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Using lyrics training as a digital tool to improve the listening skill in intermediate (B1) EFL learners

Uso de Lyrics Training como herramienta digital para mejorar la habilidad auditiva en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera de nivel intermedio (B1)

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Abstract

Developing listening comprehension is one of the greatest challenges for students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly at intermediate levels. For this reason, the interactive digital tool LyricsTraining has gained traction as a methodological strategy to enhance listening skills. The purpose of this study is to analyze the use of this application as a tool for improving listening skills. The research employs a quantitative approach and a descriptive, non-experimental, cross-sectional design. The sample consisted of 30 students at the B1 level of the Quevedo State Technical University. Data were collected through a structured survey using a 5-point Likert scale designed to assess students' perceptions of the impact of the LyricsTraining digital tool on different aspects of listening skills, such as vocabulary recognition, identification of main ideas and specific details, understanding rhythm, intonation, connected speech, and inferring meaning from context. The results were positive, as most participants expressed that their understanding of spoken English had improved, including understanding audio at natural speed and everyday conversations.

Keywords: Listening Skills, English as a foreign language, digital tools, LyricsTraining, level B1.

Resumen

El desarrollo de la comprensión auditiva se presenta como uno de los mayores retos para los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), concretamente en los niveles intermedios. Es por esto que la herramienta digital interactiva LyricsTraining ha tomado fuerza como estrategia metodológica para potenciar la habilidad de listening. La finalidad del presente estudio consiste en analizar el uso de la aplicación como la herramienta aplicada para la mejora de la habilidad de listening. La investigación tiene un enfoque cuantitativo, así como un diseño descriptivo no experimental y transversal. La muestra estuvo conformada por 30 estudiantes pertenecientes al nivel B1 de la Universidad Técnica Estatal de Quevedo. Los datos se recopilaron mediante una encuesta estructurada con la escala Likert de 5 puntos destinada a evaluar la percepción de los estudiantes sobre el impacto de la herramienta digital LyricsTraining en diferentes aspectos de la comprensión auditiva, tales como el reconocimiento del vocabulario, la identificación de ideas principales y detalles específicos, la comprensión del ritmo, la entonación, el habla conectada y la inferencia de significado desde el contexto. Los resultados fueron positivos dado que la mayoría expresó que su comprensión del inglés oral había mejorado, incluyendo la comprensión de audios a velocidad natural y conversaciones cotidianas.

Palabras clave: comprensión auditiva, inglés como lengua extranjera, herramientas digitales, LyricsTraining, nivel B1.

Introduction

In recent decades, the teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have been transformed and driven by the fast integration of technology in educational environments. Widespread internet access, the rise of mobile devices, and the emergence of a wide range of digital learning tools have reshaped the way how students interact with the language.

Listening skills are among the most important in linguistic communication and are fundamental to sustaining and strengthening this new educational reality, as they remain one of the most challenging aspects for English language learners, particularly intermediate students. Understanding English is not a simple task; it requires not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to process auditory information in real time, recognize accents, nuances, and intonation, understand pragmatic cues, and extract them from discourse (Espinoza et al., 2024).

For these reasons, the use of digital technologies has become popular as a promising alternative for enhancing students' listening skills in English through interactive learning experiences. Language acquisition, including English, has changed over time due to technology, progressing from initial computer-assisted instruction programs to current mobile apps. This evolution indicates a move toward individualized and self-directed learning. According to Chen et al. (2021), the development of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has transformed the educational dynamic by integrating resources that encourage active participation and continuous exposure to the language beyond the classroom. New generations of students demand innovative learning styles that take advantage of technology to develop communicative competence.

Silva and Dourado (2025) highlight that student face difficulties when listening English due to speech rate, lack of exposure to varied accents, and limited access to

authentic materials. As a response, digital platforms and multimedia resources have been acknowledged as effective tools to provide more realistic and diverse listening experiences.

In Ecuador, teaching English language has been a national priority in recent decades, particularly since the implementation of the National English Curriculum (Fernández et al., 2025). However, Collaguazo (2025) reports that listening skills remains one of the weakest skills among intermediate learners, due to limited exposure to real contexts, insufficient listening practice in the classroom, and the lack of teaching strategies that promote active listening.

Considering this situation, digital resources have been examined as a way to aid English listening skills via interactive platforms, podcasts, subtitled videos, and other supplementary materials to conventional learning. Research indicates that learning facilitated by technology increases motivation and exposure to the language two crucial components for skill enhancement. (Donoso et al.) Listening skills is crucial for the development of communicative competence and, according to Camaño et al. (2025), should not be understood as a passive practice but as an active and complex cognitive process that involves decoding and interpreting linguistic information.

The goal of this process is to acquire and integrate new information into prior knowledge. However, in many traditional classrooms, listening skills practice is often limited to textbook recordings, scripted dialogues, or teacher-centered explanations that fail to reflect the variety and authenticity of real communication (Valera et al., 2023). This limitation hinders students' ability to transfer what they hear in class to real communicative situations, reducing the potential benefits of listening skills. For intermediate learners, particularly those at the B1 level, the gap between classroom practice and authentic listening situations remains a significant challenge. Therefore, the

integration of digital tools into listening instruction can create a more dynamic, authentic, and autonomous environment for language development (Pérez & Segura, 2025).

Plazas and Ramírez (2025) note that technology-based learning has proven effective in enhancing student motivation and autonomous practice. Among the wide spectrum of digital tools, there are several applications that incorporate music—such as LyricsTraining—which combines entertainment, linguistic authenticity, and contextualized listening practice. Using interactive song lyrics and music videos, students can actively practice listening by completing missing words or phrases. This also strengthens concentration, vocabulary retention, and phonological awareness.

The use of songs in language teaching is not a recent innovation; however, their incorporation into digital contexts has allowed educators to explore their pedagogical potential. Songs build language in natural contexts, expose students to diverse accents and registers, and familiarize them with the rhythm of speech. Moreover, they generate an emotional component that motivates learners and fosters meaningful learning (Barcia et al., 2025). In the case of LyricsTraining, the application combines the pedagogical benefits of music-based learning with the principles of gamification, making listening practice dynamic and engaging. It provides immediate feedback based on scores and selected difficulty levels, which enhances learner engagement.

According to Gómez et al. (2025), digital tools that integrate musical elements improve comprehension by promoting selective attention and contextual vocabulary interpretation. Furthermore, digital platforms that combine visual and auditory elements stimulate cognitive processes, reinforcing memory and vocabulary retention. For B1-level students, such practices significantly improve sound discrimination, auditory training, overall message comprehension, and fluency in real-life communication situations.

Recent research has highlighted LyricsTraining as one of the most accessible and pedagogically sound tools for improving auditory feedback in contexts where English is a foreign language being learned. According to Mendoza et al. (2025) its design allows for an interactive learning experience that focuses on continuous exposure to authentic language through music, enabling students to directly connect vocabulary with authentic communicative situations. Nguyen (2023) argues that the application not only improves listening skills but also promotes phonological awareness and cultural knowledge through songs, as they introduce students to colloquial expressions and linguistic patterns often used in songs. Furthermore, Razali (2022) mentions that the use of LyricsTraining strengthens attention span and motivation, since the gamified way of completing song lyrics encourages participation and repetition, two essential factors for developing listening skills.

Moreover, LyricsTraining promotes self-directed learning in addition to improving listening skills. The tool promotes self-regulation—crucial for digital and linguistic development by allowing students to choose songs based on their preferred difficulty levels and practice pace. With this self-directed approach, learners become active agents in their own educational journey and are encouraged to seek out ongoing opportunities for language exposure outside of the traditional classroom.

The present article aims to analyze the use of the LyricsTraining application as a digital tool to improve listening skills among intermediate-level (B1) EFL students.

The study shows that integrating this platform can bolster active listening abilities and foster a more contextualized learning experience. It also provides a pedagogical examination of technology's role in teaching English, highlighting the necessity of embracing innovative methods that meet the requirements of modern educational settings.

Methods and Materials

Approach and Design

This study takes a quantitative approach, aiming to collect measurable data on the effect and perception of using LyricsTraining for enhancing listening skills in English as a foreign language (EFL). The study uses a descriptive, non-experimental design since variables are not manipulated. Instead, it outlines the observed outcomes of utilizing the digital tool with students. This study is also cross-sectional, as data collection takes place after the application of the pedagogical tool being assessed.

Population and Sample

The analyzed population comprises students from Universidad Técnica de Quevedo, who are enrolled in an intermediate B1 level foreign language program and are aged between 19 and 32 years old. The sample will consist of a purposive and non-probabilistic group of 30 students selected based on their availability and level of linguistic competence. This group was selected due to the students' adequate grammatical and lexical preparation for engaging with authentic materials; nonetheless, challenges in listening skills remain, particularly concerning accents, intonations, and natural speech pace.

Data Collection Instrument

The instrument designed to collect data for this research was a structured survey to measure students' perceptions of the usefulness of the LyricsTraining application as a tool to improve listening skills

This survey was developed using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "Strongly disagree" and 5 represents "Strongly agree," addressing the following criteria: comprehension of words and phrases, identification of main ideas, motivation, relevance

of the musical content, and ease of use of the platform. This allowed for obtaining the quantitative information necessary to analyze aspects related to learning.

The survey was designed in accordance with the research objectives and the B1 level language skills and was validated by a panel of specialists in English language teaching and educational research. This panel consisted of three professors from Universidad Técnica de Quevedo and one headmaster from Escuela Técnica de la Fuerza Aérea (ETFA. This validation process was carried out through individual review, verifying the clarity, appropriateness, and coherence of each item assessing language skills, as conceptualized. Each expert reviewed the instrument, providing observations and suggestions for improvement. Based on these observations, minor linguistic changes were made, and the wording was refined according to the experts' feedback before the final version of the instrument was administered.

Process

The survey was administered after the use of the LyricsTraining tool. To guarantee informed consent, confidentiality of responses, and the voluntary nature of their participation, participants were first briefed on the study's purpose.

After a period of independent practice with the LyricsTraining tool, the students completed the survey designed to evaluate their perception of the tool's impact on improving their listening skills.

The survey was administered virtually and took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. As this was a cross-sectional study, the data for the variables were collected at a single point in time. This establishes a descriptive view of the acceptance and perception of the application by students who have used it as a digital resource to support English language teaching.

Data analysis

Finally, the responses obtained through the structured survey using the Likert scale were statistically processed by calculating frequencies and percentages. This analysis allows for the identification of trends and levels of perception among students regarding the improvement of their English listening skills.

The results are presented in tables and graphs with their corresponding interpretive analysis. This procedure provides a clear overview of the impact that, in the students' opinion, the use of LyricsTraining as a teaching resource has on the listening skills of B1 level students.

Analysis of results

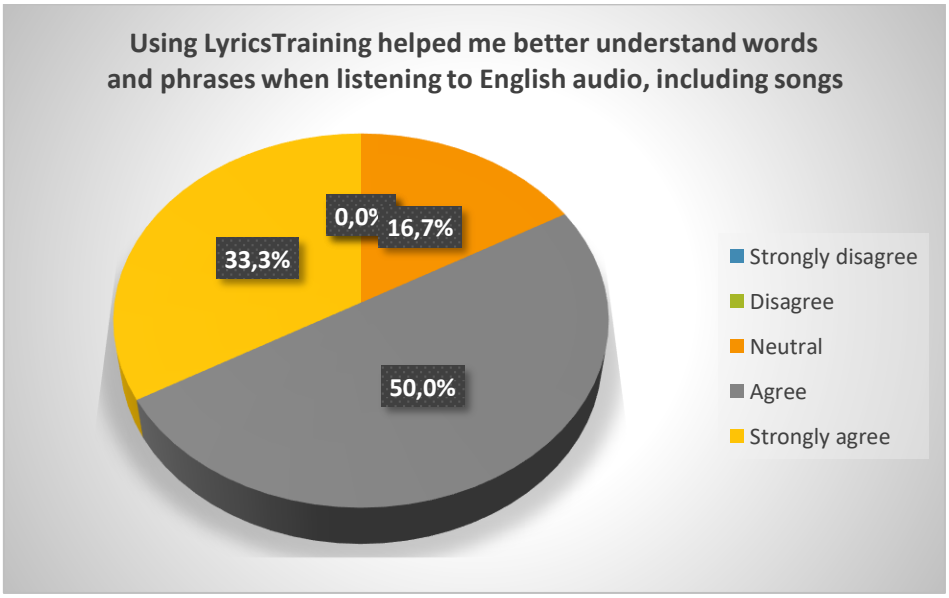
This section presents the results of a Likert-type survey administered to 30 B1-level students after they used the LyricsTraining application as a resource for developing their listening skills. The study focuses on the students' perceptions of the platform as a resource that allows them to develop word comprehension, recognize English intonation and rhythm, and identify main ideas in real-life communication situations.

The data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages to describe trends, levels of acceptance, and the students' evaluations of the learning experience.

Table 1. *Using LyricsTraining helped me better understand words and phrases when listening to English audio, including songs.*

Likert scale	Percentage	Frequency
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	16.6	5
Agree	50.0	15
Strongly agree	33.3	10
Total	100	30

Figure 1. *Using LyricsTraining helped me better understand words and phrases when listening to English audio, including songs*

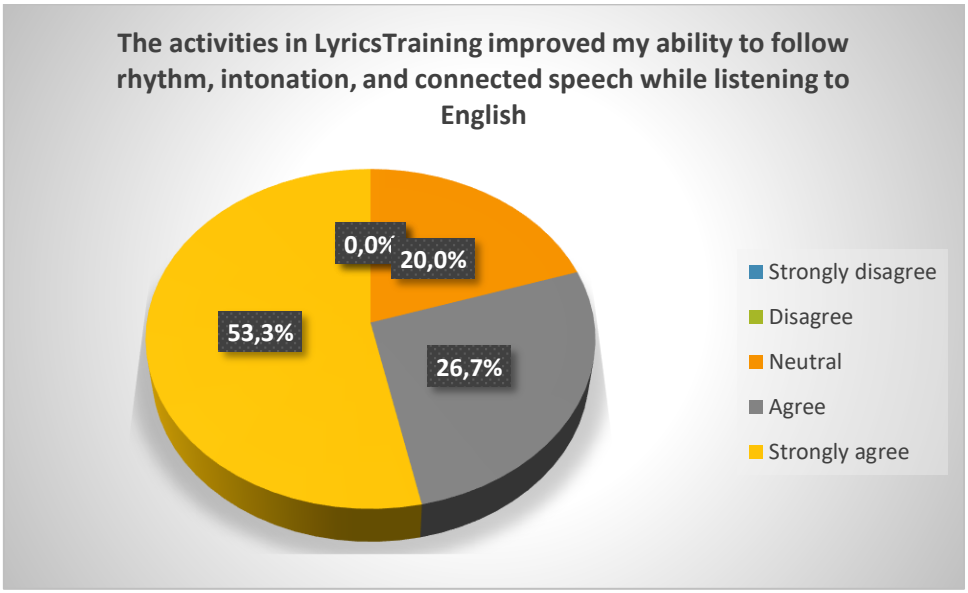


The results indicate that the majority of students perceive that the use of LyricsTraining has had a significant impact on their understanding of English words and phrases, with 83.3% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. This demonstrates a significant positive impact on these students' ability to recognize vocabulary in auditory messages. Only 16.6% of students remained neutral, and no one expressed disagreement. The results suggest that exposure to songs through the LyricsTraining application helps develop listening skills and vocabulary comprehension.

Table 1. *The activities in LyricsTraining improved my ability to follow rhythm, intonation, and connected speech while listening to English*

Likert scale	Percentage	Frequency
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	20	6
Agree	26.6	8
Strongly agree	53.3	16
Total	100	30

Figure 2. *The activities in LyricsTraining improved my ability to follow rhythm, intonation, and connected speech while listening to English*

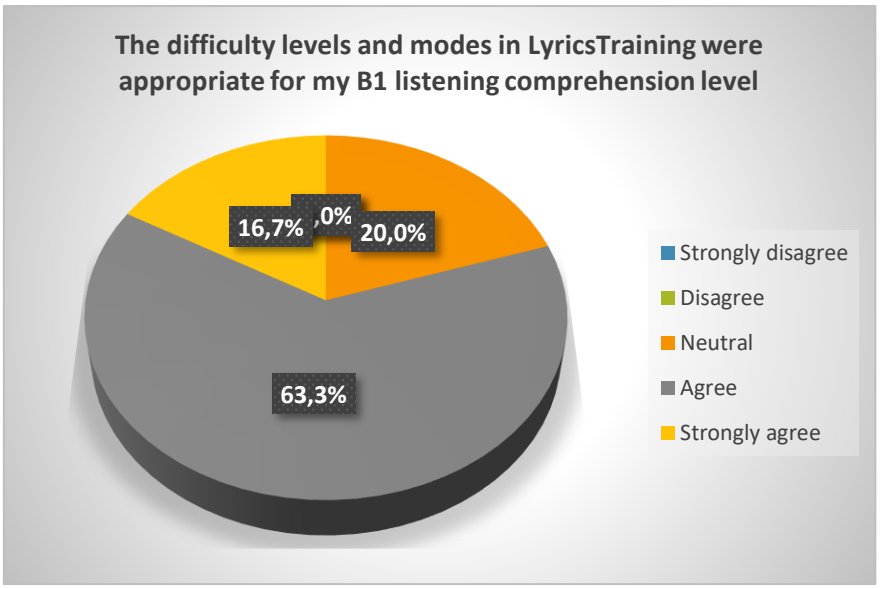


The results reflect a very positive perception of the impact of LyricsTraining on students' ability to keep up with the rhythm, intonation, and connected speech of English learners, as 79.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, showing that the tool contributes to the recognition of oral skills such as fluency, while 20% of students took a neutral position, possibly due to variations in prior exposure to the language or different levels of familiarity with the accents and musical styles of songs.

Table 2. *The difficulty levels and modes in LyricsTraining were appropriate for my B1 listening comprehension level*

Likert scale	Percentage	Frequency
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	20	6
Agree	63.33	19
Strongly agree	16.67	5
Total	100	30

Figure 3. *The difficulty levels and modes in LyricsTraining were appropriate for my B1 listening comprehension level.*

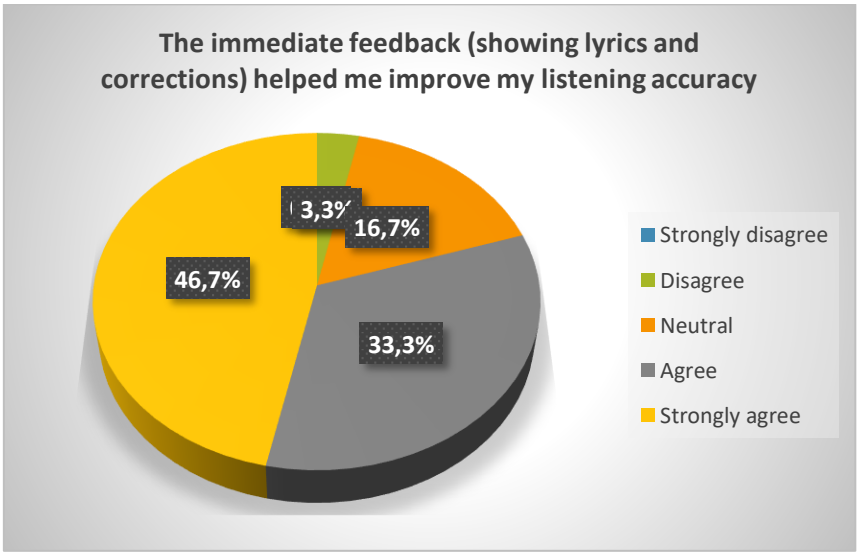


The results show a positive assessment of the suitability of the difficulty levels and game types of the LyricsTraining tool for B1 level students. 80% of the students considered the tool suitable, agreeing or strongly agreeing that it matched their listening comprehension level. This result is due to the fact that the activities offered by the application were neither too easy nor excessively difficult, maintaining a balance that promotes gradual learning. However, 20% of the responses were neutral, indicating that a small percentage of students may require additional tools to supplement their learning.

Table 3. *The immediate feedback (showing lyrics and corrections) helped me improve my listening accuracy*

Likert scale	Percentage	Frequency
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	3.33	1
Neutral	16.67	5
Agree	33.33	10
Strongly agree	46.67	14
Total	100	30

Figure 4. *The immediate feedback (showing lyrics and corrections) helped me improve my listening accuracy*

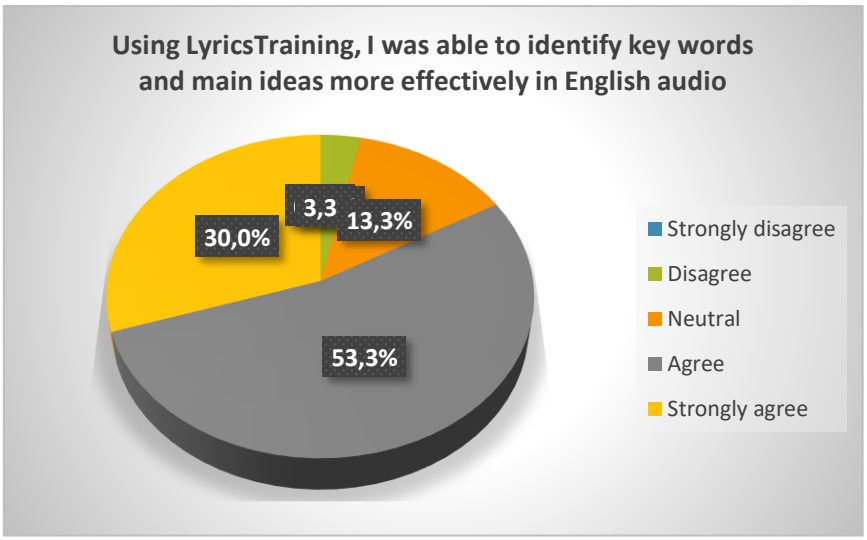


The results show that the majority of students perceived that the immediate feedback provided by LyricsTraining contributed positively to improving their listening skills. Eighty percent of participants expressed agreement or strong agreement, while only 3.33% disagreed and 16.67% remained neutral. This data demonstrates that automatic corrections and feedback promote auditory recognition of words and phrases.

Table 4. *Using LyricsTraining, I was able to identify key words and main ideas more effectively in English audio*

Likert scale	Percentage	Frequency
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	3.33	1
Neutral	13.33	4
Agree	53.33	16
Strongly agree	30.00	9
Total	100	30

Figure 5. *Using LyricsTraining, I was able to identify key words and main ideas more effectively in English audio*

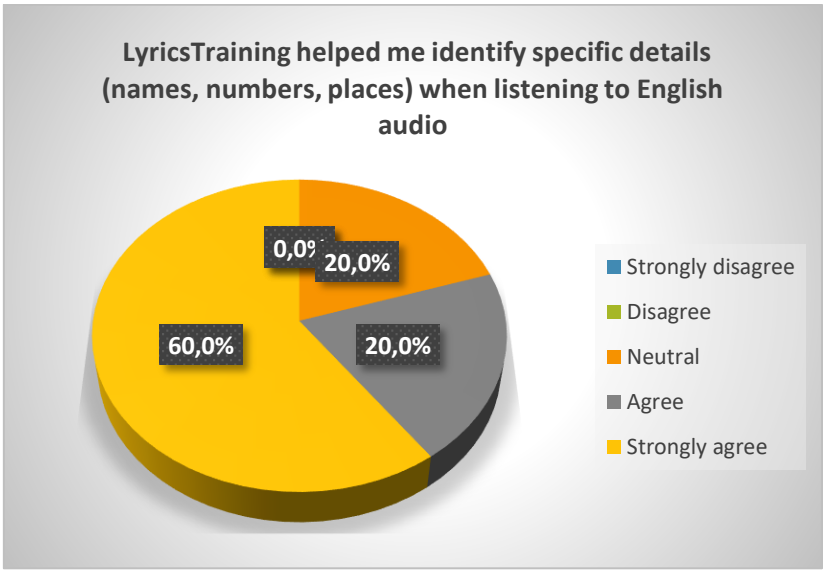


The results show that the majority of students perceive an improvement in identifying keywords and main ideas when using LyricsTraining. 83.33% of the students surveyed agree or strongly agree with this statement, demonstrating that this tool helps develop listening skills in English. Just 3.33% expressed disagreement, and 13.33% remained neutral, this indicates that repeated exposure to authentic songs and audio facilitates familiarization with the language's semantic patterns. Furthermore, the interactive nature of the platform promotes concentration and active participation during listening.

Table 5. *LyricsTraining helped me identify specific details (names, numbers, places) when listening to English audio*

Likert scale	Percentage	Frequency
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	20	6
Agree	20	6
Strongly agree	60	18
Total	100	30

Figure 6. *LyricsTraining helped me identify specific details (names, numbers, places) when listening to English audio*

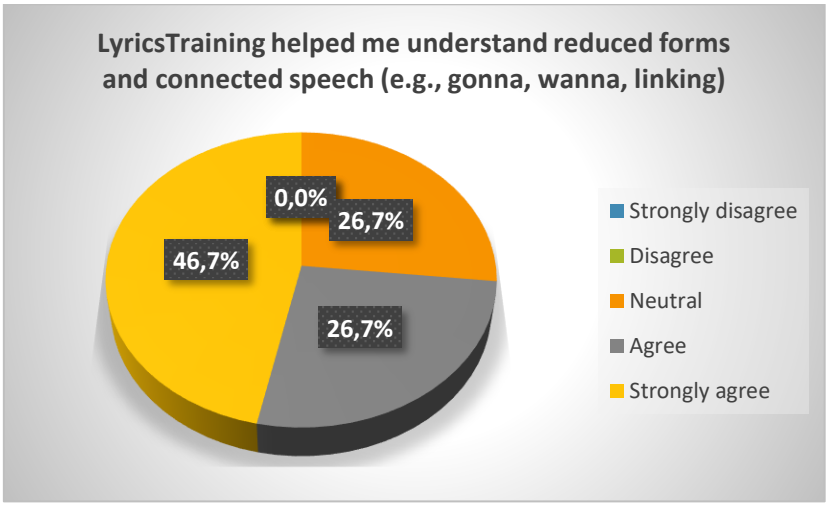


The 80% of students, including those who agreed and strongly agreed, found the LyricsTraining tool effective for identifying specific details such as names, numbers, and places. No students expressed disagreement, although 20% remained neutral. The data indicate a clearly positive perception of LyricsTraining for strengthening listening skills and improving content comprehension accuracy. The absence of disagreement suggests that all participants found the platform useful for this type of auditory recognition, while the neutral response suggests that some students may have needed additional practice.

Table 6. *LyricsTraining helped me understand reduced forms and connected speech (e.g., gonna, wanna, linking)*

Likert scale	Percentage	Frequency
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	26.67	8
Agree	26.67	8
Strongly agree	46.67	14
Total	100	30

Figure 7. *LyricsTraining helped me understand reduced forms and connected speech (e.g., gonna, wanna, linking).*

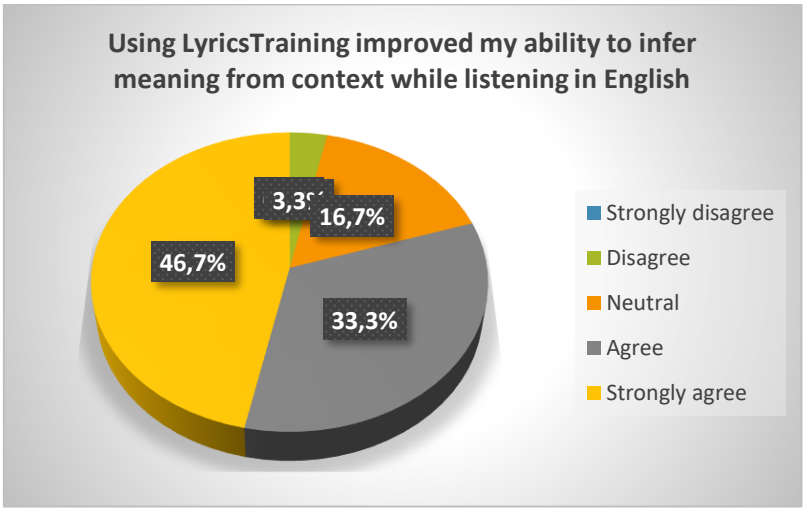


The results show that LyricsTraining improved the recognition of reduced forms and continuous speech in English, with 73.34% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. This progress is key, as these characteristics are typical of authentic English and are often a challenge for intermediate-level learners. The remaining 26.67% remained neutral, indicating that some students still require more exposure to master these phonological elements. However, the absence of disagreements demonstrates an overall positive assessment. These improvements are attributed to consistent exposure to authentic audio recordings where natural pronunciation predominates.

Table 7. *Using LyricsTraining improved my ability to infer meaning from context while listening in English*

Likert scale	Percentage	Frequency
Strongly disagree	0.00	0
Disagree	3.33	1
Neutral	16.67	5
Agree	33.33	10
Strongly agree	46.67	14
Total	100.00	30

Figure 8. *Using LyricsTraining improved my ability to infer meaning from context while listening in English*

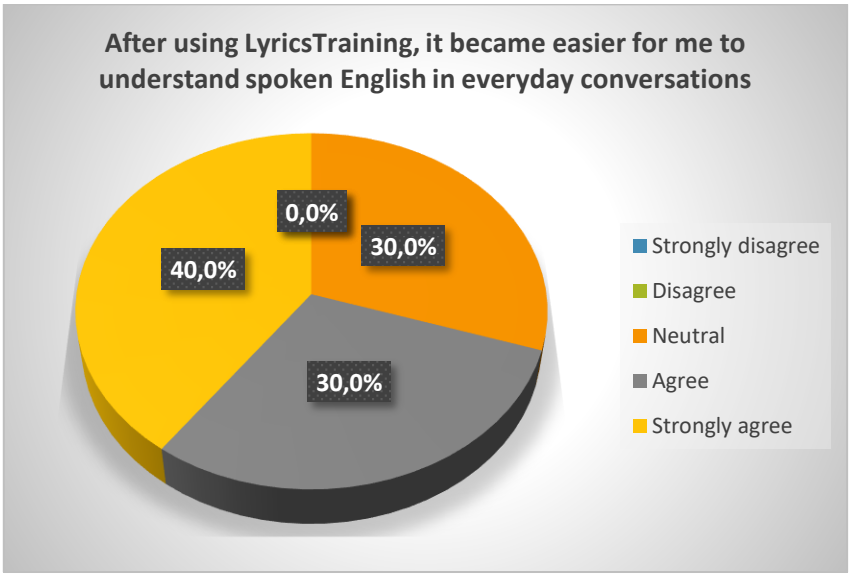


The 80% of students felt that LyricsTraining improved their ability to infer meaning from context, an essential skill for progressing to higher levels of listening comprehension. This result indicates that even when not understanding every word, students are able to reconstruct the overall meaning of the message, which is key in real-life communication situations. The 16.67% neutral response suggests that some students are still developing this skill, and only 3.33% disagreed.

Table 8. *After using LyricsTraining, it became easier for me to understand spoken English in everyday conversations*

Likert scale	Percentage	Frequency
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	30	9
Agree	30	9
Strongly agree	40	12
Total	100	30

Figure 1. *After using LyricsTraining, it became easier for me to understand spoken English in everyday conversations*

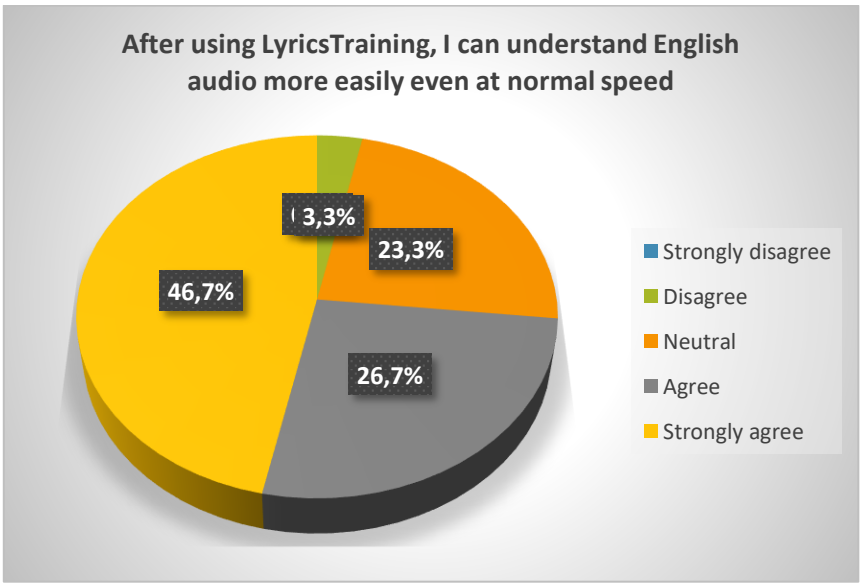


The results indicate that LyricsTraining significantly contributed to improving students' English comprehension in everyday situations. With 70% agreeing or strongly agreeing, students perceived an improvement in understanding English used in everyday conversations after using LyricsTraining. This finding is important because understanding language in natural contexts involves recognizing frequent vocabulary, common structures, and patterns typical of daily interaction. The 30% who remained neutral suggests that some students might need more exposure to consolidate this skill, but the absence of disagreements indicates that none had negative perceptions.

Table 9. *After using LyricsTraining, I can understand English audio more easily even at normal speed*

Likert scale	Percentage	Frequency
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	3.33	1
Neutral	23.33	7
Agree	26.67	8
Strongly agree	46.67	14
Total	100	30

Figure 2. *After using LyricsTraining, I can understand English audio more easily even at normal speed*



The results show that 73.34% of students stated that LyricsTraining helped them better understand English audio at normal speed, representing significant progress for the B1 level, where a gradual adaptation to the natural pace of the language is expected. The fact that only 3.33% disagreed indicates that almost all students experienced a noticeable improvement, while 23.33% of students were neutral, suggesting that some students may have needed more time to adapt to faster speeds

Conclusions

The evidence provided by the results of this research relates to the use of LyricsTraining as a tool for developing the listening skills of B1 level students. The research subjects achieved better recognition of words and phrases when interacting with English audio, especially in the case of songs and authentic materials. This shows how the use of musical content encourages more natural and meaningful learning, once students are exposed to real English vocabulary and expressions in an innovative, enjoyable, and motivating context.

According to the results, most students showed progress in identifying main ideas and recognizing specific details such as names, facts, and places, demonstrating significant advances in the literal comprehension of spoken texts. They also showed progress in identifying rhythm, intonation, and connected pronunciation, characteristics of spoken English that often present challenges for students at this level. These improvements were linked to constant interaction with authentic audio at natural speed, representing greater exposure to the authentic language and a gradual adaptation to its phonological features.

The study also corroborated the development of inferential strategies by the students, as they were able to identify meanings from context, a key skill at the B1 level that allows students to construct knowledge independently. Furthermore, the students expressed that the automatic feedback offered by the platform is a determining factor in improving their listening skills, as it provides constant self-correction and reinforcement of what they have learned.

Finally, the participants considered the difficulty levels and game modes appropriate, which ensures that the tool adapts to their linguistic needs. The fact that there were no dissenting responses to most of the survey questions is a clear indication of the effectiveness of the LyricsTraining platform as an innovative and dynamic training resource that strengthens the development of listening skills.

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