

The role of audiobooks in developing English listening proficiency: A study of undergraduate learner in Tamil Nadu



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ABSTRACT

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Listening is one of the inevitable yet often overlooked skills in the process of learning a second language, especially for Indian undergraduate students learning English as a Second Language (ESL). Even after years of studying English in school, many students still struggle to understand spoken English. This occurs because students do not get sufficient exposure to real English as spoken in daily life, and they often feel nervous or uncomfortable in classroom settings. Various apps and tools are used to facilitate language learning, but there remains limited understanding of how audiobooks specifically contribute to enhancing listening skills. This study examines the effectiveness of audiobooks in developing listening skills through a twelve-week program involving 66 undergraduate students from Tamil Nadu. Students participated in a pre-test before the intervention and a post-test after completing the twelve-week audiobook listening program, which involved daily sessions of one hour. They listened to audiobooks with teacher support initially and then independently. The results indicated a significant improvement in listening scores, with an average increase of 25%. Additionally, students reported feeling less anxious about listening, better retention of new vocabulary, and improved ability to follow spoken English. The findings suggest that audiobooks are a vital component of language learning, providing autonomous, low-pressure, and long-term benefits in listening development. Consequently, audiobooks enhance confidence and foster consistent listening skills among ESL learners. The study recommends integrating audiobooks into regular classroom activities to support language acquisition.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature by validating audiobooks as effective ESL tools. It uses a new estimation methodology through SPSS analysis, originates a formula linking Krashen's Affective Filter with audiobook learning, and is one of the few studies on Tamil Nadu undergraduates. The paper contributes quantitative and emotional factors, documents progress, and finds that audiobooks enhance proficiency.

1. INTRODUCTION

Listening possesses a higher position, as it is an essential factor of comprehension which leads to acquisition. It is a significant skill in the process of language learning. Listening is widely recognized among other language skills such as Speaking, Reading, and Writing, to develop language skills especially in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). "Listening is a frequently used language skill to assist EFL learners in developing their English ability" (Chuang & Wang, 2015). It is a fact that listening skills have been a challenge among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in India. Undergraduate-level learners have been struggling to understand live lectures, instructions, and interactions in English, even after years of experience. It is identified that traditional teaching methods emphasized grammar rules and reading comprehension rather than real-life communication practice. As the learners did not get sufficient opportunities to listen to real-life English and practice in exam-oriented teaching methods, their language acquisition has not developed. Poor listening skills can make it difficult for them to participate in discussions, follow instructions, understand global content, and improve their pronunciation and spoken fluency, which are all key components of second language acquisition (SLA). Although methods like audiolingual exist to facilitate students through digital learning, they serve as drill methods and fail to provide a relaxed space for the listener. (Kakunta & Kamanga, 2020) research article argues that the Audio-Lingual Method is an oral-based approach that trains students in the use of grammatical and sentence patterns. The Audio-Lingual Method emphasizes teaching listening and speaking skills before reading and writing, aiming to develop oral proficiency in foreign language learning. The emphasis was not on the understanding of words, but rather on the acquisition of structures and patterns in common everyday dialogue. (P.26). This method may work in listening for microteaching or for reproducing words in a limited time; thus, improving listening skills is not only important for doing well in studies but also essential for getting jobs and communicating effectively in today's globalized society. As digital technology becomes more common in education, it is important to look for creative and student-centered approaches that support natural, second-language learning.

1.1. Why Audiobooks Are Necessary

Audiobook method can be used in the classroom for improving listening skills (Serafini, 2004). In this context, audiobooks have become a simple, engaging, and effective learning tool for improving English language skills. "Listening to audiobooks enhances both listening comprehension and spoken communication abilities" (Rizal et al., 2022). Audiobooks provide native expression, meaningful context, and appropriate fluency to the listeners rather than traditional teacher-centered methods. They give real-life contexts to learners, stimulate listening habits, and provide relaxation for the eyes (Bull, 2007). Features like pause, replay, and speed adjustment sustain learners' enthusiasm towards learning and listening. Effective learning depends on a good environment that includes relaxation, confidence, and being stress-free, as promoted in Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. Learning through digital applications is unavoidable in the present scenario, where learners are engaged with smart devices/phones; both free and premium apps are available. Duolingo, a listening app, has improved learning (Sari & Octaviani, 2022). However, emotional barriers such as stress, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes still exist, preventing learners from language acquisition. Audiobooks help lower these emotional barriers, often referred to as affective filters in language learning research, by providing a safe, enjoyable, and low-pressure listening experience. Since students can listen privately, without worrying about being judged, and choose content that matches their interests and skill levels, it creates a more relaxed and independent learning space, which traditional classroom methods often struggle to offer.

Listening to the language regularly is a very important part of learning it effectively. Abdul and Ilankumaran (2025) argue that second language learning can be fine-tuned through digital media. (Phuong, So You, Huy, & Nam, 2024) state that enhancement of listening skills through social media under the guidance of the teacher or on students' own promotes their learning because they can access a wide variety of materials suitable for their levels (p.1). In addition, audiobooks are commonly used in first-language (L1) learning settings to improve vocabulary, listening

comprehension, and fluency in understanding spoken language. Tusmagambet (2020) used qualitative data and argued that “a qualitative analysis of data obtained from the interviews revealed that the use of audiobooks had an overall positive effect on students’ attitudes toward audiobooks and reading comprehension” (p.41). Some English as a Second Language (ESL) programs have casually included audiobooks as part of their extracurricular learning activities. Although not formally studied, informal observations suggest that this approach helps increase student interest and participation. For instance, Tran, Kien, and Ngoc (2021) proved the best outcome of this method through qualitative and questionnaire methods in the context of Thai Nguyen University of Education. There is a research gap in Indian higher education, and no significant research has been found in southern Tamil Nadu, especially for undergraduate ESL classrooms. There is still a lack of research-based evidence on how regular exposure to audiobooks over time impacts learners’ listening comprehension, vocabulary retention, confidence, and attitudes toward listening in English as a Second Language (ESL) settings. It is also not fully understood whether students prefer audiobooks to other digital tools or classroom-based listening methods, or how their emotional and mental responses to audiobook learning relate to Stephen Krashen’s language acquisition theories.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1. *The Role of Audiobooks in Vocabulary Acquisition*

Perdani, Nadelia, and Sumartono (2022) explored the significance of using audiobook-based e-learning in the Xiangzhu class to support BIPA learners (Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing or Indonesian for Foreign Speakers). It emphasizes the value and ease of BIPA instruction through the incorporation of audiobook e-learning. The results of the study suggest that integrating audiobook e-learning into BIPA helps learners improve listening skills and engagement in the target language for non-native speakers.

The study by Ayunda (2013) examined the impact of audiobook use on the fluency of ESL learners. As exposure to audiobooks extends beyond the classroom setting, it contributes to improvements in fluency. The study focuses on fluency, which is defined as the ability to convey ideas clearly, precisely, confidently, and coherently through the learned language. Fluency in communication includes creative expression, speaking with minimal pauses, and constructing semantically rich and well-structured sentences. It also states that learners can acquire fluency when they integrate listening, speaking, and reading in the learning process. In this way, audiobooks support learners by facilitating fluent reading and smooth language transition. The study involved two groups, with pre-test and post-test assessments: one group was provided with audiobooks, and the other was not. Results indicated that the group with audiobooks showed significant improvement in fluency and lexical density, revealing that frequent exposure to audiobooks can enhance language acquisition. Purba, Yana, Putri, and Edi (2023) conducted a study with tenth-grade students at SMA Kartini Bartam to examine their listening abilities through the incorporation of ‘Storynory’ audiobooks. The results demonstrated that integrating technological tools such as audiobooks in second language acquisition elevates listening and speaking performance.

Susilowati, Luciandika, Ariani, and Martutik (2021) studied the development and support of audiobook-based courseware in hearing and listening-centered courses for learners. The process of learning through audiobooks facilitates independent learning for students despite occasional instruction from instructors, particularly when it comes to understanding theoretical concepts. Overall, the study suggests that audiobooks are an effective tool for both listening and learners’ autonomy. Authors suggest that future versions may not require repeated access to reference material to preserve listening assessment outcomes. Wallin (2021) challenges traditional learning methods by introducing the concept of ‘reading by listening’. Instead of viewing reading as a stationary and visually focused activity, this approach provides flexible, mobile, and accessible text interaction. This study suggests that incorporating reading into everyday tasks can redefine literacy in a way that is more inclusive and adaptable to various lifestyles. Through ‘reading by listening,’ Wallin validates this reading strategy and extends literacy beyond regular visual-centric frameworks. This perspective emphasizes the value of audiobooks in language acquisition, listening

comprehension, and students' active engagement. Sharma, Pathak, Bhat, Pandey, and Sharma (2025) summarize that audiobooks provide significant benefits to language learners, such as accurate pronunciation, improved reading and listening comprehension, and motivation to read texts. Additionally, the study recommends integrating authentic audio-visual materials into teaching and learning processes to create meaningful and engaging contexts for students. Utomo and Istiqomah (2020) respondents, who were visually impaired ESL students, found audiobooks to be a practical and accessible learning aid that supports independent learning. Wallin (2022) explored the habit of listening to audiobooks among young adults, which has become part of their daily routine. The study recommends further research on how audiobooks relate to other age groups and their well-being practices. Cahyono and Widya (2017) examined how graphic textbooks and multimedia-based teaching methods can support the enhancement of listening skills among ESL learners. The study utilized a Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) approach to analyze the components of visual and audio elements incorporated into textbooks and multimedia materials for better understanding. As students were exposed to this multimodal teaching strategy, they performed better in post-tests compared to pre-tests. The researchers emphasize that visually rich textbooks, integration of multimedia tools, and films into listening instruction can significantly increase students' attention and improve listening performance. Dali and Brochu (2020) state that audiobooks can support the development of both writing and speaking tasks for language learners. They highlight the flexibility of audiobooks according to the learners' community, aiding independent learning, small-group collaboration, and whole-class activities. This feature of audiobooks satisfies various learners who prefer different, comfortable, and innovative learning systems, while instructors also benefit as the system supports diverse learning needs. Mohamed (2018) found that audiobooks motivate learners and increase participation in group discussions and projects due to improvements in reading and listening skills. The study further demonstrated statistically significant differences in Listening Comprehension Test (LCT), with students in the experimental group who used audiobooks scoring higher than control groups. This indicates that audiobooks effectively aid the learning process. Talalakina (2012) explored the use of audiobooks in ESL classrooms to strengthen listening skills. Conducted at the National Research University Higher School of Economics, the study found that audiobooks enhance students' listening abilities, motivate learners, and help manage anxiety during real-world listening tasks. Damra, Abu-Helu, and Al Masadeh (2025) focused on experimental and control groups, with the experimental group scoring better in all three domains of reading fluency compared to the control group receiving traditional methods. Audiobooks also contributed to improved pronunciation and vocabulary usage. Taghinezhad and Khalifah (2015) state that audiobooks, containing clear pronunciation, play a vital role in enhancing learners' communication skills, sound production, and recognition. The study involved 90 Iranian students across various proficiency levels, including primary, intermediate, and upper intermediate. Results indicated that frequent exposure to audiobooks increased pronunciation accuracy and the ability to recognize sound patterns, especially for challenging phonemes such as /θ/, /ð/, /ü/, /n/, /ε/, and /ə/. Palanisamy and Rajasekaran (2025) reported that storytelling through digital media enhances interaction with books and shifts away from traditional reading and storytelling methods. This research introduces the concept of 'literary listening,' which combines auditory processing with literary interpretation and comprehension. Through audio narratives, even in the digital era, literary works and literature can evolve by listening through audiobooks.

Putri, Wida, and Santoso (2019) suggested that language teaching classrooms incorporate Information Communication and Technology (ICT) tools. The study further recommended the application "English Stories with Audio" to improve students' listening skills through audiobooks. The researchers indicated that this method can enhance both the effectiveness and student engagement in the learning process.

2.2. Affective Factors and Listening Comprehension

The study of Saragih, Marpaung, and Saragih (2022) focused on podcasts and used them as a tool to develop English listening proficiency for senior high school students. The findings revealed students' high level of active

participation and positive attitudes towards improving listening skills through podcasts. As most students were familiar with podcasts, they demonstrated enthusiasm in learning and listening via podcasts. This study recommends that institutions and educators incorporate podcasts into the English language teaching process to facilitate listening and speaking proficiency among students. [Astuti, Syam, and Daddi \(2024\)](#) used podcasts as a teaching aid and showed their impact on improving learners' listening proficiency in English language classrooms. The study indicates that podcasts serve as an effective teaching aid, significantly enhancing listening skills. Conversely, [Arono \(2014\)](#) employed interactive multimedia in classrooms instead of traditional methods to improve listening skills, resulting in better student performance on listening tasks. [Palangngan and Mulyaningsih \(2018\)](#) utilized a mobile-based learning approach via the Listen English Full Audio application. The application significantly facilitated students' listening comprehension. The study's results showed statistically significant positive scores in post-tests between experimental and control groups. The findings of [Gönülal \(2020\)](#) recommend podcasting and vodcasting techniques to enhance listening competency among students. The study also suggested that the utilization of digital tools can effectively increase L2 learning proficiency. Over time, students' performance demonstrated marked progression in their proficiency assessments. Additionally, the study included participants' responses, which reported that podcasts and vodcasts with accurate pronunciation contributed to improvements in listening and speaking skills in English, as well as vocabulary development. [Hui and Godfroid \(2025\)](#) argue that including speaking practice before listening impedes the language acquisition process. The study explains that listening plays a more significant role in language acquisition than immediate speaking. Furthermore, it shows that frequent oral practice enhances speaking competency and fluency among learners. This can be achieved only by reinforcing automatic language processing and fluent speech production.

The above-mentioned research was conducted in different geographical contexts, and no research was conducted with the population of Tamil Nadu, especially in Tiruchirappalli. The study addresses the current gap in research by providing contrastive insights into audiobooks listening. It suggests practical ways for teachers, language educators, and institutions to include audiobooks in undergraduate English programmes. The study promotes alternative methods from usual and stressful drill-based instruction to learner-friendly and emotionally supportive strategies. This effective approach provides an inclusive, engaging, and effective model of English language teaching.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to explore how audiobooks can help improve English listening skills among undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu. The main idea is that listening to audiobooks, because they offer a flexible, low-stress, and realistic listening experience, will lead to better comprehension, stronger vocabulary recognition, and increased confidence in listening compared to traditional classroom methods. Audiobooks are less stressful and more learner-friendly, and are believed to lower this emotional barrier and support better language learning. This study will examine learners' utilization of audiobooks and their beneficial features and actions such as pausing, replaying, forwarding, backwarding, and changing the playback speed. Further, the study will deal with the learners' opinions regarding audiobooks and learners' emotional responses to this method of learning.

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative research design was used to assess the impact of audiobook-based instruction on the listening proficiency of undergraduate students. A total of 66 participants (33 male and 33 female), all enrolled in undergraduate English language courses, were selected through purposive sampling from St. Joseph's College, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, and participated in the study. For the qualitative component, observations were noted and marked by the instructor. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using pre-test and post-test methods to evaluate variations in listening comprehension before and after the intervention.

The audiobook level is Intermediate, and students' English proficiency was at the intermediate level. Students were already classified as Intermediate based on the centralized listening skill test conducted by the English Department. Two audiobooks, entitled "The Happy Prince" by Oscar Wilde and "The Candle" by Leo Tolstoy, were provided, and their scores were assessed using 20 multiple-choice questions. The scores were recorded for comparison with the post-test.

Before post-test, students were trained for one hour during their class time as well as at home, and a post-test was conducted using 20 MCQ questions from two different audiobooks. Test scores were recorded using materials entitled "Devoted Friend" by Oscar Wilde and "The Doll's House" by Katherine Mansfield. The intervention between pre-test and post-test lasted for twelve weeks. Students listened to the assigned audiobooks for one hour per day, five days per week, both during class time and at home. Teacher support was provided during classroom listening sessions. The pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using SPSS software with correlation and t-test methods. The results indicate a significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test. Prior to the intervention, participants completed a pre-test consisting of 20 multiple-choice questions designed to assess their baseline listening skills. Two parallel 20-item multiple-choice tests were used to measure listening proficiency. The passages for the pre- and post-tests were selected from different texts to avoid memorization: 'Happy Prince' and 'The Candle' for the pre-test; 'Devoted Friend' and 'The Doll's House' for the post-test. The questions focused on general English audio passages and tested comprehension, vocabulary recognition, and inference-making abilities. Before the intervention, students were not provided with audiobooks; they were initially assessed for their listening proficiency, and their scores were recorded for future analysis. Following the pre-test, a twelve-week intervention was implemented, during which participants had the opportunity to regularly expose themselves to English audiobooks. The audiobooks mainly contained narrative content and linguistic appropriateness. Features of audiobooks such as pausing, backwarding, forwarding, and a stress-free learning environment facilitated participants' listening, aligning with Krashen's *Affective Filter Hypothesis*. After the intervention, participants completed the same set of twenty questions, and the post-test scores showed a significant increase compared to pre-test scores. The results demonstrated an improvement in participants' listening proficiency.

Each correct answer was scored as one point. Scores were entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for analysis. The results were analyzed through descriptive statistics, frequency tables, cross-tabulations, correlation analysis, and paired sample t-tests.

5. RESULT

The study mainly focused on the improvement of English listening skills by using audiobooks among the students of English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms at Tamil Nadu. The data were collected from 66 students by conducting pre-tests and post-tests over a twelve-week period. Statistically, the results were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software to identify the learners' listening proficiency. Therefore, the study's hypothesis was supported, indicating that audiobooks serve as an efficient and learner-friendly resource for Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

The study highlighted various tools such as descriptive statistics, frequency tables, cross-tabulations, correlation analysis, and paired sample t-tests that were used to examine the findings. Through these tools, the researcher has highlighted Krashen's *Affective Filter Hypothesis*, which emphasizes the role of emotional factors like anxiety and stress while learning a second language through the effectiveness of audiobooks in listening comprehension. The findings of the study support digital and auditory tools in language learning.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Pre-test	66	5.00	14.00	10.621	2.1394
Post-test	66	10.00	17.00	13.984	2.1590
Valid N (Listwise)	66				

5.1. Descriptive Statistics: A Quantifiable Leap in Listening Skills

Descriptive statistical analysis was used to record the progress of the study. Table 1 shows the listening progress of the respondents from the pre-test to the post-test. The increased mean and standard deviation values of the post-test, respectively 13.9848 and 2.15901, indicate that audiobooks facilitated all the respondents, 66 in number, to enhance their listening skills in English. Similarly, the progress of the minimum scores in both tests supports their listening progress, with pre-test and post-test values of 5.00 and 10.00, respectively. The maximum score of the pre-test was 14.00, which increased to 17.00 in the post-test. The improvement in test scores demonstrates that learners were exposed to audiobooks, resulting in overall development of their listening skills. The progress of the minimum score is noteworthy, indicating significant gains among average learners. It reveals that traditional teaching methods are outdated for facilitating average students in ESL classrooms. This is particularly relevant in Indian English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms, where learners often exhibit wide disparities in language skills, and conventional teaching methods may not effectively support struggling students. Audiobooks, with convenient features such as speed adjustment, pause, stop, and rewind, motivate learners to engage with suitable content.

Table 2. Frequency distribution of pre-test and post-test scores.

Pre-test					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Low	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
	Medium	60	90.9	90.9	92.4
	High	5	7.6	7.6	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	
Post-test					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Medium	27	40.9	40.9	40.9
	High	39	59.1	59.1	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

The above tables contain the frequency distribution of the chosen respondents and their progress.

Pre-Test:

- Low: 1.5%.
- Medium: 90.9%.
- High: 7.6%.

Post-Test:

- Medium: 40.9%.
- High: 59.1%.

Table 2 shows that a significant majority of students, 90.9%, were placed in the medium proficiency level, and 7.6% of students were considered high-level performers before the audiobooks intervention. During the intervention, the percentage of high-performing students increased, and medium-performing students decreased. The percentages were 59.1% and 40.9%, respectively. As audiobooks improved their performance, the low-performing group was eliminated. These changes in their scores indicate that the respondents' language proficiency has improved. The significant growth of the high-performing group reflects that many respondents, including average learners, also

improved their performance, as the intervention supported. The progressive results show that learners at all levels have demonstrated a positive response towards audiobooks, supporting the hypothesis of the study.

5.2. Cross Tabulation: Visualizing Progress across All Levels

Crosstabulation and correlation clarify further developments of the respondents.

Table 3. Pre-Test and post-Test crosstabulation and correlation.

			Post test		Total
			Medium	High	
Pre-test	Low	Count	0	1	1
		% within Pre1	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Medium	Count	27	33	60
		% within Pre1	45.0%	55.0%	100.0%
	High	Count	0	5	5
		% within Pre1	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	27	39	66
		% within Pre1	40.9%	59.1%	100.0%
			Pre test	Post test	
Pre-test		Pearson correlation	1	0.881**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	
		N	66	66	
Post-test		Pearson correlation	0.881**	1	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
		N	66	66	

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows the levels of progress that 33 respondents were improved to high performance from medium proficiency, and there were no changes among 27 respondents. It shows that a twelve-week intervention helped 55% of low-performing learners to improve their listening skills as well as language proficiency in a second language; they improved to the high category. It reveals that audiobooks not only helped the learners to improve their language proficiency but also contributed to their development in active engagement and language growth. Besides, audiobooks maintain gradual progress and consistent reinforcement, as the students were shifted from medium to high proficiency. This kind of progress is often linked to long-term retention and sustained improvement. Audiobooks were administered at the convenience of learners, which means a low-pressure environment. These results reveal that language input must be both comprehensible and contextually rich for effective language acquisition, as supports (Krashen, 1985).

Table 4. Paired samples statistics and correlations.

		Mean	N	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Pair 1	Pre test	10.621	66	2.1394	0.263
	Post test	13.984	66	2.1590	0.265
			N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pre test & post test		66	0.881	0.000

5.3. Correlation Analysis: Strong Predictive Validity

Paired Sample T Test:

Table 4 shows that the respondents have improved their listening skills through two audiobooks, and the intervention period enhanced their existing potential. Furthermore, it reveals that the digital app exposed them to

autonomous learning, with gradual progress observed in pre- and post-tests conducted before and during the intervention period. The improved values of mean, standard deviation, and standard error at post-test are 13.9848, 2.15901, and 0.26576, respectively. The Pearson correlation is significant at .000, with a p-value of .001 and an r value of .881, indicating a strong positive correlation between the two tests. It confirms that the respondents' natural language ability was not disturbed by the audiobooks used for the study.

The findings of the study suggest two significant points when considered for implementation. First, it shows that the assessment tools were reliable and consistent, and the strong correlation confirms that the observed improvement was not due to random variations or chance. Second, the results support the idea that audiobook-based learning offers a uniform advantage to learners across different ability levels. While high-performing students were able to deepen their comprehension, those in the medium and lower ranges received the necessary support to raise their proficiency.

Table 5. Paired samples test.

		Paired differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	95% confidence interval of the difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-test - Post-test	-3.363	1.0471	0.128	-3.621	-3.106	-26.096	65	0.000

Table 5 presents the results of the paired-sample t-test comparing students' pre-test and post-test scores. The mean difference (-3.36) indicates a significant improvement in listening proficiency after the audiobook intervention. The t-value (-26.096) and p-value (0.000) confirm that the improvement is statistically significant. Therefore, the data support the hypothesis that audiobooks effectively enhance English listening skills among undergraduate ESL learners.

5.4. Paired Sample T-Test: Proving Statistical Significance

Sample T Test:

The most crucial evidence comes from the paired-sample t-test, as shown in Table 5.

- Mean difference.
- -3.36t-value.
- -26.096Significance (2-tailed).

The statistical values indicate a highly significant difference between the pre- and post-test scores. Through the negative mean difference, the research states the high score of the post-test. The improvement in t-test is not due to random chance, so the error probability would be less than .001. The findings of the study, with valid test scores, prove that their exposure to audiobooks increased their listening and performance in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. As the audiobooks are enriched with context-rich language and natural speech patterns, teaching and learning through audiobooks marked an effective transformation among the students. Therefore, the study suggests that, instead of traditional methods like rote memorization, lecture-based teaching, and listening, teaching and learning through audiobooks are effective.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1. Support from Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis

Through the observation of a qualitative study, the researchers state that audiobooks help learners acquire language without emotional barriers and engage with the content privately at their own pace. Learners experience no pressure to perform in front of others and no fear of being judged.

Students can replay difficult sections, adjust the narration speed, or select topics they find interesting, which contribute to improving engagement and comprehension. This flexibility creates a low-anxiety, high-motivation

learning atmosphere, which is ideal for language development. As a result, the “filter,” in which is the emotional barrier that can block language input, was reduced, allowing learners to absorb and process the new language more effectively.

Ji, Qin, and Li (2022) pointed out that many studies on Foreign Language Listening Anxiety (FLLA) show a mismatch between how the concept is defined and how it is measured. Their systematic review indicates that FLLA has been explained from different perspectives psychological, social, and context-specific but most researchers do not use tools that match these definitions. They suggested that future research should focus on building clear theoretical models and using consistent measurement tools that accurately reflect the intended definitions.

6.2. Cognitive and Psychological Benefits

In addition to academic improvements, the intervention also seemed to offer cognitive and emotional benefits. Based on informal feedback via observational notes, collected during the study, many students reported feeling more comfortable with spoken English, found it easier to remember vocabulary, and experienced reduced anxiety during the listening tasks. Though their insights are anecdotal/informal, they strongly suggest that audiobooks support not only listening skills but also their language learning attitude.

The insights of Bull (2007) suggest advantages of listening skills; along with that, it relaxes the eyes, broadens the imagination, and paves the way for multisensory experiences. Students readily prefer audiobooks because of their enjoyable and calming features, which are in contrast to traditional learning methods, rote learning, lecture-based teaching practices, and textbooks, which make them stressful.

Chave and Kokešová (2022) shows that online learning settings often lead students to be passive and technical rather than engaged in meaningful and emotional learning. The research indicates that sound plays a more significant role in the learning process, as it helps connect students emotionally, preventing feelings of isolation and disconnection from the learning experience. Furthermore, it discusses the integration of additional strategies into teaching methods within online environments to enhance engagement and effectiveness.

6.3. Pedagogical Relevance and Implications

This study emphasizes that in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms, the teaching-learning process must adapt digital and learner-assisted tools, especially in higher institutions like in India where traditional methods still dominate pedagogy. Audiobooks are enriched with more features, acting distinctly so they serve as a substitute for printed reading material and contribute to a relaxed learning process for students. Affordability and scalability are the major advantages of audiobooks; they are also suitable for both rural and urban institutions. In the context of Indian higher education, audiobooks and their features are practical and more inclusive solutions. The study recommends that audiobooks be elevated from supplementary tools to core components of language instruction in the classroom. Roebuck, Guo, and Bourke (2018) raised an important concern that passive audiobook listening may not lead to deep comprehension. They suggested that structured content should be engaged with by children; otherwise, they may just hear without understanding. This research gap led the present study to adopt a more guided and intentional audiobook framework. According to the level of students, the curriculum may include comprehension quizzes, reflective journaling, speaking practice, and vocabulary tests. This strategy may be helpful in building stronger listening skills and encourages a holistic and student-friendly approach to the language learning process. This study addresses a notable gap in the existing research. Previous studies on audiobook interventions took place in Western educational settings, developed Indian cities, and not in semi-urban and rural regions of India. Therefore, the present study focuses on an underdeveloped semi-urban area with the aim of using audiobooks as a language learning tool to produce highly effective and measurable outcomes.

Empirical results of this study offer strong and convincing evidence that audiobooks are an effective and impactful tool for enhancing English listening skills among undergraduate ESL learners in Tamil Nadu, India. Results across

all levels of learners, analyzed through SPSS, including descriptive statistics, crosstabulation, correlation, and paired sample t-tests, show a consistent and statistically significant improvement in listening. Through these findings, the study has met the core idea of Stephen Krashen's *Affective Filter Hypothesis*. The study confirms that audiobooks not only offer academic advantages but also important emotional and psychological benefits. They reduce learners' anxiety and enhance their confidence. Audiobooks help to bridge existing skill gaps and reduce stress, encourage autonomous learning among learners. They also represent practical, effective, and measurable solutions to major challenges in a second language learning environment when included in the academic curriculum.

7. LIMITATIONS

There are certain limitations to this study. The research was conducted in the limited geographical area of Tiruchirappalli, especially at St. Joseph's College. The participants were undergraduate students, so the results may differ based on socio-economic status, proficiency, attitude toward the audiobook, other states, linguistic background, and even other populations from the same geography. The study aimed to provide a hypothesis based only on the outcome of the test, not fixed facts, and not to prove that this method would be applicable to all places. The study was conducted on a small scale, and larger data may yield different results. The intervention period was limited to 12 weeks. There can be differences in the study if the researcher conducts it again because of the students' level of engagement with audiobooks. Despite the limitations, this study provides a hypothesis and results that positively approach improving listening skills through audiobooks.

8. CONCLUSION

This study offers strong, evidence-based support for using audiobooks as an effective strategy to improve English listening proficiency among undergraduate ESL learners in Tamil Nadu. The results show gradual progress of the respondents, with their range of listening skills improving. Additionally, the average respondents performed well, and higher-range respondents refined and expanded their language skills in the post-test. It reveals that audiobooks and the intervention period gradually reinforced learners' disposition towards learning a second language with no stress, no anxiety, and zero fear of judgments from peers. As the audiobook app facilitated convenient pause, stop, replay, and speed adjustment, the respondents felt autonomous, which supported Stephen Krashen's *Affective Filter Hypothesis*.

The study suggests including and implementing audiobooks along with the regular curriculum in higher educational ESL classrooms in semi-urban, southern Tamil Nadu, India, to bridge the research gap. Audiobooks are flexible, enjoyable, and autonomous. This facility helps learners improve confidence and overall language skills.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The study involved minimal risk and followed ethical guidelines for social science fieldwork. Formal approval from an Institutional Review Board was not required under the policies of St. Joseph's College, India. Informed verbal consent was obtained from all participants and all data were anonymized to protect participant confidentiality.

Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

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