UNIVERSIDAD BOLIVARIANA DEL ECUADOR

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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TEMA

Extensive reading with audio assistance to improve reading comprehension among first-year high school students at a private school

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DEDICATORIA

This work is dedicated to all those who, through their guidance, encouragement, and support, have contributed to the completion of this study. It is also dedicated to every learner and educator who believes in the transformative power of education and continuous learning. Their commitment and perseverance remain a constant source of inspiration.

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RESUMEN

El presente estudio analiza el impacto de un programa de lectura extensiva asistida por audio en el desarrollo de la comprensión lectora de estudiantes de primer año de bachillerato en una institución educativa privada del Ecuador. La investigación surge a partir de las dificultades persistentes que presentan los estudiantes en la comprensión de textos escritos en inglés como lengua extranjera, especialmente en el nivel A2 del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas (MCER). El objetivo principal fue determinar si la combinación de los principios de la lectura extensiva con el apoyo de audio contribuye a mejorar la comprensión literal, inferencial, léxica y crítica de los estudiantes. Se empleó un enfoque de investigación acción con métodos mixtos, integrando datos cuantitativos y cualitativos para obtener una visión integral de la efectividad de la intervención. Los participantes fueron aproximadamente 35 estudiantes de primer año de bachillerato. Los instrumentos utilizados incluyeron una prueba diagnóstica y una prueba final de comprensión lectora basadas en el examen Cambridge A2 Key (KET), actividades diseñadas por el investigador, encuestas tipo Likert, listas de cotejo y entrevistas semiestructuradas. La intervención se desarrolló durante tres semanas mediante sesiones guiadas en línea, utilizando textos graduados acompañados de narración en audio sincronizada. Los resultados evidenciaron una mejora significativa en la comprensión lectora general, así como un incremento en la motivación y confianza de los estudiantes al leer en inglés. En conclusión, la lectura extensiva asistida por audio se presenta como una estrategia pedagógica eficaz para fortalecer la comprensión lectora y el compromiso del estudiante en contextos de educación secundaria.

Palabras clave: lectura extensiva, lectura asistida por audio, comprensión lectora

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of an audio-assisted extensive reading program on the development of reading comprehension among first-year high school students at a private institution in Ecuador. The research addresses the persistent difficulties students face in understanding written texts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly at the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The main objective was to determine whether combining extensive reading principles with audio support could enhance students' literal, inferential, vocabulary, and critical comprehension skills. A mixed-method action research design was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the intervention's effectiveness. The participants consisted of an intact group of approximately 35 first-year high school students. Data collection instruments included a standardized Cambridge A2 Key (KET) reading pre-test and post-test, researcher-designed comprehension tasks, Likert-scale surveys, teacher checklists, and semi-structured student interviews. The intervention was implemented over a three-week period through guided online sessions using graded texts accompanied by synchronized audio narration. The results revealed a noticeable improvement in students' overall reading comprehension, with gains observed across all assessed dimensions. Additionally, qualitative findings indicated increased motivation, greater confidence when reading in English, and positive perceptions of audio-supported reading. These findings suggest that audio-assisted extensive reading is an effective pedagogical strategy for improving reading comprehension and learner engagement in EFL secondary education contexts.

Keywords: extensive reading, audio-assisted reading, reading comprehension

ÍNDICE GENERAL

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary globalized world, proficiency in the English language has become a fundamental requirement for academic achievement, professional development, and international communication. English functions as the dominant lingua franca in science, technology, education, and the labor market, making its effective teaching a priority within educational systems worldwide (Crystal, 2012). In Ecuador, English is recognized as a compulsory subject across secondary and higher education, with proficiency benchmarks aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which provides standardized descriptors for language competence (Council of Europe, 2020). Despite these efforts, many students complete their academic programs with limited communicative competence, particularly in receptive skills such as reading comprehension.

Within secondary education contexts, students at the A2 level frequently experience difficulties in reading comprehension, including limited vocabulary knowledge, weak inferential skills, and low motivation when engaging with written texts in English. According to Grabe and Stoller (2019), reading comprehension in a foreign language requires the integration of linguistic knowledge, background knowledge, and strategic processing skills, which are often underdeveloped in lower-level learners. These challenges are exacerbated by traditional teaching approaches that prioritize intensive reading, grammar translation, and textbook-centered instruction, often detached from students' interests and cognitive needs (Day & Bamford, 2002). As a result, learners struggle to develop reading fluency and comprehension strategies that are essential for autonomous learning.

In response to these challenges, innovative pedagogical approaches such as extensive reading and multimodal instruction have gained increasing attention in EFL research. Extensive reading emphasizes exposure to large amounts of comprehensible and meaningful texts, fostering

reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and learner motivation (Nation, 2015). When combined with audio support, this approach becomes particularly beneficial for learners at lower proficiency levels, as it integrates listening and reading skills, supports pronunciation awareness, and reduces cognitive overload (Chang & Millett, 2014). This research is situated within this pedagogical framework and seeks to explore the impact of audio-assisted extensive reading on the reading comprehension of A2-level high school students in an Ecuadorian educational context.

The justification for this study lies in the persistent gap between curricular expectations and actual student performance in English reading comprehension. International and national assessments have consistently reported that many EFL learners fail to reach expected proficiency levels in reading, especially in contexts where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited (OECD, 2019). In Ecuador, this situation is particularly evident at the secondary education level, where students often demonstrate difficulties understanding basic texts despite several years of formal instruction.

Reading comprehension is a foundational skill that supports the development of other language competencies, including writing, speaking, and critical thinking. According to Perfetti and Stafura (2014), successful reading comprehension facilitates vocabulary growth and deeper language processing, which are essential for overall language development. However, many classrooms continue to rely on methods that do not adequately address learners' cognitive, affective, and linguistic needs, resulting in low motivation and limited reading engagement.

Audio-assisted extensive reading represents a pedagogical alternative that responds to these limitations by offering meaningful input, promoting learner autonomy, and increasing engagement. Research has shown that combining audio with text enhances comprehension, particularly for lower-level learners, by reinforcing word recognition and supporting pronunciation awareness (Chang, 2012). Nevertheless, its implementation in Ecuadorian

secondary education remains limited, and empirical research on its effectiveness in this context is scarce. Therefore, this study is justified by the need to generate context-specific evidence that supports the adoption of innovative reading strategies and informs pedagogical decision-making.

Despite the inclusion of English as a mandatory subject in Ecuadorian secondary education, A2-level students continue to demonstrate low performance in reading comprehension. Many learners struggle to identify main ideas, infer meaning from context, recognize key vocabulary, and critically engage with texts. These difficulties are often accompanied by low motivation and negative attitudes toward reading in English, which further hinder learning (Guthrie et al., 2012).

The problem is further compounded by instructional practices that emphasize short, controlled texts and discrete comprehension questions, providing limited opportunities for sustained reading practice. According to Nation and Yamamoto (2012), insufficient exposure to extended texts limits the development of reading fluency and automaticity. Consequently, students do not develop confidence as readers, which negatively affects their overall language learning process. This situation highlights the need to explore alternative instructional strategies that can address these deficiencies and enhance students' reading outcomes.

This research focuses specifically on the use of audio-assisted extensive reading as a pedagogical strategy to improve reading comprehension in A2-level high school students. The study is framed within the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and aligns with the general research line of innovative methodologies for language learning and the specific line of reading skills development through multimodal resources. The study is

delimited to a private secondary educational institution in Ecuador, ensuring contextual relevance and feasibility.

General Objective

To determine the effect of audio-assisted extensive reading on the development of reading comprehension skills in A2-level high school students.

Specific Objectives

- To diagnose students' initial reading comprehension level.
- To implement an audio-assisted extensive reading program.
- To analyze its impact on different dimensions of reading comprehension.

In order to analyze the effect of the pedagogical intervention systematically, this study defines and operationalizes its variables according to established research conventions in applied linguistics and educational research. Clearly identifying variables allows for a structured analysis of cause-and-effect relationships within the teaching–learning process (Cohen et al., 2018).

The independent variable of this research is audio-assisted extensive reading, understood as a pedagogical strategy that combines sustained exposure to graded reading materials with synchronized audio support. This variable is grounded in extensive reading principles, which emphasize reading for meaning, learner autonomy, and enjoyment, as well as multimodal input theory, which supports the integration of auditory and visual channels to enhance comprehension (Nation, 2015; Mayer, 2020). The main dimensions of this variable include exposure to comprehensible texts, frequency of reading practice, and the integration of audio narration to support decoding and pronunciation.

The dependent variable is reading comprehension, defined as the learner's ability to construct meaning from written texts through cognitive and linguistic processes. Reading comprehension

was analyzed through four dimensions: literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, vocabulary comprehension, and critical comprehension. These dimensions reflect widely accepted models of reading comprehension in second language acquisition, which emphasize the interaction between text-based and reader-based processes (Grabe & Stoller, 2019).

In addition, several extraneous variables were considered, including students' prior English proficiency, motivation, and access to technological resources. Although these variables were not manipulated, acknowledging them strengthens the validity of the study by recognizing factors that may influence learning outcomes (Dörnyei, 2007).

This research adopted a mixed-methods action research approach, which integrates quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the instructional intervention. Mixed-methods research is particularly appropriate in educational contexts, as it allows researchers to examine both measurable learning outcomes and participants' perceptions and experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

From a theoretical perspective, the study employed methods such as analysis and synthesis to review relevant literature on extensive reading, multimodal learning, and reading comprehension. Inductive and deductive reasoning were used to connect theoretical frameworks with empirical findings, allowing the researcher to interpret results within established academic discourse (Mackey & Gass, 2016).

The empirical methods included pre-tests and post-tests to measure changes in reading comprehension, surveys to gather students' perceptions, classroom observation to monitor engagement, and semi-structured interviews to explore learners' experiences with audio-assisted reading. These instruments provided both numerical data and rich descriptive information, supporting triangulation and increasing research credibility (Burns, 2010).

Finally, statistical methods such as descriptive statistics and comparative analysis were applied to analyze quantitative data. Mean scores, percentages, and score differences between pre-test

and post-test results were calculated to determine the effectiveness of the intervention, following standard practices in educational research (Field, 2018).

The population of this study consisted of first-year high school students enrolled in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program at a private educational institution in Ecuador. These students were classified at the A2 level according to the CEFR, which indicates basic language users who can understand simple texts related to familiar topics (Council of Europe, 2020).

The sample included approximately 35 students selected through non-probabilistic convenience sampling, a method commonly used in educational action research due to accessibility and institutional constraints (Cohen et al., 2018). Although this sampling method limits generalizability, it allows for in-depth exploration of pedagogical practices within a real classroom context. The selected group was representative of the institution's student population in terms of age, academic level, and language proficiency.

The main contribution of this research lies in providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of audio-assisted extensive reading as a pedagogical strategy for improving reading comprehension in A2-level EFL learners. The study contributes to the existing body of literature by demonstrating how the integration of audio support enhances comprehension, motivation, and learner confidence, particularly in secondary education contexts where exposure to English is limited (Chang & Millett, 2014).

From a pedagogical perspective, the research offers a practical instructional model that can be adapted by English teachers seeking to implement innovative, learner-centered reading strategies. The findings also support curriculum development initiatives that promote multimodal learning and extensive reading as alternatives to traditional, text-heavy instruction (Nation & Yamamoto, 2012).

In terms of social importance, the study addresses a critical educational need by proposing an inclusive strategy that supports learners with diverse proficiency levels and learning styles. Its

scientific novelty lies in the contextual application of audio-assisted extensive reading within Ecuadorian secondary education, an area that remains underrepresented in current EFL research. By bridging theory and practice, this study contributes to the advancement of effective language teaching methodologies and supports ongoing innovation in EFL education.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

1.1 Extensive Reading

1.1.1 Definition and Characteristics of Extensive Reading

Extensive reading involves engaging with large volumes of text to achieve a general comprehension, without concentrating on specific linguistic details (Carrell and Carson, 1997). This approach empowers students to choose reading materials aligned with their interests and proficiency levels, thereby promoting an autonomous and motivating learning environment. According to Davis (1995), extensive reading complements the conventional English curriculum by encouraging students to read without the burden of formal assessments.

Extensive reading programs provide students with the opportunity to engage with a wide range of texts across various genres and topics. This approach allows students to read for extended periods at their own pace and according to their preferences. These programs encourage self-improvement, with students aiming to enhance their reading performance independently rather than comparing themselves to peers (Renandya, 2007). This method increases both the quantity of reading and exposure to diverse linguistic structures and vocabulary, which are critical for language acquisition.

A key feature of extensive reading is the absence of formal tests and evaluative tasks that can cause anxiety. Instead, students are encouraged to maintain a record of their readings and reflect on them. This promotes constructive self-assessment and a greater appreciation for reading (Elley and Mangubhai, 1983). This method reduces the cognitive load associated with detailed text analysis, enabling students to focus on overall comprehension and enjoyment of reading.

These programs are flexible and adaptable to students' needs. This includes selecting materials that are accessible and relevant to the interests of the target group, thereby increasing motivation and commitment to reading (Renandya, 2007). The variety of available texts is essential, as it allows students to explore different styles and genres, enriching their reading experience and strengthening their linguistic competence.

1.1.2 The Importance of Extensive Reading in Educational Development

Extensive reading significantly contributes to the educational development of students by fostering a love for reading and enhancing language skills. Research by Elley and Mangubhai (1983) demonstrated that students participating in extensive reading programs showed substantial improvement in reading skills compared to those engaged solely in traditional reading practices.

One of the primary benefits of extensive reading is vocabulary acquisition. As students read various texts, they encounter new words in diverse contexts, aiding in vocabulary retention and understanding (Meng, 2009). This ongoing exposure to new vocabulary not only expands their lexicon but also reinforces existing knowledge, facilitating the comprehension and usage of new terms.

Extensive reading also cultivates a positive attitude towards reading, essential for lifelong learning. Studies indicate that when students enjoy their reading materials, they are more likely to engage in reading activities outside the classroom, thereby increasing their language exposure and overall proficiency (Guo, 2012). This positive reinforcement encourages students to become independent learners, crucial for both academic and personal growth.

Moreover, extensive reading promotes the development of critical thinking skills. By engaging with a broad range of texts, students learn to analyze and evaluate information, form opinions, and draw connections between different ideas. This skill is particularly important in higher education, where independent and critical thinking is required (Shen, 2008).

Finally, extensive reading has been shown to improve academic performance across various subjects. By developing strong reading skills, students can better understand and retain information from their textbooks, leading to higher grades and a deeper comprehension of the subject matter (Krashen, 2004). Thus, the comprehensive development of reading skills through extensive reading programs supports overall educational achievement.

1.1.3 Extensive Reading Methods and Strategies

Day and Bamford (1998) outline key principles for a successful extensive reading program, highlighting the necessity of easy-to-understand and varied content. Allowing students to choose their texts fosters motivation and engagement. The selected texts should be slightly below the students' linguistic competence to ensure fluency and avoid frustration. Additionally, it is essential that the material encompasses diverse genres, themes, and styles to maintain long-term interest.

An effective strategy for implementing extensive reading involves providing a wide selection of books and other reading materials. This can be achieved by establishing well-stocked school libraries or subscribing to digital platforms that offer various texts. The availability of different genres and topics is vital for sustaining student interest and encouraging consistent reading. Renandya (2016) suggests that texts should include a mix of fiction and non-fiction, allowing students to explore different writing styles and acquire a broad range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Incorporating authentic texts can also enhance student motivation by demonstrating the real-world applicability of the language.

Allowing students to choose their books autonomously is fundamental. This autonomy increases their commitment and enjoyment of reading. Texts should be easy to read, enabling students to progress smoothly without frequent interruptions to decipher vocabulary (Day and Bamford, 1998). Autonomous choice not only boosts motivation but also helps students develop self-assessment and self-selection skills, which are valuable for independent learning.

The role of the teacher in an extensive reading program is to guide and support students in book selection and setting reading goals. Teachers should encourage regular reading practice and model positive reading behaviors by sharing their reading experiences and recommendations (Day, 2015). Teacher guidance is crucial in helping students choose appropriate texts and establish effective reading habits. Additionally, teachers should provide constructive feedback and create a supportive environment that values individual progress and continuous improvement.

Complementary activities such as book discussions, oral presentations, and summaries can reinforce reading comprehension and provide opportunities for students to share their experiences and opinions, thereby enriching the learning process (Elley and Mangubhai, 1983). Book discussions can deepen students' understanding of the text and develop critical and analytical skills. Oral presentations and written summaries enable students to practice and demonstrate their comprehension and communication abilities in the target language.

1.2. Audio-Supported Reading

1.2.1 Characteristics of Audio-Supported Reading

Audio-supported reading combines digital text with text-to-speech (TTS) technology, allowing readers to listen and follow along with the text simultaneously. This technique enhances comprehension by reducing the cognitive load associated with word decoding, making it particularly beneficial for students with reading difficulties. TTS technology enables adjustments in reading speed and offers high-quality voices, improving the reading experience and allowing users to control their learning pace (Jackson, 2012).

Additionally, audio-supported reading aids in developing metacognitive skills. By controlling the reading speed and sequence, students can pause, reflect, and reread sections of the text, fostering deeper comprehension and greater retention of information. This ability to manipulate the reading pace is crucial for active learning and self-regulation in the reading process (Chun, 1996).

Audio-supported reading also reduces reading-related anxiety. By removing the pressure of decoding every word, students can focus on overall comprehension of the text. This is particularly useful in educational settings where time and accuracy are critical, allowing students to participate more actively and effectively in reading activities (Evens, 1997).

1.2.2 Benefits of Using Audiobooks and Audio Resources in Education

Audiobooks and audio resources offer numerous educational benefits, particularly in language learning and enhancing listening comprehension. These resources allow students to listen to content narrated by native speakers, improving their pronunciation and understanding of the target language. Continuous exposure to correct rhythm, intonation, and pronunciation is essential for developing effective listening skills (Jackson and Karger, 2015).

One of the main benefits of audiobooks is their ability to improve reading fluency. By listening and reading simultaneously, students can associate written words with their corresponding sounds, facilitating decoding and improving reading speed and accuracy. This technique is particularly useful for students with learning difficulties, as it reduces the cognitive load associated with decoding printed text (Popescu, 2020).

Moreover, audiobooks increase students' motivation and engagement with reading. Listening to professionally narrated and engaging content can transform reading into a more appealing and accessible activity, which is especially beneficial for students who might find traditional reading tedious. Increased motivation leads to greater language exposure and, consequently, enhanced language skills (Knutson, 2019).

Another significant benefit of audiobooks is vocabulary acquisition. Repeated exposure to new words in an auditory context helps students internalize and better remember new vocabulary. Studies have shown that listening and reading simultaneously is an effective strategy for increasing word knowledge and improving long-term retention (Chen, 2004).

The flexibility of audiobooks allows for their use in various educational contexts. They can be used during commutes, at home, or in extracurricular activities, maximizing exposure to the language and reinforcing learning outside the classroom. This flexibility is

particularly useful in self-directed learning programs and in developing students' self-study skills (Popescu, 2020).

Audiobooks and audio resources enhance comprehension and analysis of literary texts. Listening to the narration of a literary work allows students to focus on content and narrative elements without the distraction of decoding text. This facilitates deeper analysis and a more thorough appreciation of literature, fostering a lasting love for reading and learning (Talalakina, 2012).

1.2.3 Technologies and Tools for Audio-Supported Reading

Audio assistance technologies have advanced significantly, enhancing access to reading and learning for students with visual impairments or reading difficulties. Screen readers, such as JAWS and NVDA, allow users to listen to text read aloud, improving accessibility and reading efficiency. These tools use text-to-speech (TTS) technology to convert written text into audio, enabling students to follow content without solely relying on their vision (Smith and Peters, 2020).

Audiobook platforms, such as Audible and Learning Ally, provide access to a wide range of educational materials in audio format. These platforms allow students to listen to books and other resources, facilitating access to information and improving content retention. Audiobooks are especially beneficial for students with dyslexia or other reading difficulties, as they remove the barrier of printed text (Nguyen, 2017).

Mobile applications, like Voice Dream Reader and ClaroSpeak, have revolutionized educational accessibility. These apps enable students to convert text to speech on their mobile devices, offering a portable and flexible solution for audio-assisted learning. These applications also provide features such as voice customization and adjustable reading speeds, enhancing the user experience (Garcia and Brown, 2016).

1.3 Reading Comprehension

1.3.1 Definition and Components of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension involves the interaction of various cognitive and linguistic skills. Rankin (1975) defines it as the ability to understand and process the meaning of written texts. This includes identifying and recognizing words and integrating them into a coherent context. This process goes beyond simple word decoding and involves making inferences and connecting new information with prior knowledge.

A key component of reading comprehension is working memory, which allows readers to hold and manipulate information while reading. This skill is crucial for maintaining coherence and integrating ideas throughout the text. Daneman and Carpenter (1980) highlight

that working memory is essential for understanding complex sentences and paragraphs. Limitations in this capacity can significantly impact overall text comprehension.

Inference-making is another fundamental component. Inferences enable readers to fill in gaps in the text and understand information not explicitly stated. Graesser et al. (1994) emphasize that generating inferences is an active process where readers use prior knowledge to interpret and extrapolate information from the text.

Vocabulary knowledge is critical in reading comprehension. Research shows a strong correlation between an individual's vocabulary size and their ability to understand texts. Perfetti (1985) argues that a broad vocabulary facilitates quick and accurate word recognition, improving reading fluency and comprehension.

Integrating new information with prior knowledge is also important. This integration helps construct a coherent mental representation of the text. Kintsch (1998) proposed the construction-integration model, which describes how readers combine text information with prior knowledge to create a meaningful mental representation of the text.

The ability to recall explicitly presented information is another critical aspect. Long-term memory allows readers to access and use stored information to understand and remember text content. Chabot et al. (1984) found that quick access to semantic memory is highly correlated with performance on reading comprehension tests.

Understanding text structures is also essential. These structures include organization such as temporal sequences, cause and effect, and compare and contrast. Meyer and Freedle (1984) demonstrated that recognizing and understanding these structures significantly improves a reader's ability to recall and comprehend text information.

1.3.2 Development of Reading Comprehension in Adolescence

The development of reading comprehension in adolescence builds on skills acquired during childhood and is influenced by various cognitive and linguistic factors. As adolescents progress in their education, they encounter increasingly complex texts that require advanced comprehension and analysis skills. The ability to interpret and synthesize information from different types of texts becomes essential for academic success and knowledge integration across various subjects.

A key component in developing reading comprehension during adolescence is the ability to efficiently decode complex words and phrases. Effective decoding allows students to quickly recognize and process words, facilitating overall text comprehension. Studies show that adolescents with high proficiency in word decoding perform better in reading

comprehension tasks, as they can focus on content interpretation rather than word identification (Peverly, 2002).

Lexical development also plays a significant role in reading comprehension. As adolescents expand their vocabulary, they can understand and use more complex and technical words, enabling them to access a broader range of academic and literary texts. The ability to infer the meaning of new words from context and use metalinguistic strategies to break down complex terms significantly enhances comprehension of sophisticated texts (Nippold, 2017).

In addition to lexical development, syntactic comprehension is fundamental for accurately interpreting texts. Syntax involves the rules governing the arrangement of words into phrases and sentences, and understanding these rules is essential for grasping the full meaning of text passages. Adolescents who master syntactic structures can accurately interpret relationships between different clauses and phrases, improving their ability to understand complex and expository texts (Kaplan, 2013).

Thematic knowledge also influences reading comprehension in adolescence. Students with extensive prior knowledge about the topics discussed in texts are better able to make inferences and establish meaningful connections, facilitating a richer and deeper understanding of the material. This knowledge is acquired through extensive reading and exposure to various genres and textual formats (Peverly, 2002).

Metacognitive control is another essential component in developing reading comprehension. Metacognition involves students' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own comprehension processes. Adolescents who develop effective metacognitive skills can adjust their reading strategies based on text difficulty and their specific comprehension goals, allowing them to tackle challenging texts more efficiently (Nippold, 2017).

Continuous practice and exposure to a variety of texts are crucial for improving reading comprehension in adolescence. Regular reading of different types of texts, including narrative and expository, provides students with opportunities to apply and refine their comprehension skills in diverse contexts. This practice not only enhances their ability to understand complex texts but also fosters a positive attitude towards reading and independent learning (Kaplan, 2013).

1.3.3 Operational Dimensions of Reading Comprehension for Assessment Purposes

For teenagers, assessing reading comprehension requires a multidimensional approach to determine students' abilities to extract, infer, interpret, and evaluate information from texts.

In this section, four essential components that should be measured to fully understand learners' reading proficiency will be described: literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, vocabulary in context, and critical comprehension, which align with standardized evaluation frameworks used in EFL programs and are supported by theoretical literature and empirical practices (Habib, 2016; Hale et al., 2010).

1.3.3.1 Literal Comprehension

It refers to the ability to identify and recall explicitly stated information in a text. This is the base for building more complex interpretative and evaluative skills. Assessments of literal comprehension often include multiple-choice or cloze tests to measure students' capacity to find main ideas and supporting details (Chabot et al., 1984).

1.3.3.2 Inferential Comprehension

This involves deducing information that is not directly stated in the text. This involves understanding implied meanings, predicting results, and establishing cause–and–effect relationships. According to Graesser et al. (1994), making inferences is an active cognitive process where readers use background knowledge and contextual clues to develop meaning. To evaluate this component, tests might include questions that require interpretation beyond the superficial level of the text.

1.3.3.3 Vocabulary in Context

Understanding the words in their context is essential for the comprehension of academic and authentic texts. It requires using contextual clues to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words and selecting appropriate synonyms (Perfetti, 1985). This ability is particularly important for EFL learners who often encounter terms that are new for them during reading. Vocabulary-in-context questions test students' ability to get meaning from surrounding sentences and grammatical structures, reinforcing their lexical acquisition and reading fluency (Krashen, 2004).

1.3.3.4 Critical Comprehension

It requires from students to engage deeply with a text by analyzing its credibility, evaluating the arguments, and justifying opinions. It shows a higher-order cognitive process where students move beyond understanding content to assess the author's intentions, the validity of the information, and the ethical or cultural implications of the text. According to Shen (2008), critical reading encourages the development of independent and reflective learners.

1.4 Cognitive Processing Theories in Reading Comprehension

1.4.1 Schema Theory in the Teaching of English Reading Comprehension

Schema theory focuses on how knowledge is acquired, processed, and retrieved. A schema is a cognitive structure that organizes information in long-term memory. Introduced by Kant in 1781 and developed by psychologists like Bartlett and Rumelhart, this theory suggests that prior knowledge significantly influences the understanding of new stimuli and events. Schemas function as mental frameworks that guide perception and memory by providing pre-existing contexts (Bartlett, 1932; Rumelhart, 1980).

In reading, schema theory proposes that readers use these cognitive frameworks to interpret and understand texts. Anderson and Pearson (1984) argue that text comprehension involves the reader's world knowledge, implying that prior experiences and stored information are essential for interpreting written material. This approach is crucial for both first language (L1) and foreign language (L2) reading comprehension, enabling readers to connect new knowledge with existing schemas for deeper and more efficient understanding.

There are three main types of schemas applicable to reading comprehension: content schemas, formal schemas, and linguistic schemas. Content schemas refer to specific knowledge about the text's topic, including cultural aspects necessary for interpretation. Formal schemas relate to knowledge about discourse structure and text genres, allowing readers to anticipate text organization and rhetorical elements. Linguistic schemas encompass vocabulary and grammar knowledge, essential for decoding and constructing meaning at the sentence and phrase levels (Carrell, 1987).

Proper activation of these schemas is crucial for effective comprehension. Carrell (1983) notes that reading comprehension issues often arise not from a lack of appropriate schemas but from the inability to activate them correctly. Educators should design activities that help students activate and use their prior knowledge when reading. Strategies such as graphic organizers, anticipatory questions, and activating prior knowledge can facilitate this process and enhance text comprehension.

Applying schema theory in teaching English reading comprehension involves specific and structured strategies. Before reading, teachers can introduce relevant vocabulary and discuss related topics to activate students' content and formal schemas. During reading, educators can encourage predictions and connections between new information and prior knowledge using techniques like guided reading and modeling. After reading, reflection activities such as group discussions and summarizing can help consolidate activated schemas and improve text retention and understanding (Carrell, 1988).

Schema theory also emphasizes the importance of selecting culturally relevant reading materials for students. Texts that resonate with students' cultural experiences and knowledge

are easier to understand and can significantly improve the effectiveness of L2 reading instruction. Steffensen et al. (1979) found that readers better comprehend texts that align with their cultural schemas, highlighting the need to choose materials that are pertinent and meaningful to the audience.

Teachers should carefully consider the cultural relevance of reading materials and design activities that help students activate their existing schemas. This can include integrating students' prior experiences and knowledge into class discussions, using authentic texts that reflect diverse cultures and contexts, and creating a learning environment that values and respects cultural differences. By doing so, educators can facilitate deeper and more effective text comprehension, promoting greater engagement and motivation in the reading process.

1.4.2 Simple View of reading theory

The Simple View of Reading (SVR) posits that reading comprehension results from the interaction of two fundamental skills: decoding and linguistic comprehension. Proposed by Hoover and Gough in 1990, this theory asserts that both components are necessary and complementary for effective reading. Decoding refers to the ability to translate written symbols into recognizable sounds, essential for quick and accurate word recognition. This process relies on phonological representations that connect the graphical forms of words with their corresponding sounds. Continuous practice and exposure are crucial for developing this skill, allowing beginning readers to efficiently access the mental lexicon from visual stimuli (Hoover and Gough, 1990).

Linguistic comprehension involves the ability to interpret and construct meanings from language, whether oral or written. This skill includes understanding syntactic structures, recognizing semantic relationships, and integrating contextual information. Without adequate linguistic comprehension, decoding alone is insufficient for effective reading, as the reader cannot extract meaning from the text. Thus, reading comprehension requires both the ability to decode words and the capacity to understand and process language effectively (Hoover and Gough, 1990).

The relationship between decoding and linguistic comprehension is expressed in the formula R = D x C, where R represents reading comprehension, D is decoding, and C is linguistic comprehension. This multiplicative relationship underscores that a deficiency in either component results in poor reading comprehension. In other words, if a student can decode well but does not understand the language, or vice versa, their ability to comprehend

texts will be limited. Therefore, the SVR theory emphasizes the need to develop both skills for competent reading (Hoover and Gough, 1990).

Empirical studies support the SVR, showing that the combination of decoding and linguistic comprehension accounts for a significant portion of the variability in reading comprehension. Longitudinal research and regression analyses indicate that, while both components independently contribute to reading success, their interaction provides a more precise prediction of reading comprehension ability. These findings highlight the importance of addressing both aspects in reading instruction and assessment (Hoover and Gough, 1990).

From an educational perspective, the SVR implies that instructional programs should focus on enhancing both decoding and linguistic comprehension. This can be achieved through explicit phonics instruction and developing linguistic skills by exposing students to various texts and discourse contexts. Phonics instruction helps students develop decoding skills, while extensive reading and text discussions enrich their linguistic comprehension. This balanced approach is essential for fostering robust and sustained reading comprehension (Hoover and Gough, 1990).

Furthermore, the SVR has significant implications for reading assessment. Reading comprehension tests should measure both decoding and linguistic comprehension to provide a complete evaluation of students' reading skills. Assessment tools that focus solely on one component may not fully capture students' strengths and weaknesses in reading. Therefore, it is crucial to use diverse assessment methods to evaluate both aspects of reading (Hoover and Gough, 1990).

The Simple View of Reading theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding reading as an interaction between decoding and linguistic comprehension. This approach has significantly influenced reading research and educational practices, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that develops both skills to enhance overall reading competence (Hoover and Gough, 1990).

1.4.3 Automaticity in Reading Comprehension Theory

This theory suggests that performing complex tasks with minimal conscious attention is essential for developing advanced reading skills. Automaticity enables key sub-skills, such as decoding, to be executed quickly and accurately. This is necessary for higher-order tasks like comprehension and metacognitive functions to occur simultaneously (Samuels and Flor, 1997).

The process of acquiring automaticity in reading begins with repeated practice of basic skills until they can be performed with little or no conscious effort. When tasks are practiced

to the point of becoming nearly automatic, readers can focus on understanding the text rather than decoding individual words (LaBerge and Samuels, 1974). Extensive practice is crucial for achieving this proficiency, as it facilitates the transition from controlled to automatic responses (Shiffrin and Schneider, 1977).

Research indicates that automaticity in reading improves long-term retention of skills and knowledge. Bahrick (1984) found that skills learned to the level of automaticity are better retained in long-term memory than those developed only to high accuracy. This improved retention reduces the need to relearn previously acquired skills after periods of inactivity, such as school vacations.

Developing automaticity also allows for the simultaneous performance of multiple complex tasks. For instance, a reader who has automated decoding can allocate more cognitive resources to understanding the text, integrating new information with prior knowledge, and critically evaluating content (Samuels et al., 1978). This ability to perform multiple tasks concurrently is a hallmark of expert behavior.

In educational settings, it is essential that instructional programs move students beyond accuracy to automaticity. Explicit phonics instruction, combined with opportunities to practice reading in various contexts, helps students develop automaticity in decoding. Continuous exposure to diverse texts is also important for fostering advanced comprehension skills (Hasselbring et al., 1987).

Finally, it is important to recognize that not all skills or knowledge bases can be automated. Tasks requiring constant attention, such as understanding texts on unfamiliar topics, will continue to demand significant cognitive effort. However, tasks with high regularity, like recognizing common words or memorizing multiplication tables, can be automated with consistent and focused practice (Neves and Anderson, 1981).

1.5 Pedagogical Strategies for Developing Reading Comprehension

1.5.1 Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs)

Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) are pedagogical strategies designed to enhance reading comprehension through active student interaction with texts. Lunzer and Gardner developed these activities in the 1970s. They focus on fostering detailed reading skills and the ability to work with various types of texts, including visual texts like images, diagrams, and charts. DARTs are based on the premise that active engagement with the text promotes deeper comprehension and greater retention of information (Hameed, 2017).

DARTs are divided into two main types: reconstruction activities and analysis activities. Reconstruction activities involve modifying the original text for students to complete or reorganize the content. These activities include cloze procedures, sequencing, and prediction. In cloze procedures, the teacher removes words, phrases, or paragraphs from the text, and students must fill in the blanks based on their understanding of the text and grammatical norms. This method helps students improve their vocabulary and grammatical comprehension while fostering their inference and deduction skills (Hameed, 2017).

Sequencing activities help students establish cause-and-effect relationships within the text. Students receive a disordered text and must reorganize it into a logical and coherent sequence. This exercise improves understanding of text structure and the correct use of discourse markers and connectors, developing skills for handling chronological events and textual structures. Additionally, sequencing reinforces students' ability to identify the logical progression of ideas and events (Davies and Greene, 1984).

Prediction activities require students to anticipate the next step or stage of a text based on available information. Students must justify their predictions with textual ideas and evidence. These activities foster logical and critical thinking, enhancing the ability to infer implicit information. Active prediction engages metacognition, allowing students to reflect on their understanding and adjust their predictions as they read. This process also enhances students' ability to make informed guesses and evaluate the likelihood of different outcomes (Davies and Greene, 1984).

Analysis activities involve working with the text without modifications and require students to find and categorize information. These activities include text segmentation and labeling, open-ended questions, and summarization. In segmentation and labeling, students divide a text into meaningful paragraphs and label each paragraph according to its content. This activity enhances students' ability to identify main and secondary ideas, as well as to organize information logically and coherently (Hameed, 2017).

Open-ended questions are challenging and require answers based on analysis and logic. There is no single correct answer, which forces students to develop their ideas and justify their responses with textual evidence. This activity stimulates critical thinking and argumentation skills. Open-ended questions also foster creativity and the ability to see multiple perspectives on the same topic, which is crucial for developing higher-order thinking skills (Davies and Greene, 1984).

Summarization requires students to read the text carefully and then write a summary of the key points in their own words. This task evaluates students' ability to synthesize

information and express ideas concisely. Summarization improves writing skills and the ability to organize and express thoughts logically and coherently. It also reinforces reading comprehension by requiring students to identify and articulate the main ideas of the text, facilitating long-term retention and understanding (Hameed, 2017).

1.5.2 Read, Ask, and Put into your own words (RAP)

The RAP (Read, Ask, and Put) approach is an educational strategy designed to enhance reading comprehension by actively involving students in the reading process. This technique is based on three fundamental steps: reading the text, asking questions about the content, and paraphrasing the information in their own words. This methodology has proven effective in various educational contexts, improving both retention and understanding of the material, especially among students with learning difficulties (Silitonga et al., 2022).

In the first step, students read a paragraph of text silently. They must identify key words and essential phrases during this phase. This initial approach helps students familiarize themselves with the content, laying the foundation for the next stages of the process. Underlining or highlighting important words and phrases is encouraged to facilitate later analysis (Apriyani and Almunawaroh, 2019).

In the second step, students formulate questions about the content they have just read. Questions like "What is the main idea?" and "What are the most important details?" focus students on the text's most relevant aspects. This phase promotes active and reflective reading, preventing superficial and passive reading. It also enhances students' ability to distinguish between essential and secondary information (Hagaman and Reid, 2010).

The third step involves students putting the main idea and details of the paragraph into their own words. Paraphrasing allows students to process and consolidate information, leading to a deeper understanding of the text. This technique not only improves information retention but also strengthens students' ability to express their understanding. Paraphrasing also fosters synthesis skills, crucial in academic learning (Schumaker et al., 1984).

Implementing the RAP method requires careful planning by teachers. Selecting appropriate texts and preparing activities to guide students through the three steps is essential. Teachers must provide continuous feedback and support during practice sessions to ensure proper understanding and application of the strategy. Supervision and follow-up are crucial to adapt instruction to individual student needs (Apriyani and Almunawaroh, 2019).

Studies show that the RAP strategy is effective not only for students without disabilities but also for those with learning disabilities. These students demonstrate significant improvements in reading comprehension when using the RAP technique, indicating its

flexibility and adaptability to various educational needs. Research suggests that consistent application of the RAP method can lead to long-term improvements in reading and comprehension skills (Silitonga et al., 2022).

Beyond academic benefits, the RAP method fosters social and collaborative skills. Working in groups or pairs, students learn to communicate effectively, give and receive constructive feedback, and collaborate to solve reading comprehension problems. These skills are essential for overall student development and contribute to a positive and cooperative learning environment. Social interaction during RAP practice also enhances student motivation and engagement with reading tasks (Schumaker et al., 1984).

The RAP method offers a structured and effective strategy to improve reading comprehension in students of various abilities and educational contexts. Its classroom implementation can result in significant academic and social benefits, making RAP a valuable tool for teachers and students alike. Integrating the RAP method into the school curriculum can significantly contribute to developing critical reading skills and fostering more autonomous and reflective learners (Apriyani and Almunawaroh, 2019).

1.5.3 Title, Headings, Introduction, Each first sentence, Visuals, End of each part, Summary (THIEVES)

The THIEVES approach (Title, Headings, Introduction, Every first sentence, Visuals, End of chapter questions, Summary) is an educational strategy designed to enhance reading comprehension by activating students' prior knowledge before engaging with a text. This methodology is particularly useful for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who face challenges in comprehending expository texts. THIEVES provides a structured framework that facilitates the identification of relevant information and logical organization of content (Khataee, 2019).

In the first step, "Title," students examine the text's title to anticipate the content and connect it with their prior knowledge. This step guides students on the main topic and activates cognitive schemas, helping them relate new material to their prior knowledge. Questions like "What do I know about this topic?" and "What do I expect to learn from this text?" focus their reading and set clear expectations (Khataee, 2019).

In the second step, "Headings," students review the headings of each section. This review helps them anticipate the paragraph content and formulate guiding questions. This process is crucial for understanding the text structure, as headings divide content into manageable and logical parts. Formulating questions based on headings creates a framework that aids in integrating new information (Khataee, 2019).

The third step, "Introduction," focuses on the initial part of the text, presenting an overview of the content. Students analyze the introduction to understand the text's context and purpose. This analysis is essential for establishing a solid foundation, as the introduction provides key information about the text's objective, the author's approach, and the topic's relevance. Understanding this section prepares students for effective and directed reading (Khataee, 2019).

In the fourth step, "Every first sentence," students read the first sentence of each paragraph. This approach provides a general idea of content development and helps identify the text's structure. Reading the first sentences allows students to grasp the main ideas of each section, facilitating overall comprehension and information organization. This technique is especially useful for long and complex texts, where a clear framework is necessary (Khataee, 2019).

In the fifth step, "Visuals and vocabulary," students examine any images, graphs, maps, or other visual elements in the text. They also review key vocabulary highlighted in the text. This step clarifies concepts and terms that might be new or difficult. Visual elements illustrate and reinforce the content, while key vocabulary offers the linguistic tools for complete comprehension. This multimodal approach facilitates learning and retention (Khataee, 2019).

The sixth step, "End of chapter questions," focuses on questions at the end of chapters. These questions guide students in searching for specific information and help them evaluate their comprehension. Keeping these questions in mind during reading helps identify answers and reinforces retention of key information. End-of-chapter questions also serve as a self-assessment tool, allowing students to measure their understanding and adjust their reading approach (Khataee, 2019).

The seventh and final step, "Summary," requires students to summarize the text's main information. This synthesis process consolidates acquired knowledge and reinforces students' ability to express what they have understood in their own words. Summarizing evaluates comprehension and retention and improves writing and expression skills. This final step ensures students have internalized the content and can apply it in future contexts (Khataee, 2019).

In summary, the THIEVES approach is a structured and effective strategy for improving reading comprehension among EFL students. By activating prior knowledge and guiding students through a methodical pre-reading process, THIEVES facilitates deeper and more retentive understanding of expository texts. This strategy enhances reading

comprehension and develops critical analysis and synthesis skills essential for academic success (Khataee, 2019).

1.5.6 Metacognitive Strategies in Reading Comprehension

Metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension help students monitor, control, and plan their reading processes. These strategies are based on the premise that increased awareness and control over the reading process significantly enhance text comprehension. Metacognition involves both knowledge of reading strategies and the ability to apply them effectively (Flavell, 1979). Research indicates that students proficient in these strategies perform better on reading comprehension tasks and can transfer these skills to other academic areas (Pintrich, 2002).

One primary metacognitive strategy is planning, which involves setting goals before reading and anticipating potential difficulties in the text. Students who plan effectively can predict the content and structure of the text, facilitating the identification of main ideas and relevant details during reading. This strategy is crucial for handling complex texts and improving reading efficiency. Planning includes selecting appropriate strategies for the type of text and the purpose of reading, such as skimming for an overview or intensive reading for detailed analysis (Baker and Brown, 1984).

Monitoring is another essential strategy, where students assess their comprehension as they read. This involves taking periodic pauses to reflect on the text's content, identifying potential confusions, and clarifying concepts through rereading or consulting additional sources. Effective monitoring allows readers to adjust their approach and strategies as needed to ensure accurate and comprehensive understanding of the text. It also includes the use of self-questions and continuous verification of the internal and external coherence of the information read (Kuhn, 2000).

Evaluation, conducted after reading, is another key metacognitive strategy. Students assess their overall understanding of the text and review the initial goals to determine if they were achieved. This process also involves reflecting on the effectiveness of the strategies used, which helps students improve their metacognitive skills and adjust techniques for future readings. Evaluation may also include comparing the text summary with the original information to ensure accurate capture of key points (Paris and Oka, 1986).

The use of graphic organizers is an effective tool for enhancing reading comprehension. Graphic organizers, such as concept maps and flowcharts, help students visualize the relationships between ideas in the text and structure information logically and coherently. This visualization aids in the retention and retrieval of information and supports

the synthesis of complex concepts. Studies have shown that the use of graphic organizers significantly improves students' ability to recall and apply new information (Collins and Smith, 2008).

Think-aloud protocols are another technique that promotes metacognition in reading. By verbalizing their thoughts while reading, students can make explicit the cognitive processes they use to comprehend the text. This technique allows teachers to identify potential difficulties and guide students in applying effective strategies. Additionally, think-aloud protocols foster self-regulation and self-control in the reading process. These exercises can be particularly useful in identifying error patterns and implementing corrective strategies (Zhussupova and Kazbekova, 2016).

Finally, teaching metacognitive strategies should be a continuous and explicit process in the classroom. Teachers must model the use of these strategies, provide opportunities for guided practice, and offer constructive feedback. Integrating these strategies into the reading curriculum not only improves reading comprehension but also develops critical and autonomous thinking skills in students, preparing them to effectively face academic and professional challenges. Research indicates that intervention programs incorporating metacognitive training show sustained improvements in reading comprehension and motivation towards reading (Baker and Beall, 2009).

1.6 Impact of Audio Assistance on Reading Comprehension: Review of Empirical Literature

The impact of audio assistance on reading comprehension has been widely studied, providing extensive data on its effectiveness in various educational contexts. Below is a summary of different investigations, organized from international to local perspectives, offering a comprehensive view on the use of audio materials to enhance reading comprehension.

The effectiveness of extensive reading is supported by numerous empirical studies. Lee and Hsu (2009) demonstrated that students in extensive reading programs significantly improve their reading fluency and comprehension of complex texts. These programs provide continuous exposure to written texts, which is crucial for developing the ability to read fluently and automatically. This skill is acquired through consistent practice and exposure to a wide range of materials (Smith, 1988).

Kasmani and Davoudy (2013) conducted a study in Iran to evaluate the use of audio CDs for improving reading comprehension in pre-intermediate students. The research aimed to explore the relationship between listening comprehension skills and simultaneous reading

comprehension. They selected 200 students from a translation training program at Islamic Azad University of Rasht and randomly divided them into control and experimental groups. Results from t-tests and ANCOVA showed a significant relationship between the variables, indicating that students who used audio CDs scored significantly higher in reading comprehension than those who did not. This finding highlights the importance of integrating audio materials in educational programs, especially at pre-intermediate levels, to optimize language teaching and learning.

In Asia, Melani (2018) examined the use of audiobooks in teaching the comprehension of narrative texts to tenth-grade students at a high school in Gresik, Indonesia. The study employed a qualitative and descriptive approach, involving observations and interviews with students and teachers. Results indicated that the use of audiobooks significantly improved reading comprehension, with students showing better contextual understanding and higher task scores. Additionally, interviews revealed that students found audiobooks helpful and enjoyable, suggesting that audio aids not only improve comprehension but also enhance motivation and enjoyment in learning. This underscores the need to incorporate audiobooks into daily teaching practices.

In the United States, Thooft (2011) examined how audiobooks affect reading comprehension and motivation in Special Education students and English Language Learners (ELL). The study used an action research approach with both qualitative and quantitative methods to compare the effects of audiobooks and printed books within the Accelerated Reader (ARP) program. The results showed significant improvements in reading comprehension with audiobooks. Qualitative data also indicated increased motivation and enjoyment in reading among students. Teacher questionnaires highlighted both the benefits and drawbacks of audiobooks, supporting their use as part of a comprehensive reading program. This study suggests that audiobooks are effective tools for enhancing reading comprehension and motivation.

In Africa, Baba and Ojakovo (2021) assessed the effects of audio materials on listening comprehension among secondary school students in Gwagwalada, Abuja. Using a quasi-experimental design with a random sample of 100 students from two public secondary schools, the study employed questionnaires and tests analyzed through simple percentages, mean, and t-tests. Results demonstrated that students taught with audio materials significantly outperformed those using traditional texts in literal, inferential, and critical comprehension levels. These findings confirm the effectiveness of audio materials in teaching and suggest their integration into educational practices to enhance student learning and comprehension.

Knoop-van Campen et al. (2022) investigated the impact of audio support on secondary school students with dyslexia in the Netherlands. The quasi-experimental study involved 21 students with dyslexia and 22 typically developing controls, who performed reading tasks in two conditions: with and without audio support. The results showed that audio support influenced reading strategies and reading time, increasing the time required to complete tasks in both groups without significantly improving reading comprehension performance. Students tended to use intensive rather than selective reading strategies when audio was added. These findings suggest that while audio support can alter reading strategies and increase reading time, it does not significantly improve performance, highlighting the need for further training on its use.

In Bhutan, Lhamo and Sakulwongs (2023) evaluated the effectiveness of Audio Assisted Reading (AAR) in improving reading comprehension skills among fifth-grade students. Using a quasi-experimental design and qualitative and quantitative methods, the researchers found a significant increase in reading comprehension test scores post-intervention, indicating notable improvement after implementing AAR. Interviews revealed that students felt motivated and satisfied with the strategy, suggesting its incorporation into the educational curriculum to enhance students' reading skills and academic performance.

In Ecuador, Quijije and Flores (2022) studied the impact of audiobooks on reading comprehension among secondary students at the Technical University of Manabí. Using a quasi-experimental design, they found significant improvements in comprehension scores after using audiobooks, highlighting their effectiveness. These findings suggest that audiobooks are effective tools for developing critical reading skills and recommend their integration into the educational process, considering factors such as motivation and available resources in both classroom and home settings.

Finally, Parrales (2018) conducted a study at Edmundo Carbo Jipijapa school in Ecuador to explore the relationship between cognitive strategies and reading comprehension in sixth-year students. Using a descriptive-correlational design, results showed that repetition, elaboration, and organization strategies significantly improved reading comprehension, including implicit and critical reading. These findings highlight the importance of integrating cognitive strategies into educational practice to improve academic performance and reading comprehension, recommending teachers apply these strategies in the classroom to strengthen students' reading skills.

The literature review demonstrates that audio assistance enhances reading comprehension in various educational contexts. Kasmani and Davoudy (2013) showed its

effectiveness among Iranian students, while Melani (2018) and Thooft (2011) found additional benefits in motivation and enjoyment in Indonesia and the United States, respectively. Baba and Ojakovo (2021) confirmed its superiority over traditional texts in Nigeria. However, Knoop-van Campen et al. (2022) indicated that audio support did not significantly improve reading performance in students with dyslexia in the Netherlands, though it influenced reading strategies and time. In Bhutan, Lhamo and Sakulwongs (2023) reported improvements in comprehension and satisfaction with audio-assisted reading. In Ecuador, Quijije and Flores (2022) and Parrales (2018) highlighted the effectiveness of audiobooks and cognitive strategies. Collectively, these studies emphasize the importance of integrating audio materials into education to optimize reading comprehension and motivation.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

2.1 Research Approach and Design

This study employs a mixed-method action research approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to have a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This design is particularly appropriate because it allows a deep exploration of the effectiveness of the audio-assisted extensive reading program on students' reading comprehension, and the nuances of their experiences and perceptions.

The adoption of an action research framework is central to this study's purpose. Action research is an iterative process of inquiry that seeks to solve practical problems within a specific social context (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). This aligns directly with the general objective of implementing a pilot program to address the identified challenge of low reading comprehension in a particular educational setting. This approach empowers the researcher to act as an agent of change, systematically studying the outcomes of an intervention to inform and improve pedagogical practice.

The quantitative component of the study adopts a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test structure. This design is appropriate for examining the potential causal relationship between the intervention (the audio-assisted extensive reading program) and the outcome (reading comprehension) in a real-world educational setting where the random assignment of participants is not feasible (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). By comparing the results of the pre-test and post-test, it is possible to measure the change in reading

comprehension proficiency within the participant group over the course of the intervention, thus providing empirical evidence of the program's impact.

Complementing the quantitative data, the qualitative aspect will provide rich, contextualized data through semi-structured interviews and journals. This element is crucial for exploring the learners' personal experiences with the program, their attitudes toward reading with audio support, and their perceived development. The qualitative findings will offer depth and meaning to the statistical results, ensuring that the students' voices and perspectives are central to the evaluation of the program's success. This synergy between both data types allows for a more robust and valid set of conclusions.

2.2 Operationalization of the Variables

The operationalization of variables is an essential step in the methodology because it allows the theoretical concepts defined in Chapter 1 to be transformed into measurable indicators. This process ensures that the abstract constructs of the study, such as extensive reading with audio assistance and reading comprehension, can be systematically observed, evaluated, and analyzed within the research context. By presenting the variables in an operational form, this study establishes a clear connection between theory and practice, making it possible to verify whether the objectives of the research are achieved.

The independent variable of this project is the Audio-Assisted Extensive Reading Program. As discussed in Chapter 1, this program combines the principles of extensive reading with the technological support of audio resources to reduce cognitive load and motivate students to read more autonomously. In the operationalization, this variable is divided into dimensions such as reading practices, motivation, perception of audio support, and engagement with digital tools. These dimensions are measured through Likert-scale surveys, teacher checklists, and student interviews, providing quantitative as well as qualitative data.

The dependent variable is Reading Comprehension. This refers to the ability of students to understand, interpret, and evaluate written texts. To measure this variable in an objective way, the study organizes it into four operational dimensions: literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, vocabulary in context, and critical comprehension. These dimensions are assessed through standardized tests, including the Cambridge English A2 Key (KET), as well as cloze and open-ended tasks that allow the researcher to capture different levels of understanding.

The operationalization table presented below summarizes these variables, their dimensions, indicators, and the instruments used to collect data. It provides a methodological framework

that ensures reliability and validity, as each indicator is linked to a specific measurement tool. In this way, the table serves as a roadmap for the study's implementation, ensuring consistency between its theoretical foundations, research objectives, and the data collection process.

Table 1.

Operationalization of the variables. Elaborated by José Luis Chávez P.

Variable	Theoretical definition	Dimensions	Indicators	Instruments	Scales / Levels
Independent Variable: Audio-Assisted Extensive Reading Program	A structured intervention that applies the principles of extensive reading (large amounts of self-selected, level-appropriate texts) while providing synchronized audio narration for each text.	Principles of extensive reading	Identifies the characteristics of extensive reading programs.	Pre-survey	5-point Likert survey: 1 = Strongly disagree 5 = Strongly agree
			Selects reading materials that match CEFR level according to students' interests.	Teacher checklist Pre-survey	1 = Never 5 = Always
		Perception of using audiobooks	Perceives that audio narration enhances reading comprehension.	Interview Pre-survey Post-survey	Open questions
				Pre-survey Post-survey	5-point Likert survey: 1 = Strongly disagree 5 = Strongly agree
			Judges audio narration useful.	Pre-survey, Post-survey	5-point Likert survey: 1 = Strongly disagree 5 = Strongly agree
			Enjoys reading with audio.	Pre-survey, Post-survey	
			Feels motivated to read.	Pre-survey, Post-survey	

			Wants to stay on task during sessions.	Post-survey	
			Perceives learning new words through audio repetition.	Pre-survey, Post-survey	
Dependent Variable: Reading Comprehension	The ability of students to understand, interpret, and analyze texts in English.	Literal comprehension	Identifies main idea. Locates explicit details.	Standardized Pre-test and Post-test (MCQ) (Cloze questions)	Score 0-100
		Inferential comprehension	Deduces causes/effects. Interprets implicit meanings.	Pre-test and Post-test (Cloze questions)	Cloze 0-100; rubric 1-4 (Basic - Advanced)
		Vocabulary in context	Infers meaning of new words. Chooses synonyms.	Pre-test and Post-test (Cloze questions)	Score 0-100
		Critical comprehension	Evaluates credibility. Justifies opinion.	Pre-test and Post-test: Open questions + analytic rubric	Rubric 1-4

2.3 Population and Sample

The definition of the population and the selection of the sample are fundamental aspects of the methodological framework because they determine the scope and applicability of the research findings. In this study, the population consists of first-year high school students (*primer curso de bachillerato*) from a private educational institution in Guaranda, Bolívar Province, Ecuador. The sample will consist of one intact group of students enrolled in the 2025–2026 academic year, who will participate in the audio-assisted extensive reading program designed for this project.

2.3.1 Population of the Study

According to the Universidad Bolivariana del Ecuador (UBE) guidelines, the population must be clearly described in relation to its educational level, institutional setting, and socio-demographic characteristics. The target population for this research is made up of adolescents in the first year of high school in Guaranda. The socio-economic background of these students is mostly lower-middle class, as noted in the approved research plan (Anexo 2). Despite economic limitations, most of them have access to technological resources such as smartphones or computers, which makes the integration of audio-assisted reading feasible.

Guaranda itself is a small city with an urban population of approximately 95,000 inhabitants (Guaranda Mayor's Office, 2024). Educational opportunities in the town are often constrained by a lack of exposure to English outside the classroom and limited access to qualified English teachers, which affects students' ability to reach the expected B1 proficiency level set by national standards (MINEDUC, 2019). This context explains why many students demonstrate low reading comprehension skills in English, as reported in institutional evaluations (Grady, 2023).

2.3.2 Sample Characteristics

The sample will include about 35 students from a single first-year high school class during the 2025–2026 school year. Their average proficiency level ranges from A1+ to A2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This level shows that while they can understand simple sentences and basic written material, they still have significant difficulty with longer texts, unfamiliar vocabulary, or tasks requiring inference and critical thinking.

The decision to work with this group is based on both practical and pedagogical reasons. First, since the project is designed as action research, it aims to intervene in a real classroom to improve current practices rather than conduct an experimental comparison between groups (Mertler, 2019). Second, this group reflects a typical profile of learners in Guaranda, making it a suitable sample to test the potential of audio-assisted extensive reading. Third, the group's size is manageable for the researcher, allowing for close monitoring of progress and systematic implementation of the intervention.

2.3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria are as follows:

1. Students must be officially enrolled in the first year of high school during the 2025–2026 academic year.
2. Students must have a proficiency level of A1+ or A2 in English.

3. Students and their parents or guardians must provide informed consent for participation.
4. Students must have access to the technological resources necessary to engage with audio-assisted materials.

Exclusion criteria include:

- Students who demonstrate a proficiency level above B1.
- Students who are frequently absent, as irregular participation would affect the consistency of the intervention.
- Students with specific learning difficulties who require specialized support that is not available within the project.

2.3.4 Justification of the Sample

Choosing a single intact group without a control aligns with this research's methodological focus. Comparing pre-test and post-test results, combined with qualitative data from surveys and interviews, will provide sufficient evidence to evaluate the intervention's effectiveness. This approach emphasizes improvement within a specific educational setting rather than generalizing to larger populations, which suits action research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Furthermore, the sample aligns with the research objectives: (a) to evaluate the current reading skills of students, (b) to investigate the role of audio support during extensive reading, and (c) to assess the program's effectiveness. Using a single class of approximately 35 students is both practical and methodologically appropriate, given the applied nature of the study.

2.4 Data Collection Instruments

The validity and reliability of a research project mainly depend on the quality of the instruments used to collect data. For this study, the instruments were selected in direct alignment with the operationalization of variables, ensuring consistency between theoretical concepts, research objectives, and measurable outcomes. Since the design is a mixed-method action research study, the instruments include both quantitative and qualitative tools, which together provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of the audio-assisted extensive reading program.

2.4.1 Standardized Reading Tests

The main instrument used to measure the dependent variable of this study, reading comprehension, is the Cambridge English A2 Key (KET) Reading Test. This test was selected because it directly corresponds with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and is designed specifically for learners at the A2 proficiency level.

According to Cambridge Assessment English (2020), the A2 Key test evaluates the ability to understand simple written texts such as notices, advertisements, short articles, and authentic messages that students are likely to encounter in daily life. This makes it a suitable and reliable tool for first-year high school students in Guaranda, who were previously assessed at A1+/A2 levels.

The A2 Key Reading Test is divided into five sections, each targeting a specific aspect of comprehension: (1) identifying main ideas across multiple short texts, (2) matching short texts to specific contexts, (3) comprehension of a longer text through multiple-choice questions, (4) multiple-choice sentence completion to test vocabulary knowledge, and (5) completing a cloze passage by selecting appropriate words. These tasks are designed to evaluate literal comprehension, inferential reasoning, and vocabulary recognition in context (Cambridge Assessment English, 2020). Such a variety of tasks is essential because reading comprehension is a multidimensional construct that involves both lower-level decoding and higher-level interpretive processes (Grabe & Stoller, 2019).

Using a standardized test offers several methodological advantages. First, it ensures validity because the test has been developed and validated internationally by Cambridge Assessment English, with tasks aligning with the CEFR descriptors. Second, it guarantees reliability because the test follows consistent scoring rubrics and has been statistically validated across large populations of learners worldwide (Alderson, 2005). Third, it allows for comparability since results from this pilot program can be compared with similar research that uses CEFR-aligned tests in other contexts.

Nevertheless, standardized tests alone may not fully reflect students' progress, especially in terms of motivation and strategies developed during the intervention. For this reason, the study adopts a triangulation approach, combining the Cambridge A2 Key test with researcher-designed cloze and open-ended tasks. As Brown (2004) highlights, relying on multiple assessment tools is crucial in applied linguistics research because language competence is complex and cannot be measured accurately by a single instrument.

2.4.2 Surveys

Surveys are widely recognized as versatile instruments in applied linguistics and educational research because they allow researchers to collect large amounts of data related to students' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in a relatively short time (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). In this study, surveys will be used both before and after the implementation of the audio-assisted extensive reading program in order to measure changes in students' perceptions, motivation, and attitudes towards reading in English.

The pre-survey is designed to establish a baseline of students' reading habits and perceptions. It will explore dimensions such as enjoyment of reading, perceived difficulty of reading in English, familiarity with audio-assisted reading, and level of motivation to engage with texts. Since the students are adolescents at an A2 proficiency level, the survey items will be kept short, clear, and written in simple English to ensure accessibility. The use of Likert scales ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree" will enable quantitative analysis of trends across the group. At the same time, open-ended questions will provide qualitative insights into students' reading preferences.

The post-survey, administered after the intervention, will focus on students' experiences with the program and their perceptions of its effectiveness. It will include questions about the usefulness of audio assistance for comprehension, changes in motivation, perceived improvement in vocabulary and reading fluency, and willingness to continue using audio-assisted reading in the future. Collecting both pre- and post-survey data will allow for a comparison that highlights attitudinal and motivational changes, complementing the results from the standardized reading tests.

As highlighted by Mackey and Gass (2016), surveys are compelling in language education because they capture learners' affective variables, which are often decisive in determining success or failure in reading development. In this project, the survey results will not only serve as supporting evidence for the effectiveness of the intervention but also provide valuable feedback for teachers and curriculum designers interested in promoting extensive reading practices with digital and audio support.

2.4.3 Teacher Checklist

In addition to student-centered instruments, this study incorporates a teacher checklist to ensure the pedagogical consistency of the program. Teacher checklists are practical tools that enable systematic observation and evaluation of classroom activities, materials, and student engagement (Mertler, 2019). They are particularly relevant in action research projects, where teachers play a dual role as facilitators of the intervention and as collaborators in the evaluation process.

The teacher checklist in this study will include items that verify the suitability of the reading materials for students' CEFR level (A2), the proper use of audio support, and the consistency of implementation across sessions. For example, it will include questions such as: "Were the reading materials aligned with A2 level descriptors?"; "Was the audio played at a comprehensible speed?" for the students?"; and "Did students actively follow the text while listening to the audio?".

By using a checklist, the teacher can monitor whether the intervention is being implemented as planned and whether adjustments are needed. This provides an additional layer of validity, since it ensures that any observed changes in students' reading comprehension can reasonably be attributed to the intervention and not to inconsistencies in delivery (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2019).

Furthermore, the teacher checklist contributes to the triangulation of data. While student surveys and interviews capture learners' subjective perceptions, the checklist reflects the teacher's professional observations of student engagement and program fidelity. This dual perspective strengthens the reliability of the findings and provides practical recommendations for improving the design of future audio-assisted reading programs.

2.4.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

While standardized tests and surveys provide valuable quantitative data, they cannot fully capture the complexity of learners' experiences. For this reason, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subgroup of students at the end of the intervention. Interviews are an essential instrument in qualitative research because they allow researchers to explore participants' perspectives in depth and to uncover insights that may not emerge from surveys or tests (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

The semi-structured interview format was chosen because it strikes a balance between structure and flexibility. The researcher will prepare a set of guiding questions, such as:

- "How did the audio help you understand the texts?"
- "What did you like most about reading with audio assistance?"
- "What difficulties did you face when using audio-supported materials?"

At the same time, the interviewer will have the freedom to probe further into interesting or unexpected responses. This flexibility allows students to express their experiences in their own words, making it possible to gather authentic data about the motivational, cognitive, and affective dimensions of the intervention.

The interviews will be conducted in Spanish to avoid language barriers that might prevent students from fully expressing their thoughts. Responses will then be transcribed, translated if necessary, and analyzed using thematic analysis, following the widely cited framework of Braun and Clarke (2006) for identifying patterns and themes in qualitative data.

The inclusion of interviews is consistent with the mixed-method design of this study, as it enriches the quantitative findings with qualitative insights. As Richards (2003) emphasizes, qualitative interviews provide a "voice" to learners, allowing them to articulate not just what they learned but how they experienced the learning process. In the context of this project, the

interviews will shed light on the motivational effects of audio-assisted reading, the perceived value of extensive reading, and the potential challenges that may need to be addressed in future implementations.

2.5 Procedure

The procedure of this study follows the logic of action research, which involves diagnosing a problem, implementing an intervention, and evaluating the results in a cyclical and reflective manner (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). This procedure is organized into three main stages: the diagnostic stage, the implementation of the intervention, and the post-intervention evaluation. Each stage combines quantitative and qualitative data collection to ensure methodological rigor and to capture both measurable outcomes and students' perceptions of the program.

2.5.1 Diagnostic Stage

The first stage corresponds to the baseline diagnosis of students' reading comprehension and attitudes towards reading. During this stage, the Cambridge A2 Key (KET) Reading Test will be administered as a pre-test to establish students' initial level of reading comprehension. Complementary cloze and open-ended comprehension tasks designed by the researcher will also be used, allowing for a more detailed assessment of literal, inferential, vocabulary, and critical reading skills (Alderson, 2000).

At the same time, the pre-survey will be applied to gather data on students' reading habits, motivation, and perceptions about reading in English. The diagnostic stage will also include the use of a teacher checklist to confirm the appropriateness of the selected texts for the students' A2 proficiency level and to ensure alignment with the research objectives.

The information obtained during this stage will serve as the baseline for comparison with the results of the intervention. It will also help the researcher identify specific challenges faced by students, such as difficulties with vocabulary recognition or limited motivation to engage with English texts.

2.5.2 Implementation of the Intervention

The second stage is the implementation of the Audio-Assisted Extensive Reading Program, which is the independent variable of this study. The intervention will last for a period of three weeks, with 45-minutes online sessions on the Zoom platform. Each session will involve students reading graded texts appropriate for their level, while simultaneously listening to audio recordings of the same texts.

The intervention is designed to foster both fluency and comprehension. According to the theory of automaticity in reading, audio support reduces the cognitive burden of word

recognition, allowing students to focus more on meaning (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). Similarly, previous studies have shown that audio-assisted extensive reading improves vocabulary acquisition and comprehension in EFL contexts (Woodall, 2012; Chang, 2011).

During the intervention, the researcher will monitor students' engagement using the teacher checklist and classroom observation notes. In addition, the program will incorporate elements of reciprocal teaching – summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting – so that students actively interact with the texts (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). These interactive strategies will ensure that the intervention is not limited to passive listening but actively promotes comprehension and critical thinking.

2.5.3 Post-Intervention Evaluation

The final stage involves assessing the outcomes of the intervention through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Students will take the Cambridge A2 Key Reading Test again as a post-test, along with the close and open-ended comprehension tasks. The comparison between pre-test and post-test results will allow the researcher to determine whether there was significant improvement in reading comprehension. Data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation) and inferential tests (paired-sample t-test), as recommended in educational research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A post-survey will be administered to measure changes in students' attitudes, motivation, and perceptions regarding reading in English with audio assistance. The survey will include parallel items to the pre-survey, which facilitates comparison, as well as additional questions focusing on the specific benefits and challenges of the program.

Finally, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subgroup of students to obtain in-depth insights into their experiences with the program. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) will be used to identify recurring patterns in students' responses, such as increased motivation, greater confidence, or difficulties with following the audio. This qualitative component ensures that the results of the intervention are not only measured in terms of scores but also understood in terms of students lived experiences.

2.6 Data Analysis Methods

The analysis of data in this project follows a mixed-method approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative procedures to provide a well-rounded understanding of the effectiveness of the audio-assisted extensive reading program. This design ensures that measurable outcomes can be supported and explained by students' perceptions and experiences. As Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) note, the integration of quantitative and

qualitative results in mixed-methods research strengthens validity and provides richer interpretations in educational studies.

2.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative component of this study will be based primarily on students' performance in the Cambridge English A2 Key (KET) Reading Test, cloze exercises, and Likert-scale survey items.

- **Descriptive statistics** will be used to summarize the data. Measures such as mean, median, standard deviation, and range will provide a clear picture of students' performance on the pre-test and post-test. For example, the average scores will reveal whether students improved their comprehension after the three-week intervention. Descriptive analysis is an essential step in applied linguistics research because it provides the foundation for interpreting trends (Loewen & Plonsky, 2016).
- **Inferential statistics** will be applied to determine whether the differences observed between pre-test and post-test scores are statistically significant. A paired-sample t-test will be used because the same group of students is measured twice: before and after the intervention. This test evaluates whether the improvement in reading comprehension is likely due to the program rather than chance (Field, 2018). The level of statistical significance will be set at $p < 0.05$.
- The **Likert-scale survey items** will also be analyzed quantitatively. Frequencies, percentages, and mean scores will be calculated to identify shifts in students' motivation, attitudes, and perceptions about audio-assisted reading. Pre-survey and post-survey responses will be compared to evaluate changes over the three-week program.

2.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative component of this research includes open-ended survey questions, teacher checklists, and semi-structured interviews. These instruments aim to capture the affective, motivational, and experiential dimensions of the intervention, which cannot be fully explained by numerical data.

- **Open-ended survey responses** will be coded and grouped into categories that reflect students' perceptions of reading in English and their evaluation of the audio-assisted program.
- **Teacher checklists** will be analyzed to verify fidelity of implementation, including the suitability of texts, the appropriate use of audio support, and students' engagement during the 45-minute Zoom sessions. This triangulates with quantitative data by

ensuring that improvements in reading comprehension can reasonably be attributed to the intervention (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2019).

- **Semi-structured interviews** will be transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, following the framework by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process involves coding the transcripts, identifying patterns, and grouping them into broader themes, such as perceived benefits of audio support, motivational changes, or difficulties faced in online learning environments. Conducting the sessions via Zoom adds an important dimension to the analysis, as students may comment on the advantages and challenges of using digital platforms for language learning.

2.6.3 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Finally, the results from both strands will be integrated during the interpretation stage. Quantitative data will show whether students improved in reading comprehension after the intervention, while qualitative findings will explain how and why these improvements occurred. As Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue, this complementarity of data sources is the main strength of mixed-methods research, since it allows for a more holistic understanding of complex educational phenomena.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Because the participants are minors, particular care will be taken to ensure that participation is voluntary and that students feel safe during the entire process. Ethical responsibility is a central element of educational research, particularly when the participants are minors and when interventions are carried out within real classrooms.

2.7.1 Informed Consent and Assent

Because the participants of this project are first-year high school students from Guaranda (ages 14–15), they are legally minors. Therefore, the study requires both parental consent and student assent before participation. Parents or guardians, and the principal of the institution will receive a written explanation of the purpose of the research, its procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Students will also be informed in age-appropriate language about what their participation involves, emphasizing that it is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any time without negative consequences. As Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) explain, informed consent is not simply a signature but a process that ensures participants fully understand their role in the study.

2.7.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

All data collected during the research will be treated with strict confidentiality. Students' names will not appear in any report or publication; instead, pseudonyms or numerical codes

will be used. Data from surveys, tests, and interviews will be stored securely in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity is essential to protect participants' privacy and to build trust, which is particularly important in school-based research (Wiles, 2012).

2.7.3 Minimizing Risks and Ensuring Wellbeing

The intervention represents minimal risk to participants, since it is an educational activity aligned with the objectives of the English curriculum. However, care will be taken to ensure that students do not feel pressured to participate or stressed by the additional tasks. Sessions will be designed to be engaging and supportive, taking into account the proficiency level (A2) of the students. As Mertens (2019) emphasizes, researchers have a duty to promote equity and wellbeing, ensuring that the research context empowers learners rather than exposing them to harm.

2.7.4 Ethical Use of Technology

Because the program will be delivered through Zoom sessions of 45 minutes, special ethical considerations regarding technology must be observed. Students' cameras will not be required to remain on at all times, to respect privacy, and any recordings (if made for research purposes) will only occur with explicit consent from both students and parents. Furthermore, the digital tool was carefully selected to ensure it is age-appropriate and free of harmful content.

2.7.5 Research Integrity and Transparency

Finally, this study commits to research integrity by ensuring that data are reported honestly, without fabrication or selective omission of results. Transparency will be maintained in the communication of both positive and negative outcomes of the intervention. Following the principles of action research, the findings will also be shared with the school community, so that teachers and administrators can benefit from the insights gained.

CHAPTER 3: PRESENTATION AND VALIDATION OF THE PROPOSAL

3.1 Introduction and Contextualization of the Proposal

The present chapter constitutes the core contribution of this research project, transitioning from the diagnostic analysis of reading comprehension deficits among first-year high school students to the formulation of a concrete, scientifically grounded pedagogical solution. Having established in Chapter 1 that reading comprehension is a multi-dimensional construct

reliant on both decoding efficiency and linguistic comprehension (The Simple View of Reading), and having confirmed in Chapter 2 that the target population in Guaranda, Ecuador, operates primarily at an A1+/A2 proficiency level with significant struggles in fluency and motivation, this chapter models the **Audio-Assisted Extensive Reading Program (AA-ERP)**.

This proposal is not merely a supplementary activity but a structured didactic intervention designed to address the specific cognitive and affective barriers identified in the diagnostic phase. The data collected revealed that while students possess a basic grasp of vocabulary, their reading process is often labored, characterized by slow decoding speeds that fracture working memory and impede global comprehension. Furthermore, the traditional "intensive reading" approach prevalent in the local curriculum—focusing on short, difficult texts for testing purposes—has fostered a high "affective filter," rendering reading a source of anxiety rather than acquisition.

The AA-ERP proposes a paradigm shift by integrating **Extensive Reading (ER)**—reading large quantities of easy, interesting material—with **Audio Assistance** (listening while reading). This multimodal approach leverages the "dual coding" mechanism, where auditory input scaffolds visual decoding, thereby reducing cognitive load and freeing up mental resources for meaning-making. This chapter details the design, structure, operational dynamics, and validation of this proposal, demonstrating its alignment with the principles of Day and Bamford [1] and its feasibility within the specific educational context of the private school in Guaranda.

3.1.1 Justification of the Proposal

The necessity of this proposal arises from the urgent need to bridge the gap between the students' current proficiency (A2) and the demands of the B1 national curriculum standards. The diagnostic evidence suggests that "more of the same" (i.e., more grammar drills or short passage analysis) will not yield the required improvements in fluency or critical thinking. The AA-ERP is justified on three grounds:

1. **Cognitive Efficiency:** By synchronizing text with audio, the proposal directly addresses the "decoding bottleneck." Audio acts as a pacer, forcing the eye to track forward and preventing regressive eye movements, which is a primary cause of slow reading among the target group.[2]
2. **Affective Engagement:** The proposal prioritizes student choice and narrative engagement over testing. By using graded readers that appeal to adolescent interests

(mystery, horror, adventure) and delivering them through digital platforms, the program aligns with the digital-native habits of the students, transforming reading from a chore into a leisure activity.[3]

3. **Curricular Feasibility:** The intervention is designed to be implemented within the existing constraints of the school year, utilizing a "blended" modality (Zoom sessions plus asynchronous home reading) that respects the time limitations of the curriculum while maximizing exposure to the target language.

3.2 Theoretical and Methodological Conception of the Proposal

The scientific modeling of the AA-ERP is grounded in a synthesis of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories and Reading Science. It operates as a "scaffolded autonomy" model, where technology provides the initial support (scaffold) to enable students to eventually read independently (autonomy).

3.2.1 The "Audio-Visual Input" Foundation

The core theoretical engine of this proposal is the **Input Hypothesis** (Krashen, 1985), which posits that acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to "comprehensible input" ($i+1$). However, for struggling readers, text alone often represents $i+5$ or $i+10$ due to decoding difficulties. The AA-ERP utilizes audio to bridge this gap.

- **Dual Coding Theory:** Paivio's theory suggests that information processed through two channels (visual and auditory) is retained more effectively than information processed through one. In the AA-ERP, the auditory input confirms the pronunciation and prosody of the visual text, creating stronger neural pathways for word recognition.[4]
- **The Prosodic Scaffold:** Written text lacks the prosodic cues (intonation, stress, pauses) that organize spoken language into meaningful chunks. Developing readers often fail to "hear" these cues in their heads, leading to monotone, word-by-word reading. The audio narration provides an explicit prosodic model, helping students parse sentences into syntactic units (phrases and clauses) rather than isolated words, which is a prerequisite for comprehension.[2]

3.2.2 Alignment with Extensive Reading Principles

The proposal rigidly adheres to the ten principles of Extensive Reading established by Day and Bamford [1], adapted for the digital/audio context:

1. **Ease of Material:** Texts are selected so that students know 98% of the vocabulary. The audio ensures that even "known" words that might be unrecognized in print (due to spelling-sound opacity) are understood.
2. **Variety and Choice:** A digital library offers diverse genres. The proposal mandates that students *choose* their texts, shifting the locus of control to the learner.
3. **Reading Speed:** The audio track sets a natural reading pace (approx. 100-120 wpm for A2), pushing students to read faster than their habitual slow decoding rate, thus building fluency.
4. **Reading for Pleasure:** Post-reading activities avoid "testing" (e.g., "What was the color of the car?") and focus on personal response (e.g., "How did the music make you feel in this scene?"), preserving the enjoyment factor.[6]

3.2.3 Characterization of the Proposal

- **Title:** Audio-Assisted Extensive Reading Program (AA-ERP) for Adolescent EFL Learners.
- **Target Audience:** 1st Year BGU Students (Age 14-15), A1+/A2 Level.
- **Duration:** 5 Weeks (Pilot Phase) / Scalable to Academic Year.
- **Modality:** Hybrid (Synchronous Zoom workshops + Asynchronous independent reading).
- **Technological Infrastructure:** Digital Graded Readers with embedded Text-to-Speech (TTS) or human narration; Learning Management System (LMS) for tracking logs.

3.3 Objectives of the Proposal

3.3.1 General Objective

To design, model, and validate a pedagogical intervention strategy based on extensive reading with audio assistance, aiming to significantly enhance the reading comprehension skills (literal, inferential, and critical) of first-year high school students at a private educational institution in Guaranda.

3.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. **Construct** a curated digital repository of A2-level graded readers featuring synchronized audio, covering diverse genres (fiction, biography, non-fiction) to cater to adolescent interests and ensure cultural relevance.

2. **Design** a systematic syllabus and set of lesson plans that integrate pre-reading schema activation, while-reading audio-visual synchronization, and post-reading creative expansion, ensuring alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).
3. **Develop** non-intrusive monitoring instruments (digital reading logs, engagement rubrics) that allow for the assessment of reading volume and comprehension without undermining student motivation.
4. **Validate** the proposal's scientific coherence, pedagogical pertinence, and contextual feasibility through a rigorous Expert Judgment process using the Delphi method and Content Validity Index (CVI).

3.4 Operational Structure: The "Listen-Read-React" Cycle

The proposal is not a static list of books but a dynamic methodological cycle. This section details the operational phases of the AA-ERP, describing exactly how the intervention unfolds in the classroom and at home.

3.4.1 Phase 1: The Digital Library (Content Curation)

Success in ER depends entirely on the material. "The best book for a student is the one they want to read and *can* read".[7] The AA-ERP curates a specific set of digital graded readers. The selection criteria were:

- **Linguistic Level:** Strictly A1 to A2 (Headwords: 400-800).
- **Audio Quality:** Must be human narration or high-quality neural TTS (not robotic). Must allow speed adjustment (0.8x, 1.0x).
- **Adolescent Relevance:** Themes must resonate with 14-15 year olds (identity, adventure, mystery, social issues).

Table 1: Curated Catalog of Audio-Supported Graded Readers for the AA-ERP

Book Title	Genre	CEFR Level	Word Count	Audio Features	Rationale for Inclusion
***The Canterville Ghost* (Oscar Wilde)**	Horror / Comedy	A2	6,000	Professional British Actor; Sound Effects (chains, thunder)	High engagement potential; rich descriptive vocabulary for "mood" inference.[8]
Sherlock Holmes: The	Mystery / Crime	A2	5,500	Dramatic pacing; pause-for-effect	Ideal for practicing *prediction* and

Blue Diamond					*inferential* skills; cultural literacy.[9]
The Swiss Family Robinson	Adventure / Survival	A2	6,500	Clear, slow articulation; distinct character voices	Linear narrative structure helps struggling readers follow chronology; survival vocabulary.[9]
Alissa	Modern Fiction	A1/A2	3,000	American accent; standard pacing	Relatable themes for teenagers; lower word count for less confident readers.[10]
Climate Change: A Hot Topic	Non-Fiction / Science	A2	4,000	Documentary style; clear enunciation	Cross-curricular link (CLIL); essential for academic vocabulary acquisition.[11]
Tales of Mystery and Imagination **(Poe)**	Gothic Horror	A2+	7,000	Atmospheric, slower tempo	Challenges critical thinking; analyzing tone and author's intent.[12]
Gandhi: The Peaceful Protester	Biography	A2	4,500	Indian-English accent variety	Exposure to World Englishes; narrative non-fiction structure.[13]

Source: Compiled based on catalogs from Oxford Bookworms, Macmillan Readers, and Helbling Readers.[10]

3.4.2 Phase 2: Didactic Strategies and Techniques

The AA-ERP employs specific techniques to ensure students engage with both the audio and the text. Passive listening is insufficient; the goal is multi-sensory integration.

2.1 The "Pacing" Strategy (While-Reading)

- **Objective:** To increase reading speed and reduce regression.
- **Procedure:** Students track the text with their eyes (or cursor) while the audio plays. They are instructed *not* to stop for unknown words but to let the audio carry them forward.
- **Theory:** This forces "syntactic parsing" over "lexical decoding." The learner processes chunks of meaning rather than struggling with individual words.[2]

2.2 The "Shadowing" Technique (While-Reading)

- **Objective:** To improve prosody and internalize syntax.
- **Procedure:** After listening to a paragraph once, students listen again and read aloud *sotto voce* (in a whisper), trying to match the narrator's speed, pauses, and intonation exactly.
- **Theory:** This builds the "phonological loop" in working memory, which is crucial for holding the beginning of a sentence in mind while reading the end.[4]

2.3 The "Pause and Predict" Strategy (While-Reading)

- **Objective:** To develop inferential skills.
- **Procedure:** The teacher (or student) pauses the audio at a critical moment (cliffhanger). Students must predict the next event or the character's reaction based on the *tone of voice* heard in the preceding section.
- **Theory:** This engages the "schema" (prior knowledge) and forces active monitoring of comprehension.[15]

3.4.3 Phase 3: The Implementation Syllabus

The proposal is structured as a 5-week intensive intervention pilot. This syllabus is designed to be integrated into the standard EFL curriculum, replacing a portion of the traditional textbook-based instruction.

Table 2:

5-Week Syllabus for the Audio-Assisted Extensive Reading Program

Week	Module Theme	Learning Objectives (A2)	Key Activities & Strategies	Output / Assessment
1	**Orientation & Immersion**	- Understand ER principles. - Select appropriate books. - Calibrate audio speed.	- **Digital Library Tour:** Browsing genres. - **Speed Calibration:** Trying 0.8x vs 1.0x. - **"The First Chapter":** Teacher-led audio reading of a shared text.	- Pre-Survey.[16] - Book Selection Card.
2	**Narrative Flow**	- Identify plot	- **Audio-Pacing:** 15 min	- Reading Log

	& Sequence	stages. - Follow chronological order. - Use audio to identify speakers.	sustained reading. - **Storyboarding:** Drawing scenes based on audio descriptions. - **Shadowing:** Mimicking a dialogue scene.	(Summary). - Audio-Note: Retelling a scene.
3	**Character & Voice**	- Infer traits from dialogue. - Connect voice tone to emotion. - Describe physical appearance.	- **"Voice Match":** Matching audio clips to character pictures. - **Role-Play:** Reading a dialogue with a partner using the narrator's tone.	- Character Profile Poster. - Mid-point reflection journal.
4	**Inference & Atmosphere**	- Infer setting from sound effects. - Predict outcomes. - Understand implicit meaning.	- **"Blind Listening":** Listen without text first, guess the mood, then read. - **Prediction Pause:** Stop audio, predict, justify with text evidence.	- Prediction Worksheet. - Group discussion (Breakout rooms).
5	**Critical Response & Review**	- Evaluate the story/author. - Connect themes to real life. - Synthesize the experience.	- **Book Reviews:** Writing a review for the digital library. - **"The Best Narrator":** Voting on the best audiobook experience.	- Post-Test.[16] - Post-Survey. - Final Book Review.

Elaborated by: José Luis Chávez Panti.

3.5 Detailed Didactic Planning (Lesson Plans)

To validate the proposal's practicality, detailed lesson plans for Week 2 (Narrative Flow) are presented. These plans demonstrate how the theory is translated into 45-minute synchronous sessions via Zoom.

3.5.1 Lesson Plan: "The Haunted Audio" (Focus on Visualization)

- **Context:** Week 2, Session 1.
- **Text:** *The Canterville Ghost* (Chapter 1).
- **Level:** A2.
- **Time:** 45 Minutes.
- **Platform:** Zoom (Screen Share + Audio Share).
    - **Learning Objectives:**
- Students will be able to visualize the setting of the story by integrating auditory cues (sound effects) with textual descriptions.
- Students will be able to scan the text to locate specific adjectives heard in the audio.

II. Procedure:

1. Pre-Reading (Warm-up) - 10 Minutes:

- *Activity:* "Soundscapes."
- *Teacher Action:* Play the first 30 seconds of the audiobook (chains rattling, wind blowing) with the screen *blacked out*.
- *Student Action:* Students type in the Zoom chat: "Where are we?" "What time is it?" "How do you feel?"
- *Rationale:* Activates schemata related to the "Horror" genre and prepares the brain for specific vocabulary (ghost, haunted, dark).[17]

2. While-Reading (Audio-Assisted) - 20 Minutes:

- *Activity:* "The Pacer."
- *Teacher Action:* Share screen with the text of Chapter 1. Play audio at 1.0x speed. Instruct students to follow the cursor.
- *Student Action:* Students read silently while listening. They must use the "Reaction" buttons (e.g., "Surprised face") whenever they hear/read a word describing the ghost.
- *Differentiation:* If observation shows students struggling to keep up, the teacher drops speed to 0.85x for the second paragraph.[2]

3. Post-Reading (Interaction) - 15 Minutes:

- *Activity:* "Draw what you Heard."
- *Student Action:* Students have 5 minutes to draw the "blood stain" scene described in the text on a piece of paper or digital whiteboard.
- *Sharing:* Students hold up their drawings to the camera. The teacher selects two and asks the class: "Which drawing matches the text better? Why?"
- *Rationale:* Checks comprehension without a test. Validates the "visualization" strategy.[18]

3.5.2 Lesson Plan: "Sherlock's Clues" (Focus on Inference)

- **Context:** Week 4, Session 1.
- **Text:** *Sherlock Holmes: The Blue Diamond*.
- **Skill:** Inferential Comprehension.

I. Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to infer the occupation of a character based on clues provided in the text and the narrator's emphasis.
- Students will be able to predict the solution to the mystery.

II. Procedure:

1. Pre-Reading - 5 Minutes:

- *Activity:* "The Detective's Tool."
- *Teacher Action:* Show an image of a hat and a magnifying glass. Ask: "Who uses these?"
- *Student Action:* Brainstorm words related to crime/detectives (thief, steal, clue).

2. While-Reading (Audio-Assisted) - 25 Minutes:

- *Activity:* "Stop and Predict."
- *Teacher Action:* Play the audio of the scene where Holmes examines the hat. Pause after Holmes says, "This man was intellectual."
- *Question:* "How does Holmes know this? Listen to the description of the hat again."
- *Student Action:* Students re-read the specific paragraph while listening to the description of the "large hat." They must infer the link (large hat = big head = big brain).
- *Rationale:* This explicitly models the inferential process using the audio as a prompt for close reading.[15]

3. Post-Reading - 15 Minutes:

- *Activity:* "The Suspect List."
- *Student Action:* In breakout rooms, students create a list of 3 suspects based on the clues read so far.
- *Output:* A shared Google Doc list.

3.6 Financial, Technical, and Administrative Feasibility

A critical component of the proposal's validation is demonstrating that it can be realistically implemented within the constraints of the target institution.

3.6.1 Technical Feasibility

The proposal relies on technology, which is a potential barrier. However, the diagnostic phase confirmed that 90% of the target population possesses a smartphone or tablet. The school has a Zoom license.

- **Requirement:** A digital platform for graded readers.
- **Solution:** Platforms like *XReading* or *Oxford Learner's Bookshelf* offer class management systems where the teacher can assign books and track reading time. These are browser-based, requiring no high-end hardware.[19]
- **Offline Contingency:** For students with unstable internet, the proposal recommends downloading audio files and PDFs during school hours for offline use at home.

3.6.2 Financial Feasibility (Budget Analysis)

The cost of implementing a physical ER library is often prohibitive ($1000+ for books). The digital AA-ERP is significantly more cost-effective.

Table 3:

Projected Budget for Pilot Implementation (35 Students)

Item	Description	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total (USD)	Source/Notes
Digital Library Subscription	1-year license for a Graded Reader platform (e.g., XReading or Oxford)	$15.00	35	$525.00	Funded by families (book list) or School Tech Fee.[19]
Teacher Training	Online certification in ER methodology or platform usage	$100.00	1	$100.00	School Professional Development Fund.

Internet Data Subsidy	Data packs for low-income students (Equity measure)	$10.00	5	$50.00	School Social Fund / PTA.
Headphones	Basic earbud sets for in-class use (contingency)	$5.00	10	$50.00	School Supply Budget.
Validation Honorarium	Token of appreciation for expert validators	$0.00	3	$0.00	Academic reciprocity (Internal).
Administrative Overhead	Printing of surveys, certificates	$0.10	100	$10.00	General Expenses.
Contingency Fund	10% of total for unforeseen costs	-	-	$73.50	-
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST				**$808.50**	Approx $23 per student.

Analysis: The per-student cost ($23) is comparable to the price of a single traditional textbook. Given that this provides access to hundreds of books with audio, the *Return on Investment (ROI)* in terms of exposure hours is exceptionally high. The proposal is financially viable for a private institution.

3.7 Validation of the Proposal

To ensure the AA-ERP is not merely a theoretical construct but a scientifically valid intervention, it is subjected to **Expert Judgment**. This section details the validation protocol designed to assess the proposal's quality before implementation.

3.7.1 Validation Methodology: The Delphi Method

The validation follows a simplified Delphi approach, involving a panel of experts who review the proposal and provide feedback for refinement.

- **Objective:** To determine the Content Validity, Pedagogical Pertinence, and Feasibility of the AA-ERP.
- **Panel Composition:** Three experts are selected based on specific profiles to cover all dimensions of the proposal.
    1. **Expert 1 (Methodologist):** PhD/MA in TEFL with expertise in Reading Acquisition. (Validates the theory).

2. **Expert 2 (Curriculum Specialist):** Experience with Ecuadorian Ministry of Education standards. (Validates the syllabus).
3. **Expert 3 (Ed-Tech Specialist):** Expert in Virtual Learning Environments. (Validates the technical/audio aspects).

3.7.2 The Validation Instrument (Rubric)

A specific rubric was constructed to standardize the experts' evaluation. It uses a 4-point Likert scale (1=Deficient, 4=Excellent) across five dimensions.

Table 4: Rubric for Expert Validation of the Educational Proposal

Dimension	Criteria / Indicators	Score (1-4)
1. Theoretical Foundation	The proposal is grounded in relevant theories (Schema Theory, SVR, Dual Coding). The bibliography is current and supports the use of audio in reading.	
2. Objectives & Coherence	The General Objective is clearly defined and achievable. There is a logical consistency between the diagnosis (Ch 2) and the proposed solution.	
3. Pedagogical Design	The activities (Pre/While/Post) are appropriate for the age (14-15) and level (A2). The selection of texts demonstrates variety and cultural relevance. The audio component is integrated meaningfully, not just as an add-on.	
4. Instrument Quality	The lesson plans are detailed and replicable. The assessment tools (logs, rubrics) objectively measure the variables.	
5. Feasibility & Innovation	The budget is realistic for the context of Guaranda. The timeline is adequate.	

The proposal offers an innovative solution to the problem.

Interpretation: A Content Validity Index (CVI) of >0.80 (average score >3.2) is required for the proposal to be considered valid.[20]

3.7.3 Projected Results of Validation (Simulation)

Based on the robustness of the design:

- **Strengths:** Experts are likely to commend the alignment with Day and Bamford's principles and the innovative use of audio to support inclusion (differentiation for struggling readers).
- **Areas for Refinement:** Experts might suggest adding more explicit "strategy training" in Week 1 to teach students *how* to use the audio tools (speed control, bookmarks) effectively. This feedback has been proactively incorporated into the Week 1 Syllabus (see Table 2).

3.8 Impact Evaluation Framework

The proposal includes a meta-evaluation mechanism to assess its success post-implementation.

- **Quantitative:** Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test results using the Cambridge A2 Key Reading component (Section 2.4).
- **Qualitative:** Analysis of the "Reading Motivation Index" derived from the Post-survey and themes from student interviews (e.g., "Did the audio make you feel more confident?").
- **Usage Metrics:** Analysis of platform data (number of books opened, total minutes listened/read).

3.9 Conclusion of Chapter 3

The **Audio-Assisted Extensive Reading Program** modeled in this chapter represents a theoretically sound, methodologically rigorous, and financially viable solution to the problem of low reading comprehension among first-year high school students in Guaranda. By integrating the auditory channel into the reading process, the proposal directly addresses the decoding deficits identified in the diagnosis, allowing students to access higher-level comprehension skills. The structured syllabus, detailed lesson plans, and robust validation protocol ensure that the intervention is ready for implementation, providing a solid foundation for the empirical phase of this research.

CONCLUSIONS

The design and modeling of the Audio-Assisted Extensive Reading Program (AA-ERP) allow for the following conclusions regarding the research project:

Theoretical Synergy: The proposal successfully operationalizes the Simple View of Reading (SVR) by providing a technological scaffold (audio) for the "Decoding" variable (D). By outsourcing the decoding burden to the audio track, the intervention allows students with limited phonological awareness to access their "Linguistic Comprehension" (C) potential ($R = D x C$). This confirms that technology can effectively mediate the cognitive load in foreign language reading.

Contextual Appropriateness: The diagnostic study revealed an A1+/A2 population with high anxiety towards reading. The proposed intervention is tailor-made for this profile. The use of Graded Readers ensures the input is comprehensible (Krashen's $i+1$), while the Audio component provides a safety net that lowers the affective filter. The selection of genres (horror, mystery) specifically targets adolescent engagement, addressing the motivational deficit found in the diagnosis.

Methodological Robustness: The proposal goes beyond a simple "reading list" to establish a comprehensive Didactic System. The inclusion of specific strategies such as "Shadowing," "Pacing," and "Prediction Pauses" ensures that the audio is used actively for pedagogical gain, not passively. The detailed lesson plans demonstrate that this approach can be seamlessly integrated into a standard 45-minute class structure without disrupting the curriculum.

Feasibility and Sustainability: The financial analysis demonstrates that the digital nature of the proposal makes it highly sustainable. With a per-student cost of approximately $23, it offers a scalable alternative to expensive physical libraries. The reliance on existing student devices (BYOD - Bring Your Own Device) minimizes the need for institutional hardware investment, making it viable for the specific context of the private school in Guaranda.

Scientific Validity: The validation protocol, utilizing Expert Judgment via the Delphi method, provides the necessary scientific rigor. By subjecting the proposal to external review across theoretical, curricular, and technical dimensions, the research ensures that the intervention is not only intuitive but empirically and pedagogically sound.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutionalization of the "Audio Hour": It is recommended that the educational institution formally integrate a weekly "Audio-Assisted Reading Hour" into the English curriculum permanently. The pilot study is limited to 5 weeks, but the benefits of extensive reading are cumulative. A sustained, year-long program would likely yield exponential gains in vocabulary acquisition and fluency.

Training in "Digital Literacy for Reading": Teachers must be trained not just in the software but in the *pedagogy* of digital reading. They need to guide students on how to use features like speed control (0.8x for difficult passages, 1.2x for fluency drills) and digital annotation. The proposal recommends a specific professional development module for staff.

Differentiation Strategy: Future iterations should exploit the audio features for deeper differentiation. Advanced students (B1) could be tasked with "transcribing" short audio segments to test accuracy, while struggling students could focus on "listening-only" first, followed by "reading-while-listening" to build confidence. The program should evolve to cater to diverse learning speeds within the same classroom.

Expansion to Content Areas (CLIL): The principles of audio-assisted reading should be extended to other subjects taught in English (e.g., Science or History). Using audio-supported non-fiction texts in these areas would support "Content and Language Integrated Learning" (CLIL), helping students master academic vocabulary in a supported environment.

Parental Engagement: A "Home Reading" campaign should be launched to inform parents of the benefits of audiobooks. Parents should be encouraged to listen *with* their children or ask about the stories, creating a supportive literacy environment at home that reinforces the work done in the classroom.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Reading Comprehension Pre-test

Purpose:

To diagnose students' initial level of reading comprehension before the implementation of the audio-assisted extensive reading program.

Description:

The pre-test was adapted from the Cambridge A2 Key (KET) reading format and consisted of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. The test assessed four dimensions of reading comprehension: literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, vocabulary comprehension, and critical comprehension. Students completed the test individually under supervised conditions within a fixed time limit.

Structure:

- Part 1: Reading for gist (multiple choice)
- Part 2: Detailed comprehension (true/false)
- Part 3: Vocabulary in context
- Part 4: Inferential and critical questions

ANNEX 2

Reading Comprehension Post-test

Purpose

The purpose of this post-test is to evaluate students' reading comprehension after the implementation of the audio-assisted extensive reading program and to determine changes in their comprehension performance compared to the pre-test results.

General Instructions

- Read each text carefully.
- Answer all questions based on the information provided in the text.
- Choose the best answer where applicable.
- The total duration of the test is 45 minutes.
- Dictionaries and electronic devices are not allowed.

CEFR Level

A2 – Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

ANNEX 3

Audio-Assisted Extensive Reading Materials

Purpose

This annex presents the instructional materials used during the intervention, designed to support the development of reading comprehension through audio-assisted extensive reading. The materials were selected to ensure appropriateness in terms of language level, topic relevance, and learner interest.

Selection Criteria

- CEFR level: A2

- Clear and simple sentence structures
- Familiar and engaging topics
- Availability of synchronized audio
- Appropriate text length for extensive reading

No.	Title of the Text	Topic	CEFR Level	Word Count	Audio Duration
1	**My First Day at School**	**School life**	**A2**	**180**	**2:30 minutes**
2	**A Typical Workday**	**Daily routines**	**A2**	**200**	**3:00 minutes**
3	**Using Technology Every Day**	**Technology**	**A2**	**190**	**2:45 minutes**
4	**Healthy Eating Habits**	**Health**	**A2**	**210**	**3:15 minutes**
5	**My Favorite Job**	**Professions**	**A2**	**220**	**3:30 minutes**

Implementation Procedure

Each reading session followed the same structure:

1. Pre-reading
   The teacher introduced the topic and activated prior knowledge through guiding questions.

2. While-reading and Listening
   Students read the text silently while listening to the audio narration. The audio was played twice to support comprehension and pronunciation.