

Audiobooks as a Tool for Improving Pronunciation and Fluency: Insights from Ecuadorian EFL Pre-Service Teachers**Audiolibros como una Herramienta para Mejorar la Pronunciación y Fluidez: Perspectivas de Docentes en Formación de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera en Ecuador***Solange E. Guerrero.***PUNTO CIENCIA.****Julio - diciembre, V°6 - N°2; 2025****Recibido:** 01-10-2025**Aceptado:** 02-11-2025**Publicado:** 30-12-2025**PAIS**

- Ecuador, Guayas

INSTITUCION

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Guerrero, S. (2025). Audiobooks as a Tool for Improving Pronunciation and Fluency: Insights from Ecuadorian EFL Pre-Service Teachers. *Revista G-ner@ndo*, V°6 (N°2). Pág. 2377 – 2394.

Abstract

Pronunciation and fluency are crucial for effective communication. This study examines the experiences of Ecuadorian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pre-service teachers who use audiobooks to enhance their English fluency and pronunciation. As part of an assignment, 208 pre-service teachers applied audiobook-driven shadowing methods to their language study for 10 weeks. 89% of pre-service teachers view audiobooks as helpful tools to enhance their English-speaking skills. Additionally, the practice boosted their confidence and encouraged autonomous learning. The main barriers were the narrator's speed, pronunciation issues, and managing time effectively to practice. Despite these challenges, pre-service teachers experienced fluency and pronunciation improvements. The findings highlight the educational benefits of audiobooks as supplementary tools in EFL teacher training programs. Recommendations include further experimental studies with objective measurements applied to speaking skills, as well as a greater expansion of digital resources in EFL settings.

Keywords: Audiobooks; EFL pre-service teachers; Speaking skills; Pronunciation; Fluency.

Resumen

La pronunciación y la fluidez son cruciales para una comunicación efectiva. Este estudio examina las experiencias de futuros profesores ecuatorianos de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) que utilizan audiolibros para mejorar su fluidez y pronunciación en inglés. Como parte de una tarea, 208 futuros profesores aplicaron métodos de shadowing (repetición inmediata) basados en audiolibros a su estudio de idiomas durante 10 semanas. El 89% de los futuros profesores considera los audiolibros como herramientas útiles para mejorar sus habilidades de expresión oral en inglés. Además, la práctica aumentó su confianza y fomentó el aprendizaje autónomo. Las principales barreras fueron la velocidad del narrador, los problemas de pronunciación y la gestión efectiva del tiempo para practicar. A pesar de estos desafíos, los futuros profesores experimentaron mejoras en la fluidez y la pronunciación. Los resultados resaltan los beneficios educativos de los audiolibros como herramientas complementarias en los programas de formación docente de inglés. Las recomendaciones incluyen la realización de más estudios experimentales con mediciones objetivas aplicadas a las habilidades de expresión oral, así como una mayor expansión de los recursos digitales en entornos EFL.

Palabras clave: Audiolibros; Futuros profesores EFL; Habilidades de expresión oral; Pronunciación; Fluidez.

Introduction

Nowadays, through the mastery of the English language, access to academic and professional opportunities is possible (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006). It is particularly significant for those preparing to become English language teachers. English pronunciation and fluency are critical, as it is the primary medium of instruction. In an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) undergraduate program, these aspects facilitate communication in the classroom. The interaction between professors and pre-service teachers, as well as among peers and between pre-service teachers and professors, can occur in multiple directions. Although the significance of English pronunciation and fluency is acknowledged, many still struggle to speak clearly and fluently (Derwing & Munro, 2015). It may be due to a lack of exposure to the target language or inadequate time organization for practice. Additionally, the low motivation level can be a barrier. Nonetheless, spending more time using English helps improve communication skills (Nkhi & Shange, 2025).

There are online resources available to learn a foreign language or become proficient in it. It includes speech recognition apps and interactive tools. Thus, EFL learners can be exposed to materials to improve their English language skills. The applications help users improve their target language skills and fluency while teaching them to develop their accent skills.

Another helpful resource that gained attention is audiobooks. People can access authentic, interactive content through them. It enables learners to hear spoken English. Thus, it may help them overcome some of the challenges in communicating effectively. Similarly, listening to authentic English through audiobooks helps people develop their pronunciation skills. Moreover, they improve students' rhythm, speech flow, and stress patterns.

Audiobooks as a Multimodal Pedagogical Resource

Audiobooks are increasingly recognized for their pedagogical potential in EFL education. It is particularly due to their multimodal nature. They are defined as texts combining auditory narration with written language. Audiobooks enable learners to engage simultaneously with both visual and auditory processing systems. As a result, their learning experience can be improved (Larson et al., 2015). This dual-channel input aligns with Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 1979) and Cognitive Load Theory (Chandler & Sweller, 1991). These theories indicate learning enhancement when information is processed through multiple sensory pathways. Additionally, learning improves when cognitive strain is reduced and semantic retention is reinforced (Mayer & Moreno, 2003; Valente & Marchetti, 2019).

Audiobooks support pronunciation learning through more interactive and authentic models, as well as situated language use (Karavidaj, 2020). Therefore, they are well-suited to EFL teacher programs where the development of linguistic proficiency and pedagogical literacy is necessary.

Audiobooks and Speaking Language Development

In recent years, audiobooks have evolved their purpose. Previously, they were used to assist individuals struggling with reading skills. Today, they are implemented as tools to improve learners' vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, fluency, and motivation as well (Ayunda, 2013).

Several studies show the effectiveness of audiobooks in supporting the development of pronunciation and fluency. For instance, Saka (2015) found that targeted audiobook exposure resulted in measurable improvements in phoneme recognition and articulation among Turkish EFL university students. The improvements were particularly evident at pre-intermediate proficiency levels.

Integrating audiobook-assisted reading aloud has also significantly improved pronunciation accuracy in Indonesian secondary learners (Wahyuni, 2023). These findings validate the ones asserted by Damra et al. (2025). They found that consistent audiobook listening contributes to improved fluency, engagement, and prosodic features among Jordanian EFL students. Moreover, Göçerler and Kalemci (2022) highlighted positive learner perceptions regarding pronunciation development through simplified German audiobooks.

Collectively, these findings address the role of audiobooks in developing English language skills. Specifically, they demonstrate how audiobooks act as active facilitators of oral language proficiency, particularly when paired with text-based input or speaking tasks.

Addressing the Gap & Research Questions

English is a compulsory language to learn from elementary school through higher education in Ecuador. Although that requirement, a significant challenge persists: language proficiency. According to the EF English Proficiency Index (2024), Ecuador ranks 82nd out of 116 countries and regions. Thus, it is categorized as a country with a low level of English proficiency. This reveals a clear need for urgent and effective changes to language education.

Various significant factors contribute to this low level of English proficiency. Perhaps one of the most well-documented persistent challenges is the deficiency in English language teaching proficiency among teachers. Thus, this becomes a barrier to improving the English language education in Ecuador. Therefore, this gap undermines the efforts to further educational reforms (Sevy-Biloon et al., 2020) to raise the English proficiency of Ecuadorian students across primary and secondary levels.

English language teachers in Ecuador are required to hold a minimum B2 level of English proficiency, as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). However, some teachers fail to meet this level. As reported by Palma (2020), only 10% of teachers meet the required level. It is due to limited initial training, which often occurs when pre-service teachers have low exposure to English and inadequate professional development mechanisms (Villafuerte & Mosquera, 2020).

In response to the challenges in the English language in Ecuador, strategies have been implemented. The most recent one is the program 'Ecuador Habla Inglés.' It was developed in cooperation with the U.S. Embassy and Ecuador's Ministry of Education. Ecuador Habla Inglés focuses on providing training to in-service English language teachers. As a result, it has improved the confidence and skills of participating in-service teachers (U.S. Embassy and Consulate in Ecuador, 2023; The District Communications Group, 2023; U.S. Mission Ecuador, 2024).

However, these programs highlight the systemic nature of the problem, as they often target teachers who are already below the B2 standard (Banegas & Arellano, 2024). As explained by Cajas (2017), although Ecuador has implemented plans to support teachers, challenges persist, especially where language immersion opportunities are scarce. Similarly, Orosz et al. (2021) documented those in-service teachers are motivated to improve their English levels. Nonetheless, barriers such as a lack of time, poor access to native-speaking mentors, and insufficient institutional support limit their progress.

Therefore, EFL teacher education programs aim to equip pre-service teachers with the training and skills necessary to enhance language Education in Ecuador. Nonetheless, these efforts have not eliminated all challenges. For instance, based on class observations, it has been noted that English language pre-service teachers often do not participate in class discussions. This means they do not engage in class

discussions, even though they are allowed to interact. Additionally, participants face challenges with pronunciation and fluency, despite being at an advanced level in the undergraduate program. As asserted by Guerrero and Moreira (2025), "Improving oral proficiency in Ecuador requires targeted teacher training" (p.134). This includes pre-service teachers' undergraduate programs from the first level.

Taking into account these challenges and what the literature indicates about how valuable audiobooks are to improve language skills, the following questions emerged:

1. How do EFL pre-service teachers perceive the effectiveness of audiobooks in developing their English pronunciation and fluency?
2. How does the use of audiobooks influence EFL pre-service teachers' motivation to improve their pronunciation and fluency development?

This research examines the experiences of pre-service EFL teachers using audiobooks to improve their English pronunciation and fluency. Besides, it aims to move beyond quantitative outcomes to understand how audiobooks are perceived, experienced, and utilized in practice. Similarly, this study contributes to understanding the pedagogical role of audiobooks.

Methodology

Research Design

This study aims to explore EFL pre-service teachers' experiences when using audiobooks to enhance their English pronunciation and fluency. In order to attain that purpose, a Descriptive Research Design was implemented through a pedagogical activity. Similarly, this research employed a cross-sectional design, supported by a survey.

As part of the Descriptive Design, EFL pre-service teachers used audiobooks for 10 weeks as an assignment. This activity allowed them to practice and evaluate whether improvements occurred. Additionally, this research design employed a cross-sectional approach, supported by a self-administered questionnaire. It allowed for gathering pre-service teachers' experiences at a single point in time regarding the use of audiobooks to enhance their pronunciation and fluency in English.

It is important to determine that this study did not aim to gather qualitative data or prove causality. On the contrary, this activity aimed to foster English Language practice and EFL pre-service teachers' evaluation of valuable tools to achieve their language proficiency goals.

Sampling Approach

This study applied convenience sampling (Bryman, 2016). Participants were EFL pre-service teachers in their first level or semester of study in a TEFL undergraduate program in Ecuador. They were part of the course Independent Study Methods, which aims to provide students with study and learning strategies that will guide them not only in developing their English Language Skills but also in acquiring educational ones. In total, 208 pre-service teachers participated in this study: 77% (N=160) identified themselves as females, 21% (N=44) as males, and 2% (N=4) preferred not to share that information.

As a specification of this study, it is important to note that they are not a representation of all students of the TEFL undergraduate program. However, valuable insights were gathered from pre-service teachers on how helpful audiobooks are in improving their pronunciation and fluency. Therefore, the interpretation of the findings is limited to the participants of this research.

Instruments

For this research, audiobooks and a self-administered questionnaire were implemented:

1. Audiobooks. They were in English, focused on educational topics:

Super Human mind: This audiobook was selected to help pre-service teachers unlock their mental potentialities and build the confidence that is necessary to overcome barriers such as affective filters (Krashen, 1982) often associated with speaking a target language. The content of this audiobook served as a tool to improve their mindset. It is crucial for developing pronunciation and fluency.

Master Your Time: A Practical Guide to Increase Your Productivity and Use Your Time Meaningfully by Thibaut Meurisse. This audiobook was chosen to provide pre-service teachers with strategies to improve their productivity and time management. Additionally, its focus was to help pre-service teachers learn strategies for organizing their time and allocating time for language practice.

The primary purpose of using these audiobooks was to provide EFL pre-service teachers with engaging, educational content that they could actively listen to and use during the practice. By learning from the audiobooks' content, they could have a strong foundation in the major while listening and repeating what the narrator says (as part of the showing strategies). Thus, by learning from these audiobooks, pre-service teachers could have a strong beginning, knowing they can achieve more while improving their English language skills.

2. Self-administered questionnaire. The survey was designed in Google Forms, containing 11 questions, and distributed via email. This was the primary tool used to gather data on pre-service teachers' experiences with audiobooks to enhance their pronunciation and fluency.

The survey's questions were written in English. They had a format of dichotomous, multiple-choice, filter, or contingency questions, along with a 5-point Likert scale. They were designed to determine the perceived improvement, the challenges they experienced, and the overall experience when using the audiobooks.

Data collection and analysis procedures

Data Collection

After selecting the audiobooks, pre-service teachers were introduced to the study and the materials through a formal assignment and explained during a synchronous class session. The assignment consisted of using each audiobook for 10 weeks in total (5 weeks each). Pre-service teachers were instructed to organize their schedules to practice once per week.

This practice involved a shadowing strategy. This consists of listening to the audiobooks and simultaneously repeating what was said. In that way, it mirrors the narrator's pace, pronunciation, and intonation. Additionally, they had to write down unknown words and their definitions to facilitate vocabulary acquisition.

Once students finished the 10-week practice, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to all pre-service teachers via email. The questionnaire was designed to gather their experiences of the audiobook-based practice and its effectiveness in improving their pronunciation and fluency. Besides, they signed an informed consent to volunteer to participate in this survey.

Data Analysis

The collected data from the self-administered questionnaire underwent initial curation to process, check, and remove duplicate answers.

The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions. For conciseness and an effective report, a subset of these questions was included in this paper. The questions containing open-ended responses were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The closed-ended questions were compiled in Microsoft Excel and presented in graphs.

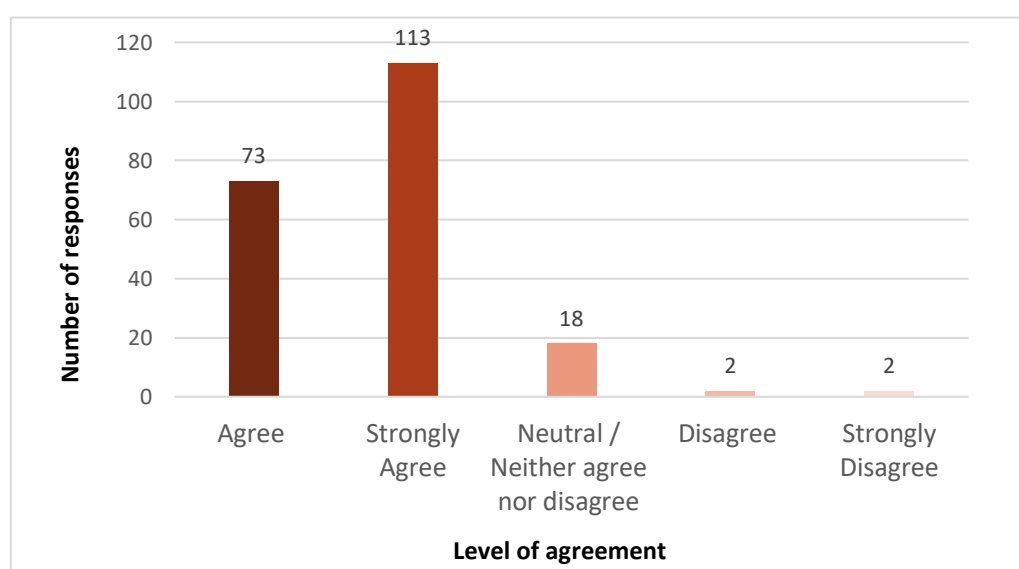
Analysis of Results

This research analyzed participants' responses (N=208). They are based on participants' perceptions and self-assessments of how audiobooks helped improve their pronunciation and fluency. This approach helped to explore the lived experiences of EFL pre-service teachers as they used audiobooks to enhance their spoken language skills. Therefore, the findings reflect the experiences of pre-service teachers rather than an external or statistical measurement.

Besides reporting on pronunciation and fluency, this section highlights how the constant practice with audiobooks helped other aspects and areas, such as confidence and motivation.

Figure 1.

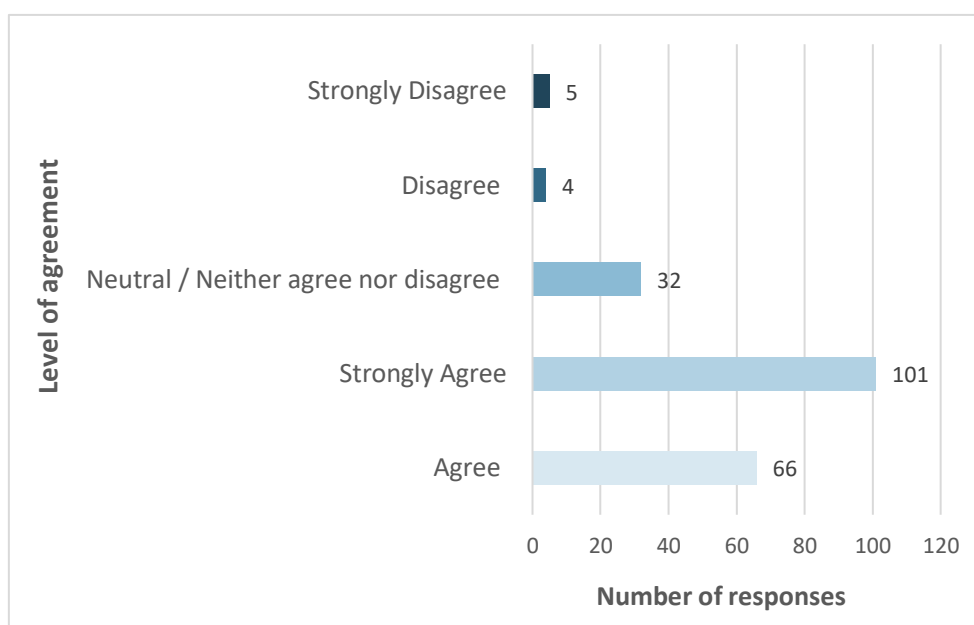
Effectiveness of Audiobook to Improve Pronunciation and Fluency



The findings strongly suggest that 186 out of 208 pre-service teachers found audiobooks helpful. From their experience and perspective, audiobooks proved to be an effective tool for improving their pronunciation and fluency. The low numbers of neutral and disagreement reinforce these findings.

Figure 2.

Usefulness of Audiobooks as a Tool to boost confidence



Confidence is crucial for anyone learning a new language. It is even more vital for pre-service teachers as they will need to use English professionally. After consistent practice, 81% of pre-service teachers (167 out of 208) perceived a positive impact on their self-confidence when speaking. The findings suggest a strong connection between the use of audiobooks and self-assurance in speaking.

Figure 3.

Perceived Impact of Audiobooks as a Tool to boost motivation

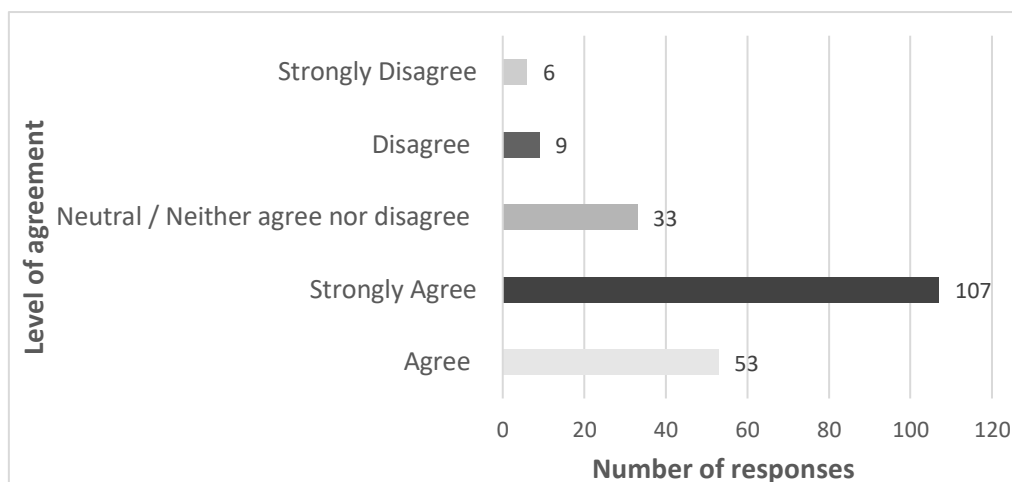


Table 1.

Challenges faced by pre-service teachers when practicing with audiobooks

Focus area	Key insights
Pronunciation & fluency	Most participants struggled with pronouncing unfamiliar words, especially at the pace of the native narrator.
Speed of narration	The pace of the audiobook made it challenging to follow, especially for pre-service teachers who feel their English level is beginner.
Time management & scheduling	Participants often struggled to find quiet time or coordinate practice due to studies, work, and personal life responsibilities.
Vocabulary & comprehension	Technical and unfamiliar terms made it difficult for participants to understand and repeat the content.
Technological barriers	A few faced issues with devices, internet stability, or noise at home making recording difficult.

Despite the challenges, pre-service teachers recognized significant growth in their fluency, confidence, and vocabulary over time. Additionally, 80% of them (N = 166) reported becoming more independent in their studies. The remaining 20% were split, with 17% (N=35) finding the practice somewhat helpful and only 3% (N=7) reporting it did not help develop independence.

Discussion

Audiobooks are considered an alternative and flexible instrument to support language learning, particularly in developing speaking skills. In this study, they served as listening materials and an instructional tool to support EFL pre-service teachers' pronunciation and fluency. 89% of pre-service teachers viewed audiobooks as beneficial highlights. Their relevance in the language learning process, especially when integrated with supportive techniques such as shadowing, was unveiled.

Previous studies have underscored the impact of repeated auditory exposure in improving learners' prosodic and rhythmic features (Saka, 2015; Damra et al., 2025; Wahyuni, 2025). The present findings align with these perspectives. Participants reported improvements in their English pronunciation and fluency. Additionally, it led to increased confidence and motivation. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis helps to explain this relationship. He suggested that language acquisition is facilitated when emotional barriers are reduced.

The shadowing technique—where learners repeat what they hear from the audiobook narrator—appears to have played a key role in fostering pronunciation accuracy. Nevertheless, this method was not without difficulty. Some EFL pre-service teachers, especially those with lower proficiency, indicated challenges in keeping pace with native-level speed. This finding is consistent with research by Karavidaj (2020). He noted that beginner learners often struggle with rapid input.

Similarly, time emerged as a practical challenge. Some pre-service teachers mentioned difficulties integrating audiobook practice into their daily routines due to the overlap of academic and personal responsibilities. Despite this, 80% of them expressed that audiobooks were useful to become more autonomous in their learning process. Independent practice, even if irregular, may promote more sustainable learning habits over time.

Nevertheless, some external limitations must be taken into account. Some pre-service teachers reported that technological problems, such as poor internet connectivity and a lack of quiet spaces, hindered their ability to engage fully with the audiobooks. These challenges are particularly relevant for students living in underserved or shared environments. Therefore, accessibility remains a consideration in the broader adoption of such tools.

Overall, the findings suggest that audiobooks, when thoughtfully integrated into language instruction, offer a supportive complement to traditional methods. Their contribution goes beyond mere exposure to input. They help foster autonomy, boost motivation, and reinforce oral language development. While not a substitute for professors, audiobooks can serve as a practical supplementary resource within teacher education programs focused on English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

The study relied on participants' self-reported perceptions, rather than on direct measures of oral proficiency. While these reflections offer valuable insights into the experiences of EFL pre-service teachers, they do not substitute for empirical assessments. Future research would benefit from incorporating objective measures. They may be speech recordings or pre- and post-assessment tasks to provide a more precise evaluation of improvements in pronunciation and fluency.

Conclusion

The use of audiobooks proved to be a supportive tool for developing English pronunciation and fluency among EFL pre-service teachers. Participants described enhancements in their speaking skills. Additionally, they experienced improvements in their motivation, confidence, and ability to learn independently. Although there were challenges such as fast narration, time management, and technology-related ones, most found the experience meaningful and relevant to their language development.

Audiobooks should be considered a complementary resource within teacher education programs. They can enhance learners' engagement with spoken language and support the overall goal of improving classroom communication. Future research is encouraged to include objective assessments to explore the effectiveness of this approach further..

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