# An Extensive Online Listening Program for Preparing Postgraduates to Take the TOEFL Listening Test and Enhancing their Autonomy

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## Abstract

The current research investigated the effectiveness of a proposed extensive online listening program in preparing postgraduate students to take the TOEFL listening test and enhancing their online language learning autonomy. The program targeted training students on the three major listening comprehension skills addressed in the TOEFL-ITP listening tests (listening for basic comprehension, listening for pragmatic understanding, and listening to connect information). The quasi-experimental design was adopted using a pre-post administration for one group consisting of 15 Master's students at the Faculties of Education and Nursing. The research adopted two equivalent TOEFL-ITP listening tests to measure students' listening skills. An autonomy scale was also designed and administered to assess students' online learning autonomy. Some online tools were employed in the program to provide authentic, extensive listening materials and to facilitate students' interaction (ELLLO, TED Talks, VoA, and Microsoft Teams). The results revealed that the research group students' mean ranks in the post-administration of the listening test and the autonomy scale were significantly higher than the pre-administration. Accordingly, the extensive online listening program proved to have significant effectiveness in improving students' listening skills and enhancing their online learning autonomy.

**Key words:** TOEFL, listening, autonomy, extensive online listening

## Introduction

The TOEFL stands for Test of English as a Foreign Language. It is one of the most widely recognized language proficiency standardized tests developed to measure students' level of readiness for study. TOEFL has been used as a requirement for non-native English students to pursue further study overseas, to get an appropriate job, and to graduate from university. In Egypt, English is considered a foreign language as it is mostly used in English classrooms, while outside the classroom, people commonly use Arabic for their daily communication. English is regarded as an important foreign language that is taught in all grades, from kindergarten until university. After graduation, many Egyptian students seek to apply for graduate study. In most Egyptian universities, applicants are required to take the TOEFL-ITP test, which is regarded as one of the must-take tests to continue higher education.

The TOEFL-ITP test consists of three main sections: listening comprehension, reading, and structure and written expression. Among these parts, listening is often regarded as the most difficult one since students often encounter difficulties following the audio recordings, especially extended conversations and talks, and completing the listening questions. This is, unfortunately, due to the absence of real-life exposure to native speakers of English, which strengthens students' reluctance to frequently practice listening to English. Thus, it is very difficult for them to be able to master the different English language skills. However, those graduate students can maximize their language learning opportunities and learn independently outside the formal educational system to enhance their listening skills and, thus, improve their TOEFL test scores if they conduct extensive listening practices via online resources.

Extensive listening (EL) involves listening to a great deal of comprehensible and enjoyable input, which enables learners to enhance their listening fluency and comprehension. Effective EL offers various authentic and spontaneous listening materials over an extended period of time while fostering learners' autonomy. These real-like materials help learners learn genuine utterance characteristics like hesitations and incorrect starts. In this regard, learners should acquire the skills needed to deal with such real input, which they understand only partially.

There are several similarities between extensive reading (ER) and EL; for instance, both seek to develop speed in recognizing comprehensible texts, and it is vital for learners to enjoy and continue being engaged with the extensive tasks. While EL is just as effective as ER and it is essential to increase learners' exposure to the target language, EL has been an under-researched area, unlike ER (Renandya, 2012). EL would lead to massive positive effects on learners' linguistic abilities if integrated with online tools. Thanks to the rapid advancement of digital technology, many learners now have easy access to both authentic and modified listening materials through the use of smartphones and the internet. As a result, it is critical to select the best extensive online listening platforms that offer useful features like subtitles and varied talks in terms of topics, lengths, visual effects, and speech rates. This is due to the fact that providing learners with EL practice using TED talks, ELLLO, and VoA would positively improve their listening comprehension, reduce their learning burden, and promote continuous autonomy. Therefore, the current research sough examining the effectiveness of a proposed extensive online listening program in preparing postgraduate students to take the TOEFL listening test through improving their EFL listening skills, and enhancing their online language learning autonomy.

## Literature review
## TOEFL

The TOEFL is one of the pre-requisites to apply for a job vacancy in certain companies, graduate from university, join volunteer programs, or apply for higher education scholarships at in-country or abroad universities. There are four types of TOEFL tests, including CBT (computer-based test), IBT (internet-based test), PBT (paper-based Test), and TOEFL ITP (institutional testing program) (Khobir, 2020). TOEFL tests are not based on the content of any particular English course but rather on learners' English language proficiency—their overall ability to use English.

For many formal institutions, TOEFL-ITP is chosen and widely used because of its affordable cost and reputation of TOEFL which is believed to be reliable and valid. More than 2,500 universities worldwide, including those in the Middle East and North Africa, use the TOEFL-ITP to assess students' English language proficiency for

academic purposes. When compared to other English tests, the TOEFL-ITP Assessment Series exams are more cost-effective and time-efficient. TOEFL-ITP tests are high-quality measures from the creators of the *TOEFL-iBT* test (Amideast, 2023). The test forms are like the genuine TOEFL PBT, with only three sections being tested: listening, structure and written expression, and reading. This test consists of 150 multiple-choice questions that need to be answered in about 100 minutes, where the students are evaluated for accuracy and speed in English listening, structure and written expression, and reading skills (Maharani, 2021). Every year, more than 500,000 ITP tests are conducted worldwide, and the number still continues to rise.

(Taufiq, Santoso, and Fediyanto, 2017).

In reality, many applicants who have the willingness to continue their postgraduate study face difficulties getting the minimum score on the TOEFL test, especially in the listening comprehension section. Some of them have already taken the test more than three times, but the result is still below the minimum requirement (Razmalia & Gani, 2017). Many studies were conducted to determine students' difficulties in answering the TOEFL listening test. For example, Rina and Tiarina (2020) attempted to find out those difficulties among the English department students of Universitas Negeri Padang who have taken the TOEFL test from August to December 2020. The results demonstrated that students were in agreement on the problems they faced during the listening test, which included some physical conditions, listening length and speed, and a lack of vocabulary and concentration.

Soali & Pujiani (2020) also conducted a study to identify the most challenging section of the TOEFL listening comprehension test and the elements that contribute to students' difficulties. 25 seventh-semester students of the Nursing Study Program were the participants of this study. The results indicated that the difficulties encountered by students were selecting keyword synonyms, idioms, double negatives, the paragraph's core idea, and comprehensive information. Besides, difficulties related to listeners were high levels of anxiety, difficulty in concentration while listening, difficulties regarding vocabulary meaning, and difficulty drawing conclusions from conversations. Moreover, low vocabulary mastery, insufficient practice on the test, low self-confidence,

and poor time management were among the other variables that made it difficult for students to take the TOEFL listening section.

In addition, Lasi & Bouk (2022) evaluated ESP students' ability and strategies used to master the skills of listening comprehension targeted in the TOEFL test. The descriptive research design based on content analysis was adopted to collect the data by administering observations and testing to measure students' listening comprehension skills. Results indicated that students' ability in listening comprehension was at the level of 'Low Intermediate' in general. It was suggested that the students need more training on TOEFL listening. Advanced technology is recommended to be employed to improve learners' English listening skills using online TOEFL training with more drills on YouTube channels and podcasts.

Alzana (2022) aimed to discover students' most common problems for the TOEFL-ITP listening comprehension test as well as their strategies to overcome them. The descriptive quantitative method was adopted by administering a questionnaire and conducting an interview. Results revealed that the most common difficulties in answering the TOEFL-ITP listening comprehension test are word selection and the speaker's speed, accent, intonation, and length of talk. Consistently, Pasaribu et al. (2023) reached the same results after analyzing students' difficulties in listening to academic oral discourses, which are commonly found in Section C, Listening Part of the TOEFL-ITP. It was found that students' listening ability was low, as 71.43% of students scored less than 50% on their listening comprehension test. Strategies suggested for overcoming these difficulties include frequent practice of various listening sources, drawing the speaker's conclusion and details of the topic, and becoming familiar with the American accent by watching YouTube videos, movies, and listening to English songs.

Accordingly, it can be indicated that the TOEFL-ITP is a valid tool for evaluating the English language proficiency of non-native English students and is a mandatory requirement for admissions to graduate degree programs in non-English-speaking countries. The TOEFL-ITP listening section is considered the most difficult among the three sections since students face many problems like feeling worried and confused, losing concentration, having limited English vocabulary, and rarely practicing TOEFL tests or listening to authentic materials. Thus, it is

essential for students before the test to be well trained on the listening comprehension skills assessed through the TOEFL listening section. The current research, then, targeted developing students' listening comprehension skills in order to prepare them to take the TOEFL-ITP listening test.

## Listening

Listening is an essential English language skill that is greatly needed for producing a good language since people cannot speak without listening. It also has an undeniable effect on successful communication, as people spend more time listening than doing the other three skills. This is consistent with a survey conducted by Lake (2015), who revealed that people spend most of their time (between 70 and 80%) communicating, and interestingly, about 55% of the time is used for listening.

Listening comprehension is considered a complicated, interactive process in which listeners are involved in the dynamic construction of meaning. It is an active process that involves making connections between what is heard and what the listener already knows. In order to actively listen, one must be able to differentiate between words that have specific grammatical structures, sounds, stress, intonation, and other elements about what the speaker actually says, in addition to comprehending the content, connecting ideas, and evaluating them (Rost, 2011 and Saraswaty, 2018).

Rost (2011) listed six types of listening, which are:
- *Intensive listening* focuses on practicing sounds, words, phrases, and grammatical and pragmatic features.
- *Selective listening* motivates students to approach authentic spoken texts by focusing on certain details rather than trying to comprehend and retain everything.
- *Interactive listening* involves listening in a collaborative conversation where learners communicate with one another or with native speakers.
- *Extensive listening* listening for an extended period of time while concentrating on meaning.
- *Responsive listening* whose goal is the listener's response.
- *Autonomous listening* is independent listening in which the learner has control over input selection, task completion, and assessment.

Underwood (1989) offered three stages for teaching listening: pre-listening, while listening, and post-listening. Firstly, the pre-listening activities stimulate the schemata to assist the students in making predictions about what they will hear. Thus, teachers should provide students with related information to facilitate their listening comprehension. Secondly, the while-listening stage is the most difficult stage for the teacher to manage since the students have to concentrate and actively comprehend the information. In this stage, students can complete the assignment while they are listening or right away after. The activities are usually created to enable students to foster their skills in acquiring and understanding messages from spoken language. Thirdly, the post-listening activities are used to check comprehension after listening, merging all the work performed. More time is needed for the post-listening activities as students are engaged in thinking, discussing, reflecting, and writing processes.

Listening ability has a vital effect on real-life situations. Despite being an essential skill in language learning, listening is somehow considered underestimated, and its skills have received little attention in foreign language teaching. The traditional way of teaching listening, so-called intensive listening, may not provide the students with an option to choose their preferred topics. They listen to the audio materials offered by the teacher, which sometimes are not at their comprehensible level. Besides, the speaking speed is frequently too fast for them to understand, and they have trouble keeping up with the words being said. (Renandya & Farrell, 2011). This leads to students' feelings of frustration and demotivation towards listening. Thus, teachers tend to replay the audio more than once to enable their students to comprehend the idea. This is not ideal instruction because it hinders students' ability to develop their listening skills.

Furthermore, individuals rarely ask their interlocutors to repeat what they have said when they are speaking in real life. To grasp the information from the oral text, more time is needed for EFL learners to become familiar with authentic language to keep up with the speaking rate. Like reading, listening fluency necessitates supporting learners' autonomy in learning and in their exposure to real listening resources and self-directed listening materials (hereafter named extensive listening) (Barella & Linarsih, 2020).

**Learner autonomy:**

The concept of learner autonomy in the area of foreign language development was clearly articulated in the 1979 report prepared by Holec for the Council of Europe (Çakıcı, 2015). According to Holec (1981), learners should be offered the responsibility to make decisions concerning all aspects of their own special learning styles, capacities, and needs. The purpose of learner autonomy is to enable language learners to assume greater accountability for their own learning and for making decisions about what and how they should learn.

Autonomy is regarded as a complex construct of learners' competences, as the meta-capacity of the learners to control and self-direct their own learning in different ways according to their needs and the situation (Tassinari, 2018). Learner autonomy is executed when setting goals, trying to achieve them, reflecting on one's progress, and setting new goals or altering goals, and maintaining such a learning cycle (Little & Thorne, 2017). Autonomous learners take charge of their own learning; in other words, they have and hold the responsibility for the decisions related to all learning aspects, such as identifying objectives, selecting content, monitoring, and evaluating their progress (Holec, 1979 and Little, Dam, & Legenhausen, 2017). These skills of self-evaluation, setting goals, and monitoring one's own learning processes are metacognitive skills. Without such skills, autonomous learners do not exist. The awareness of one's own cognition is metacognitive knowledge (Wenden, 1998). Thus, autonomous learners are metacognitively aware learners (Gao & Zhang, 2011).

Three main pedagogical principles underscoring language learning autonomy were identified: the first is learner involvement (engaging learners to share responsibility for their learning process); the second is learner reflection (motivating learners' critical thinking as they plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning); and the third is the appropriate use of the target language as an essential means of language learning (Najeeb, 2012). This emphasizes the fact that students' language proficiency is influenced by their autonomy. Some previous studies supported this; for instance, Dafei (2007) examined the relationship between learner autonomy and English proficiency of 129 non-English majors in a teacher college in China by means of a questionnaire and an

interview. The results revealed that the students' English proficiency was significantly and positively related to their learner autonomy.

Besides, ÜSTÜNLÜOĞLU (2009) assessed the perceptions of undergraduate students and their instructors concerning responsibilities and abilities related to autonomous learning activities. Quantitative and qualitative data were gained from interviewing 320 students and 24 instructors. The results revealed that students do not take responsibility for their learning, although they have the ability, and instructors take on most of the responsibilities. It was suggested that both students and instructors need to understand the importance of learner autonomy. Conducting a training program was also recommended to enhance students' autonomous learning.

Şakrak-Ekin & Balçıkanl (2019) conducted a study to unravel the possible relationship between EFL learners' autonomy level and academic success in language learning at the tertiary level. Data were obtained by administering a questionnaire consisting of 66 items to 267 university students. Findings indicated that language learners' academic success improved with their autonomy and vice versa.

Moreover, previous research fostered the existence of a positive relationship between autonomy and listening. For example, Elekaei, Faramarzi, and Tabrizi (2016) conducted a study examining the relationship among autonomy, critical thinking ability, and listening comprehension ability of Iranian EFL learners. The results revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between autonomy and the critical thinking ability of learners. It was also indicated that learners with a high level of autonomy had the best listening comprehension ability.

Yang (2020) investigated EFL learners' autonomous learning processes and their perceptions toward a listening program using TED videos to provide authentic listening materials. The results showed that the participants used a variety of tactics while setting objectives, choosing resources, creating learning methods, and assessing learning outcomes during the autonomous learning process. In addition, students appreciated the chance to be in charge of their learning by having more freedom than when they were enrolled in classes.

Consistently, Rahmawati, Putri, and Melani (2023) assessed the correlation between learners' autonomy and listening skills among the

second-semester students of the English Education Study Program IAIN Bukittinggi. Some listening problems were determined in this study; for example, students were unable to use a set of tactics for taking control of listening learning; students were not motivated to independently learn listening; and many exercises were needed to increase students' autonomous listening. The results of administering questionnaires indicated a direct correlation between learner autonomy and listening skills.

Based on what was previously mentioned, it can be concluded that learner autonomy is closely related to their language proficiency in general and to their listening skills in particular. Studies revealed that students' increased responsibility and sense of autonomy positively influence their language development. Similarly, proficient learners, in terms of listening comprehension skills, achieved higher levels of autonomy and independence. However, some students tend not to take responsibility for their learning, although they have the ability. Training programs using powerful language teaching and learning approaches were recommended to enhance students' autonomous learning. Extensive listening is one of the approaches that helps the students feel comfortable with exposure to authentic English materials and feel in control of their autonomous learning experience.

## Extensive Listening (EL):

EL is regarded as a language teaching and learning approach that motivates language learners to experience a great amount of enjoyable and comprehensible listening input presented in the target language over an extended period of time (Ivone & Renandya, 2019). The term "extensive listening" overlaps with "narrow or intensive listening" in its focus on learners' interest as an initial point for selecting what is to be heard. Intensive listening depends mainly on form since doing intensive listening practice requires focusing on pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary rather than overall meaning. It helps learners lay the groundwork for language development. Because it seeks to help listeners comprehend fundamental language elements, intensive listening is particularly significant for beginning and intermediate students. On the contrary, in EL, listeners are not required to fully comprehend the detailed parts of the audio material; rather, they should get a general overview and, above all, enjoy the process of listening. EL focuses on

longer activities, which may vary from something that is a few minutes long to several hours long. It encourages learners to comprehend spoken language in real-world contexts. This is of special importance for intermediate and advanced learners who seek a changeover from language academic understanding towards full fluency

(Saputra & Fatimah, 2018).

Onoda (2012) emphasized the great significance of EL in language learning since it is one of the best methods to get a massive amount of comprehensive input. Krashen (1985) had earlier indicated that exposure to a large amount of listening input is the main influential factor in language acquisition. Krashen, supporting the *input hypothesis*, argued that humans acquire language and listening skills by understanding language with some structures a little bit beyond their current level of proficiency (i+1): comprehensible input. Easiness, in his opinion, is another important element that assists the learner in enhancing listening skills. Easiness and interest may be factors that identify if the learner is actively engaged in listening or not. Thus, instructors should try to reduce learner listening anxiety and select input that best suits learner motives and attitudes about listening. Krashen's suggestion reinforced the idea of EL approaches that are typically implemented based on materials learners want to listen to in light of their interests and the difficulty levels of the listening materials.

Many features of EL are similar to those of Extensive Reading (ER); thus, EL is considered the oral equivalent or the sister of ER. The five principles of ER that could be applied to EL include: quantity, comprehensibility, learner-centeredness, meaning-orientation, and accountability. Accordingly, learners should: listen to large amounts of comprehensible target language texts that are either at or slightly above their current comprehension and linguistic level; choose materials according to their potential relevance and interest rather than their linguistic content; complete comprehension-based, non-intrusive tasks like "listening cards," write or tell the general idea or a summary of the material at their own pace without teacher's help, and stress meaning over form (Mayora, 2017).

In EL, the following four premises of the meaning-focused input and fluency strands must be met (Nation, 2007): (1) students are exposed to listening materials, vocabulary, and discourse patterns that they are

already familiar with; (2) learners stress meaning (intrinsically interesting materials); (3) students are under pressure to perform faster than usual; and (4) students are exposed to a large amount of input. Reinders and Cho (2010) supported the same principles, emphasizing that to apply EL in teaching, teachers should be able to offer an attractive environment. They ought to assist the students in feeling at ease and in charge of their own autonomous EL experience. Besides, selecting the materials for EL should be based on the principle of "listening for pleasure". Therefore, students' cognitive levels should be considered in the design of the teaching materials for EL activities

Several studies were conducted to verify the significance of EL. For example, Bozan (2015) assessed the effect of EL for pleasure on improving EFL learners' English language proficiency levels. The participants were offered a large amount of aural and visual materials and asked to choose materials for EL. Administering a listening test and a listening habits questionnaire supported the significance of EL and indicated that EL activities can positively influence the learners' global language skills and proficiency level. It was also revealed that there is a positive relationship between EL and proficiency level, which means the more learners practice EL, the more they enhance their global language skills.

Norawati (2021) also conducted a research on developing students' listening skills through the EL strategy. Instruments used for collecting data included a listening achievement test, questionnaires, field notes, and observation. The results showed that most of the students could go along with the EL strategy implemented. The students were positive and participated actively in the implementation process. In addition, Kobayashi (2020) indicated that learner autonomy can be enhanced through adapting EL activities in the EFL classroom. An action research project was conducted in a listening class using seven non-English major junior students. They were motivated to listen to English materials outside the classroom and to write a listening report with a summary of the content and their reflection on it. Results showed that they became more autonomous learners, enjoyed the activity, valued sharing their reflections, and increased their perceived self-efficacy in their English skills. The interviews also emphasized the benefits of using EL activities and sharing reflections in the classroom. Students' appreciation of the activities fostered an improvement in their language learning autonomy.

EL, then, is listening to a great deal of comprehensible and enjoyable input that leads to improving students' listening fluency, which describes how quickly and automatically oral language is processed (Rost, 2011). Thus, it is useful to provide activities and exercises to enhance students' listening fluency since speech rate is often deemed the largest listening challenge, even for advanced listeners. Successful EL provides a great amount of listening input that is effective and enjoyable for an extended period of time, which in turn fosters students' autonomy. For students studying English as a foreign language (EFL), very few opportunities exist to interact with English outside the classroom. To overcome this shortage of authentic input, using EL supported with online materials and activities is encouraged to improve EFL students' listening skills and enhance their autonomous language learning.

**Extensive online listening:**

The current digital age has changed not only the lifestyles of people but also teaching and learning strategies. Online learning is an educational method that facilitates implementing instruction with appropriate technologies by utilizing digital tools and platforms to offer educational content and activities (Mayer, 2019). The advantages of online learning are numerous; for example, communication and interaction are supported between instructors and learners. It also allows flexible use at a convenient time and place while considering learners' individual differences; thus, learners are provided with adaptive instructional materials. Additionally, learners are free to learn at their own speed and choose from the numerous extensive instructional resources available online (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015).

Creating a successful online learning context is mostly reliant on learners' being independent and able to take on the responsibility of their own learning process. In online learning, autonomy is regarded as a significant element of self-learning and an indicator of academic success (Firat, 2016). Since online learning offers flexibility, it is crucial for learners to possess self-motivation and self-discipline in this context. Hutapea (2019) indicated that learners who have high learning autonomy can learn better and are capable of observing, evaluating, and managing their studies effectively and efficiently while setting appropriate time to fulfill the required course tasks.

EL, as mentioned earlier, provides a great deal of comprehensible and enjoyable auditory input from which learners can independently choose what to listen to. The practice of EL can be successfully implemented by being integrated with online learning resources. The internet enables learners to access various useful materials, and they become independent and autonomous as they interact with technology. It also offers varied learning models since learners tend to get bored quickly with regular instruction whose resources and materials are limited (Chang, Millett, & Renandya, 2019; and Gavenila, Wulandari, & Renandya, 2021).

Many studies were conducted to assess the value of integrating EL with online tools. For instance, Onoda (2012) investigated the effect of QuickListens with EL tasks on developing listening skills and self-confidence for university English majors. The study employed a pedagogical approach that utilizes components of fluency development and meaning-focused input in addition to the QuickListens approach. The results suggested that students' listening skills and self-confidence improved as they listened extensively to comprehensible input that sparked their intrinsic interests.

In addition, for the goal of developing EFL students' listening fluency and comprehension and fostering their autonomous lifelong learning, Milliner (2017) reported on Japanese EFL students self-selecting English listening content online. Students were required to listen to three online texts a week throughout a 15-week semester. Students' engagement was monitored with a post-listening log. Students' perceptions were also assessed through a post-treatment questionnaire. It was revealed that students' difficulties while listening included the unknown vocabulary, speakers being too fast, and failure to focus because they were unable to follow the speech rate. Results also indicated that students positively perceived the EL tasks. Besides, it was indicated that the most frequently beneficial selected materials were Ted Talks, ESL Fast texts, YouTube, VoiceTube, and ELLLO.

Saputra and Fatimah (2018) also explored how EL can utilize internet-based media, namely TED and YouTube. Participants in the study were EFL freshmen from a university in Indonesia. The findings proved that YouTube and TED helped students enrich their English vocabulary. Further, students stated that the tasks created a more

dynamic and less monotonous learning atmosphere. Moreover, Strong et al. (2023) evaluated students' use of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) for an EL module in a listening course over a 15-week semester. In EL, language learners listen to large amounts of materials that are roughly within the "comfort zone" of their comprehension to enhance different listening abilities such as comprehension, vocabulary, confidence, and motivation. Administering an online survey indicated that students recognized the importance of EL but had mixed attitudes toward using their smartphones as an educational tool.

As mentioned in the previous studies, varied websites can be employed to deliver authentic EL listening input. ELLLO (English Listening Lesson Library Online), for example, is a website with free activities and quizzes for improving English through listening. This website, created by a Japanese English teacher called Todd Beckens, has more than 3000 texts. ELLLO gives students various authentic listening materials that enable them to practice using English as a Lingua Franca (Milliner & Chaikul, 2020). Students' experiences with ELLLO were evaluated by Mulyadi et al. (2023). Using an open-ended questionnaire administered to 96 participants, it was revealed that ELLLO is an effective alternate learning medium to develop students' practice of listening skills in and out of the classroom. Diverse ELLLO-based EL practice plays a significant role for teachers of English seeking to enhance their learners' self-directed learning autonomy in listening comprehension.

In addition to ELLLO, the Voice of America (VoA) is a dynamic international multimedia broadcaster serving an estimated weekly global audience of 141 million. VoA offers news, information, and cultural programming through the internet, mobile and social media, radio, and television (Dierking, 2018). Astuti and Dj (2019) investigated whether or not students' listening skills can be developed through VoA. They highlighted that students face difficulty recognizing the sound of words and identifying the meaning of the content in English when hearing the spoken text, which indicated their low listening comprehension level. After using VoA, it was revealed that students' listening level on the posttest was higher than the pre-test, which proved that the use of VOA in teaching listening skills led to the students' being more effective in listening to English.

According to the previously stated review of literature, it can be concluded that EFL students face a lot of problems in answering the TOEFL-ITP listening test. They need extensive training on the listening comprehension skills required for getting an acceptable listening score. Moreover, they need to learn how to be lifelong independent learners. One potential benefit of extensive online listening is that EFL students can be engaged in listening autonomously by using audio listening features. It motivates students to develop their listening comprehension, fluency, and independent learning outside of the classroom. Therefore, the current research investigated the effectiveness of designing and using a proposed extensive online listening program in preparing postgraduate students to take the TOEFL-ITP listening test, equipping them with the necessary listening skills, and enhancing those students' online learning autonomy.

## Context of the problem:

Egyptian postgraduate students in most universities are required to take the TOEFL-ITP test as an obligatory requirement for higher studies. Many students face difficulties in passing the minimum score of the TOEFL test, especially in the listening comprehension section. Some of them have already taken the test more than two times, but the result is still below the minimum requirement. Examples of the difficulties faced by the students include the lack of vocabulary, length and speed of the speaker, speaker's accent and intonation, identifying synonyms of keywords, double negative expressions, idioms, the main idea of the talk, and detailed information, in addition to excessive anxiety, difficulty in concentration while listening, and difficulty drawing conclusions from conversations. These challenges were highly emphasized in previous research on TOEFL in general and TOEFL-ITP in particular (e.g., Abboud & Hussein, 2011; Soali & Pujiani, 2020; Rina & Tiarina, 2020; Lasi & Bouk, 2022; Alzana, 2022; and Pasaribu et al., 2023).

In addition, analyzing the scores of 50 master's students from the Faculties of Education and Nursing led to the conclusion that the listening part is the most challenging one among the three sections in the TOEFL-ITP test. It was found that students' mean score in listening comprehension was 29 (58%), which was considered lower than their mean scores in the structure and written expression section (33, 82%) and the reading comprehension section (42, 84%).

The absence of real-life exposure to native speakers or authentic English and the limited opportunity to use English outside the educational context resulted in students' multiple difficulties in listening, especially in a proficiency test. Furthermore, students' lack of autonomy and absence of control over their learning process made these challenges more sophisticated, since creating a successful context for enhancing language proficiency is mostly reliant on learners' being able to be responsible for their own learning, monitor their own training, and manage their time effectively. All of this, in turn, crystallized the problem of the current research.

## Statement of the problem:

According to what was previously stated, the research problem was identified as:

"Postgraduate students need to enhance their EFL listening comprehension skills and their language learning autonomy in order to pass the TOEFL-ITP listening section and get the level of language proficiency required for pursuing their higher studies." Thus, the current research attempted to examine the effectiveness of a proposed extensive online listening program in preparing postgraduates to take the TOEFL listening test and enhancing their autonomy.

## Questions:

*The current research attempted to answer the following questions:*

1. What are the features of an extensive online listening program for preparing postgraduates to take the TOEFL listening test and enhancing their autonomy?
2. What is the effectiveness of the extensive online listening program in preparing postgraduates to take the TOEFL listening test?
3. What is the effectiveness of the extensive online listening program in enhancing postgraduates' autonomy?

## Purpose:

The main purpose of the research was to investigate the effectiveness of a proposed extensive online listening program in preparing postgraduate students to take the TOEFL listening test and enhancing their language learning autonomy.

**Delimitations:**

*The research delimitations were as follows:*

1. A group of postgraduate students (N = 15) at the Faculties of Education and Nursing, Mansoura University.

2. EFL listening skills required to pass the TOEFL-ITP listening part (namely, listening for basic comprehension, listening for pragmatic understanding, and listening to connect information).

**Operational definition of terms:**

**TOEFL:**

TOEFL stands for Test of English as a Foreign Language. It is one of the most widely recognized language proficiency standardized tests developed to assess non-native English students' level of language proficiency. There are four types of TOEFL tests: CBT (Computer-based test), IBT (Internet-based test), PBT (Paper Based Test), and TOEFL-ITP (Institutional testing program). In the current research, TOEFL-ITP was targeted since it is provided at a more affordable price and is utilized by many Egyptian universities to measure students' readiness for postgraduate studies. This test examines three skills in the areas of listening, structure and written expression, and reading.

**Listening:**

Listening is an active process that involves receiving and interpreting messages accurately in the communication process. It involves identifying the sounds of speech and processing them into meaningful words and sentences. Listening is a major section in all TOEFL test types. The main listening subskills in the TOEFL-ITP listening test are: listening for basic comprehension, listening for pragmatic understanding, and listening to connect information.

**Autonomy:**

Autonomy is a complex construct of learners' competences, which reflect learners' meta-capacity to control and self-direct their own learning in different ways according to their needs and the situation. Autonomous online learners take charge of their own online learning; in other words, they hold the responsibility for the decisions related to all learning aspects, such as identifying objectives, selecting content,

monitoring, and evaluating their progress. The four major domains of online learning autonomy are: self-control, self-reflection, self-interaction, and self-motivation.

**Extensive online listening:**

Extensive listening is a language teaching and learning approach that encourages language learners to be exposed to a large amount of easily comprehensible and enjoyable materials presented in the target language over an extended period of time. The practice of extensive listening comprehension can be successfully implemented if integrated with online learning resources. The internet enables learners to access various authentic listening materials and activities; this can foster learners' autonomy as they interact with technology. Sample online tools that provide multiple authentic audio recordings are ELLLO, Ted Talks, and VoA.

**Hypotheses:**

*The research tested the following hypotheses:*

1. There is a statistically significant difference at 0.0١ level between the mean ranks of the research group's pre- and post-administrations of the TOEFL listening test in favor of the post-administration.
2. There is a statistically significant difference at 0.0١ level between the mean ranks of the research group's pre- and post-administrations of the autonomy scale in favor of the post-administration.
3. There is a positive correlation between learners' improvement in listening skills and their online language learning autonomy.

**Method of the research:**

**Participants:**

The target research participants were 15 postgraduate students from the Faculties of Education and Nursing at Mansoura University. Those students are enrolled to obtain a Master's degree in education and nursing. The research group received the pre- and post-administrations of the TOEFL ITP listening test and the autonomy scale.

## Design:

The research adopted a quasi-experimental design using the pre-and-post administration to one research group to investigate the effectiveness of a proposed extensive online listening program in preparing postgraduates to take the TOEFL listening test and enhance their autonomy.

## Instruments

The following instruments were used to achieve the purpose of the current research:
A. TOEFL-ITP listening tests.
C. An online language learning autonomy scale

A detailed illustration of each one of these instruments is presented in the following section.

## A. TOEFL-ITP listening tests:

Two equivalent, valid, and reliable versions of TOEFL-ITP listening comprehension tests (appendix A) were adopted from the *Longman preparation course for the TOEFL test* and used to measure the target participants' proficiency in listening skills through assessing their ability to listen and understand conversations and talks in English before and after implementing the proposed extensive online listening program. The examinees listened to different types of audio recordings related to general topics and common themes in academic life. The listening test includes 50 multiple-choice questions divided into three parts, with special purposes and directions for each part. The following table illustrates the specifications of the listening test.

**Table 1:**
*Specification table of the TOEFL-ITP test*

| Test parts | Type of questions | Major target skill | No. of recordings and questions | Score | Time |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Part 1 | Questions about short conversations | listening for basic comprehension | 30 recordings and 30 mcq items | 30 | 35 minutes |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Part 2** | Questions about longer conversations | listening for pragmatic understanding | 2 recordings and 8 mcq items | 8 | |
| **Part 3** | Questions about lectures or talks | Listening to connect information | 3 recordings and 12 mcq items | 12 | |
| **Total** | | | **50** | **50** | |

## B.  The online language learning autonomy scale

The autonomy scale was designed for assessing students' autonomy level in online English language learning before and after implementing the extensive online listening program. The scale included 35 items addressing four main factors or domains of online learning autonomy, as follows:

**Table 2:**

*Domains of online language learning autonomy*

| Domains | Statements |
|---|---|
| **Self-control** | 1- 11 |
| **Self-reflection** | 12- 23 |
| **Self-interaction** | 24- 28 |
| **Self-motivaiton** | 29- 35 |
| **Total** | **35** |

The four domains of the scale were illustrated by Adanır and Güven (2023).

- The first domain is 'self-control', which includes students' actions to achieve their goals. Students' actions before, during, and after the learning process are also considered. Students are assessed according to completing the assigned homework prior to attending the online class, following their lessons, checking the coursework deadlines, acting in parallel to the study plan, managing their time, keeping distracting devices turned off, and performing self-evaluations.

- The second domain is 'self-reflection', which handles students' assessing their own learning performance and providing self-explanations about both their successes and failures.
- The third domain is 'self-interaction', which addresses students' communication and interaction with their peers and instructors, in addition to their collaboration with each other.
- The fourth domain is 'self-motivation', which refers to students' intentions and desires to access internet-related information. Based on this domain, students are motivated to learn from different resources, to access audio-visual materials, and also to benefit from open instructional resources.

For maintaining objectivity, the scale included the use of positive and negative statements. A 5-point Likert scale (① never true, ② Rarely True, ③ Sometimes True, ④ Mostly True, and ⑤ Always True) was used to reflect students' points of view. To evaluate the validity of the scale, it was submitted to a number of TEFL and psychology specialists to assess the statements of the scale in terms of clarity and appropriateness. The jury members expressed their opinions, which showed that the scale is comprehensive and appropriate to evaluate students' autonomy level in online language learning.

The scale's internal consistency and reliability were further evaluated by administering it to a pilot group of fifteen Master's students in the Faculty of Nursing other than the main research participants. Firstly, the internal consistency was estimated by calculating the correlation coefficient between the score of each domain and the total score of the autonomy scale; the results are shown in table (3).

**Table 3:**
***The correlation between the score of each domain and total score of the autonomy scale***

| Domains | Correlation Coefficient | Sig |
|---|---|---|
| *Self-control* | 0.946 | 0.01 |
| *Self-reflection* | 0.817 | 0.01 |
| *Self-interaction* | 0.572 | 0.05 |
| *Self-motivation* | 0.876 | 0.01 |

Table (3) illustrates that the correlation coefficients are positive at 0.01 and 0.05 levels, which enhances the valid internal consistency of the online learning autonomy scale. ***Secondly***, the reliability of the scale was also estimated by getting the value of Cronbach Alpha (α), as shown in table (4).

**Table 4:**
*Values of Cronbach's Alpha for the cognitive load scale*

| Domains | N of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|
| *Self-control* | 11 | 0.894 |
| *Self-reflection* | 12 | 0.843 |
| *Self-interaction* | 5 | 0.885 |
| *Self-motivation* | 7 | 0.82 |
| *Total* | 35 | 0.92 |

The values of Cronbach's Alpha for the autonomy scale domains range between $(0.894−0.82)$, and the reliability coefficient for the total scale is 0.92, which indicates that the autonomy scale is reliable and can be administered as one of the research instruments. The final form of the online language learning autonomy scale is presented in appendix (B)

Moreover, the time for responding to the scale was estimated by getting the total time taken by all the pilot students and dividing it by their number (15). It was found that 20 minutes plus 5 minutes (for instructions), would provide an appropriate time (25 minutes) for the students to respond to the scale.

## *Designing the extensive online listening program*

To design the proposed extensive online listening program, the phases of the ADDIE model (analysis, design, development, implementation/teaching, and evaluation) were followed as a guide for systematizing the design process. These phases are implemented as follows:

*1. Analysis*: reviewing literature related to the TOEFL-ITP test and the challenges faced by EFL students to pass it, it was found that listening is the most difficult among the three sections. In addition, analyzing the

scores of Egyptian students, as mentioned earlier in the problem context, indicated that they had difficulty with the TOEFL-ITP listening test. Examples of the difficulties faced included their lack of vocabulary, length and speed of speech, the speaker's accent and intonation, identifying synonyms of keywords, double negative expressions, idioms, the main idea of the talk, and detailed information. This gave significance to the dire need for Egyptian postgraduate students to be trained on the listening skills and strategies required for getting an acceptable score in the TOEFL-ITP listening test.

*2. Design*: this phase illustrates how the students will be guided to reach the target objectives through the design of the proposed extensive online listening program. It addresses the objectives of the program, the content, materials, and strategies used.

### 2.1. Objectives:

The target objectives of the proposed extensive online listening program were identified as follows:
- Enhancing postgraduate students' online language learning autonomy.
- Improving postgraduate students' listening skills required for passing the TOEFL-ITP listening test. Those skills were determined in light of reviewing multiple TOEFL-ITP test practice books. The target listening skills are presented in table (5).

**Table 5:**
*The EFL listening skills of the TOEFL-ITP listening test*

| Major listening skills | Listening sub-skills |
|---|---|
| **Listening for basic comprehension** | • Vocabulary-based skills (e.g. identifying word meaning, synonyms, and antonyms) <br> • Anticipate what a person is going to say <br> • Identify the main idea <br> • Identify important details |
| **Listening for pragmatic understanding** | • Identify the purpose of the speech or conversation <br> • Identify the speaker's style, attitude and tone of voice <br> • Recognize the speaker's degree of certainty <br> • Recognize how stress and intonation patterns are |

| | |
|---|---|
| | used to convey meaning |
| **Listening to connect information** | • Identify how the lecture/talk is organized.<br>• Identify the relationships between ideas (e.g.cause/effect, compare/contrast, and steps in a process)<br>• Predict what information or idea will be expressed next |

## 2.2. Content:

The proposed extensive online listening program was presented in six EFL listening modules other than the orientation module, which was delivered to the research group at the beginning of the experiment to familiarize the postgraduate students with the program objectives and introduce how the program would be implemented using the extensive online listening resources. The other six main modules gave students the opportunity to practice various online listening activities. Each module was organized into seven main steps (objectives, materials and media, warm-up, presentation, practice, assessment, and reflection).

## 2.3. Strategies:

Throughout the phases of the online modules, pre-while-post-listening strategies were employed. In pre-listening, the students are becoming familiar with the listening tasks by being provided with related information and vocabulary to facilitate their listening comprehension and activate their prior knowledge. The while-listening phase is directly related to the main listening text, and students perform the task either during the listening process or immediately after listening. The activities help students improve their skills in acquiring messages from spoken language. In this phase, the students practice multiple strategies like listening for the gist, listening for main the ideas, and making inferences. The post-listening phase is then realized after listening, and it requires more time than the other phases since students deal with thinking, discussing, and reflecting.

### 2.4. Materials & media:

Authentic audio recordings of different situations and interactive exercises from multiple online resources and podcasts were employed to enable students to practice the listening skills needed for passing the TOEFL-ITP listening test. Podcasts are a great listening resource since they cover a variety of topics to suit students' interests and can be listened to almost anywhere. Online resources and podcasts used are as follows:

(1) **Elllo:** It provides high-quality listening activities based on authentic English from real speakers. The audio recordings tend to vary according to length and difficulty level, with more varied interactive activities. ELLLO lessons also offer a *state of flow*, which reflects learning through natural exposure and engagement. Thus, the activities try to help students become immersed in language without having to encounter metalanguage, instructions, or assessment tasks unless desired. Elllo can be easily accessed, whether through the link: https://www.elllo.org/, or by installing it on mobile phones via the Play Store or the App Store. The following screenshots illustrate the ELLLO website and app.

**Figure 1:**
*Screenshots of ELLLO site and app*

- **VoA Learning English podcasts**: Voice of America Learning English is a website of learning English that addresses integrated skills (reading, writing, pronunciation, listening, etc.). It offers varied materials from beginner to advanced levels and includes interesting and simple audio and video content that is easy for
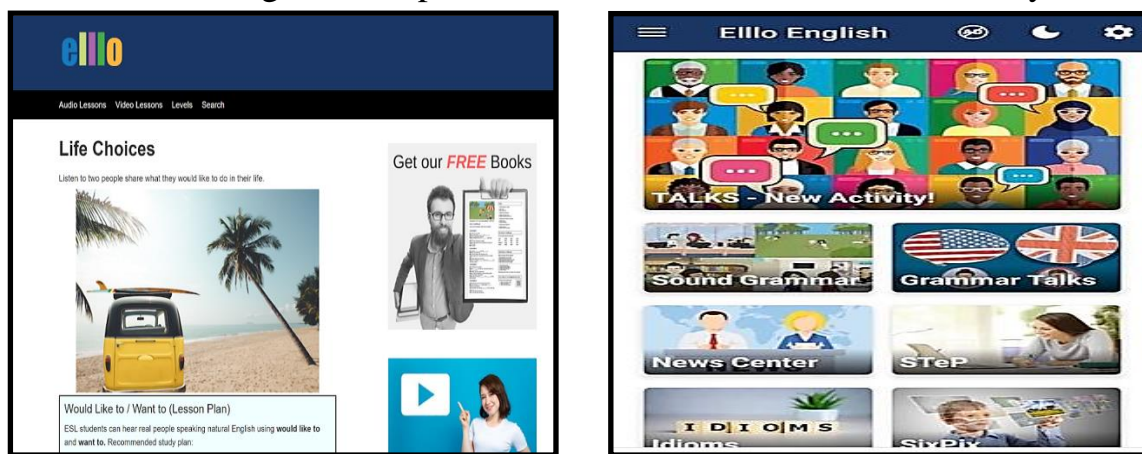
students to comprehend. The topics of the content cover daily life conversations, the news world, and US history. Transcripts or subtitles are available, so participants can listen while reading subtitles. With subtitles, participants find it easier to understand what they hear, reducing misunderstandings. The following figure is a screenshot from VoA.

**Figure 2:**
*Screenshot of VoA site/podcast*
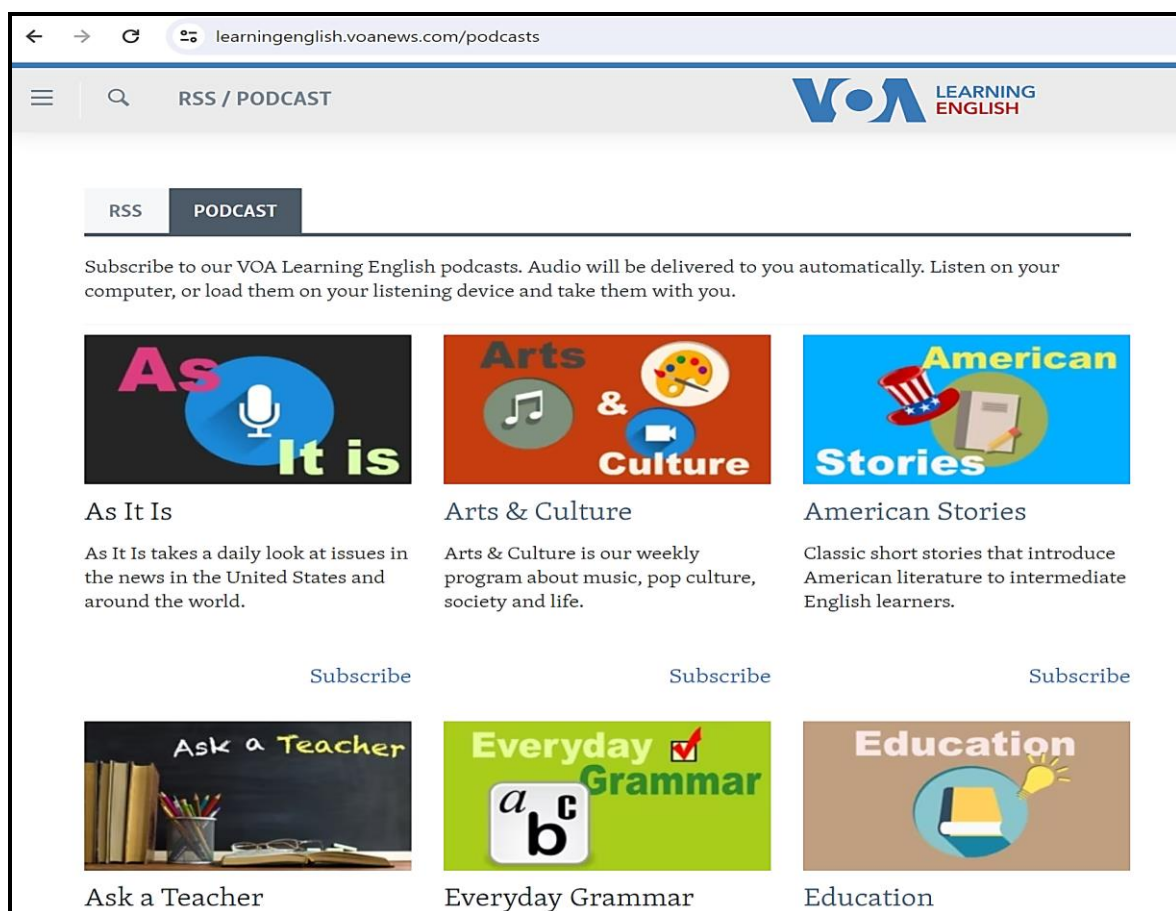


- **TED Talks**: During a TED Talk, an expert speaker talks about a topic s/he likes for about 10 to 20 minutes. The speech can be about different issues such as technology, sea animals, how to tell when someone is lying, and more. These are a great option for listening to spoken English since they are fairly short and often very engaging. Also, there are so many talks available (over 2000 on the website), that a student can be sure to find a

topic that interests him/her. The following screenshots are from the TED website and app.

**Figure 3:**

*Screenshots of TED site and app*
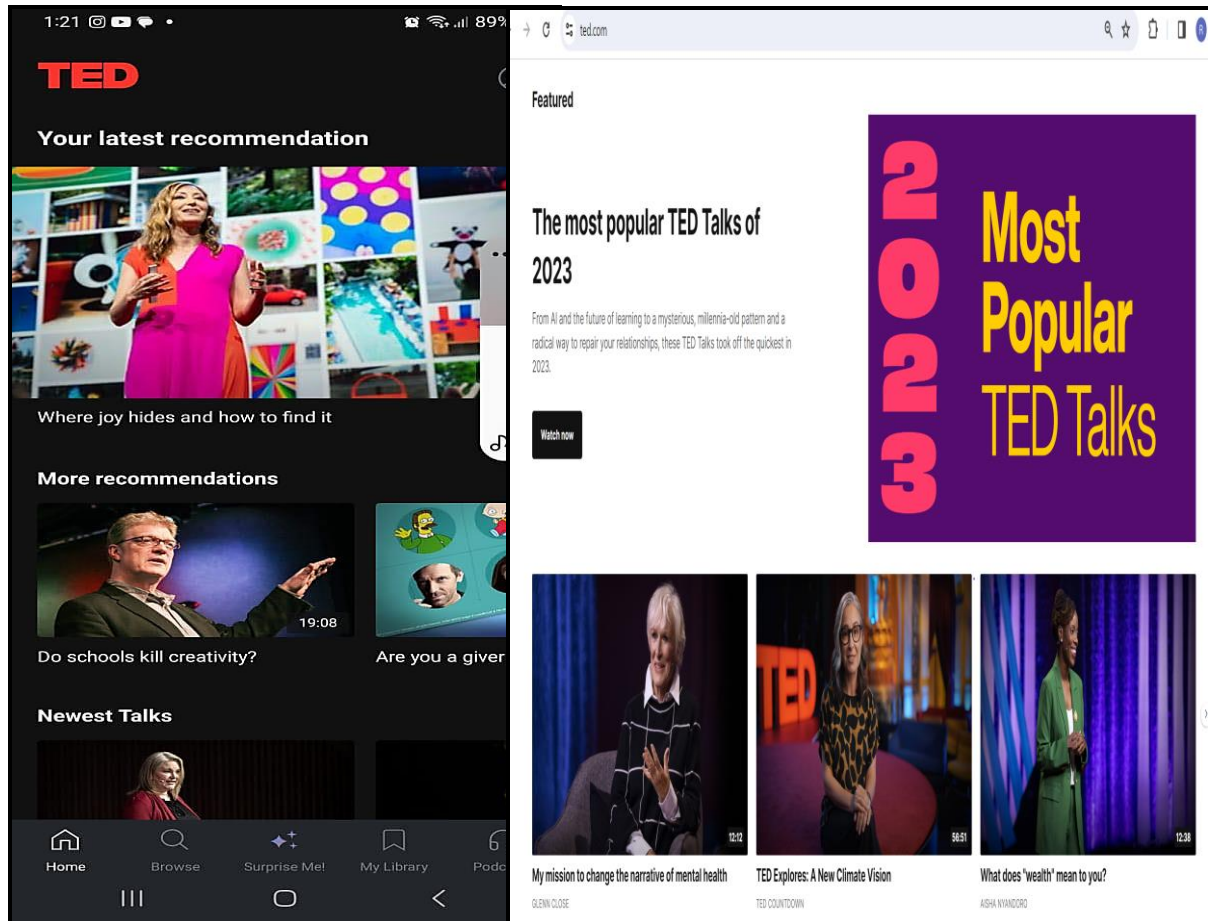


- Microsoft Teams: this application was used for meeting the students and instructing or training them through the extensive online listening program. It was also successful in getting students to cooperate with each other and interact with the instructor. The following screenshots show some of the instructor's team meetings with the target participants:

**Figure 4:**
*Screenshots of Microsoft Teams meetings*
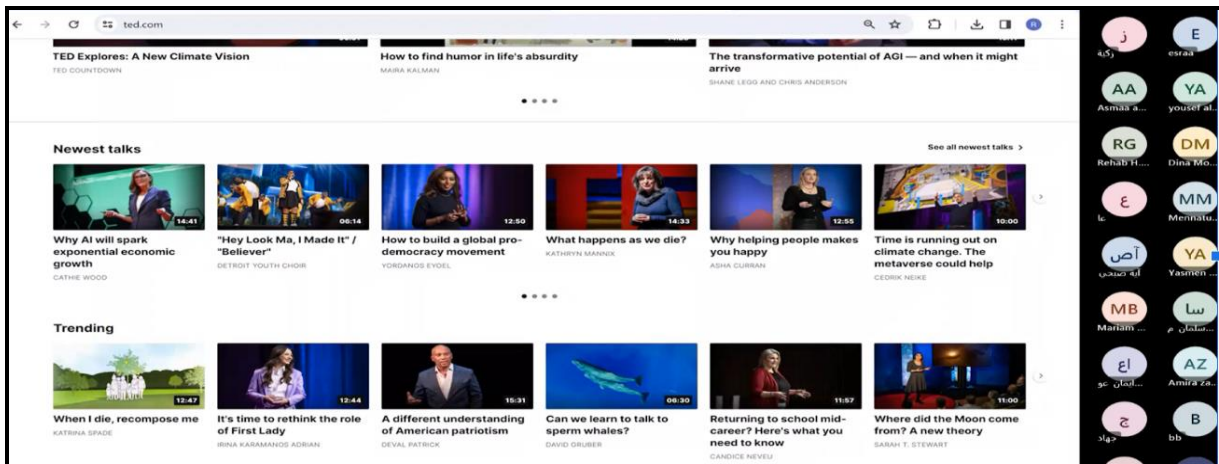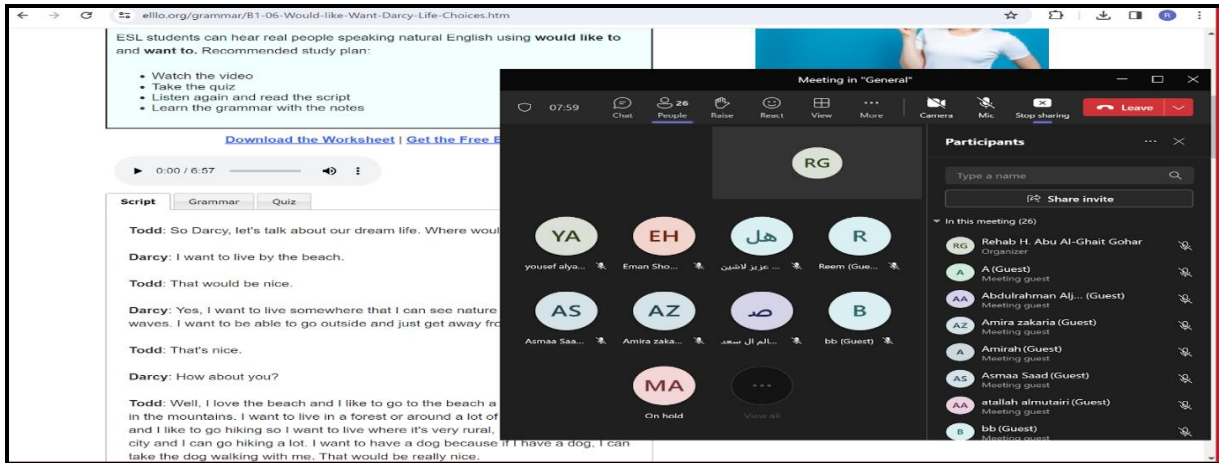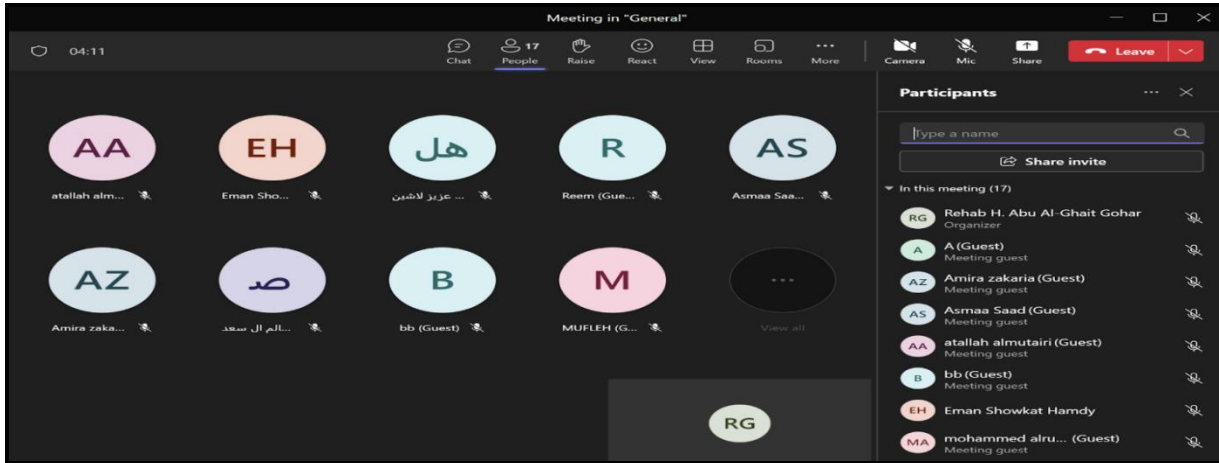
4. ***Development:*** this phase included finalizing the preparation and design of the extensive online listening modules (appendix C), according to what was previously described.

5. Implementation: the proposed extensive online listening program was then ***implemented*** throughout the second semester of 2022/2023 academic year through the following procedures:

- The instruments (the listening test and the autonomy scale) were administered to the research group.

- An orientation module was implemented to help participants of the research group become familiar with the proposed program, its objectives, content, media, strategies, and the phases of each module. In this module, students were also familiarized with the structure of the TOEFL-ITP listening test and its three sections, where the first section is made up of short conversations between two people with one recording per question, the second section has longer dialogues between two or more people with one recording used for several questions, and the third section consists of longer talks or lectures, each talk or lecture being followed by several questions.

- The students then studied the main six modules, following the pre-while-post listening structure throughout the phases of each module. Throughout the process of implementation, students were trained on applying multiple strategies and tips for answering the three listening sections properly. Each one of the six modules addressed a different topic, with a number of audio recordings (from ELLO, VoA, and TED) addressing the same topic. For presentation and pre-listening, a few main words are discussed, and the students listen to a number of very short conversations while being encouraged to: focus on the second speaker where the answer is always included; identify key words and find synonyms; avoid similar sounds that might make the answers tricky; be familiar with multiple nouns; make a conclusion; be aware of expressions of agreement and disagreement; and be familiar with idioms. In practice and while listening phase, the students listen to two extended conversations and are trained on determining the topic, identifying the "who, what, and where," taking notes, and focusing on the purpose of speech, stress, intonation, and tone

of voice. As for assessment and post-listening, the students listen to a long talk or lecture and are encouraged to: listen carefully to the first sentence of the talk; try to predict and guess; reflect; and identify relationships. Furthermore, in order to ensure students' autonomous online learning, the assessment phase also requires the students to freely select an audio recording according to their interests, listen to it, and write a listening report with a summary of the content and their reflection on it.

- In addition, the students are motivated to expand their vocabulary to understand a wider range of topics and to familiarize themselves with different accents by listening to podcasts, watching movies, or interacting with native speakers.

- After finishing each module, students were presented with an online reflective form through the Microsoft Forms application that required them to briefly state their overall opinions and feelings regarding the module introduced to them. They were also asked at this stage to suggest further recommendations for the upcoming modules.

6. _**Evaluation**_**:** this final stage assessed the effect of the proposed extensive online listening program. It included:

- Formative evaluation: the listening activities provided in the program in addition to the reflective tasks were assessed on an ongoing basis.

- Summative evaluation, which focused on the effect of the extensive online listening program through **post-administering the research instruments.** The following section presents the related results of the instruments pre- and post- administration.

## Results

### Testing the first hypothesis

Wilcoxon signed-rank test for dependent samples was used to test the first hypothesis, which addressed the significant difference between the mean ranks of the experimental group's pre- and post-administrations of the TOEFL listening test. Results are shown in table (6).

**Table 6:**

*Comparison between the research group's pre-post administrations of the EFL TOEFL-ITP listening test*

| Skills | Ranks | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks | Z Value | Sig | (η2) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Listening for basic comprehension** | Negative Ranks | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.425 | 0.01 | 0.884 |
| | Positive Ranks | 15 | 8 | 120 | | | |
| | Ties | 0 | -- | -- | | | |
| **Listening for pragmatic understanding** | Negative Ranks | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.443 | 0.01 | 0.889 |
| | Positive Ranks | 15 | 8 | 120 | | | |
| | Ties | 0 | -- | -- | | | |
| **Listening to connect information** | Negative Ranks | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.44 | 0.01 | 0.888 |
| | Positive Ranks | 15 | 8 | 120 | | | |
| | Ties | 0 | -- | -- | | | |
| **Total** | **Negative Ranks** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **3.422** | **0.01** | **0.884** |
| | **Positive Ranks** | **15** | **8** | **120** | | | |
| | **Ties** | **0** | **--** | **--** | | | |

The results shown in table (6) illustrate that the estimated Z-value is significant at 0.01 level for each particular skill and for the total listening level. This supports the statistically significant difference between the mean ranks of the research group's pre- and post-administrations of the TOEFL-ITP listening test in favor of the post-administration due to the use of the proposed extensive online listening program. In addition, the values of (η2) emphasize the high effect size levels of the program on the three main skills and the total. Thus, such results led to proving and accepting the first hypothesis. Further, in order to assess the effectiveness level of the extensive online listening program in improving the postgraduate students' TOEFL-ITP listening scores, Mac Gogian's equation was used, and the results are provided in table (7).

**Table 7**

*The effectiveness level of the program in improving the postgraduate students' TOEFL-ITP listening scores*

| Skills | Mean | | Effectiveness |
|---|---|---|---|
| Listening for basic comprehension | Pre | 12 | 88.17% |
| | Post | 27.87 | |
| Listening for pragmatic understanding | Pre | 3 | 81.4% |
| | Post | 7.07 | |
| Listening to connect information | Pre | 4.4 | 70.13% |
| | Post | 9.73 | |
| **Total** | Pre | **19.4** | **82.58%** |
| | Post | **44.67** | |

Table (7) reflects the high effectiveness levels of the program for the three skills and for the total listening level, which emphasizes the significant effectiveness of the extensive online listening program in improving the postgraduate students' TOEFL-ITP listening test scores.

**Testing the second hypothesis**

Wilcoxon signed-rank test for dependent samples was used to test the second hypothesis, which stated that "There is a significant difference between the mean ranks of the research group's pre- and post-administrations of the autonomy scale in favor of the post administration". Results are shown in table (8).

**Table 8:**

*Comparison between the research group's pre-post administrations of the autonomy scale*

| Domains | Ranks | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks | Z Value | Sig | (η2) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self-control | Negative Ranks | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.42 | 0.01 | 0.883 |
| | Positive Ranks | 15 | 8 | 120 | | | |
| | Ties | 0 | -- | -- | | | |
| Self-reflection | Negative Ranks | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.419 | 0.01 | 0.883 |
| | Positive Ranks | 15 | 8 | 120 | | | |
| | Ties | 0 | -- | -- | | | |
| Self- | Negative Ranks | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.431 | 0.01 | 0.886 |

| Domains | Ranks | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks | Z Value | Sig | (η2) |
|---------|-------|---|-----------|--------------|---------|-----|------|
| **interaction** | Positive Ranks | 15 | 8 | 120 | | | |
| | Ties | 0 | -- | -- | | | |
| **Self-motivation** | Negative Ranks | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.436 | 0.01 | 0.887 |
| | Positive Ranks | 15 | 8 | 120 | | | |
| | Ties | 0 | -- | -- | | | |
| **Total** | **Negative Ranks** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **3.313** | **0.01** | **0.855** |
| | **Positive Ranks** | **15** | **8** | **120** | | | |
| | **Ties** | **0** | **--** | **--** | | | |

Table (8) shows that all *Z*-values of the four domains and the total scale are significant at 0.01 level, which supports the statistically significant difference between the research group students' mean ranks in the pre- and post-administrations of the autonomy scale in favor of the post-administration. Additionally, the values of effect size (η2) support the significant effect of the proposed program on enhancing students' online learning autonomy. Moreover, the effectiveness level of the extensive online listening program in enhancing postgraduate students' autonomy was assessed using MacGogian's equation, and the results are illustrated in table (9).

**Table 9:**

*The effectiveness level of the program in enhancing students' online language learning autonomy*

| Domains | Mean | | Effectiveness |
|---------|------|-----|---------------|
| **Self-control** | Pre | 14.27 | 86.74% |
| | Post | 49.6 | |
| **Self-reflection** | Pre | 16.87 | 80.87% |
| | Post | 51.67 | |
| **Self-interaction** | Pre | 7.13 | 73.14% |
| | Post | 20.2 | |
| **Self-motivation** | Pre | 11.93 | 78.63% |
| | Post | 30.07 | |
| **Total** | **Pre** | **50.2** | **81.19%** |
| | **Post** | **151.53** | |

Table (9) illustrates that levels of program effectiveness in enhancing postgraduate students' online language learning autonomy are significantly high for the four domains and the total, which supports the positive impact of the extensive online listening program on enhancing students' autonomy. Therefore, the second hypothesis is proved and accepted.

### Testing the third hypothesis

Concerning the third hypothesis, which claimed that "there is a positive correlation between postgraduate students' improvement in listening skills and their online language learning autonomy", Pearson correlation coefficient was used to verify this hypothesis. Table (10) illustrates the value of the correlation coefficient and its significance.

**Table 10**
*Establishing the correlation between listening skills and online language learning autonomy*

| Correlation coefficient | Listening | Sig. level | Direction |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Online learning autonomy** | 0.762 | 0.01 | Positive |

Table (10) reflects that the value of "r" (= 0.762) is significant at 0.01 level, which indicates that there is a positive correlation between students' improvement in listening skills and their level of online learning autonomy. Thus, the third and last hypothesis of the research is verified and accepted.

### Discussion:

The current research aimed at assessing the effectiveness of using a proposed extensive online listening program in preparing postgraduate students at the faculties of Education and Nursing to take the TOEFL-ITP listening test and in enhancing their online language learning autonomy. Reviewing literature related to TOEFL-ITP and analyzing students' test scores revealed that the listening section is the most challenging one among the three sections and that students face a lot of difficulties that hinder them from getting a satisfactory listening score. Thus, improving the three major listening skills (listening for basic comprehension, listening for pragmatic understanding, and listening to connect information) of the TOEFL-ITP listening section was the major purpose of the current research.

To achieve this purpose, two equivalent TOEFL-ITP listening tests were adopted and administered to the research group before and after conducting the extensive online listening program. In addition, an online language learning autonomy scale was designed and used to assess students' autonomy levels before and after the experiment. The previously illustrated statistical results revealed that the research group students' post-listening skills level was significantly higher than their pre-level, which emphasizes the positive effect of the program on improving the TOEFL-ITP listening test scores for the target students. Such results are consistent with Rost (2011), Bozan (2015), and Norawati (2021), who indicated that extensive listening activities can positively affect the students' listening comprehension and fluency, global language skills, and proficiency level.

Concerning the online language learning autonomy scale, the results section clarified that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean ranks of the research group's pre- and post-administrations of the autonomy scale in favor of the post-administration. This indicates that the proposed extensive online listening program had considerable potential for enhancing the students' online learning autonomy. This is consistent with the earlier studies conducted by Firat (2016) and Kobayashi (2020), who concluded that using extensive listening assisted the students in becoming more autonomous learners, enjoying the activities, valuing reflection, and thus improving their language learning autonomy. Moreover, the results indicated a positive correlation between students' improvement in listening and their autonomy. This was also supported by Tabrizi (2016), Yang (2020), and Rahmawati, Putri, and Melani (2023), who proved that learners with high autonomy had the best listening comprehension level, which reflects the direct positive relationship between autonomous learning and listening.

The modules of the program followed the pre-while-post listening phases, which represent a reliable format for doing a listening activity. However, sometimes there were good reasons to break from this format. For example, students could read the transcript before listening to pick up the context of the listening, or the activity could begin with a short excerpt from the middle of the listening text (no pre-listening task) to simulate the kind of listening done in real life (turning on a TV show in the middle of a program or walking into a room where a conversation

has already started). Thus, various audio recordings with different levels and lengths, addressing the same topic, were used in each module to fulfill the same purposes of these three listening phases.

The proposed extensive online listening program made use of various online tools (Ted, ELLLO, and VoA) for providing authentic audio recordings of either short and extended conversations or lectures and talks. Some of these recordings were supported with scripts or subtitles, so students had the option to listen while reading or listen only. Short quizzes were provided after the different audio recordings, which helped train students on the target listening skills. Offering the students an opportunity to freely select an online audio recording based on their interests for summarization and reflection supported their autonomous online language learning. These positive points were also in line with the results reached by Onoda (2012), Milliner (2017), Saputra and Fatimah (2018), Astuti and Dj (2019), Strong et al. (2023), and Mulyadi et al. (2023). These studies indicated that practicing extensive listening through the authentic materials offered by such online platforms led to improving students' listening skills and self-confidence, in addition to enriching their English vocabulary and enhancing their autonomy. Moreover, the use of the Microsoft Teams app was helpful for the students as it allowed them to receive training in a real-like learning environment. It enabled the students to interact with each other and with the instructor without having to worry about time and distance constraints since it was easily accessed anytime and anywhere.

Consistently, analyzing students' responses and comments mentioned in their reflective logs led to supporting the research results. The students perceived the online listening materials as so impressive and useful; they also appreciated the variety of topics, ease, length, and speed rates offered by Ted, VoA, and ELLLO. All of this emphasized the significant potential of the proposed extensive online listening program for improving students' listening skills and enhancing their learning autonomy.

## Conclusion:

The current research aimed at examining the effectiveness of a proposed extensive online listening program in preparing postgraduate students to take the TOEFL ITP listening test and enhancing their online learning autonomy. The above-mentioned statistical results and

discussion proved that the proposed program had a positive effect on developing students' EFL listening skills, thus equipping them with the necessary listening skills required for improving their listening test scores. It was also revealed that students' autonomy has been enhanced due to the proposed program.

## Recommendations:

Based on the research results and discussion, the following recommendations are provided:
1. Extensive listening practice should be employed in undergraduate and postgraduate English courses to foster learners' language proficiency.
2. Using authentic listening materials should be considered in designing English courses for learners' of different levels to enhance their listening comprehension and fluency.
3. Curricula designers at the university and pre-university stages should employ extensive online  listening tools (e.g., ELLLO, Ted Talks, VoiceTube, VoA, etc.) to enhance students' listening skills as well as other language skills.
4. Learners' online autonomous language learning should be fostered by giving them the opportunity to participate in selecting the learning materials from the various available websites.

## Suggestions for further research

The following research suggestions are provided based on the research results and recommendations:
1. The impact of extensive online listening on improving students' other linguistic abilities, such as oral fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, etc.
2. The effectiveness of a program based on extensive reading in improving university students' critical reading skills.
3. The effect of authentic online resources on developing the EFL speaking and writing skills of secondary stage students.

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المستخلص
برنامج استماع موسع عبر الإنترنت لإعداد طلاب
الدراسات العليا لإجتياز اختبار الاستماع TOEFL وتعزيز
استقلاليتهم

هدف البحث الحالي إلى دراسة فاعلية برنامج فى الاستماع الموسع عبر الإنترنت في إعداد طلاب الدراسات العليا لإجراء اختبار الاستماع TOEFL وتعزيز استقلاليتهم في تعلم اللغة عبر الإنترنت، وقد استهدف البرنامج تدريب الطلاب على مهارات الفهم الاستماعي الثلاثة الرئيسية التي تتناولها اختبارات الاستماع TOEFL-ITP (الاستماع للفهم الأساسى ، والاستماع للفهم البرجماتى، والاستماع لربط المعلومات)، وتم اعتماد التصميم شبه التجريبي باستخدام التطبيقين القبلي والبعدي لمجموعة واحدة مكونة من ١٥ طالب ماجستير في كليتي التربية والتمريض، وقد تبنى البحث اختبارين متكافئين فى مهارات الاستماع TOEFL-ITP ، كما تم تصميم واستخدام مقياس الاستقلالية نحو تعلم اللغة عبر الانترنت، واستخدام البرنامج بعض المنصات الالكترونية والمدونات الصوتية podcasts التى توفر مواد استماع أصيلة وشاملة والتى تعزز تفاعل الطلاب (ELLLO، TED  Talks، VoA، و Microsoft Teams). وأظهرت النتائج أن متوسط رتب طلاب مجموعة البحث في التطبيق البعدي لاختبار الاستماع ومقياس الاستقلالية كان أعلى بكثير من التطبيق القبلي، وبناء على ذلك، أثبت برنامج الاستماع الموسع عبر الإنترنت فاعليتة الكبيرة في تحسين مهارات الاستماع لدى الطلاب واستقلاليتهم فى تعلم اللغة عبر الإنترنت، ويوصى البحث بضرورة توظيف انشطة الاستماع الموسع عبر الانترنت فى تحسين المهارات اللغوية المختلفة للطلاب مثل النطق، والطلاقة الشفهية، و التحدث.