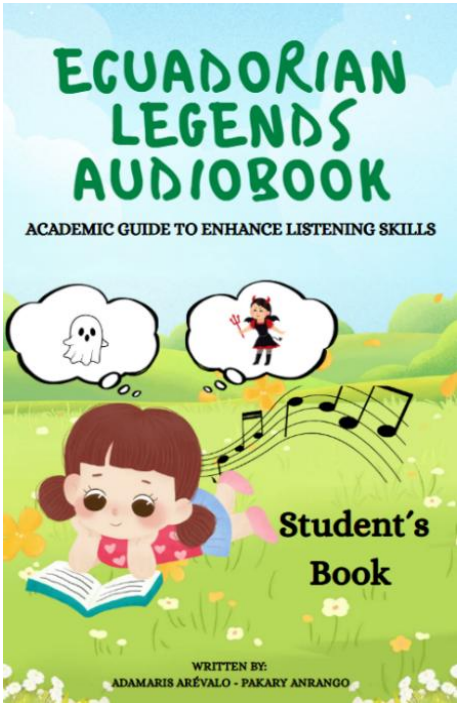
Access the digital teaching guide ***Ecuadorian Legends Audiobook*** through the link or scan the QR code:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Jyk_cxtKLDC2D5dDvG7vXD2i7Ty2W3dy/view?usp=sharing

Complementing the Teacher's Guide, the Student's Book was designed as the primary learning resource for students throughout the implementation of the instructional intervention. It contains the activities, worksheets, and learning tasks that learners complete individually or collaboratively during each lesson, fostering active participation, learner autonomy, and meaningful engagement with the listening process. In addition, the Student's Book encourages learners to monitor their own progress and supports student-centered learning by promoting active involvement in each instructional activity. Illustration 2 presents the cover page of the Student's Book. **(see Illustration 2)**

Illustration 2

Student Book



Note. Elaborated by the authors.

Access the digital students book ***Ecuadorian Legends Audiobook*** through the link or scan the QR code:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1a1ustlTdefrnRSy7XG1XuQrozPyrEnWB/view?usp=sharing

Both instructional materials follow a clear and systematic structure designed to facilitate their effective implementation in the classroom. They begin with a cover page that presents the title and authors' names, followed by an introduction that describes the purpose of the resources, their organization, and the relevance of integrating culturally meaningful audiobooks with metacognitive strategies to enhance listening comprehension. Furthermore, both Teacher Guide and Student Book include a preliminary unit that introduces essential concepts through three topics: "What is a legend?", "Types of legends," and "Basic characteristics of legends." This introductory section provides learners with the necessary cultural and literary background to better understand and interpret the legends presented throughout the instructional materials.

The proposal is organized into three thematic units, each focusing on a traditional Ecuadorian legend: Unit 1: The legend of La Dama Tapada, Unit 2: The legend of La Llorona, and Unit 3: The legend of Cantuña. Instructional materials are composed of two lessons per unit, making six lessons in total. The lessons are structured around a pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening sequence of activities, which take the learners through the different stages of the listening process. These stages incorporate metacognitive strategies such as prediction, monitoring and self-evaluation, which assist learners to develop a heightened awareness of their own process of comprehension and become active participants in their learning. Additionally, the lessons incorporate a variety of exercises, interactive tasks, and listening activities aimed at strengthening comprehension, encouraging critical thinking, and fostering learner autonomy.

Moreover, both instructional materials include a glossary of key vocabulary related to each legend to facilitate language comprehension and support vocabulary development. At the end of the resources, bibliographic references are provided to support the theoretical and methodological foundations underlying the proposal.

The content and audio recordings elaborated per unit were selected and designed according to the descriptors of the level A2 defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for

Languages (CEFR) and the guidelines of the National Curriculum of Ecuador. The audio recordings were produced using Google AI Studio, which has a text-to-speech generation function, an artificial intelligence-based voice generation tool that allowed the generation of natural sounding narrations of each Ecuadorian legend. This technology enabled the customization of voice characteristics, including tone, pace, and pronunciation, ensuring that the recordings were aligned with learners' age, language proficiency level, and listening needs.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This research started with the identification of the level of listening comprehension of the English language in ninth grade students of Municipal "Alfredo Albuja Galindo" High School. The results showed that listening comprehension is considered one of the most difficult skills, with 81% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that listening presents a major challenge and 70% reporting difficulty in understanding spoken English. Both teachers confirmed this pattern, citing native speech rate and sustained attention as the main hindrances. It is important to point out that this challenge is not related to the lack of motivation, as 94% of students recognized the importance of English for their development. It implies that the difficulty lies in the listening process.

Moreover, this research explained the teaching strategies and methodology English teachers use to develop listening comprehension. The interviews showed that both teachers use some strategies such as shadowing, songs, videos and podcasts but with significant differences in scope and resources between them. Both reported using audiobooks only rarely, mostly because they had difficulty holding students' attention for extended periods. This was consistent with the students' replies as almost one-third of the sample indicated inconsistent exposure to listening activities, supporting the fact that strategies are available but their application is still irregular.

The results of the questionnaire and interviews were positive for the suggested resource. Both teachers and students showed a strong willingness to use Ecuadorian legends audiobooks in English classes, as shown in the 87% of students who agreed or strongly agreed with this idea. Besides, students and teachers appreciated the fact that the contents of the audiobooks are linked to Ecuadorian culture, which reinforced their motivation and identity toward the proposed material.

In this manner, the proposal design, Ecuadorian Legends Audiobooks, offers a pedagogical tool with a Teacher's Guide and a Student's Book to enhance listening comprehension through culturally relevant content based on the legends La Dama Tapada, La Llorona, and The Legend of Cantuña. The material is organized in a pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening sequence, integrating metacognitive strategies and correlating to the descriptors of CEFR A2 and the curriculum of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. This proposal responds directly to the limitations of the diagnostic phase and in the future it could be adapted to include other Ecuadorian legends or it could be extended to other educational levels.

5.2 Recommendations

First, it is recommended that English teachers incorporate culturally relevant listening materials into their classroom practices. Familiar topics can increase students' motivation, help them to understand, and motivate them to participate more in listening activities. In this respect, local stories and traditions can also increase students' appreciation of their cultural heritage while learning English. In addition, teachers are also encouraged to incorporate metacognitive listening strategies into the entire listening process. For example, encouraging learners to make predictions about the content prior to listening, to monitor their comprehension during the activity and to evaluate their performance after the activity can help learners to become more autonomous and strategic listeners.

In addition, educational institutions should encourage the use of innovative teaching resources that combine technology with meaningful learning experiences. Audiobooks, interactive listening activities, and structured instructional materials can be used to supplement existing textbooks and provide students with further opportunities to develop listening skills in interesting ways. Moreover, it is recommended that future researchers implement and evaluate the proposed Teacher's Guide and Student's Book in real classroom to examine the potential contribution of the materials to student´s listening comprehension development. Similarly, more research could adapt the materials to different educational levels, language proficiency levels or other aspects of English language learning.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that English teachers consider the integration of culturally relevant listening materials as part of their instructional practices. The use of local stories and traditions, such as Ecuadorian legends, may provide meaningful contexts for language learning while promoting students' connection with their cultural heritage. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to incorporate structured listening activities that guide learners through the pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening stages, allowing them to engage more actively with listening tasks.

Furthermore, it is recommended that teachers incorporate metacognitive strategies into listening instruction to help learners become more aware of the processes involved in understanding spoken EnglishActivities such as prediction, monitoring comprehension and self-evaluation encourage learners to think about their performance and, over time, to take a more active approach to listening.

Schools and institutions need to invest in more creative ways of integrating technology, cultural content and language learning into instructional resources. Teachers can be given resources such as audiobooks, electronic devices, and culturally grounded activities, to diversify listening practices and create more opportunities for students to engage in authentic spoken English.

It is recommended for future researchers to implement the proposed instructional materials in other educational contexts to find out their usability, acceptance, and contribution to the development of students' listening comprehension. Other studies could also look into adapting culturally based listening materials for different proficiency levels, educational contexts, or other language skills.

Finally, it is suggested that the proposed instructional materials be reviewed and updated periodically according to technological advancements, curriculum changes and learners' needs. Continuous improvement of educational resources can help maintain their relevance and applicability within English language teaching contexts.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Instruments validation

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DEL NORTE

FACULTAD DE CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA FECYT PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS – INGLÉS

Magíster
Darwin Fernando Flores Albuja
DOCENTE UTN

De mis consideraciones:

Mediante el presente, solicito muy comedidamente la validación de las entrevistas y cuestionarios de Investigación del Proyecto: **ECUADORIAN LEGENDS AUDIOBOOKS AS STRATEGY TO ENHANCE LISTENING SKILL IN 9TH GRADERS AT MUNICIPAL ALFREDO ALBUJA GALINDO HIGH SCHOOL.** Previo a la obtención del título de Licenciatura En Pedagogía De Los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros, Mención Inglés, para lo cual, se encuentra adjunto las Entrevistas, el Cuestionario y los instrumentos de validación.

Por la atención que se sirva dar al presente, le anticipo mis debidos agradecimientos.

Atentamente,

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Estudiantes de la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros-Inglés

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DEL NORTE

FACULTAD DE CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA FECYT PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS – INGLÉS

INTERVIEW FORMAT FOR THE ENGLISH TEACHERS AT MUNICIPAL ALFREDO ALBUJA GALINDO HIGH SCHOOL

Topic: Ecuadorian Legends Audiobooks as Strategy to Enhance English Listening Skill in 9th Graders at Municipal Alfredo Albuja Galindo High School

Objective. Identify the strategies and resources teachers use to enhance students' English listening skills and their perceptions about the use of Ecuadorian legends.

Your information will be managed with absolute confidentiality, and the results will only be used for educational purposes, thus the data that will be gathered will be anonymous.

TEACHER' S QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Please, answer each question honestly.

1. What strategies do you commonly use to develop English listening skills with your 9th graders students?
2. What resources do you usually use to improve listening skills in 9th graders students?
3. What difficulties do students commonly present during listening activities?
4. Have you ever used audiobooks as a strategy in your English classes? Explain your answer.
5. Do you think audiobooks can help improve English listening skills in students? Why?
6. Would you like to use Ecuadorian legends audiobooks in your English classes? Why or why not?

Thank you for your collaboration

En la siguiente matriz marque con una X el criterio de evaluación según corresponda en cada ítem. De ser necesario realice la observación en el apartado correspondiente.

INSTRUMENTO DE EVALUACIÓN CUALITATIVO			
ITEMS	**CRITERIOS DE EVALUACIÓN**		
	MUCHO	**POCO**	**NADA**
Instrucción breve, clara y completa.	X		
Formulación clara de cada pregunta.	X		
Comprensión de cada pregunta.	X		
Coherencia de las preguntas en relación con el objetivo.	X		
Relevancia del contenido	X		
Orden y secuencia de las preguntas	X		
Número de preguntas óptimo	X		

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SURVEY FORMAT FOR THE STUDENTS AT MUNICIPAL ALFREDO ALBUJA GALINDO HIGH SCHOOL

Topic: Ecuadorian Legends Audiobooks as Strategy to Enhance English Listening Skill in 9th Graders at Municipal Alfredo Albuja Galindo High School

Objective: Determine students' perceptions about English listening skills and the use of Ecuadorian legends audiobooks.

Your information will be managed with absolute confidentiality, and the results will only be used for educational purposes, thus the data that will be gathered will be anonymous.

Personal Information

Age:

12-13 ☐ 14-15 ☐ More than 15 ☐

Sex:

Female ☐ Male ☐

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

INSTRUCTIONS
Read each statement carefully and mark an "X" according to your opinion.

Scale:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

1) **Do you think learning English is important for your academic and personal development?**

Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

2) **Do you consider listening one of the most challenging English skills?**

Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

3) **Does your English teacher use listening activities regularly in class?**

Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

4) **Do listening activities help you improve your understanding of spoken English?**

Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

5) **Is understanding spoken English difficult for you?**

Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

6) **Do audio materials help you pay attention during English classes?**

Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

7) **Are you familiar with audiobooks?**

Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

8) Do you think audiobooks can improve English listening skills?

Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

9) Do listening activities motivate you to learn English?

Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

10) Do you think Ecuadorian legends can be useful for learning English?

Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

11) Would you like to use Ecuadorian legends audiobooks in English classes?

Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

12) Do you think Ecuadorian legends audiobooks could make English classes more enjoyable?

Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

Thank you for your collaboration

A continuación, marque con una **X** en el criterio de evaluación según el análisis de cada pregunta que conforma el cuestionario, las cuales se encuentran representadas en el siguiente instrumento de evaluación como Ítem. De ser necesario realice la observación en el casillero correspondiente.

INSTRUMENTO DE EVALUACIÓN CUANTITATIVO				
CRITERIOS DE EVALUACIÓN				**OBSERVACIONES**
Ítem	**Dejar**	**Modificar**	**Eliminar**	
1	X			
2	X			
3	X			
4	X			
5	X			
6	X			
7	X			
8	X			
9	X			
10	X			
11	X			
12	X			



Firma del Evaluador

C.C.:1002188470

Apellidos y nombres completos	Flores Albuja Darwin Fernando
Título académico	Magister
Institución de Educación Superior	Universidad Técnica del Norte
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Fecha de envío para la evaluación del experto:	05-06-2026
Fecha de revisión del experto:	08-06-2026

Annex 2: Request for application of the instruments

REPÚBLICA DEL ECUADOR

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DEL NORTE
Acreditada Resolución Nro. 173-SE-33-CACES-2020
FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA
DECANATO

Oficio Nro. UTN-FECYT-D-2026-0159-O
Ibarra, 09 de junio de 2026

PARA: **MSc. Washington René Campos**
RECTOR DE LA UNIDAD EDUCATIVA MUNICIPAL ALFREDO ALBUJA GALINDO

ASUNTO: Trabajo de Integración Curricular Srtas. Ñusta Pakary Anrango Velásquez y Adamaris Lizbeth Arévalo Chamorro

Reciba un atento y cordial saludo, en nombre de la Facultad de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología FECYT de la Universidad Técnica del Norte y mi deseo de éxito en las actividades que desempeña.

Me dirijo a Usted de la manera más comedida, con la finalidad de solicitarle que, se brinde las facilidades necesarias a las Señoritas: ÑUSTA PAKARY ANRANGO VELÁSQUEZ y ADAMARIS LIZBETH ARÉVALO CHAMORRO, egresadas de la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros, para que obtengan información a través de la aplicación de instrumentos de investigación, lo cual requieren para el desarrollo del trabajo de integración curricular con el tema: "ECUADORIAN LEGENDS AUDIOBOOKS AS STRATEGY TO ENHANCE ENGLISH LISTENING SKILLS IN 9TH GRADERS AT MUNICIPAL ALFREDO ALBUJA GALINDO HIGH SCHOOL".

Por su favorable atención, le agradezco.

Atentamente,
CIENCIA Y TÉCNICA AL SERVICIO DEL PUEBLO

Firmado electrónicamente por:
JOSE LUCIANO REVELO RUIZ

MSc. José Revelo
DECANO DE LA FECYT
CC: 1002072179
Contacto: 062997800 ext. 7802
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JLRR/M.Báez

UNIDAD EDUCATIVA MUNICIPAL ALFREDO ALBUJA GALINDO SECRETARÍA

Annex 3: Request for socialization of the final proposal

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DEL NORTE
Acreditada Resolución Nro. 173-SE-33-CACES-2020
FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA
DECANATO

Oficio Nro. UTN-FECYT-D-2026-0188-O
Ibarra, 06 de julio de 2026

PARA: **MSc. René Campos**
RECTOR DE LA UNIDAD EDUCATIVA MUNICIPAL ALFREDO ALBUJA GALINDO

ASUNTO: Socialización propuesta de las Srtas: Anrango Velásquez Ñusta Pakary y Arevalo Chamorro Adamaris Lizbeth

Reciba un atento y cordial saludo, en nombre de la Facultad de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología FECYT de la Universidad Técnica del Norte y mi deseo de éxito en las actividades que desempeña.

Me dirijo a Usted de la manera más comedida, con la finalidad de solicitarle que, se brinde las facilidades necesarias a las Señoritas Anrango Velásquez Ñusta Pakary y Arevalo Chamorro Adamaris Lizbeth, Anrango Velásquez Ñusta Pakary y Arevalo Chamorro Adamaris Lizbeth, estudianteS de la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros, FECYT-UTN, para que socialicen la propuesta con el tema: "ECUADORIAN LEGENDS: AN AUDIOBOOK TO IMPROVE ENGLISH LISTENING SKILLS, perteneciente al trabajo de integración curricular con el tema: "ECUADORIAN LEGENDS AUDIOBOOKS AS STRATEGY TO ENHANCE ENGLISH LISTENING SKILLS IN 9TH GRADERS AT MUNICIPAL ALFREDO ALBUJA GALINDO HIGH SCHOOL".

Por su favorable atención, le agradezco.

Atentamente,
CIENCIA Y TÉCNICA AL SERVICIO DEL PUEBLO

MSc. José Revelo
DECANO DE LA FECYT
Contacto: 062997800 ext. 7802
Correo electrónico: decanatofecyt@utn.edu.ec

JLRR/M.Báez

Annex 4: Evidence of socialization

