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Inglés

Implementing YouTube and TikTok video activities during EFL virtual classes to boost

students' listening skills

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April, 2023

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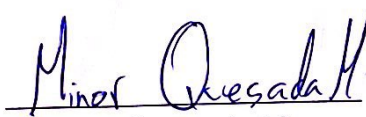
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Abstract

This project provides students and teachers with a meaningful set of strategies to follow that can help them improve the students' listening skills by applying audiovisual content from YouTube and TikTok. The participants consisted of a group of twelve intermediate students from Centro de Estudios de Idiomas Conversacionales, CEIC. They were in the 14-19 age range who lived in different places in Alajuela and Heredia. The findings show that there was a slight improvement in the students' listening skills by applying the action plan showing that at least one of the students improved their listening skills while the others were able to keep their same grade. It can be stated that audiovisual material from social media such as TikTok and YouTube featuring relevant celebrities has great potential to influence the listening skills of students, although the impact obtained will depend on the approach taken and the manner in which they are used. Finally, more research is recommended on the topic of the effects of social media on students' learning skills and the possible repercussions that these may have on students and classes.

Key words: Listening skills, social media, EFL classroom, TikTok, YouTube, audiovisual content.

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction and General Information

Social media has become part of our lives in the last few years, and as we continue emerging in this technological era, the usage of social networks has become something we cannot ignore. With the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the areas that changed the most was education, but thankfully the technological advances made it possible for education to continue even with such a drastic modification to the very well-established face-to-face model that had been applied for many years as the routinary way of teaching. Nowadays, most students attending high school use social media in their daily life or are either directly or indirectly associated with it.

Apps such as YouTube and TikTok offer audio and video content and have become relevant in today's society. On one hand, YouTube was created back in 2005, and since then it has been known as one of the most reliable video and audio libraries all around the world, to the point that you can find almost any audiovisual material uploaded on YouTube. According to Shepherd (2022a), as of 2022, more than 2 billion people use YouTube monthly, and at least 40% of the playtime occurs through the YouTube mobile app More than a fourth part of the world's population use YouTube monthly, and the amount of educational information present on this social media is huge and can be very beneficial for teachers if properly used. TikTok, on the other hand, was launched in 2016, under the name of Douyin, which changed to its current name as the app debuted internationally. TikTok was the #1 worldwide downloaded app in 2021, and in 2022 is ranked as the seventh most popular social media app globally (Shepherd, 2022b). TikTok's highly engaging formula is based mainly on short videos in a practically "infinite" feed that seeks to satisfy the tastes and needs

of every user, including those who are just looking to be entertained for a few minutes or those who want to learn, for example, another language.

In this whole process of social media consumption, listening takes an enormous part, since it is mainly a passive process where consumers only receive information from the source. For students learning English as a foreign language, listening can be a challenging skill to master since they do not have contact with the English language in the same way as they do with their native language.

As a consequence of globalization, English content is widely consumed even in countries where the official language may not be English, and neither YouTube nor TikTok are peculiar in this sense, since a great part of the videos or audio content are consumed in English due to many factors, being one of the main ones the fact that popular social media celebrities upload content in English. This opens a broad space for teachers and learners to use this to their advantage to enhance the learning process.

It is not unknown that even when receiving classes students are constantly checking their social media platforms. For that reason, including social media audio and video format content from celebrities they are familiar with would make the learning process more enjoyable and exciting for students. Acquiring a second language is a fascinating journey with ups and downs and it can be a tough process for some learners; therefore, teachers should aim to make this a pleasant process where teachers include their students' likes and day-to-day activities in the classroom.

1.1. Rationale

Listening takes a fundamental part in modern communication between humans and has since many centuries ago. According to Sabina (2018), this skill comprehends six stages "consisting of hearing, attention, understanding, remembering, evaluating and responding"

(p. 53). Being able to listen correctly is rather a complex activity that involves many steps and therefore, it must be taught exhaustively to achieve a proper acquisition on the learners' side. However, teachers should be careful since the current competition to gain people's attention at all times includes students not only in their free time, but also during school time.

Distractions play an important role in education since these can affect the learning process; consequently, they should not be overlooked by teachers or any of the educational staff. Social media can be one of those distractions if not used properly. Implementing the usage of YouTube and TikTok in the virtual classroom might not seem like a great idea for some educators but taking into account the benefits that these tools can bring into classrooms, it can be a magnificent success if well applied. Since learners get a lot of enjoyment from their favorite social media platforms and the content creators they follow; it results in a loop of checking their socials all the time. Therefore, if there is a connection between the time students spend on YouTube and TikTok, along with the excitement and joy they receive from those platforms, and the teaching and learning process, their motivation and eagerness to learn could be magnified and as a result, allowing them to improve their listening skills.

As Pratiwi and Ferstephanie (2022) stated that "students who are motivated will give more effort to learning. They are eager to invest themselves to obtain knowledge in the learning progress" (p. 164). Noticeably, motivation plays a fundamental role when talking about education, since it is through it that learners can boost their learning process and make it meaningful for them. Motivation enhances both teaching and learning, and it has been associated with the academic success students may or may not have (Filgona et al., 2020, p. 31). Moreover, using things they enjoy outside of their academic life, can help increase their academic performance. Thus, this project aims to strengthen students' listening skills by

applying audio and visual activities related to popular social media celebrities on YouTube and TikTok, and so, boosting pupils' learning process.

1.2. Purpose

The intention of this project is to provide students and teachers with a meaningful set of strategies to follow that help them improve their listening skills by applying audiovisual content from YouTube and TikTok that students are familiar with and therefore, will be able to create a closer connection between the learning process and their specific likes and hobbies. At the present time, virtual classes are still going on, not only in Costa Rica, but all around the world, and this can be tough for some learners and the academic load can be overwhelming for many of them. This can end up in students sometimes not paying close attention to what is happening in their classroom for many reasons, being either that they are tired or that the class is not interesting enough for them, which leads not only to them not paying as much attention as they would if they considered the information given to them relevant, but also decreases their motivation, and consequently, the output of their listening skills may not be as great as expected.

Nevertheless, if teachers include social media content that their students already consume because they like it, it would be easier to catch their attention; as a result, their linguistic competencies can be significantly improved. Students should enjoy the moment they spend in the classroom, even if it is a virtual or face-to-face classroom; thus, using social media networks such as YouTube and TikTok and the content they are familiarized with would make the class more enjoyable and would help increase their ability to develop their listening skills.

1.3. General objective

1. To enhance EFL students' listening skills through the implementation of YouTube and TikTok video activities during virtual classes for intermediate-level learners at Centro de Estudios de Idiomas Conversacionales, CEIC.

1.4. Specific objectives

1. To diagnose learners' listening skills through the application of a test.

2. To implement listening activities that use YouTube and TikTok content from popular content creators.

3. To appraise how implementing YouTube and TikTok video activities during virtual classes boosts learners' listening skills.

1.5. Research questions

1. How can social media video and audio content affect learners' listening skills?

2. To what extent can the pupils' ability to pay attention, analyze, and retain information be improved by using social media videos and audio from celebrities during class?

3. How does the implementation of YouTube videos and TikTok during classes enhance students' listening skills?

1.6. Hypothesis

1. If students watch and listen to YouTube and TikTok videos from a content creator they are familiar with, their listening skills will improve.

Chapter II

2. Literature Review

The main purpose of this study is to boost student's listening skills through audiovisual content from TikTok and YouTube. To ensure this, the following chapter is the literature review, which will consist of the conceptualization of terms, its analysis, and the adaptation of previous knowledge regarding listening skills, its importance, how to teach them, and its obstacles; also, social media, its relevance, TikTok and YouTube will be major points of discussion throughout this chapter.

2.1. Listening Skills

Listening is key for communication. In EFL, listening is the first part a student receives from the language to learn, and therefore, it should be given special attention to make sure that listening skills are properly engaged during the teaching process.

2.1.1. *Importance of listening skills*

Verbal communication plays a fundamental part in modern society, in which not being able to communicate due to any reason leaves people in a disadvantaged position. According to Yurko and Styfanyshyn (2020), "listening is basically about how we acquire and learn the new information" (p.39). Therefore, aiming to enhance listening skills is at least as important as the other skills to focus on by teachers or human beings in general. Listening may be overlooked by many since it is a passive skill, while active skills such as speaking and writing are usually given more importance, time, and resources, which may lead students to an imbalance in their learning progress.

Listening should neither be left aside nor seen as less than other skills. In a world where communicating to others through sounds is as simple as typing someone's phone

number on a phone or just sending them an audio or video, being able to comprehend what is said is crucial and has to be emphasized. As Zokirova (2022) stated:

> Other than being the primary form of communication, listening helps the language learner to understand the beauty of the language. Especially in terms of communicative language teaching it is said that the basis for communicative competence is listening as it provides the aural input and enables learners to interact in spoken communication and hence language learning largely depends on listening. (pp.789-790)

Teachers should pay close attention to their students' listening skills in order to understand their needs and how to approach them in a meaningful way so that the proper methods or strategies are used to boost their listening abilities. As mentioned by Sabina (2018), "the aim of teaching listening comprehension is (or should be) to help learners of English cope with listening in real life" (p.53). Educators aiming to aid their students to improve should also be careful about what and in which way they teach their students so that they teach them things that can be useful not only in the classroom but also out of it on a day-to-day basis.

2.1.2 *How to teach listening skills*

Teaching listening is not a simple task since it involves many processes. Sabina (2018) declared that listening is multi-staged process, where first we have hearing, that refers to the reception of the sound itself, secondly, we have attention, that is paying attention to the incoming information, thirdly, we have understanding, that consists of giving a meaning to the information received based on the right context, whether it was a noise like an applause or a combination of words, fourthly, we have remembering, that refers to the capability of storing the information received, but it is important to keep in mind that our memory is not

consistent and therefore, it will very likely not remember things perfectly. Continuing, the fifth step of the listening process is evaluating, that as its name says, it alludes to the action of being able to evaluate the information perceived and create an own opinion based on that; and finally, the sixth and last act of this process is responding, which is making sure verbal or nonverbally that the information received is correct and that is has been understood by the listener (p.53). Accordingly, listening should not be underestimated neither for its difficulty nor for its relevance to learn a language.

Listening skills can be taught in many ways, since there are many resources to be used: audios, videos, podcasts, conversations, songs, etc. However, teachers must adapt to their curriculum, goals, context, and most importantly, to their students' needs. Hence, teachers should aim to understand their students before wondering on how to approach them, since trying to use methods, strategies, or resources that are not relevant or interesting to their students may only lead to a low-quality education with little or no success at all. To perform listening properly, students have to understand what they are being told, which involves many factors such as pronunciation, vocabulary, context, among others. Following Madhu et al. (2017), it is also favorable to provide complex or unknown vocabulary to the student in advance to elude possible lexicon obstacles. Moreover, activities such as simple telephone conversations and paying attention to songs' lyrics can help in the process of teaching listening skills (pp.173-174). Planning in advance the plan to follow can help diminish the negative effect teachers and students could potentially face, and thus, providing a more useful set of information to acquire in the classroom.

Realia can also be very useful for teaching in general. As Atabekova (2021) disclosed, "realia refer to authentic objects from real life that one uses in the classroom to teach a specific concept. Realia can be both physical and virtual, as long as it is something used in

the real world" (p.1527). Realia is basically something physical or virtual used for teaching that was not created for teaching purposes, and therefore, it refers to a very wide variety of things that can be used by teachers to include things students enjoy that may not be related to education. For example, reading labels or characteristics on articles that students use or like, listening to parts of movies popular among learners, watching audiovisual content liked by pupils, etc.

Regardless of the approach, methods, or resources used to work with listening skills in the classroom, teachers need to understand that one of the main factors that have an impact on whether students really learn or not is if they find the information given to be relevant to them, this not only due to the increase in in-class motivation they might have and participate more willingly, but also on the out-of-class motivation factor that determines how deep the information taught is going to go into their memories and brains, and therefore, how significant this information is for them in a daily basis and how to apply it properly.

2.1.3 *Obstacles to teaching or learning listening skills*

For this project, realia will be the major resource to aid students' listening skills. Specifically, audiovisual content from popular, trendy, or famous people that students might feel familiar with, or that at the least, they like or enjoy their content. Consequently, realia can be used to provide meaningful resources and information for learners to learn from. However, this is a newer approach to teaching listening skills, and therefore, there are many challenges to overcome.

Teaching listening is not a simple task and requires compromise from both teachers and students. Factors such as listening not having direct rules as in grammar, lack of resources and enough educational background, the little or non-existent opportunity to practice out of the classroom, and the overemphasis on other language skills can hinder both educators and

learners who aim to improve their listening skills (Mai, 2019, p. 30). Also, aspects such as the variety of diversity in the pronunciation or vocabulary used by different groups of speakers or even among closely related people, the lack of interest from either educational institutions, teachers, parents or even from the students to refine skills, can make the learning process even more challenging.

Using audiovisual materials to further enhance listening skills can be very beneficial for students, since it provides a more interactive way for them to learn. Teachers can take advantage of this to provide resources that can help pupils relate to what they are being taught and, in this way, perceive the learning process rather as an enjoyable activity. However, using videos to boost listening skills can have counter effects if not applied and managed properly. Therefore, teachers should not only understand how, what, and when to use audiovisual materials in a classroom, but also comprehend how to address their students with such methods to prevent as much as possible from falling into these barriers.

2.1.4 *Teaching listening through media*

Society as a whole is constantly changing. From the way we perceive morality to what we consider useful, entertaining, etc. Nowadays, education is a fundamental pillar to life in general, and due to its relevance, it must be constantly adapting to the ongoing changes around the world. Teachers have the obligation to keep what they teach relevant, to seek new ways to approach their students, to further explore methods to teach innovatively, and from an academic point of view, to modernize themselves (Aguilar et al, 2015, pp. 3-6). Therefore, teachers should continuously seek ways to stay current to the reality that surrounds them. Social media is the current trend, where billions of users have access to it, and most of them are teenagers.

2.2. **Social Media**

Social media cannot be omitted these days. Since it represents a huge part in people's lives, teachers have to take as much advantage as they can to assist students' learning process. Therefore, this section will mention the relevance of social media in education and the importance of using YouTube and TikTok during the English language classroom.

2.2.1. *Definition*

Social media has taken an important role in today's society, but it has existed since a long time ago. Boyd and Ellison (2007) cited in Syamala et al., (2019) mentioned that "the popularity of social network sites is a relatively recent phenomenon beginning in 2002 with the advent of sites such as Friendster, My Space and Google's Orkut and with sites like Facebook rising to mainstream prominence around 2007" (p. 97). Since then, people have used social media for multiple purposes such as communication, entertainment, learning, and sharing information. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines social media as an online form of communication where users can share their ideas, information, and create and share content such as videos or photos.

Since the pandemic started in 2020, the usage of social media has increased across the world to help human beings keep entertained and in touch with their beloved ones, and many new content creators have emerged in apps such as YouTube and TikTok due to the boredom from the lockdown. Due to the popularity of platforms such as YouTube and TikTok during these times, many people started using these networks more often including students. For that reason, including social media during the classes may have its benefits during the learning process.

2.2.2. *Relevance of Social Media in Education*

Catching students' attention during class requires a little bit of effort because if the class is too slow paced for them or teachers do not include materials or resources, they find appealing, learners can lose interest; consequently, their learning process can be affected. "A primary reason to adopt social media in the classroom is because it is familiar to almost everybody and also because it doesn't cost and requires minimal training" (Syamala et al., 2019, p. 97). For that reason, including what pupils already know and use most of the time can be an effective way of teaching and improving their skills, for instance, social media.

Because of this new technological era the world is going through, including social networks such as YouTube and TikTok during the English class to assist students acquiring the listening skills can be an enormous help. Moreover, it has been believed that social platforms provide value during the teaching-learning process and that videos, podcasts, and web sites are beneficial for teaching and cooperative learning (Syamala et al., 2019, p. 96). Therefore, the usage of these resources can be implemented in the English classroom as an educational tool.

Using authentic materials can be a magnificent way of teaching because the class will not be so academic and repetitive, so students have the opportunity to enrich their learning process. Yuyun and Yanti (2021) defined authentic materials as the following "Authentic materials are not designed for pedagogical purposes; it means they do not come from a coursebook. Authentic materials are systematically not developed for language learning" (p. 2). In this case, social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok are perfect examples of authentic materials to use during the English class because these networks were not created for teaching purposes. In addition, one of the main reasons why

teachers should incorporate authentic materials during their classes is because it helps with students' motivation and interest.

The importance of using social media as an authentic material not only relies on motivation and interest but also on preparation for real life situations. Gebhard (2009) cited in Yuyun and Yanti (2021) expressed that the best way to prepare students for real world situations is through authentic materials (p. 3). In this way, when using YouTube and TikTok as part of the lesson plan, learners can have access to the English language in a real context through audio and video format which also help them develop and acquire the four different English skills which are some of the advantages that Yuyun and Yanti (2021) have stated.

> The advantages of authentic materials are as follows: 1) It can increase students' motivation and independent learning because they can quickly obtain these materials from radio, movies, or television, 2) Students can have a meaningful experience with an actual language, 3) It presents cultural understanding, 4) It can provide various kinds of texts and sustain a small number of materials in listening, 5) The topic can be more exciting and relevant to the current issue, 6) It makes the teacher more creative in designing the lesson, and 7) The visual listening models can develop learners listening skills in richer language contexts. (p. 3)

Along with authentic materials the usage of audio-visual aids can have its own impact on students' learning process. Yang (2020) explained audio-visual aids as those materials that can be listened to and seen (p. 164). Using these types of resources in the English language classroom might be of great help because pupils can connect words with actions. Since it is a type of resource that students can listen to and see, using content they are familiar with would help to catch their attention as well as improve their motivation

during the class while they are learning. Besides, relevant studies have shown the positive impact of using authentic audio-visual aids in the teaching process since it assists students' language and comprehension skills as well as their motivation. (Yang, 2020, p. 164)

Clearly, using audio-visual aids might be of great benefit to the students' learning process.

2.2.3. *YouTube in English Teaching*

YouTube is a widely used source of information, and one of the most popular ones. Maldin et al., (2017) have defined YouTube as the most famous online video sharing app and the one that students know and connect with it very well. In such a platform, users can find countless topics and information related to what they like. Music videos, short films, interviews, TED Talks, workouts, comedy videos, vlogs among others are just some of the types of YouTube content that users can come across.

Vlogs are an excellent way of sharing content on YouTube. According to Maldin et al., (2017), "Vlog is a fusion of video and blog. Vlogs are done through a Smartphone or computer- connected with a video camera and internet connection" (p. 59). Vlogs are often found on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok; consequently, vlogs can be used as authentic materials in class to provide real life context to the students. Yuyun and Yanti (2021) have also argued about how watching and listening to videos provided by native speakers help students understand the language.

> The real world on the videos provided helps students quickly gain background knowledge on topics by seeing situational and the participants on video. Then, use the original language produced by native speakers. Listening to content that uses a native language makes students closer to the original language itself. The original language is easier to find in real life, so it is easier for students to recognize the original language provided by YouTube than the modified one. (p.9)

Because learners already have access to YouTube for free, it can motivate them to access the platform and connect with what they like at an educational level, also YouTube works as a motivator for those pupils wanting to enhance their language abilities (Mustofa et al., 2022, p. 19). Consequently, if used properly, educators can take advantage of YouTube as an educational and motivational tool to improve their classes.

The usage of YouTube can bring multiple benefits to the English classroom; since this social network is so rich in terms of content, students can take advantage of it and learn new vocabulary, improve their pronunciation, enhance their listening skills, correct their grammar mistakes and expand their knowledge (Mustofa et al., 2022, p. 14). By listening to native English speakers, learners can polish those aspects that they need to improve. Mustofa et al., (2022) also argued that YouTube is a great source of cultural diversity that can motivate students to interact with other cultures and expand their knowledge and points of view by watching videos or listening to music at the same time they listen to daily conversations by native speakers which provide authentic vocabulary and expressions.

According to Johnson et al., (2009) cited in Syamala et al., (2019), "Some courses have also used in YouTube as a platform for students to create and share videos for their course" (p. 97) Some teachers can also use this platform as a way of teaching and have their students create their own videos, in that way students get to create or replicate their favorite content at the same time that they are putting into practice what they learned.

2.2.4. *TikTok in English Teaching*

TikTok has become one of the most popular social networks used around the world (Razali and Xiuwen, 2021, p. 1441). TikTok is a short-video sharing app where users can upload videos ranging from 15 seconds to 5 minutes (Yang (2020, p. 162). The popularity and success of this video-sharing app relies on trends, dances, tips and tricks, funny videos,

lip syncs, among others. Yang (2020) has also described TikTok as a social network where users can take advantage and make their videos influential and an opportunity to reach many people thanks to its fast-paced style as it has been stated in the following quote:

> Characterized by short-video sharing, Tik Tok provides video authors with much flexibility to create videos of any style and theme, except for the duration of videos. Unlike other video-sharing social media applications, the length of the videos in Tik Tok ranges from 15 seconds to 5 minutes. This feature is not only consistent with the current fast-paced information acquisition style, but also an opportunity for video creators to make their videos more influential. (p. 163)

At the present, social media consumption has increased among the world population. According to Wu (2020, cited in Razali and Xiuwen (2021), "youngsters aged 30 and below, i.e., generation Z, dominate the major users of TikTok and they spend an average of 52 minutes every day on TikTok" (p. 1441). TikTok users spend a great amount of time on this app which can be significant to the implementation of TikTok during the English classroom since it is a social platform that students know and manage very well and continue to be one of the hottest apps of the moment according to Sweney (2022). Thanks to this popularity TikTok has many benefits to offer.

Since TikTok is one of the most used apps throughout the world, using it as part of the class can be really helpful because of the numerous advantages it brings. Yang (2020) mentioned that using social media assists students to boost their language skills and proficiency. Some other authors such as Razali and Xiuwen (2021) have argued about the uniqueness and popularity of TikTok among its users and how to take advantage of those features to enhance the English language communication acquisition during the Covid-19 pandemic or even the post-pandemic time (p. 1440). For that reason, taking advantage of

the popularity of TikTok during these days will help not only teachers to be creative with their class but also students during their learning process.

As TikTok is used for different purposes such as entertaining, it can be used for learning. According to Razali and Xiuwen (2021), "TikTok could help provide numerous interactive activities for learners and teachers via short videos" (p. 1441). Therefore, teachers can take advantage of this app to help learners during their learning process acquiring the English language by using short videos during their class. Another benefit that this platform provides has to do with students' short attention span; because the length of the video tends to be shorter than most of the videos in other websites, students' focus more which allows them to get the information effectively (Razali and Xiuwen, 2021, p. 1442). Such videos can help pupils enrich their vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and writing skills.

Another important aspect to consider when talking about TikTok is the motivation part. Social media platforms that provide videos and different content improve not only students' language skills but also their learning motivation (Yang, 2020, p. 163). According to Zam Al Arif (2019) cited in Razali and Xiuwen (2021), "... EFL learners showcase positive attitudes towards the utilization of social media in English language learning which can help increase their motivation and willingness in English language speaking and acquisition" (p. 1441). Furthermore, including content from social media as part of the class can bring numerous advantages to the students, especially an app such as TikTok which helps make the English learning process more effective and pleasing. (Razali and Xiuwen, 2021, p. 1443) For that reason, social media apps can take part in the language classroom to help them with their linguistic skills and to keep them involved during the class.

  To summarize, listening skills are fundamental and should not be let aside, which is a common mistake made by many people who give more importance to other skills when learning a language. Teaching listening is not a simple task, and therefore, teachers should aim for an approach that helps them connect with their students. Using social media for enhancing listening skills can be very productive, since it allows students to be in touch with something they are familiar with and at the same time progressing in their learning process.

  The third chapter of this project will emphasize on the design and method to follow to achieve the aforementioned objectives to prove the effectiveness of TikTok and YouTube as listening skills enhancers.

Chapter III

3. Design and Method

The purpose of this study is to provide teachers and students strategies to enhance learners' listening skills through the usage of audiovisual content from social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. Furthermore, the following chapter consists of the methodology to use, and so the research method, type of approaches, and instruments will be explained in detail as well as the action plan.

3.1. Research Method

For this project, the research method to be applied will be the action research method. As Efrat and Ravid (2013) mentioned, action research is often seen as an "inquiry conducted by educators in their own settings in order to advance their practice and improve their students' learning" (p. 2). In other words, teachers can use action research to understand their situation and come up with enhancements for the teaching and learning process within the given context. Moreover, Efrat and Ravid (2013) described action research as "different from other traditional educational research. It is *constructivist, situational, practical, systematic, and cyclical*" (p. 7). Thus, giving action research characteristics that differ from other long-established research methods that stick to conventional approaches only. Also, Brown and Coombe (2015) stated that action research "is a research approach that is grounded in practical action (the practical component) while at the same time focused on generating, informing, and building theory (the research component)" (p. 99). As seen, this method gives practitioners tools not only to be able to gather information about a certain condition, but also to take active part of the ongoing situation to better understand it.

Action research gives teachers the possibility to keep close to the reality they are trying to face and to dive even deeper into it by being able to seek for or apply alternatives

that might mitigate or improve the current circumstances. Following this idea, Brumfit and Mitchell (1990) declared that "the real point about action research is that it is closely tied to the particular interests and needs of particular teachers" (p. 9). Therefore, it remains as a useful instrument for those teachers who want to find options to improve their setting. Similarly, Brumfit and Mitchell (1990) also uttered that "action research will be performed by practitioners, on topics formulated by practitioners" (p. 9). Consequently, this research method also leads to social action, which is a very valuable trait from an educator standpoint.

Action research works within the provided context since it fulfills this project's practical, theoretical, social, and problem-solving needs. Not only does it provide a tool to assess the participants' necessities, but it also delivers a device to issue meaningful answers to the ongoing situation. Hence, action research was chosen as the research method on which this project was based.

3.2. Type of approach

3.2.1. *Constructivist paradigm*

Constructivism, as referred to by its name, is a paradigm based upon the idea that knowledge is fabricated by learners themselves. According to Bodner (1986), the "constructivist model can be summarized in a single statement: *Knowledge is constructed in the mind of the learner*" (p. 1). Therefore, it could be stated that learners acquire information as it is built into our minds. Similarly, Western Governors University (2020) affirmed that constructivism refers to how "people actively construct or make their own knowledge, and that reality is determined by your experiences as a learner. Basically, learners use their previous knowledge as a foundation and build on it with new things that they learn" (para. 1). Following these ideas, this paradigm empowers students to be responsible for the information stored in their brains. Paulson and Paulson (1994) mentioned that "the learner

constructs meaning. It [constructivism] assumes that meaning varies across individuals, over time, and with purpose" (p. 7-8). In other words, this approach to the learning process identifies pupils as individuals no matter their background, current context, or even the period of time they are in.

3.2.2. *Experimental design*

The experimental design was described by Bell (2009) as "the process of carrying out research in an objective and controlled fashion so that precision is maximized and specific conclusions can be drawn regarding a hypothesis statement" (para. 1). Therefore, it can be stated that this type of design follows a previously organized plan of action to achieve a certain goal. Moreover, Efrat and Ravid (2013), affirmed that "it is conducted to test the effect of planned interventions [...] on groups or individuals" (p. 44). Therefore, we can understand experimental design as a way to obtain a desired output of a premeditated action on a person or on a group of people.

3.2.3. *Qualitative approach*

According to Aspers and Corte (2019), qualitative research is "an iterative process in which improved understanding to the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon studied" (p. 155). Consequently, giving this type of approach the fundamental characteristic of working to point out peculiarities out of the subject of study. Similarly, Friedman (2012) alleged that "qualitative research is *inductive*; that is, it aims to build theory (i.e., explanations of a phenomenon) from the detailed study of particular instances" (p. 181). Thus, qualitative research can be described as the observation of a certain issue to create new knowledge about it.

3.3. The context

Heredia is one of the provinces in Costa Rica, it is located in the north-central part of the country. Heredia is the smallest province in Costa Rica; but despite being the smallest province in the country, Heredia is the fourth most populous province in the country with a total of 433,677 inhabitants. In 1975, the first school was founded in Cubujuquí by Monsignor Pedro Agustin Morel, and in 1845 the first high school was opened. Later, in 1915 Escuela Normal de Costa Rica started working as well as Universidad Nacional (UNA) did in 1973.

3.3.1. *Chosen setting*

Centro de Estudios de Idiomas Conversacionales (CEIC) is located in Heredia, Costa Rica. It was founded in 1993 with the purpose of helping citizens learn a new language. This institution belongs to Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje and Oficina de Vinculación Externa de la Universidad Nacional.

3.3.2. *Participants*

The participants chosen for this project are a group of intermediate students from Centro de Estudios de Idiomas Conversacionales, CEIC. The participants consist of a group of twelve students in the 14-19 age range who live in different places in Alajuela and Heredia.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures and Tools of Initial Research

In this section a pre-test will be implemented to assess the listening skills of the participants before applying the action plan to determine the initial condition of the students' listening skills.

3.4.1. *Instrument*

For the pre-test a listening activity with an audio track from Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab will be carried out. The test consists of an audio practice about the topic

"Summer Vacations" for an intermediate level with two speakers, a man and a woman, with a length of one minute and forty-nine seconds. Students are going to listen to the audio track three times. After that, they have to answer five comprehension questions about the audio track.

3.4.2. *Data Analysis*

For the analysis section, the tests applied will be given a grade from 1-100 according to the number of right answers students get. This will be calculated by multiplying the total number of correct answers obtained by the student by 100, and then dividing the result obtained from that operation by the total number of points of the test. In this way we will be able to grade each learner individually and also as a group.

3.5. Action Plan

3.5.1. *Description of the Intervention Plan*

For the action plan a series of activities including social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok and content creators from those platforms will be carried out. During eight sessions, different listening activities will be implemented to improve the students' listening skills. Each activity will be presented in the next lesson plan.

Table 1

Action Plan Summary

Lesson	Name of the activity	Purpose of the activity	Mediation Strategy	Time
Lesson 1	TikTok	To increase learners'	Listening for new vocabulary	20 minutes

		vocabulary by listening to native speakers.		
Lesson 2	YouTube	To polish students' grammar knowledge by listening and watching a YouTube video with a real-life context.	Practicing previous grammar knowledge	30 minutes
Lesson 3	TikTok	To enhance students' listening skills by listening to a TikTok and extracting the main idea.	Listening for main ideas	20 minutes
Lesson 4	YouTube	To help students expand	Learning new tenses,	30 minutes

		their knowledge about different tenses in English by listening to real life conversations in English.	structures, and phrases by listening	
Lesson 5	TikTok	To boost learners' pronunciation by listening to English native speakers.	Practicing new pronunciation sounds	20 minutes
Lesson 6	YouTube	To enhance students' listening comprehension by listening to audio-visual material from YouTube.	Listening for main ideas	20 minutes

| Lesson 7 | TikTok | To analyze new vocabulary and phrases by listening to audiovisual materials from TikTok. | Listening for new information | 20 minutes |
| Lesson 8 | YouTube | To help students improve their listening and speaking skills by listening to an audio and then sharing their opinions. | Sharing the main idea | 30 minutes |

Note. This table contains the action plan activities to be implemented with the participants with its corresponding lesson number, name of the activity to be applied, the purpose of the activity, the mediation strategy to follow, and the time to apply the activity.

3.6. Intervention Assessment

Similarly, as in the initial diagnosis done, the post-test will consist of a listening activity using audio content from Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab. The test consists of an

audio practice about the topic "Vacation Plans" for an intermediate level with two speakers, in this case, two men, with a length of one minute and forty-nine seconds. Students are going to listen to the audio track three times. After that, they have to answer five comprehension questions about the audio track.

Summarizing, for this project action research will be applied which is an excellent method to understand the situation that is happening in the classroom and come up with an enhancement proposal. Also, this project is based on the constructivist, experimental, and qualitative approach. The participants, the context, the instruments, and the action plan that will be executed is also explained in detail to provide an overview of what is expected to be achieved.

The fourth chapter of this project will emphasize on the findings resulting from the application of the abovementioned action plan, and data analysis of the instruments applied to further comprehend its effects on the selected group.

Chapter IV

4. Findings

This action research aims to improve the listening skills of a specific group of learners by utilizing carefully chosen audiovisual material from TikTok and YouTube, which has been selected to ensure that it is relevant and significant to them by asking them about their personal preferences. Following the structure of this project this chapter will consist of the resultant findings from the application of both the pre-test and the post-test, finalizing with an overall analysis of these results.

4.1 Pre-test Results

To measure and quantify the listening skills of the determined group before any intervention, a pre-test was applied. The pre-test consists of a series of questions based on the website Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab with an audio track about the topic "Summer Vacations" for an intermediate level with two speakers, a man and a woman, with a length of one minute and forty-nine seconds. The pre-test was applied in such a way where students would first listen to the audio track that would be played three times and then they would answer a series of five questions based on the aforementioned audio track.

Figure 1

Results of the Applied Pre-test
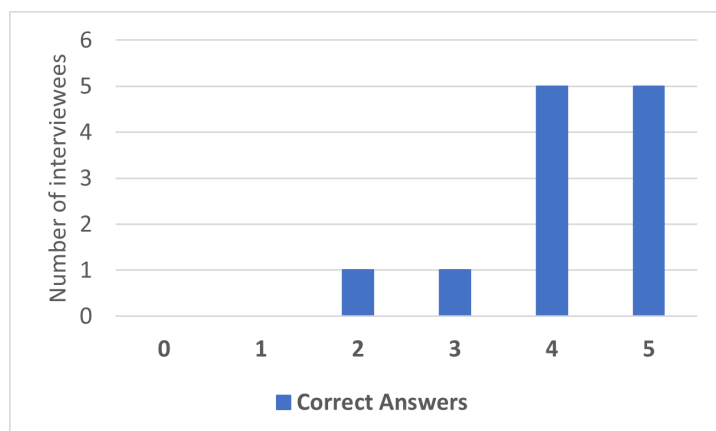
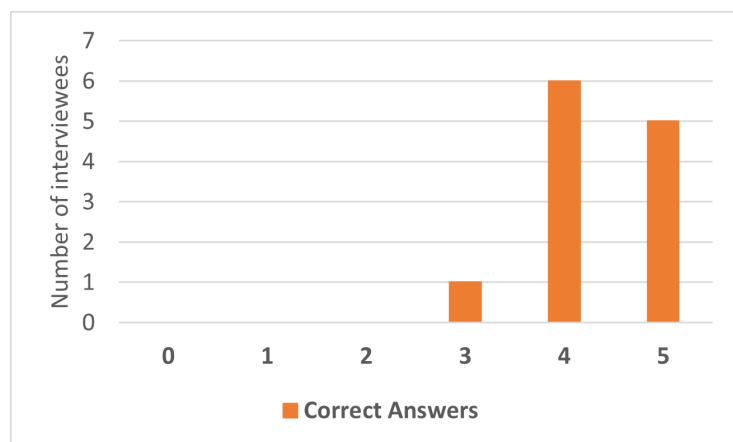*Note.* This figure illustrates the number of correct answers achieved by the interviewees in the pre-test.

The collected data shows that 5 out of 12 interviewed students had 5 correct answers out of 5 questions, while another 5 out of the 12 pupils had 4 correct answers. On the other hand, just 1 of the interviewees had three correct answers, and only one of them had two correct answers. Accordingly, 10 out of 12 students scored 80 or higher if given a grade based on 100. In this case, none of the learners had 0 correct answers.

4.2 Post-test Results

To measure and quantify the listening skills of the determined group after the intervention was done, a post-test was applied. The post-test consists of a series of questions based on the website Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab with an audio track about the topic "Vacation Plans" for an intermediate level with two speakers, in this case, two men, with a length of one minute and forty-nine seconds. The post-test was applied in such a way where students would first listen to the audio track that would be played three times and then they would answer a series of five questions based on the previously mentioned audio track.

Figure 2

Results of the Applied Post-test

Note. This figure illustrates the number of correct answers achieved by the interviewees in the post-test.

The collected data shows that 5 out of 12 of the interviewed students had 5 correct answers out of 5 questions, while 6 out of the 12 pupils had 4 correct answers. Following the data, only 1 of the 12 interviewees had three correct answers, and none of them had 2 or fewer correct answers. Hence, 11 out of 12 students scored 80 or higher if given a grade based on 100 for the post-test. In this case, none of the learners had 0 correct answers.

4.3 General Analysis of the Results

Figure 3

Comparison of the Number of Correct Answers of the Pre-Test and Post-Test
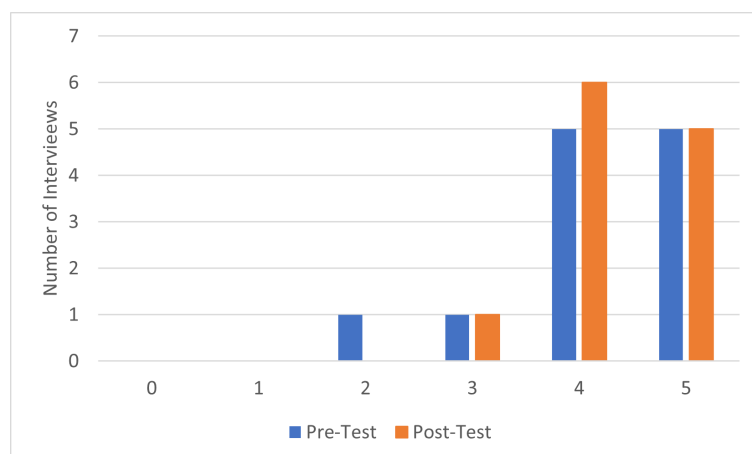
Note. This figure illustrates a side-by-side comparison of the number of correct answers obtained by the interviewees in both the pre-test and the post-test.

As evidenced by the data gathered, there is a difference between the pre-test and the post-test results. For the pre-test, which had 5 questions, the results were: 0 students with 0 correct answer, 0 students with 1 correct answer, 1 student with 2 correct answers, 1 student with 3 correct answers, 5 students with 5 correct answers, and 5 students with 5 correct answers. On the other hand, for the post-test, which again had 5 questions, the results were:

0 students with 0 correct answers, 0 students with 1 correct answer, 0 student with 2 correct answers, 1 student with 3 correct answers, 6 students with 4 correct answers, and 5 students with 5 correct answers.

Furthermore, for the pre-test, 12 out of 12 students got the first question right, 9 out of 12 students got the second question right, 8 out of 12 students got the third question right, 10 out of 12 students got the fourth question right, and 11 out of 12 students got the fifth question right. This information confirms that question 3 was the most difficult for the respondents, and on the contrary, question 1 was where learners were most accurate. Similarly, for the post-test, 12 out of 12 students got the first question right, 10 out of 12 students got the second question right, 11 out of 12 students got the third question right, 8 out of 12 students got the fourth question right, and 6 out of 12 students got the fifth question right. These data illustrate that as in the pre-test, question 1 was answered correctly by all students, however, question 5 was the most difficult question for the respondents: only half of them were able to answer correctly.

The comparative figures show that there was a slight improvement in the students' listening skills by applying the action plan because on the pre-test 10 out of 12 learners got an 80 or higher grade and for the post-test 11 out of 12 of them got an 80 or higher grade, showing that at least one of the students improved their listening skills while the others were able to keep their same grade. It should be noted that as Yuyun and Yanti (2021) stated in their article *The Use of YouTube to Support EFL Students Listening Skills*, one of the best ways to prepare learners for real life circumstances is by using authentic materials during class since it will provide students with real-life context (p. 3). Therefore, YouTube and TikTok are exceptional examples of these types of authentic materials since some of the advantages that authentic materials offer that help students maintain or even improve their

listening skills, are the motivation they get from the content, the significant experience with the real language, and the cultural exposure.

Besides, as Mustofa et al., (2022) claimed, the usage of social media, especially YouTube enriches students' knowledge regarding grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and listening (p. 14), which results in the general improvement that the pupils had in the post-test because they were able to identify, analyze, and correct any mistakes regarding the areas already mentioned during the activities. This provides further evidence to support the contributions made by other researchers on the usefulness of certain widely popular apps utilized among students, such as YouTube and TikTok.

Recapping, in this chapter it was discussed the approach taken for the pre-test and post-test, and the results of these. Thus, making it clear that although subtle, there was evidence of improvement in the listening skills of the students, taking the starting point and the endpoint as a point of comparison.

The forthcoming chapter will draw on the insights and reflections that have emerged from the implementation of the pre-test, post-test, and intervention involving the use of TikTok and YouTube applications.

Chapter V

5. Reflections

This project looks forward to boosting the listening skills of a particular group of learners by utilizing carefully chosen audiovisual material from TikTok and YouTube, which was chosen taking into account their preferences. This chapter will focus on the reflections and insights arising from the creation and application of this action research project.

After having completed this whole investigation, it is now possible to reflect on the whole teaching experience and implemented activities. In terms of design, the activities were quite appealing for students since they had the opportunity to use social media platforms such as TikTok and YouTube which are some of the most used and engaging apps, not only among teenagers but people in general. Even though the activities' focus was to enhance the learners' listening skills, they were not closed just to one linguistic area but different ones such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, etc. Consequently, the students were able to practice their input and output skills. In terms of success, the activities were quite successful because the learners were able to understand and complete all of the tasks correspondingly. Moreover, they were also able to review the topics they had been studying and at the same time learn relevant new features of the English language. Another important aspect that can be seen as a success during the implementation of the action plan is that students had a lot of fun while completing the activities and were greatly motivated the majority of the time which was an essential part of this process because they were looking forward to each activity.

Regarding the materials used during the action plan, all of them worked successfully because the pupils had access to their smartphones, internet connection, and both social media platforms to be used, i.e., TikTok and YouTube. In the case of TikTok, only one of the twelve students did not use the app actively, but this was not an obstacle at all to carrying

out the activities related to TikTok because the participant was able to work with another partner. In the case of YouTube, all of them had access to it and used the app consistently; there was no previous training needed for either of the apps. When it comes to general impressions in terms of the learning of the students, it can be noticed how vastly motivated each student was at the end of each activity as well as how much fun they had while they were carrying out the tasks. Furthermore, based on their comments and feedback, it can be also mentioned that they also had the opportunity to either review some of the contents they already knew or learn something new to their language skills not only regarding listening, which was the main focus of this project, but also their pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar.

For future research as well as some improvements that can be done, there are some key aspects to consider. First of all, it is essential to understand that each student works and learns differently, but when the classes and activities are more enjoyable, the learning process becomes smoother. Taking students' likes and dislikes into consideration encourages them to feel part of the class, and therefore be eager to attend the classes and learn every day as well as implementing group work so that they can help each other every time they need it. These are just a few examples of making the learning process more pleasant not only for the pupils themselves, but also for the professors. When students work together, they share their ideas and knowledge, demonstrating why cooperative learning can be so helpful to the learning process. In this specific case, even though social media is widely used on a daily basis by students, there can be some apps that they do not use at all or do not have access to; consequently, that could be an obstacle if not identified in advance.

Recapitulating, this project has shown the integral nature in which education can be approached, where if the right materials are used, taking into account students as beings who

have own thoughts about what they like and dislike, favorable results can be obtained, not only if seen from the motivational aspect, but also academically. Although there is no perfect method to teach, the proposed activities have shown to be useful and have given positive results, achieving that students improve academically at the same time that they are more encouraged to be part of the class and the learning process, which is a key factor in a world where so many other things take attention away from students' education.

The following chapter will discuss the conclusions reached after implementing the action plan, taking into account the process undergone, the results of the pre-test and post-test, and the initial questions raised.

Chapter VI

6. Conclusions

The main purpose of this project is to enhance the listening skills of a previously selected group of students through audiovisual content from TikTok and YouTube. The focal point of this chapter is to describe the conclusions derived from the entirety of this project, starting from the initial proposal with research questions and leading up to the final results obtained after actively intervening with the intention of positively boosting the listening skills of the students.

At the beginning of this investigation, several research questions were proposed to support the elaboration of this project and to define the expected outcomes. The first of the research questions ponders on the effects of audiovisual content from social media on students' listening skills; secondly, the effectiveness of social media audiovisual content to improve the ability of the learners to concentrate, analyze, and hold onto information is mentioned; and finally, the question is posed whether adding videos from platforms such as YouTube and TikTok has the potential to improve the listening skills of the students.

Taking into account the experiences gained during the development and implementation of this action research, it can be stated that audiovisual material from social media has great potential to influence the listening skills of students, although the impact obtained will depend on the approach taken and the manner in which they are used. Additionally, based on the results obtained both before any intervention (i.e., the pre-test) and after the intervention (i.e., the post-test), it can be stated that videos from social media featuring relevant celebrities for the students may have a great power to help improve students' capacity not only from an academic perspective but also from a motivational one. Finally, it can be affirmed that the implementation of videos from YouTube and TikTok

during classes can positively affect the listening skills of the students, as demonstrated in the results on the previous chapter; however, it is crucial to underscore the significance of refraining from overgeneralization.

As for the strengths found during the elaboration of this project, it can be deduced that using audio visual content from TikTok and YouTube featuring content creators that students often watch might be helpful for the pupils' learning process because that is content that they are consuming on a daily basis, so learners can take advantage of it by learning and reviewing some important aspects of the English language. In terms of limitations, the resources needed to carry out this action plan might be an obstacle if not considered in advance because there might be students who do not use one or any of the social networks at all. Therefore, the teachers would have to think about it and create a way to still use the resources and include those students who do not have access to those platforms. Besides, if there are learners who do not own a device where they can access these platforms and carry out the different tasks, the teacher might have to supply the students with the necessary resources.

In conclusion, the research questions proposed for this project explored the effects of social media content on listening skills and its potential to improve them. The results showed that social media content has the potential to positively influence students' listening skills, but its impact depends on the approach taken and may vary depending on various factors. Moreover, the usage of videos featuring relevant celebrities can improve students' capacities both academically and motivationally. Furthermore, using YouTube and TikTok during classes can also positively affect listening skills; nonetheless, overgeneralization must be avoided, and more research is recommended to establish a more substantial database on this topic.

The seventh chapter will develop some proposed recommendations based on the experiences gained during this project, mainly on its application and the results obtained, among other aspects.

Chapter VII

7. Recommendations

This action research project is focused on the improvement of the students' listening skills by implementing audio-visual content from social media platforms such as TikTok and YouTube featuring famous content creators that the students are familiar with. This chapter will provide recommendations for improvement to students, the institution, and colleagues in a similar situation.

Listening skills are a huge part of the English language, so they cannot be omitted when teaching a class. Students have to continue practicing this skill in and outside the classroom, and using content that they are familiar with from social media platforms that they might use on a daily basis can be convenient for them. It is essential for students to consume interesting and enjoyable content for them so that it catches their attention and at the same, they can really practice their listening skills with it. By utilizing resources that catch the learners' attention, the whole teaching and learning process can become more meaningful.

As for the institutions, it is recommended that they can be more flexible and allow teachers to use resources such as social media networks during their classes for academic purposes. That way, both professors and students can benefit from it since teachers will be innovating their classes and students will be having a more significant and pleasant moment in the classroom using those tools that they might use every day but for academic and useful purposes.

As for colleagues in a similar situation, it can be useful to innovate and implement more social media platforms that are being used by their pupils at the present time during their classes, not only social media but any other resource that students find appealing. It

should be also noted that listening to what learners have to say and how they are, and taking that into account and including it in the learning process will very likely become more significant to them.

Finally, more research is recommended on the topic of the effects of social media on students' learning skills and the possible repercussions that these may have on students and classes so that methodologies can be used that are not only more familiar to the students, but that also include apps used by them, hopefully making the learning process more relevant and interesting for them.

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Appendixes

Appendix A. Pre-Test.

The woman wants to _____ on Monday.

go to the lake

walk along the river

visit the city park

The man doesn't want to go because he ___.

is busy with work

wants to see a movie instead

is worried about the sun

On Tuesday, the woman suggests ____.

visiting an art museum

going for a bike ride

driving in the mountains

On Wednesday, the woman to ____.

go fishing

catch a movie

have a barbecue

On Friday or Saturday, the woman would like to ____.

have a nice picnic

play games at home

go shopping for clothing

Appendix B. Post-test.

Where is the man going on vacation?

Germany

Italy

France

Where did he meet Claudia?

at a music store

at the post office

online

What advice does Markus give Pete about meeting Claudia's parents?

be on time

take a small gift

smile and be friendly

What is one thing Markus does NOT say about greeting Claudia?

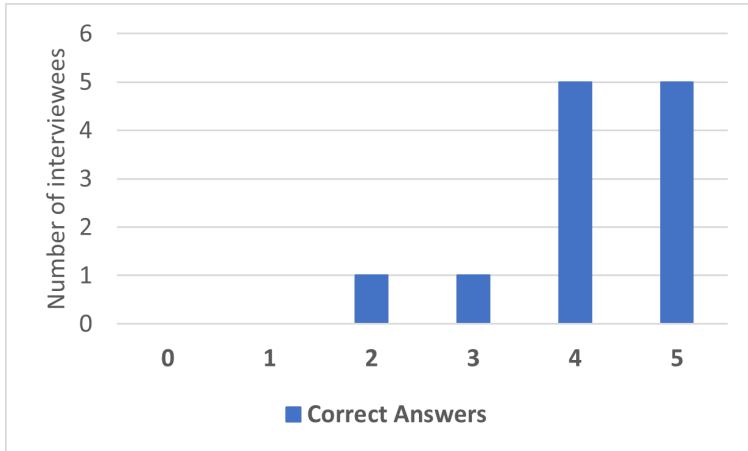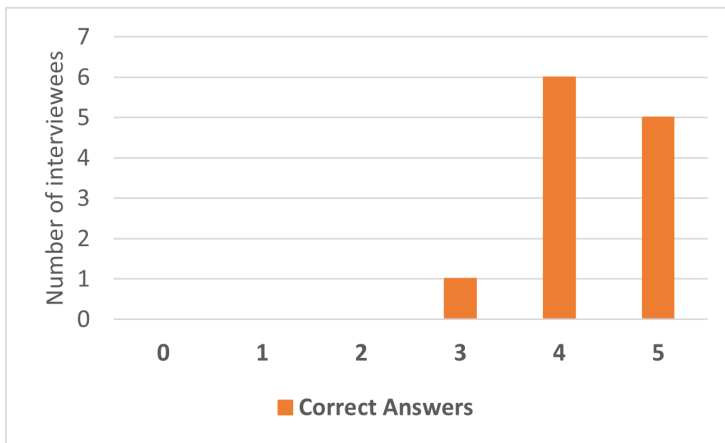take her some flowers

give her a friendly hug

shake her hand

Markus' final suggestion for Pete is that he should ____.

brush up on his German

visit Berlin during his visit

buy souvenirs for Claudia's family

Appendix C. Figure 1.

Appendix D. Figure 2.

Appendix E. Figure 3.