

# Online Academic Tutoring for English Language Learning: A Case Study of Receptive Skills Development in Ecuadorian Students

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## Abstract

This study examines the impact of online academic tutoring on Ecuadorian students of 5<sup>o</sup>, 6<sup>o</sup>, and 7<sup>o</sup> grades of Educación General Básica (EGB) on English receptive skills. Despite English's importance and integration into Ecuador's education system, language acquisition keeps facing some challenges due to resource limitations and diverse linguistic backgrounds. The research involved 52 students and 57 preservice teachers in an exploratory case study. Statistical data showed how digital education along with online academic tutoring contributed to improvements in the receptive skills of a group of English language students as well as let researchers see the most significant gains in 7th graders. Preservice teachers also developed pedagogically but encountered technical challenges. Findings underscore online tutoring's potential to address educational gaps, highlighting the need for greater investment in digital infrastructure and teacher training. Future research should examine the socio-emotional impact of online tutoring on learners' confidence and well-being.

**Keywords:** Ecuador, Educación General Básica (EGB), preservice teachers, digital education; language acquisition

## 1. Introduction

Education is a pillar that fosters people's personal and professional growth. Though the subjects in the curriculum must be taught, the practical application of the same knowledge into the environment or globally in this competitive world is essential (Fantinelli et al., 2024). Learning a foreign language like English is relevant in this perspective. English is known as the global Lingua Franca, spoken globally by 380,000,000 L1 users and 1,080,00,00 L2 users, according to Eberhard et al. (2024). More generally than that, EFL is learned in regular schools all over the globe as part of a much more general education curriculum. This fact is highlighted by Peña (2019). Many studies have proved that English can be used as a lingua franca (Illés & Bayyurt, 2023; Jenkins et al., 2018) and has developed and supported many aspects of education, cross-cultural understanding, development of talent, and collaborative effort worldwide. It serves as a global communication tool (Alfarhan, 2016; Sabirova et al., 2021) that allows interaction and collaboration between different language speakers, and it positively impacts academic and professional development, primarily in more multi-language and globalized working environments (Zhang, 2024).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Receptive Skills: Importance in English Language Learning

Listening and reading are receptive skills essential for scaffolding successful language learning. They provide the opportunity to decode and understand language input, which is necessary for effective communication through productive skills (speaking and writing).

On the one hand, listening comprehension is widely recognized as one of the foundations of language learning. Ngwoke et al. (2022) believe that good listening skills are necessary for students to succeed academically in an environment where they can participate in discussions and interact more effectively. Research has continued to show that listening is the primary medium through which one gains other language skills (Bozorgian, 2012; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016), especially in the classroom where oral language use is more evident for second language learners.

On the other hand, reading offers extensive exposure to vocabulary, grammar, and cultural contexts (Masrai, 2019), which are "essential factors of foreign language learning, and they both influence a learner's speaking performance" (Dash, 2013, pp. 67-73). Reading also develops cognitive skills such as critical thinking and analysis, resulting in a deeper understanding of the text, significantly contributing to general language development (Fakazli, 2021).

Studies confirm the importance of integrating receptive skill activities in English language learning (Surkamp & Yearwood, 2018). For example, Guo and Wills (2006) have shown that concurrent reading and listening tend to improve performance in listening comprehension through better vocabulary acquisition and context familiarity. However, learners sometimes face problems acquiring receptive skills for several reasons, including insufficient practice, not understanding the practicality of the skills (Hromova et al., 2021), and ineffective teaching methods (Vinita & Ilankumaran, 2023). Thus, teachers can help learners cope with these challenges by providing

academic support where learners can experiment and take risks with language.

2.2 English Teaching in Ecuador: Reforms and Challenges

Ecuador has recognized the importance of English learning and integrated it into its education system years ago (Poblete, 2014; Ministerio de Educación de Ecuador [MINEDUC], 2014), but only for some levels. Nonetheless, from the 2016-2017 academic year in the Highland Region and the 2017-2018 academic year in the Coastal Region, a ministerial agreement (No. MINEDUC-ME-2016-00020-A) has required English to be taught progressively from the General Basic Education level (Hereafter EGB as its initials in Spanish), beginning with the Starters level (MINEDUC, 2016).

Since 2016, English has been a compulsory subject from General Basic Education through High School (Bachillerato) in Ecuador, according to the Ecuadorian curriculum for English as a Foreign Language reform, which is based on the proficiency standards of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (MINEDUC, 2016; 2023).

Learning a second language is an exceptional opportunity for students (Contributor, 2021; Spence, 2022; Lingua, 2023; "Why first and Second language," n.d.) to gain academic advantages, mainly because they can improve their communication skills. However, it is not easy. It is evident in some students in Ecuador due to their multicultural background (Barre-Parrales & Villafuerte-Holguín, 2021) where the first language is ancestral ones are learning Spanish as a second language and English as a third language. Likewise, students sometimes face challenges due to limited resources (Oroz et al., 2021). Thus, private reinforcement or review classes can be a great help but can also be expensive and out of reach for many, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Moreover, students often think learning English is irrelevant unless they appreciate its practical use (Sevy-Biloon et al., 2020). It is due to the dominance of L1 over the target language in class, failure to practice English in class since so much on the grammar is covered, and the learner being of different pre-beginner proficiency standards as a norm (Rosado & Vaca-Cárdenas, 2023).

Several other factors affect the quality of English education in Ecuador. These include educators' need to strengthen the necessary skills and resources to teach English effectively (Dikilitaş & Erten, 2017; Obiajulu, 2017), a lack of innovative instructional strategies that engage students (Villafuerte & Macías, 2020), and limited access to digital tools in rural areas, which hinders the importance of using modern teaching techniques (Gómez, 2020).

The urgency to address the need for quality English education in Ecuador is prominent since it has one of the lowest English levels globally, as the Education First [EF] (2023) report indicates. Such is the implication set from research done by Garzón-Castrillón and Zúñiga-Santillán (2017) and the study by Zavala (2021), which call for quality education in the region. Online academic support sessions are thus a game changer in light of the previous challenges explained.

2.3 Previous research on online academic tutoring: Examining its effectiveness

Technological advancements have dramatically impacted education (McDiarmid & Zhao, 2022). The widespread shift from onsite to online learning was highlighted by the health crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pokherl & Chhetri, 2021) and the need for more inclusive and equitable support to reduce inequities and improve student outcomes (Sato et al., 2024). While the transition to digital approaches to learning and teaching has brought advantages in flexibility and availability, it also revealed and amplified pre-existing inequalities in education (UNESCO, 2020; Li & Lalani, 2020), with a particularly severe effect on foreign language instruction.

In this context, governments worldwide have harnessed the power of digital solutions to ensure educational continuity in these difficult times. Online academic tutoring and virtual classrooms soon became essential tools in the fight against educational inequalities (see Table 1) and in supporting language learning. As a result, the effects of online tutoring were no longer a rare or hard-to-grasp phenomenon, definitely not after its impact in reducing disparities in the uptake of education had been demonstrated.

Table 1. Previous studies on online tutoring's effectiveness

Study	Authors	Year	Sample	Results
Apart but Connected: Online Tutoring and Student Outcomes during the COVID-19 Pandemic.	Carlana, M., & La Ferrara, E.	2021	1,059 students from 76 schools in Italy	Improvement in academic performance, mental health, and development of social and emotional skills.
A Multi-State Analysis of Effective Online Tutoring for Elementary, Middle, and High School-Aged Students.	O'Connor, M.	2022	a) 4,000 students in Colorado, b) students in Los Angeles, c) 12 schools in Brainfuse study	Online tutoring provides crucial academic support, offering reliable content and learning partners in a timely and accessible manner.
Online tutoring works: Experimental evidence from a program with vulnerable children	Gortazar, L., et al.	2023	356 disadvantaged students in Spain	Improvement in academic outcomes, effort, and aspirations of socially disadvantaged students.
Multiplying learning: Remote tutoring to enhance schooling	Zoido, P., et al.	2023	Students in Latin America	Students receiving remote tutoring learn 30% faster than those who do not.
Africa and Asia successful global tutoring experiences: ConnectEd.	Angrist, N., et al.	2023	Students in five countries in Africa and Asia	Improvement in learning outcomes, most notable improvements in Uganda and the Philippines.

Therefore, digital interventions have demonstrated the potential to improve education, making them critical tools for providing more equitable and inclusive learning environments. Indeed, experience during the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore the critical importance of investment in digital infrastructure and teacher training to enable all learners to access educational opportunities (UNESCO, 2020; Li & Lalani, 2020).

#### *2.4 Online Academic Tutoring: Support for English Language Learners*

Online academic tutoring is an effective tool for teaching EFL worldwide because of its flexibility and resource accessibility (Zou et al., 2021). With all the help from technology, online academic tutoring gives students a chance to learn English in a personalized way and at a very affordable cost (Rotar, 2022), with the provision of resources to assist them in attaining the needed language skills that will help them fit into the global community.

Online academic support makes the practice of language skills possible (Topping et al., 2022) in a comfortable and safe environment, with experienced tutors able to give personalized instruction, feedback, and support (Tao & Gao, 2022). This is yet another benefit, particularly for students who may not have access to regular language programs, require reinforcement in their development of English language skills, or face challenges within the traditional classroom setting.

Online tutoring indicates an improvement in various EFL students' understanding of language proficiency and student engagement (Tran et al., 2024). Flexibility and access to many varied resources are some factors that define the very positive results observed with online tutoring. For instance, a systematic review of 40 articles published between 2019 and 2022 reported that digital tools and online methodology play a crucial role in bettering EFL students' learning (Wang et al., 2022).

However, despite these numerous benefits, there are challenges when applying online tutoring. Technical issues and low levels of digital literacy among students can hinder the effectiveness of online learning (van de Werfhorst et al., 2022; Mohd Nordin et al., 2022). For instance, a study conducted by Al Shlowiy (2023) revealed that "students lacked some ethics and requirements for e-learning; and technical issues disabled both teachers and learners from remaining in the learning engagement" (p. 382).

The absence of face-to-face experience might lead to lesser motivational and affective engagement on the part of students (Zhang et al., 2023). Furthermore, the lack of digital competency is a huge issue and access to quality technology is challenging (Cakrawati, 2017). On the contrary, other studies report that combining synchronous and asynchronous interactions boost students' motivation in their learning process (Bergdahl, 2022).

Overall, the impact of online academic support on developing the English language can be consequential, mainly when it deals with the development of Ecuadorian students, who face many barriers to gaining proficiency in the English language. Online academic support can lessen the gap between students and English education (Zheng et al., 2023) by providing them with personal language instruction, thus enabling them to succeed in their learning process by obtaining high-quality education to face the challenges of globalization.

#### *2.5 Research Question*

This study was based on the following question: To what extent does online academic tutoring improve the English receptive skills of Ecuadorian students in grades 5, 6, and 7 (EGB)?

### **3. Method**

#### *3.1 Research Design*

This study derived from a community project that sought to give online EFL academic support to Ecuadorian students in grades 5, 6, and 7 EGB during an academic school year. The purpose was to present the project results and their implications in English language education in contexts with a community base. Therefore, this research employed an exploratory case study design with pre-experimental characteristics. This design was selected because the project is exploratory and seeks to uncover whether online EFL tutoring affects students' English receptive skills (including grammar and vocabulary) in a real-world setting. The pre-experimental characteristics are evident in the absence of a control group and the lack of random assignment of participants to the intervention since the project aimed to provide valuable support to a specific selected group of students from a community in Ecuador.

#### *3.2 Sampling Approach*

Convenience sampling (Bryman, 2016) was employed in this study due to the constraints of a limited timeframe and resources. Participants were selected from a general education elementary school that was readily available and open to collaborating on a community project. This approach allowed for efficient data collection within the project's parameters.

Students in the 5th, 6th, and 7th grades were chosen, as these are critical school grades for English language development within the Ecuadorian EGB system. In total, 109 participants were included in this study: 52 students (27 boys and 25 girls) and 57 preservice teachers (45 females and 12 males).

While acknowledging the inherent limitations of convenience sampling, particularly the potential for selection bias and limited generalizability beyond the specific context of its participants, efforts were made to reduce concerns, such as maintaining sample diversity in terms of gender and grade levels. Additionally, caution was exercised in interpreting the findings, emphasizing their applicability to the specific context of this study.

### 3.3 Instrument

For this research, a pretest containing 10 questions with multiple-choice options, including short readings, to determine students' initial state of receptive English skills (including grammar and vocabulary) was applied before the intervention. Likewise, interactive tools such as Quizzes, Live worksheets, Learn Chocolate, and Fun English games were used to implement academic support sessions and encourage active student participation. Zoom was the means to hold the online sessions. Similarly, a posttest with a 10-question design was developed to measure students' progress after the intervention. Both questionnaires were administered using Google Forms. While the tests were not formally piloted, a group of experienced English language teachers reviewed the questions to ensure content validity, alignment with the target grade levels, appropriate question clarity, and complexity levels. Furthermore, preservice teachers documented their experiences during the project in reflective journals shared when the intervention concluded. In total, 57 journals were collected and served as this study's primary source of qualitative data.

### 3.4 Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

This study was divided into two phases and applied 90% virtually and 10% on-site. The last percentage was used to collect signatures and/or deliver minutes, certificates, and final reports.

#### a) Phase 1: Preparation and diagnosis

- School authorities, where students are from, were contacted to obtain permission to conduct the project on their premises.
- Parents, legal guardians, and students were provided comprehensive information about the project's purpose, duration, and activities to parents, legal guardians, and students. Informed consent was obtained to ensure students' full participation in the project.
- Preservice teachers received training. It included planning based on students' ages, creating curricular adaptations for students with special needs, using an interactive platform to plan the content, and using interactive activities for the interventions during academic support. Throughout this process, preservice teachers received guidance from their professors.
- Later, an online pretest was administered to determine students' receptive skills levels. The results were analyzed and gathered into a report. In addition, the head of the English Department at the school provided a report that played a relevant role in identifying the students' challenges in developing their receptive skills. This dual analysis of the results allowed for the tutoring sessions to be customized according to the specific needs of the students.
- Students were grouped by their grade level (5th, 6th, and 7th) and their classmates. Preservice teachers were divided into pairs and assigned a group of students based on their grades to tailor their lesson plans to their needs, create a welcoming learning environment, and ensure students' comfort.
- The Zoom platform, which is familiar to students and known for its ease of use, was selected for online English tutoring sessions. Parents were instructed to assist their children in joining sessions.

#### b) Phase 2: Implementation and evaluation

- Preservice teachers prepared resources. Lessons and structured, playful activities fostered a comfortable and motivating learning environment, making the interactions more dynamic. Similarly, they worked on curricular adaptations for students with special needs.
- Academic support consisted of weekly online tutoring sessions. Interactive tools such as Quizzes, Liveworksheets, Learn Chocolate, Fun English games, and Learn English Kids (British Council) were employed. Students were encouraged to apply knowledge through practical out-of-class online exercises.
- Additionally, preservice teachers had monitoring sessions with their professors to receive constructive feedback on their teaching and define areas of improvement. Likewise, preservice teachers recorded their experiences and insights in reflective journals.
- After the intervention, a posttest was administered, which revealed students' improvements in their receptive skills. The results were shared with school authorities, teachers, parents, legal guardians, and students.

After gathering the data, the questionnaire responses were categorized based on topics and divided into pretest and posttest groups. This enabled an analysis of learning outcomes to be more effective. Students' questionnaires were analyzed systematically using SPSS. Bar graphs were created to visually represent the results and practicality of the English online tutoring sessions. This analytical approach aimed to assess the benefits and practicality of the English online tutoring sessions to provide academic support. It was identified at which educational levels the most significant improvements took place and at which the efforts need to be concentrated within the tutoring structure.

Further, preservice teachers' experiences, as referred to in their reflective journals, were also analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This involved carefully reading and coding the journals. Besides, emerging patterns and themes were constantly compared to ground interpretations in the data. This comparative analysis identified critical trends in preservice teachers' experiences, persistent challenges, and the intervention's impact on their pedagogical development. The resulting information was then organized and displayed in a comprehensive table for further discussion.

**4. Results**

The project served as a testing ground for the pedagogical approaches and interventions applied. It is essential to acknowledge that this study's findings can only be interpreted in the context of its participants. Due to the sample size, it would not be appropriate to generalize the results to all Ecuadorian English language learners. However, the results can be used as a reference for other similar studies in different groups and contexts on online EFL academic support through tutoring sessions.

*4.1 Pretest and posttest results*

Students (n=52) were administered a pretest and posttest at the beginning and end of the English online tutoring sessions. The results are divided by grade. Each pair of bars represents a particular topic's pretest and posttest scores.

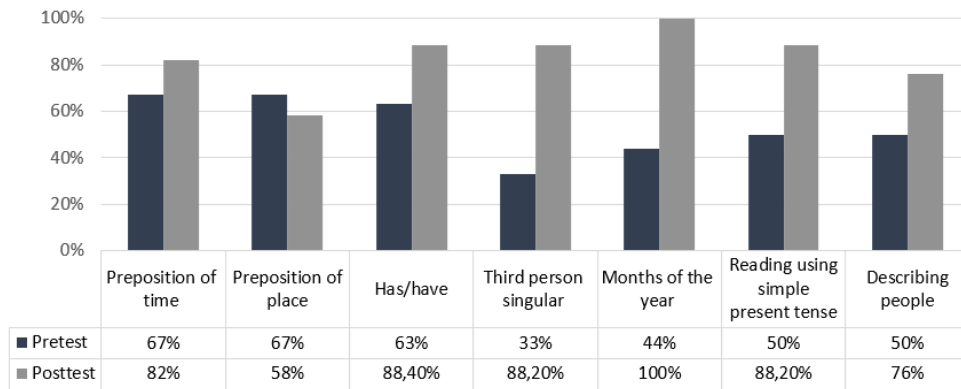


Figure 1. Pretest and posttest: 5th grade (N= 15)

The results indicate a substantial improvement in most topics, with notable progress in "Third Person Singular," "Has/Have," and "Months of the Year." However, the performance in "Prepositions of Place" showed a decrease. However, performance in "Prepositions of Place" decreased since a newly studied preposition (at) was included, which was a challenge for some students. It is important to highlight that, despite this decrease, significant improvements were observed in other topics. The highest posttest score was achieved in "Months of the Year," with a score of 100%. These findings suggest that the intervention positively impacted the participants' receptive skills (including grammar and vocabulary).

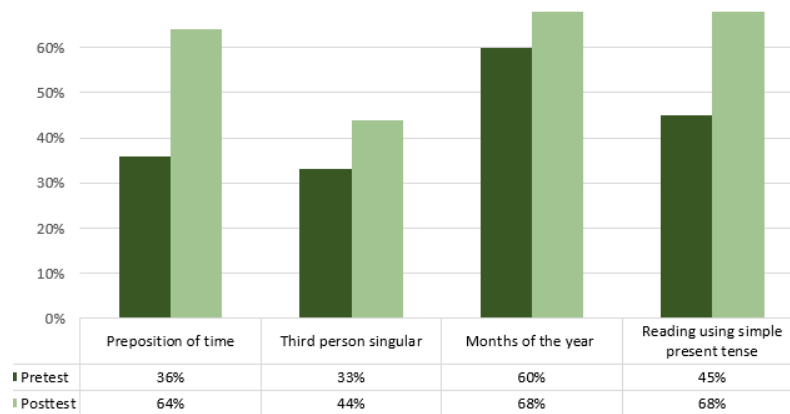


Figure 2. Pretest and posttest: 6th grade (N= 17)

The results indicate that the interventions employed were particularly successful, as considerable improvements were observed in "Prepositions of Time" and "Reading Using Simple Present Tense." Additionally, there were positive improvements in "Third Person Singular" and "Months of the Year," although they were less pronounced.

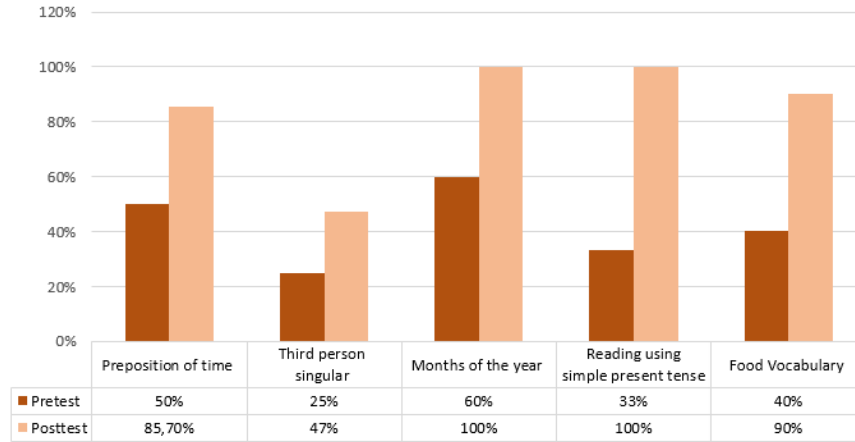


Figure 3. Pretest and posttest: 7th grade (N= 20)

The results show that the interventions have proven successful and that they have made significant differences in various areas. Statistically (See Table 2), students significantly improved their English receptive skills across all grades from pretest to posttest.

Table 2. Pretest and posttest mean scores per grade

Grade	Mean Pretest Score	Std Dev Pretest	Mean Posttest Score	Std Dev Posttest	p-value
5th Grade	0.53	0.12	0.83	0.14	0.023
6th Grade	0.44	0.12	0.61	0.11	0.035
7th Grade	0.42	0.14	0.84	0.22	0.005

The analysis indicates a notable improvement in receptive language skills, including grammar and vocabulary, after the intervention in all grades: 5th, 6th, and 7th. The 5th Grade rose significantly from an average score of 0.53 to 0.83 with  $p = 0.023$ , which is an important finding, showing the statistical improvement. Similarly, the 6th Grade experienced a notable rise from 0.44 to 0.61 ( $p = 0.035$ ). Specifically, the 7th Grade demonstrated the most significant gain: 0.42 to 0.84 ( $p = 0.005$ ). Therefore, this intervention was very efficient and effective in improving students' receptive language skills at all levels of the discussed variable, with the most effectiveness found for 7th graders.

The overall results per Grade confirm significant improvement from pre-test to post-test for students across all grades and topics. The p-values show that such improvement was statistically significant; thus, the instructional period during the intervention effectively improved the students' development of their receptive skills, including grammar and vocabulary.

#### 4.2 Analysis of Preservice Teachers' Reflective Journals

Preservice teachers ( $n=57$ ) shared their experiences during the project in a reflective journal, which offered valuable insights. These experiences were classified into three areas: skill development and career exploration, building relationships and fostering participation, and navigating the online environment

Table 3. Insights from preservice teachers' experiences

Focus area	Specific element	Major findings
Skill development and career exploration	Technological skills enhancement	Online tutoring provided a practical space for preservice teachers to develop and enhance their skills with technology, a critical component of modern education.
	Pedagogical strategy application	Preservice teachers experimented with teaching methods in a real-world context, adapted to students' needs and interests.
	Bridge to future career	Online tutoring offered a valuable preview of the teaching profession, allowing preservice teachers to immediately apply theories learned in their study programs and gain a deeper understanding of their role.
Building relationships and fostering participation	Innovation and adaptability	The online environment demanded flexibility and creativity from preservice teachers, skills that are transferable to any educational setting.
	Diverse technological tools & interactive materials	Engaging students online required various approaches and resources to maintain attention and foster active learning. Interactive online activities made this possible.
	Active participation	Encouraging students to take ownership of their learning and participate fully in the process played an important role in leading them to better outcomes, a deeper understanding of the topics covered, and refinement of their receptive skills.
Navigating the online environment	Technology-related issues	Technical difficulties, such as connectivity problems and platform limitations, sometimes disrupted sessions and hindered learning. Finding solutions and alternative plans was crucial for maintaining continuity.
	Student attendance	Ensuring consistent attendance in an online format was a challenge due to technological problems.

## 5. Discussion

The shift to online education, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted the critical role of digital solutions in addressing educational inequities and enhancing learning outcomes (McDiarmid & Zhao, 2022; Pokherl & Chhetri, 2021; Sato et al., 2024). This study's results align with the growing body of evidence demonstrating significant improvements in student performance through online academic tutoring sessions.

Significant increases in posttest scores were evident across all three grade levels — 5th, 6th, and 7th — for the online tutoring condition. 7th graders displayed the most significant gain: their mean scores increased from 0.42 to 0.84,  $p = 0.005$ . These results are statistically significant, with  $p < 0.05$  for all grades. They show how vital online tutoring can be for students' receptive language skills (including grammar and vocabulary). This result has been consonant with other evidence that showed fairly consistently how online tutoring can be a strong lever of improvements in academic performance, particularly for disadvantaged students (Carlana & La Ferrara, 2021; Gortazar et al., 2023).

The preservice teachers' reflections offer experiences that demonstrate the benefits and challenges of online tutoring. The reported enhancement in technological skills, practical application of pedagogical strategies, and deep understanding of their future roles in education all point to the valuable nature of online tutoring as a bridge to future careers. Such experiences underline the flexibility and adaptability that online educators must exhibit through tailoring teaching methods to meet diverse student needs and interests (Topping et al., 2022; Tao & Gao, 2022). However, it was reported that technical issues, digital literacy, and inconsistency in the attendance of students both came up as barriers that concur with the findings of other studies (Al Shlowiy, 2023; van de Werfhorst et al., 2022; Mohd Nordin et al., 2022; Cakrawati, 2017). These challenges describe the need for further investment in digital infrastructure and digital literacy training for teachers and students to maximize online academic support (UNESCO, 2020; Li & Lalani, 2020).

There are clear indications that online academic tutoring sessions support language education well by improving receptive language skills. Language education in countries like Ecuador could greatly benefit from online academic support. Therefore, this will call for a future digital infrastructure and continuous teacher training investment by policymakers and educators to uphold and increase online tutoring. Such an approach can bridge gaps in education, provide all students with equal learning opportunities, and provide educators with the empowering skills they need to be successful in the digital era.

## 6. Limitations

This study recognizes inherent limitations that may have influenced its outcomes. The absence of a control group restricts the ability to solely attribute observed improvements to the intervention itself, as external factors like natural development or concurrent learning experiences could also play a role.

Furthermore, although technology is a crucial enabler for online tutoring, it also brings forth potential obstacles. Fluctuations in internet connectivity may have disrupted participation and engagement, thus potentially affecting the efficacy of the tutoring sessions.

Additionally, a significant portion of the original 110 students withdrew from the study due to changing institutions or relocating. The reduced sample size could lower the study's statistical power.

Nevertheless, the study progressed with the dedicated remaining participants, and within this group, positive shifts in English receptive skills were observed. The research team and participants demonstrated adaptability in these challenges, allowing valuable insights to be collected.

## 7. Conclusion

This study explored the effectiveness of online academic tutoring sessions to enhance English receptive skills among elementary school students (grades 5-7) in Ecuador. Despite certain limitations, the research demonstrated significant improvements in students' English language skills through thoroughly examining pretest and posttest results and the reflective experiences of preservice teachers.

The findings emphasize the positive impact of online tutoring on reducing educational disparities and creating a conducive learning environment for English, mainly when physical resources are scarce or traditional teaching methods fail.

Likewise, the study provides practical implications for educators and policymakers. The professional growth experienced by preservice teachers through the practical application of pedagogical and technological skills emphasizes the importance of integrating such innovative approaches into teacher training programs. The engagement strategies and technological challenges encountered during the sessions offer valuable insights for implementing future online academic tutoring sessions.

## 8. Recommendations

Teachers and policymakers must invest in two critical areas to make online tutoring for English language learning more available, especially in countries like Ecuador.

Firstly, digital infrastructure should be invested in and improved upon so that there is reliable internet access and availability of the adequate technological tools needed by teachers and students. This is particularly essential in marginalized communities where such infrastructure is fundamental to the success of online tutoring programs by allowing easy interaction and access to digital learning resources.

Secondly, strong emphasis must be placed on professional development for educators to increase their proficiency using digital platforms and pedagogical strategies appropriate for an online learning environment. Training content must focus on both technical skills and methods of engaging students that can help personalize instruction for various needs. Thus, stakeholders working on the principal areas highlighted above would improve the quality and access to online tutoring, making it an assertive means of English acquisition that will help learners in Ecuador or similar contexts reduce the educational gap.

As such, subsequent studies may investigate the socio-emotional effects of online tutoring. Considering that language learning is a generally challenging experience for students, personalization and support integrated into online tutoring may help raise levels of emotional resilience and English confidence, affecting overall well-being.

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All authors contributed equally to the content of this work and approved the final manuscript.

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Obtained.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

### **Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

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