

Enhancing Listening Comprehension Through the British Council Website Among Grade VII Students of Smp Swasta Teladan Pematangsiantar

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Abstract. This community service program was carried out to address students' low confidence and difficulty in understanding spoken English texts. The purpose was to improve the listening comprehension of Grade VII-B students at SMP Swasta Teladan Pematangsiantar through the use of digital media provided by the British Council website (LearnEnglish Teens). The method used was a qualitative descriptive approach, involving socialization, material preparation, classroom implementation, and student reflection. The partners in this program were 27 Grade VII-B students, the English teacher, and the school principal. Evaluation was conducted through classroom observation and written student reflections. The results showed that although most students struggled to understand authentic English audio and lacked confidence, a small number of students demonstrated high interest and willingness to continue learning through the British Council platform. The activity successfully raised awareness of the importance of digital media in listening instruction and laid the groundwork for further development of similar programs in the future.

Keywords: Listening Comprehension; British Council Website; LearnEnglish Teens; Grade VII students; SMP Swasta Teladan Pematangsiantar.

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in English Language Teaching (ELT) has become

essential, particularly to enhance listening skills. As Rost (2011) emphasizes, listening forms the critical foundation for language acquisition and effective communication. Yet traditional instruction still relies heavily on textbook audio and teacher-centered models, which often fail to engage students or provide authentic language exposure (Gilmore, 2007; Herman et al., 2025).

A study by Kartika et al. (2023) examined the effect of audio-visual media on the listening comprehension of eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar. Their quasi-experimental study compared a group taught using video-based media with a control group following lecture-based instruction. The findings revealed a markedly higher post-test mean of 90 for the experimental group, compared with 78 for the control group—indicating that audio-visual tools significantly boost comprehension. This supports the selection of the British Council LearnEnglish Teens website (British Council, 2025), which offers interactive, culturally relevant listening materials beyond static textbook audios.

At Grade VII-B students of SMP Swasta Teladan Pematangsiantar, many learners exhibit low confidence in listening—often stating “I can’t do English”. Their inexperience with authentic English audio and limited listening strategies indicates a strong need for scaffolded, ICT-based listening instruction.

Theoretical grounding comes from Mayer’s (2001) Multimedia Learning Theory and recent findings by Ibrahim et al (2025), which both affirm the benefits of combining visual and auditory input. In line with Indonesia’s Merdeka Belajar policy, which encourages learner-centered and digital-enhanced instruction, this study aims to implement and evaluate the use of the British Council website to enhance listening comprehension, engagement, and learner autonomy among Grade VII-B students.

In addition, this study aligns with the global agenda of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. The integration of ICT-based platforms such as the British Council (2025) website supports this goal by providing accessible, flexible, and authentic language learning resources for students regardless of their background. By introducing digital listening materials in a junior high school context, this study contributes to enhancing digital literacy, learner autonomy, and equal access to quality English education. Therefore, the implementation of technology-supported listening instruction not only addresses classroom-level challenges but also supports broader educational development aligned with global standards.

2. Literature review

2.1. Listening Comprehension in English Language Learning

Listening comprehension remains a fundamental component of second language acquisition, as it provides learners with essential input for language development (Bingol et al., 2014; Azhar et al., 2023; Dalman & Plonsky, 2025). Recent studies emphasize that listening is not a passive activity but an active cognitive process involving interpretation, prediction, and meaning construction. According to Field (2019), successful listening requires learners to integrate linguistic knowledge with contextual understanding in real time (Islam & Hasan, 2020; Wang, 2020). In addition, Goh & Vandergrift (2021) highlight that learners need strategic competence, such as inferencing and monitoring, to effectively comprehend spoken text. However, many learners still face difficulties in listening due to limited exposure to authentic input and lack of effective strategies. These challenges are often intensified in traditional classrooms where listening activities are limited and teacher-centered.

2.2. CT-Based Learning in English Language Teaching

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become increasingly important in modern English Language Teaching (ELT). ICT facilitates interactive, flexible, and learner-centered environments that enhance students' engagement and autonomy (Lei et al., 2022; Haerazi, 2024). According to Huang & Sun (2023), digital technologies play a crucial role in expanding access to authentic language input and promoting meaningful learning experiences (Ahada & Setiawan, 2024; Ansari et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2026). Furthermore, Gökçe (2022) reinforces through updated perspectives on Multimedia Learning Theory that combining visual and auditory elements improves comprehension and retention (Yuanisa, 2022; Sinaga et al., 2025). ICT tools enable this integration effectively, making them particularly useful in teaching listening skills (Mulyadi et al., 2022). Recent studies also show that ICT-based instruction aligns with 21st-century learning demands, where students are expected to be independent, digitally literate, and actively engaged in their learning process.

2.3. Digital Media and Listening Skill Development

Digital media, particularly audio-visual resources, have been widely recognized as effective tools for improving listening comprehension (Li, 2023; Rohana & Saharani, 2023; Syahid et al., 2024). These resources provide contextual cues such as visuals, gestures, and real-life situations that support learners' understanding of spoken language. A study by Kartika et al. (2023) demonstrated that students who were taught using audio-visual media achieved significantly higher listening comprehension scores compared to those who received conventional instruction. Similarly, Ningtias et al. (2021) found that multimedia integration enhances learners' ability to grasp meaning and increases their motivation to participate in listening activities (Kruchinin & Bagrova, 2021; Meniado, 2023; Cahyani et al., 2025).

More recent research by Hsu & Lin (2024) also confirms that digital media positively impacts listening performance by providing repeated exposure, interactive tasks, and immediate feedback.

2.4. The Role of Authentic Online Resources: British Council Website

Authentic online platforms have become essential in supporting listening instruction. The British Council provides one of the most widely used digital learning platforms for English learners through its LearnEnglish programs (British Council, 2025). The British Council website offers structured listening materials, including audio recordings, interactive exercises, and transcripts, which are designed according to learners' proficiency levels. These features allow students to practice listening independently and repeatedly, which is crucial for skill development.

According to recent studies, online platforms that provide authentic input can significantly improve learners' listening comprehension and motivation (Widodo et al., 2024). They also help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world language use by exposing students to natural speech, accents, and communicative contexts.

2.5. Learner Confidence and Listening Anxiety

Learner confidence plays a critical role in listening comprehension. Many students experience anxiety when dealing with spoken English, especially when exposed to unfamiliar accents or fast speech. This anxiety often leads to avoidance and reduced participation. Recent research by Derwing et al (2022) suggests that language anxiety negatively affects learners' performance and willingness to engage in listening activities. Similarly, Lai & Zheng (2018) highlights that positive emotional experiences and supportive learning environments can significantly enhance learners' confidence and motivation (Resnik et al., 2025).

ICT-based tools can help reduce anxiety by allowing learners to control their learning pace, repeat materials, and engage in low-pressure environments. This makes platforms like the British Council website particularly beneficial for building confidence in listening.

3. Method

This activity was carried out as part of the Community Service Program (Program Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat) by a university student from the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar. The program was designed to bridge academic learning with real classroom practices by implementing media and ICT in English Language Teaching (ELT), specifically in the area of listening skills. This study adopts a qualitative research approach, as it emphasizes descriptive observation, student reflection, and classroom evaluation to explore how the British Council website can support listening comprehension in an authentic school setting.

The program included elements of socialization, classroom assistance, material development, and direct student implementation.

The activity was conducted in collaboration with SMP Swasta Teladan Pematangsiantar, a private junior high school in North Sumatra. The partner class involved in this program was Grade VII-B, consisting of 27 students. The English subject teacher and the school principal also supported the planning and execution of this activity to ensure that the goals aligned with the curriculum and school priorities.

This community service program was carried out through three structured phases, namely: Phase 1 – Preparation, Phase 2 – Implementation, and Phase 3 – Evaluation. The structure of the program is illustrated in the following diagram (Figure 1):



Figure 1. Structure of the Three Phases

3.1. Phase 1: Preparation

The preparation phase involved a series of structured steps to ensure the program was well-organized and effective:

- Coordination with the School

The university student held an initial coordination meeting with the school principal and the English teacher to explain the goals of the Community Service Program, gather information about the students' current listening skills, and agree on the schedule and classroom needs. This coordination helped align the activity with the school's teaching calendar and obtain approval to use digital media in the classroom.

- Material Preparation

Authentic listening materials were selected from the British Council LearnEnglish Teens website (British Council, 2025). Materials were chosen based on relevance, age appropriateness, and language level. These included audio dialogues such as "Ali and Samir" and other short listening texts with interactive tasks.

- Lesson Plan Design

A structured lesson plan was developed to support the integration of the British Council website into listening instruction. The plan included clearly defined objectives, step-by-step procedures, student activities, and supporting materials. The session was organized into several stages: an introduction to the topic "Media and ICT for Listening Skills," presentation and demonstration of the British Council website, a listening task using audio from the site, class discussion, and short student reflection. Each stage was designed to promote student engagement,

listening comprehension, and digital learning experience in a measurable and guided manner.

- Logistical Support

All necessary classroom tools and materials were prepared in advance. This included printed worksheets, speakers, a laptop for media playback, a projector, and a stable internet connection. Backup audio files were also downloaded in case of internet instability during the activity.

- Task Sheet and Assessment Preparation

Listening comprehension worksheets and reflection forms were designed to assess students' understanding, vocabulary recall, and opinions about the activity. The forms included multiple-choice and short-answer items directly linked to the listening materials.

3.2. Phase 2: Implementation

The implementation phase was carried out in the English classroom of Grade VII-B students at SMP Swasta Teladan Pematangsiantar, with a total of 27 participants. This phase focused on the actual delivery of the ICT-based listening activity, led by the university student as part of the Community Service Program and supported by the English teacher. The process was designed to be interactive, student-centered, and integrated with digital resources from the British Council website.

- Introduction to Media and ICT for Listening Skills

The session began with a greeting and a short orientation by the university student. Students were introduced to the topic "Media and ICT for Listening Skills" using a projector presentation. The researcher explained the importance of listening in English language learning and how technology can support skill development. To activate background knowledge and interest, students were asked questions such as: "Have you ever listened to English songs?", "Have you used online websites to learn English before?", and "Do you like learning with videos or audio?" This interactive opening helped set the context for the activity.

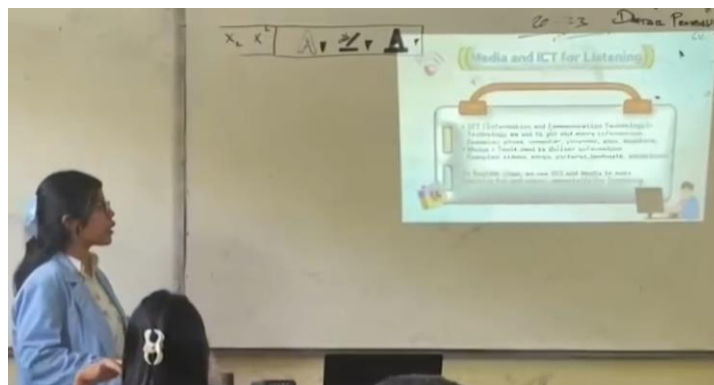


Figure 2. Introducing the Topic "Media and ICT for Listening Skills"

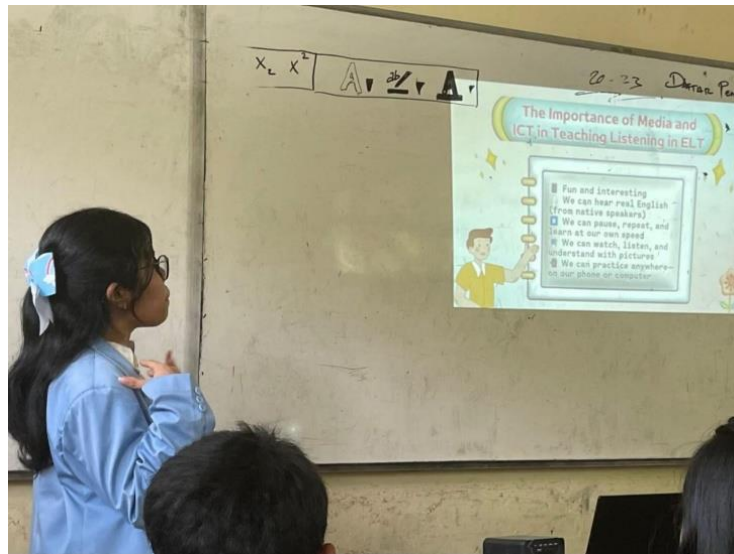


Figure 3. Explaining the Importance of Media and ICT in Teaching Listening in ELT

- Introduction to the British Council Website

After introducing the general concept of media in learning, the researcher explained the British Council LearnEnglish Teens website as the primary tool for the day's activity. A brief overview of the website's purpose, user interface, and available resources was presented. The researcher pointed out the "Listening Skills" section and showed how students can access age-appropriate materials including audio tracks, comprehension tasks, and transcripts. The explanation was supported visually through a slide that displayed screenshots from the website.

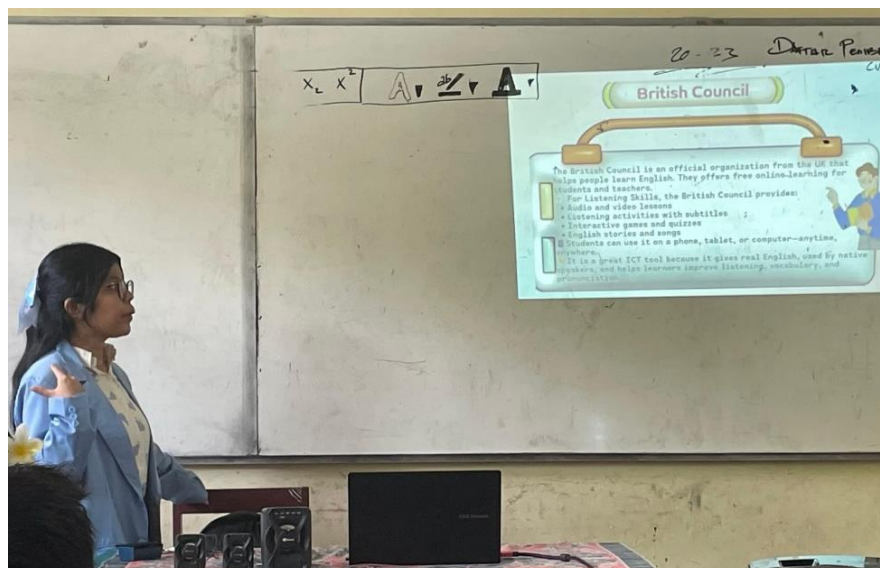


Figure 4. Introducing the British Council Website

- Demonstration of the British Council Website

Following the introduction, a live demonstration of the British Council website was conducted using a projector and a connected laptop. The researcher navigated to the “Ali and Samir” listening activity, explaining step by step how to play the audio, how to pause or replay if needed, and how to view the transcript. Students were shown how to match the listening content with the questions provided on a printed worksheet. The demonstration ensured that students understood how the website works before beginning their own listening task.

- Listening Activity and Worksheet Completion

The main task of the session was for students to listen to the dialogue “Ali and Samir: Talking about Routines,” sourced directly from the British Council website. The audio was played twice through a speaker connected to the researcher’s laptop. Students were given a printed worksheet with a simple task: mark (A) for Ali, (S) for Samir, or (B) for both based on what they heard in the conversation. During the first listening, students focused on understanding the general idea. During the second listening, they completed the task in more detail.

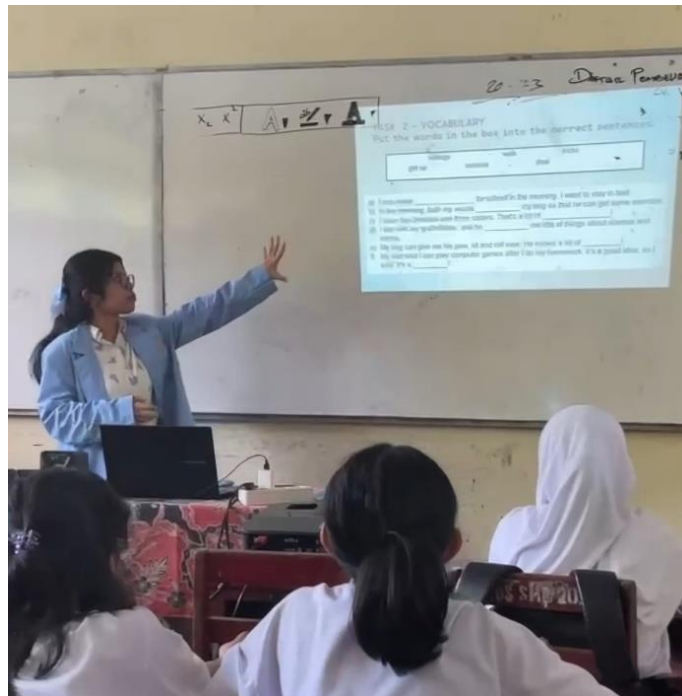


Figure 5. Students Listening to Audio from the British Council Website and Answering Comprehension Questions

- Feedback and Group Discussion

After the listening activity, students discussed their answers in pairs and then shared them with the whole class. The researcher led the review by asking questions to confirm understanding and provide corrections. Key phrases and vocabulary

from the audio were discussed, and pronunciation practice was also included by repeating some expressions from the dialogue.

- Student Reflection and Motivation Building

To close the session, students were given a short reflection task. They wrote their thoughts about the activity—what they learned, what they found easy or difficult, and whether they would like to try similar activities in the future. Although many students initially felt they could not understand English audio, some reported enjoyment and curiosity to explore more listening materials independently. This reflection helped the researcher and teacher assess student attitudes and determine strategies for future improvement.

3.3. Phase 3: Evaluation

The evaluation phase aimed to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the British Council website as an ICT-based tool to support the listening comprehension of Grade VII-B students. Evaluation was conducted through direct observation and student reflection, both during and after the activity.

3.3.1. Ongoing (Formative) Evaluation

During the listening session, the university student conducted direct classroom observation to monitor student engagement and participation. Informal observation criteria included:

- 1) Student focus during audio playback
- 2) Willingness to complete the listening task
- 3) Ability to follow instructions
- 4) Participation in discussion during post-listening review

It was observed that many students struggled to follow the audio and needed repeated explanations. Several students appeared hesitant and frequently said they could not understand the English material, which indicated a lack of confidence. Despite these challenges, some students showed genuine interest and made visible efforts to complete the task independently. These observations highlighted the variation in student readiness and listening confidence, especially when dealing with authentic materials for the first time.

3.3.2. Post-activity Observation and Student Reflection

After the listening activity, students were guided through a simple reflection session. Rather than filling out a formal questionnaire, the researcher invited students to orally express their thoughts and write short answers on a reflection sheet that asked questions such as:

- 1) What did you learn from today's activity?

- 2) What part did you enjoy or find interesting?
- 3) What was difficult for you?
- 4) Would you like to try using the website again?

Based on these reflections, a majority of students expressed difficulty in understanding the spoken English. Many admitted they felt unsure and believed they were “not good at English.” This self-limiting mindset appeared to be a major barrier to engagement. However, a small group of students responded positively, indicating that they liked the real-life English materials and were curious to explore more content on the website.

This mixed response showed that while the material was beneficial and engaging to some, others required more guided support and confidence-building strategies to fully benefit from ICT-integrated instruction.

4. Result and discussion

This community service activity was implemented in three structured phases: Preparation, Implementation, and Evaluation, each contributing to the goal of enhancing students’ listening comprehension using ICT-specifically through the British Council LearnEnglish Teens website. The findings indicate that while the integration of authentic digital listening materials sparked interest and created new learning opportunities, the majority of students encountered psychological and linguistic challenges that limited their full engagement. Nonetheless, the activity succeeded in demonstrating that ICT-supported listening can be beneficial when implemented with appropriate support.

4.1. Phase 1: Preparation

The preparatory phase laid a strong foundation for success. The coordination with the school ensured institutional support, while the development of age-appropriate lesson plans and materials based on British Council resources allowed the session to be conducted smoothly. The preselected audio, aligned with national curriculum goals, was successfully adapted to students’ proficiency levels.

The key result from this phase was the successful alignment between ICT materials and classroom readiness, both technically and pedagogically. This supports previous claims that proper preparation is crucial when integrating digital media in low- to mid-level classrooms (Gilmore, 2007). Compared to studies that use off-the-shelf materials without adaptation, this project emphasized customization, which led to better classroom execution.

4.2. Phase 2: Implementation

During the implementation phase, the integration of digital media into the English learning process was carried out through a structured and student-oriented activity. The session opened with a brief classroom interaction to set the tone for the day's objective: improving listening comprehension through the use of online educational resources.

Students were then introduced to the concept of media in English Language Teaching (ELT), focusing on how technology—specifically websites—can support the development of listening skills. This was followed by the introduction of the British Council LearnEnglish Teens (British Council, 2025) as the learning platform for the session. A live walkthrough was conducted to familiarize students with the features, layout, and types of materials available on the site.

To apply this knowledge, students engaged in a listening activity using the website's audio titled "Ali and Samir: Talking about Routines." They listened to the dialogue while working on a printed worksheet that required identifying which character said each statement. The audio was played twice to provide students with the opportunity to process and refine their understanding.

Throughout the activity, the researcher provided support when needed—clarifying instructions, helping with vocabulary, and assisting students in interpreting key information. After completing the task, students engaged in a brief discussion to compare their answers, followed by guided clarification and pronunciation reinforcement. At the end of the session, students gave short written reflections about the activity, which offered insight into their comprehension and overall response to the integration of ICT in learning.

4.3. Phase 3: Evaluation

Observations during and after the session confirmed that student confidence remains a key barrier to effective listening comprehension. Most students needed repeated instructions, often hesitated to answer questions, and depended on peer support or repetition. The reflection form responses confirmed that the most commonly reported difficulty was "not understanding native English speakers."

However, this phase also revealed that students benefited from visual support, repetition, and guided discussion. The presence of the university student and the supportive teacher helped reduce some of the anxiety, allowing the more motivated students to express enjoyment and even attempt pronunciation practice.

5. Challenges in Implementation

During the implementation phase, several challenges emerged that affected the effectiveness of the listening activity using the British Council website. One of the most prominent issues was the students' low self-confidence and strong language anxiety. Many students entered the session with the mindset that they were not capable of understanding English, as evidenced by repeated expressions such as "I can't speak English". This negative self-belief created a psychological barrier that limited student participation and made them hesitant to listen actively or respond to questions, even when they had understood part of the material. Such mental blocks are common among early EFL learners, especially in environments where students rarely engage with authentic language input.

Another major challenge was the lack of prior exposure to authentic English audio. For most of the students in Grade VII-B, the listening activity represented their first encounter with real spoken English from native speakers, outside of textbook recordings. The pace, pronunciation, and vocabulary used in the audio—although designed for beginner learners—were still perceived as fast and difficult to catch. As a result, many students missed key information during the initial listening and struggled to complete the task. Additionally, it was observed that students had limited listening strategies, such as predicting content, identifying key words, or using context clues to infer meaning. Without these strategies, students became easily overwhelmed by the listening task and gave up early, further reinforcing their belief that English was "too hard" for them.

6. Steps to Overcome the Challenges

To address the challenges identified above, several strategic steps can be taken to support students in future ICT-based listening activities. First, it is essential to provide stronger scaffolding before the listening phase. This includes introducing important vocabulary in advance, showing relevant images or context, and allowing students to predict the content of the listening text. Pre-listening questions and vocabulary-matching tasks can help activate students' background knowledge and make them feel more prepared. These steps are especially important for beginner-level learners who need time to mentally prepare for new input.

Second, repetition and gradual exposure are key. Students should be allowed to listen to the same audio multiple times—not just within one session, but over several lessons. Hearing the same material repeatedly helps students become familiar with sounds, accents, and expressions, which gradually improves their

comprehension. The use of subtitles or transcripts during the second or third listening can also support understanding and reinforce vocabulary.

Third, it is important to promote peer support and collaborative learning. Allowing students to work in pairs or small groups when answering listening questions can reduce anxiety and build confidence. Peer discussion gives students the opportunity to compare answers and clarify misunderstandings without fear of making mistakes in front of the whole class. The teacher's role is to facilitate and encourage this collaboration while providing corrective feedback and praise.

Lastly, to address students' negative mindset, teachers and researchers should focus on building students' confidence gradually. This can be done by celebrating small successes, acknowledging effort, and using easier listening tasks at the beginning before moving to more challenging content. Motivational encouragement and a supportive classroom environment are crucial to help students believe that they are capable of learning English—even if they find it difficult at first.

Together, these steps can help create a more positive, structured, and effective learning experience for junior high school students engaging with ICT-based English listening materials for the first time.

6. Conclusions

This community service program demonstrated that the integration of ICT-based platforms, particularly the British Council LearnEnglish Teens website, can support the development of listening comprehension among Grade VII students. The implementation provided students with exposure to authentic English input, interactive learning experiences, and opportunities to engage with digital media in a structured classroom setting. Despite initial challenges such as low confidence and limited prior exposure to authentic listening materials, the activity showed that students could gradually develop interest and motivation when appropriate scaffolding, repetition, and guidance were provided. From a pedagogical perspective, this study highlights the importance of incorporating digital resources into English language teaching, especially in junior high school contexts. Teachers in similar educational settings are encouraged to adopt ICT-based listening tools to create more engaging and learner-centered environments. The use of authentic online platforms can also help bridge the gap between textbook-based instruction and real-world language use, thereby improving students' readiness to communicate in English.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the sample size was limited to 27 students from a single class, which may not represent broader student populations. Second, the duration of the intervention was relatively short, limiting the ability to observe long-term improvements in listening comprehension. Future programs are recommended to involve larger participant groups and longer implementation periods to obtain more comprehensive results and stronger impact.

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