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*The Impact of Audio-Readings on the Pronunciation of Past Tense Verbs in EFL Students*

*El impacto de las lecturas de audio en la pronunciación de los verbos en tiempo pasado en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera*

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## Resumen

El presente estudio investiga la efectividad de los textos con audio para mejorar la pronunciación de estudiantes de inglés enfocándose en el pasado de los verbos regulares. Para desarrollar este estudio la población fue escogida de una universidad pública del Ecuador. Los participantes fueron 30 estudiantes entre mujeres y varones con una edad promedio de 19 años. La universidad facilitó sesiones en línea para esta experimentación. El investigador seleccionó dos grupos, el grupo experimental y el de control. El grupo experimental utilizó un texto con audio mientras que los estudiantes del grupo de control solo leyeron el texto sin audio. Los estudiantes de ambos grupos rindieron un examen antes de la experimentación y un examen después de la misma, los cuales consistieron en grabar sus voces mientras leían el texto. Estas grabaciones fueron comparadas y se determinó una diferencia significativa en el mejoramiento en la pronunciación a favor del grupo experimental, concluyendo que los textos con audio son beneficiosos para mejorar la pronunciación. El conocimiento previo de los docentes de Inglés acerca de proceso de aplicación de lecturas con audio para propósitos pedagógicos fue investigado a través de entrevistas a los profesores. La percepción de los docentes y estudiantes acerca de la implementación de los textos con audio recibió una atención especial en este proyecto a través de encuestas para profesores y estudiantes.

**Palabras Clave:** Pronunciación; textos con audio; verbos regulares en pasado.

## Abstract

The present study investigates the effectiveness of Audio-readings to improve the pronunciation of EFL learners focusing on regular past tense verbs. In order to develop this study, the population was taken from a public university of Ecuador. The participants were 30 students among boys and girls whose average age was 19. The university facilitated online sessions for the current experimentation. The researcher selected two groups: experimental and the control one. The experimental group used an Audio-reading while the students from the control group just read the text without audio. Students from both groups took a pre-test and a post-test which consisted in recording their voices while reading a text. These recordings were compared and it was found as a result a significant difference in the improvement of pronunciation in favor of the experimental group, concluding that Audio-readings are beneficial for the improvement of pronunciation. The

EFL teachers' prior knowledge about the process of applying Audio-Readings for pedagogical purposes was researched through a teachers' interview. Teachers and students' perceptions about the implementation of Audio-readings received a special attention in this research through surveys for teachers and students.

**Keywords:** Pronunciation; texts with audio; regular verbs in past.

## Resumo

O presente estudo investiga a eficácia de textos de áudio na melhoria da pronúncia de alunos de inglês, concentrando-se no pretérito dos verbos regulares. Para desenvolver este estudo, a população foi escolhida de uma universidade pública no Equador. Os participantes foram 30 alunos entre mulheres e homens com idade média de 19 anos. A universidade facilitou sessões online para esta experimentação. O pesquisador selecionou dois grupos, o grupo experimental e o grupo controle. O grupo experimental utilizou um texto com áudio enquanto os alunos do grupo controle leram apenas o texto sem áudio. Os alunos de ambos os grupos fizeram uma prova antes da experimentação e uma prova depois dela, que consistia em gravar suas vozes enquanto liam o texto. Essas gravações foram comparadas e constatou-se diferença significativa na melhora da pronúncia a favor do grupo experimental, concluindo que textos com áudio são benéficos para melhorar a pronúncia. O conhecimento prévio de professores de inglês sobre o processo de aplicação de leituras de áudio para fins pedagógicos foi investigado por meio de entrevistas com professores. A percepção de professores e alunos sobre a implementação de textos em áudio recebeu atenção especial neste projeto por meio de pesquisas para professores e alunos..

**Palavras-chave:** Pronúncia; textos com áudio; verbos regulares no passado.

## Introduction

When learning any language, it is important to be conscious about the importance of communication. The communicative competence is not the result of an isolated process, it needs the integration of the language skills to be successful (Abbas, 2012). The person who sends the message and the one who receives it must take into consideration the importance of pronunciation when trying to code and decode the message, it means understanding the meaning correctly (Abbas and Narjes, 2016). If people want to be understood, the information they are transmitting should be clear in terms of pronunciation. Therefore, the pronouncer gives correct utterance to all the

required sounds (Blattner, 2009) taking into account the segmental and suprasegmental features of the English language (Saber & Maleki, 2015).

Many learners and also teachers do not pay attention to pronunciation. Some of them underestimate it and ignore it. They believe that it is not as relevant as grammar and vocabulary (Prashant, 2018). Even though pronunciation is a relevant part in EFL learning, restraint attention has been given to it in school curriculum, teachers' planning and other aspects in the teaching-learning process (Benítez, et al., 2020). Pronunciation needs to be treated differently and it has the necessity to be involved in the process of communication with other skills as well (Stegall, 2021). In Ecuador, English is seen as an important tool for communication and for approaching opportunities to be successful in different parts of the world. For this reason, Ecuadorian English teachers recognize the relevance of English and are making a substantial effort to keep up with the professional demands related to teaching English as a Foreign Language for communicative purposes (Orosz, 2021). The problem arises when those teachers feel uncertain about pronunciation, maybe because they are not native speakers, and they think they do not have the authority to be good models at pronunciation. However, they must manage the English sound system and how it works (Huwari, 2015). Additionally, they are reluctant to teach pronunciation due to the lack of enough educational resources to practice it (Macdonald, 2002). These facts accompanied by the lack of interest in teaching it, derives in poor pronunciation activities.

Teacher's role are the ones who facilitates students' learning (Leu, 2005). Also, they are the mediators of the language learning and who select the content, determine the focus of the classroom activity and the ones who decide the exercises they will be exposed to (Van Den, 2016). EFL teachers are responsible of teaching the new sounds, words, sentences phrases and arranging appropriate materials for understandable pronunciation in their EFL classes (Abbas, 2016b). For these reasons EFL teachers are supposed to have at least, a native-like pronunciation skill and try to get a pronunciation that is acceptable and intelligible (Gowhary, 2016), in order to support their students.

The current study "The Impact of Audio-Readings on the Pronunciation of Past Tense Verbs in EFL students" aims to provide a response to one specific research questions: How does the implementation of Audio-Readings impact EFL students' pronunciation of past tense regular verbs. This project has researched previews studies in the field of this investigation. Different authors have made important contributions about the difficulties that EFL learners present in

pronunciation; specifically, when pronouncing the –ed morpheme of regular verbs in past and the benefits on using Audio-Readings.

Huwari (2015) conducted a work about the importance of pronunciation in Arab society which main objectives were to describe the impact of pronunciation on the communication process, the role of teaching and the pedagogical implication. One of the most relevant conclusions was that in order to help students improve their communication, it was necessary the implementation of audio material in order to get an effective pronunciation in English.

Al-Saim (2021) worked with a sample of twenty English language students from a college of Sciences and Art. The aim of the research was to identify their –ed ending pronunciation problems and possible solutions after analyzing data qualitatively. It was concluded that when using an audio and a written text at the same time, in this case a list of regular verbs, students identified that there were three different ways of pronouncing the regular verbs in past. Therefore, teachers were recommended to use audio and texts with pupils to make them realize about the different ways to perform the verbs -ed.

Another relevant work was the one held by Muhammad (2021) at elementary levels in a public school in Pakistan. In this work the author intended to prove the effectiveness of Audio-readings on improving pronunciation. It was observed that there was a significant difference in the improvement of pronunciation after using the text and the audio by the students who belong to the group which was under the treatment.

Other studies focus on the effect of using drilling and color- coding language teaching techniques (Carranza et al., 2020) to improve the ed pronunciation of the verbs. Lindawati, et al.(2021) applied the use of Role playing Technique for improving Speaking Ability in the simple Past Test.

The current research has some things in common with the studies presented above. It takes into consideration the importance of pronunciation for a good communication, the problems that students present when using the regular verbs in past and the effectiveness of the use of a story and its audio version to get the results expected. The findings of this study really contribute to the existing literature and will benefit the Language Center from the university where the investigation was held.

## **Method**

### **Setting and Participants**

The population of this study were 30 students from elementary level at a public University from Ecuador who need to complete the language requisite of three levels of EFL in order to graduate from their degree. The sample of this research were two groups of 15 participants each making a total sample of 30 students. The average age of the students was 19. Besides, two EFL teachers participated in this research, who were the ones who facilitated the groups of the students for this project. One of the groups was called the control group and the other one the experimental group in which the suggested procedure (Audio-readings) was implemented to determine the benefits for EFL pronunciation.

### **Procedures**

The research process started with a well elaborated literature review which was focused on different relevant information related to the topic. The research covered aspects about main concepts and characteristics of pronunciation, as well other theories that affect pronunciation like integrated skills, receptive skills and the use of audio-readings in EFL classrooms.

Once the literature review was completed the research started with the approval of a letter of acceptance given by the director of a language department from a public university which gave the facilities to come out with this study. For this research project the method used was a quantitative-qualitative approach.

In order to respond to the first research question, in the first session, the researcher delivered to the students from both groups a short Reading called *The House on the Hill - Part 1*. The two groups (control and experimental) read the story and recorded their voices while reading it. The recordings were sent through WhatsApp to the researcher. These recordings were analyzed by using an instrument called *Table - Pronunciation of The Regular Verbs in Past (ed)*, this activity allowed the researcher to diagnosed students' accuracy on the pronunciation of the three forms of pronunciation for the past of regular verbs /t/, /d/, /ɪd/, and analyzed the percentage of errors. It was extremely necessary to identify the starting point of students' pronunciation at both groups. After this process was held; the suggested treatment (Audio-readings) was applied only to the experimental group. The treatment was developed from session 2 to session 7, in which this group read silently fragments of the same instrument Part 1 of the story while listening to the audio of the reading. The control group worked on the same activity, reading out loud the text but without audio. Once the treatment was finished, in session eight, which was the last one, both groups read the



same Part 1 of the reading and recorded their voices. The recordings were sent to the researcher by WhatsApp again. The researcher analyzed, tabulated and presented the results by comparing the data obtained. The outcome permitted to determine how students performed the pronunciation of the regular verbs in past (ed-endings) after the suggested experimentation.

### Results and discussion

In the following section the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data obtained from the experimental procedure developed between the control group and the experimental group of students is shown and represented using tables which facilitate the comprehension of the results gotten.

### How does the implementation of Audio-Readings impact EFL students' pronunciation of past tense regular verbs?

**Table 1**

*Comparative Table Pre-Test vs Post-Test, control group*

Student	% Pre-Test (effectiveness on pronunciation)	% Post-Test (effectiveness on pronunciation)
S1	71,43	95,24
S2	19,05	80,95
S3	38,10	47,62
S4	28,57	47,62
S5	19,05	28,57
S6	38,10	42,86
S7	47,62	47,62
S8	38,10	80,95
S9	14,29	57,14
S10	57,14	66,67



S11	42,86	42,86
S12	9,52	9,52
S13	52,38	85,71
S14	19,05	38,10
S15	61,90	95,24
<b>Average</b>	<b>37,14 %</b>	<b>57,78 %</b>

**Table 2**

*Comparative Table Pre- Test vs Post Test, experimental group*

Student	% Pre-Test (efectiveness on pronunciation)	% Post-Test (efectiveness on pronunciation)
S1	23,81	80,95
S2	14,29	66,67
S3	38,10	76,19
S4	23,81	71,43
S5	38,10	85,71
S6	85,71	100,00
S7	23,81	61,90
S8	47,62	66,67
S9	23,81	80,95
S10	0,00	100,00
S11	23,81	47,62
S12	61,90	100,00
S13	76,19	100,00
S14	23,81	66,67
S15	33,33	80,95

Average	35,87 %	79,05 %
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The analysis of these results shows that the students from the control group based on the application of the Pre-Test obtained an average of 37,14% of effectiveness in the three ways of pronouncing past tense regular verbs. After eight sessions of a traditional class where a reading was applied the participants from the control group took a Post-Test and the average obtained was 57,78% of effectiveness at pronouncing the past tense of regular verbs in general. It is shown that the application of a traditional class where a reading was applied helped the students to improve their pronunciation of the past tense of regular verbs, 'ed' ending. Table 1 shows that the majority of students from the control group improved their pronunciation after the reading treatment. Montaser (2020), manifests that reading aloud is one of the factors that enables learners to develop students reading fluency and pronunciation. Based on the statistical results found and on the theoretical point of view of the author mentioned, it could be said that traditional classes have some positive effect on the English pronunciation of the students where EFL teachers become models of the language and helps them to improve their pronunciation.

The analysis of the experimental group revealed that the application of audio-readings contributes in a great percentage to the improvement of pronunciation of regular past tense verbs. Table 2 shows that the average in the pre-test is 35,87% of effectiveness at pronouncing the past tense of regular verbs in the three past tense forms which is similar to the percentage 37,14% obtained by the students from the control group in relation to the pre-test. This similarity in percentages on the pre-test obtained by both groups indicated that this study was reliable because both groups the control and the experimental were homogeneous and the initial knowledge in pronunciation was similar before the treatment. The average obtained by the experimental group in the post-test after the Audio-Reading treatment is 79,05% which evidence that the use of audio-readings is a powerful tool that EFL teachers have in order to improve students' pronunciation. This experimental procedure confirms the belief of some researches who manifest that audio stories play a significant role for students to learn pronunciation and help learners to develop an ability for improving listening and speaking as well as pronunciation (Jalal, 2013). Through this experimentation it has been proved that recorded materials and audio books are considered tools used for educational purposes which bring lots of benefits to improve the pronunciation skills of the students and give confidence to learn language pronunciation. Learners start understanding new items through

receptive skills, then later move on to the productive use (Masduqi, 2016) which is the objective in a real communication context.

**Table 3**

*Comparative Table Pre-Test vs Post- Test, control group /t/ ending*

Student	% Pre-Test (effectiveness on pronunciation)	% Post-Test (effectiveness on pronunciation)
S1	60,00	100,00
S2	0,00	90,00
S3	20,00	30,00
S4	20,00	40,00
S5	10,00	20,00
S6	10,00	20,00
S7	20,00	30,00
S8	40,00	80,00
S9	0,00	60,00
S10	30,00	70,00
S11	10,00	40,00
S12	10,00	0,00
S13	50,00	80,00
S14	0,00	30,00
S15	60,00	100,00
<b>Average</b>	<b>22,67%</b>	<b>52,67%</b>

**Table 4***Comparative Table Pre- Test vs Past- Test, experimental group /t/ ending*

Student	% Pre-Test (effectiveness on pronunciation)	% Post-Test (effectiveness on pronunciation)
S1	10,00	90,00
S2	0,00	60,00
S3	30,00	70,00
S4	10,00	70,00
S5	40,00	90,00
S6	90,00	100,00
S7	0,00	50,00
S8	40,00	60,00
S9	20,00	70,00
S10	0,00	100,00
S11	10,00	50,00
S12	50,00	100,00
S13	70,00	100,00
S14	0,00	60,00
S15	10,00	70,00
<b>Average</b>	<b>25,33%</b>	<b>76,00%</b>

In table 3, the pronunciation of the group of regular past tense verbs ending /t/ such as finished, walked, watched is analyzed. It is observed that the average obtained by the students from the control group increased in a 30% after the students received a traditional reading session, but the experimental group rose the average in 50,67% after the treatment received with the audio-reading. Yulduz (2021) gives a suggestion that says that listening to examples of authentic speech is the most obvious way to improve pronunciation. The statistical analysis during this study and the contributions made by the author clearly demonstrates that the audio-reading procedure is more

effective than just a traditional reading session because students have the opportunity to be in contact with an authentic speech which guides them in recognizing the correct pronunciation. In the case of the pronunciation of regular past tense verbs, Audio-Readings help students to be aware on how they pronounce the 't' ending of past tense verbs properly. Candice (2022) says that if students have the chance to combine audio texts with the printed version they can memorize correct pronunciation and spelling.

**Table 5**

*Comparative Table Pre- Test vs Post-Test, control group /d/ ending*

Student	% Pre-Test (effectiveness on pronunciation)	% Post-Test (effectiveness on pronunciation)
S1	87,50	87,50
S2	37,50	62,50
S3	37,50	50,00
S4	37,50	75,00
S5	12,50	50,00
S6	50,00	50,00
S7	62,50	75,00
S8	37,50	100,00
S9	12,50	62,50
S10	87,50	62,50
S11	62,50	37,50
S12	0,00	0,00
S13	75,00	100,00
S14	25,00	25,00
S15	75,00	100,00
Average	46,67%	62,50%

**Table 6***Comparative Table Pre-Test vs Post-Test, experimental group /d/ ending*

Student	% Pre-Test (effectiveness on pronunciation)	% Post-Test (effectiveness on pronunciation)
S1	25,00	75,00
S2	12,50	75,00
S3	62,50	87,50
S4	37,50	75,00
S5	37,50	75,00
S6	100,00	100,00
S7	25,00	62,50
S8	62,50	87,50
S9	12,50	87,50
S10	0,00	100,00
S11	37,50	62,50
S12	75,00	100,00
S13	87,50	100,00
S14	50,00	75,00
S15	50,00	87,50
<b>Average</b>	<b>45,00%</b>	<b>83,33%</b>

The following verbs: turned, smiled, lived, happened, opened, covered, moved were analyzed in relation to the pronunciation of regular past tense verbs with ending /d/. Table 5 that corresponds to the control group shows that the average of pronunciation effectiveness obtained by students in the pre-test is 46,67% and after the regular reading session was hold the students reached the percentage of 62,50. Table 6 indicates that the experimental group in the pre-test had an average of 45% and after the treatment the group obtained an average of 83,33 %. As it is perceived the data obtained in this research is reliable since the initial average scores gotten by students from both groups are quite similar which tells that the initial levels of the two groups were even. After

the treatment, it is noticed that the experimental group got more progress on pronunciation. Al-Saim (2021) manifests that the pronunciation of the regular past tense ending inflectional morpheme 'ed' causes serious problems and leads to ineffective communication. Some researchers believe that audio stories play a significant role for students to learn pronunciation and help learners to develop the ability in listening and speaking as well as pronunciation. Jalal (2013) cites that it is a fact that listening to stories usually apply spoken narrative and students understand how the sounds are pronounced. Taking into consideration the statistical analysis obtained and the contributions of the authors cited, it is possible to say that EFL teachers must pay attention to the pronunciation of regular past tense verbs because an effective communication depends on a great percentage on how well the ending of verbs are pronounced. Audio-Readings are a powerful tool that teachers have in order to help students to improve the pronunciation of regular past tense verbs, as some authors have already claimed, and which was demonstrated in this study. Using this kind of material involves de Receptive skills at the same time, and if students are good listeners and careful readers as well and develop their listening and reading skills by practicing them, they will feel confident to communicate in any situation (Sreena & Ilankumaran, 2018)

**Table 7**

*Comparative Table Pre-Test vs Post-Test, control group /Id/ ending*

Student	% Pre-Test (effectiveness on pronunciation)	% Post-Test (effectiveness on pronunciation)
S1	66,67	100,00
S2	33,33	100,00
S3	100,00	100,00
S4	33,33	0,00
S5	66,67	0,00
S6	100,00	100,00
S7	100,00	33,33
S8	33,33	33,33
S9	66,67	33,33



S10	66,67	66,67
S11	100,00	66,67
S12	33,33	66,67
S13	0,00	66,67
S14	66,67	100,00
S15	33,33	66,67
<b>Average</b>	<b>60,00%</b>	<b>62,22%</b>

**Table 8**

*Comparative Table Pre-Test vs Post-Test, experimental group /Id/ ending*

Student	% Pre-Test (efectiveness on pronunciation)	% Post-Test (efectiveness on pronunciation)
S1	66,67	66,67
S2	66,67	66,67
S3	0,00	66,67
S4	33,33	66,67
S5	33,33	100,00
S6	33,33	100,00
S7	100,00	100,00
S8	33,33	33,33
S9	66,67	100,00
S10	0,00	100,00
S11	33,33	0,00
S12	66,67	100,00
S13	66,67	100,00
S14	33,33	66,67
S15	66,67	100,00
<b>Average</b>	<b>46,67%</b>	<b>77,78%</b>

From the analysis of the past tense regular verbs group which ending is /Id/, (needed, wanted, shouted), it is shown in Table 7 that the average of effectiveness of pronunciation in the pre-test is 60%. After the regular reading sessions, it is shown that the average in the post-test is 62,22 %. As it is noticed there was not too much improvement on the pronunciation of the students from the control group, regarding to the comparison between the pre-test and the post-test. On the other hand, analyzing the experimental group Table 8 shows that the average of effectiveness of pronunciation in the pre-test is 46,67% and the average after the Audio-Reading treatment is 77,78%. Besides improving pronunciation on -Id ending, students presented a good performance in intonation, accent and pitch when recording themselves after the experimentation. Cakir (2012) states that there are positive benefits when using supported audio materials for EFL learners to promote correct pronunciation because audios bring real and authentic language into the classroom including different accents, intonations, pitches, etc. Muhammad, et al. (2021) point that in modern times recorded materials and audio books are tools used for educational purposes and they help students to improve the pronunciation skills and give them confidence to learn language pronunciation. From the analysis of the contributions of the authors above and the analysis of the data obtained in this research it is determined again that the use of audio-readings helped students to higher the percentage of effectiveness of pronunciation of regular past tense verbs.

### **Conclusions**

The result of the study proved that the use of Audio-readings is an effective tool for improving students' pronunciation of the regular verbs in the simple past tense 'ed' ending. The experimental group of students showed improvement in the pronunciation of the three forms /t/, /d/, /Id/ of simple past-tense regular verbs after the application of the treatment. Audio-readings helped learners to identify the differences of the three forms and through imitation they obtained the correct pronunciation. In this way the research question was answered. This article will be the starting point for other studies since it has just covered one small part of the big world of verbs. There are other parts of the speech that might be improved in terms of pronunciation as well.

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