

Does the “Words of Affirmation” English Podcast Have Any Positive Influence on Students' Listening Skills?

Zulfikar Noor

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara

E-mail: zulfikar.noor@uinsu.ac.id

Sholihatul Hamidah Daulay

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara

E-mail: sholihatulhamidah@uinsu.ac.id

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Abstract

A plethora of studies in Indonesia have investigated the research of the use of technology on students' listening skills but research about the use of English word affirmation podcasts in improving students' listening skills based on student perception is still limited. This study aimed to investigate students' views on the effect of listening to “English words of affirmation” on their listening skills. This research employed a qualitative case study methodology. By using a closed-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, 24 English students from one of North Sumatera's state universities were recruited to fulfill the demographic survey. The participants were selected by using purposive sampling, as the researchers selected only those who frequently listened to “English word affirmation” in their daily lives to enhance their English proficiency, particularly their listening skills. The questionnaire was disseminated through a Google Form to collect the demographic survey of students who were familiar with listening to the “English word affirmation podcast”. The interview was then conducted via the Zoom application to delve deeper into students' perceptions of the positive influence of listening to the “English word affirmation podcast” on improving their listening skills. This study discovered that listening to the “English word of affirmation” podcast could improve students' listening skills. This study suggested that educators and students could use English word affirmation podcasts as a reference in the English learning process, particularly for listening skills.

Keywords: English, listening skill, podcast, words of affirmation

INTRODUCTION

For English students learning a second language, the ability to listen is one of the most crucial language skills since listening is the most important aspect of communication because it is essential for giving a thoughtful and insightful response (Renukadevi, 2014). In order for people to maintain successful communication, listening is essential in both academic and ordinary contexts (Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016). Learners should practice comprehending real-world language situations in order to understand the major points being made by native speakers if they want to communicate with them (Ahmadi, 2016). Consequently, listening is crucial, and both teachers and students need to pay attention to it in order to achieve their communication goals. Listening is a *sine qua non* in language learning since it is the learners' main tool for creating their understanding of the target language and picking up the input. This is true for people who believe that learning a second language is pretty comparable to studying their native language (Yavuz & Celik, 2017). Listening is essential while learning a language for communication because it enables the language learner to develop pronunciation, word stress, vocabulary, and grammar, and comprehension messages can be determined merely by tone of voice, pitch, and accent. This is only possible when we listen (Renukadevi, 2014). Learning cannot be improved if the input is not understood correctly. Listening is not just hearing. It is a condition of receptivity that allows comprehension of what is heard and gives the listener complete participation in the communication process (Sadiku, 2015). According to this theory, listening comprises the capacity to interpret what is heard as a developmental skill. Because of this, listening comprehension is an essential part of language learning and a crucial building block for success in language immersion programs. Nevertheless, little is known about the listener qualities that lead to successful second language (L2) listening comprehension (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015). Goss stated that as a listener acquires information from a listening source, they attempt to assemble a meaning (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Nadig said that it entails being conscious of speech sounds, grasping the significance of particular words, and comprehending sentence grammar (Ahmadi, 2016). In addition, it is possible to draw the conclusion that listening skills are very essential in the process of learning a foreign language. This is due to the fact that the most important aspect of learning a language is being receptive to the language that is being presented to one. However, despite its significance, attention is widely regarded as the most challenging aspect of language acquisition (Nisa et al., 2022). Instructing attention in English is exceptionally challenging due to the language's inherent complexity (Lee, 2022). Scholars also perceive listening comprehension as a productive method that necessitates selective focus, working memory, form-meaning mapping, lexical knowledge, and the ability to detect and decipher subtle phonological and/or contextual cues in the input.

One essential for students to be hired in today's world is technology. Multimedia-enabled technology can expand, improve, and facilitate the delivery of rich, understandable L2 audible input to the student in a classroom context (both audio and video). There are numerous educational technology tools, devices, and programs that may be used by students and appear to be more advantageous to enhance the learning process (Naseri & Motallebzadeh, 2016). The availability of current technological innovation, on the other hand, makes it possible to triumph over these obstacles and difficulties in the process of enhancing students' listening understanding. It is believed that technological advancements can make language acquisition easier. Listening to various content from artists all over the world (songs, podcasts, vlogs, and so on) that is available on various

applications such as Spotify, Youtube, Tiktok, Instagram, and so on is a great way for English language learners to practice their listening skills at any time, any place, and anyway. In this modern era, there are many media and applications that can assist English language learners in more readily accessing learning materials via their smartphones (Gusfira & Putri, 2022). Podcasts are one of the most popular forms of media among teenagers in Indonesia today; it has been proven that Indonesia has the second-largest population of podcast listeners between the ages of 15 and 24 of any country in the world, with a total user base of 35.6%. Based on the various forms of media that were mentioned above (Gusfira & Putri, 2022). Podcasts, which are seen as a fresh invention for enhancing students' listening and talking abilities, may play a crucial role in the development of listening competence and skills (NamazianDost et al., 2017). Podcasting is the practice of distributing audio or video files online. McGarr stated that it may be manually downloaded from the internet or sent out to subscribers continuously (Naseri & Motallebzadeh, 2016). In addition, a podcast is a multimedia file that is distributed across the internet through the use of syndication streams, and it can be played on mobile devices as well as personal computers. The word "podcast" is a portmanteau that combines the words "broadcast" and "iPod," which is the moniker of Apple's MP3 player. Podcasts can be audio-only or audiovisual (sometimes referred to as "podcasts" or "video podcasts"), and they frequently come with connections to written texts on the same subject and/or a transcript of the audio. Podcasts are sometimes referred to as "podcasts" or "video podcasts" (Castro et al., 2017). Podcasts are digital audio files that can be published to the internet and downloaded to a computer or mobile device to listen to later (Chowdhury, 2019). There are a total of eight distinct categories of podcasts, including interview podcasts, conversational podcasts, monologue podcasts, storytelling/investigative podcasts, discussion podcasts, theatrical podcasts, repurposed content podcasts, hybrid podcasts, and repurposed content podcasts (Gusfira & Putri, 2022). Podcasts have the potential to serve as a resource for language acquisition (Bustari et al., 2017). In addition, podcasts are one of the technological products that can be used to help students increase their vocabulary and practice their pronunciation. Podcasts can also be used to improve students' listening and speaking abilities (Gusfira & Putri, 2022). Because of this, many educators all over the globe incorporate podcasts into their lesson plans and other educational endeavors on occasion (Darwis, 2016).

Word affirmation podcasts are a good instance of the sort of podcast that attracts a large number of users due to the easygoing and engaging nature of the conversations that take place within them. As human beings, we can reap a great many advantages from listening to and repeating positive affirmations to ourselves. People who make effective use of optimistic affirmations are said to have a mindset that is more open to being taught and corrected. In addition, there is a connection between higher academic accomplishment and positive affirmations, specifically among students whose GPAs are falling (Layous et al., 2017). People who used positive affirmations increased their quantity of physical activity when the emphasis of their affirmations and goals was on getting more exercise. Affirmations of positivity can be used to combat unfavorable health circumstances in a manner that leads to the intentional and desirable development of positive change. Affirmations are statements you make not to praise yourself or your capabilities but rather because you want to be associated with the object you're affirming. The primary purpose of affirmations is to assist you in refocusing your thoughts. By engaging in the practice of positive affirmations on a consistent basis, you can take control of your own ideas and prevent unfavorable ones from penetrating your consciousness.

They direct your attention to the actions you are taking to develop yourself as well as the steps involved in the process of self-improvement.

Previous studies have shown that listening to English podcasts has a variety of advantages, one of which is that it helps English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and students improve their teaching and learning outcomes, specifically in regard to their listening abilities (Barjesteh & Ghaseminia, 2019). The findings of a study conducted also demonstrate that having students listen to English podcasts can help improve those students' listening abilities (Asoodar et al., 2016). In addition, the findings of twenty research articles published in journals over the past few years regarding broadcasting, the findings of the analysis shed light on two key aspects: first, the students benefited tremendously from the use of podcasts in terms of improving their English skills as well as other aspects of their language proficiency, such as their grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciations (Hasan & Hoon, 2014). Second, the majority of the students exhibited positive attitudes and perspectives regarding the utilization of podcasts in the process of English language acquisition.

In addition, a large number of researchers from the past have looked into the use of podcasts for language instruction and the study of English in a variety of contexts across a variety of countries and cities. Some examples of these studies include the investigation of the impact of repetitive listening, listening aids, and podcast length on EFL podcast listening for Turkish pre-service EFL teachers (Şendağ et al., 2018). Thus, (Indahsari, 2020) reviewed and evaluated the findings of twenty studies that were published between 2010 and 2020. Past researches in Indonesia have more or less concentrated on the use of podcasts in learning English in general, despite the fact that research in Indonesia about the use of English word affirmation podcasts in improving students' listening skills based on student perception is still limited (Darwis, 2016; Gusfira & Putri, 2022). As a direct consequence of this, the purpose of this research was to investigate the students' perceptions of improving their listening skills by listening to English word affirmation podcasts. The objective of this research is to establish, on the basis of the participants' perceptions, whether or not listening to an English word reinforcement podcast can help students improve their listening skills. The following research questions are being investigated as a component of this research:

1. How is students' interest in choosing social media content to improve their English listening skills?
2. What positive impact does listening to the English word affirmation podcast have on students' listening skills?

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study because it examined the phenomenon from multiple perspectives rather than a single perspective. The data in this investigation are also displayed in a narrative format. Qualitative research data are commonly textual, narrative, and descriptions of individuals' experiences documented on digital media such as tape or video, photographs, or researcher-written (Arntsen & Waldrop, 2018). In collecting data, the researchers used questionnaire and interview as instrument to collect the data research. 24 English-speaking students from one of the state universities in North Sumatera were hired to complete the demographic survey. Then, respondents were chosen depending on their familiarity with the English word affirmation podcast through a process of purposive sampling. The purpose of the questionnaire is to collect demographic data to learn about students' interests in social media content that

they used to improve their listening skills in this study, while the purpose of the interview is to discover about their perceptions of the positive effects of listening to an English word affirmation podcast on their listening skills. The discussion attendees are picked voluntarily. The questionnaires were disseminated via Google Form, and interviews were conducted online or in person based on participant consent. The data were presented anonymously in this instance. In analyzing the data of interview and questionnaire, the researcher used thematic content analysis, According to Braun & Clarke, thematic content analysis entails three classifications of data analysis, namely pre-coding, initial coding, and final coding, all of which have the same meaning and function (Frieze et al., 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researchers broke it up into two parts. In the first part, they talked about the demographic survey of students' interest in social media content that helps them improve their listening skills. The second section looks into how students perceive the positive influences of listening to English word affirmation podcasts in terms of improving their listening skills. This is integral to the objective, which aims to determine, based on students' perceptions, whether listening to English word affirmation podcasts can enhance their listening skills. The following are the outcomes of the analysis of the data:

1. Students' interest in choosing social media content in improving their listening skills.

According to the findings, there are several social media contents that were chosen by English students to increase their listening skills, starting from watching English vlogs, English podcasts, and English storytelling content to listening to English songs. Among the varieties of content identified, watching English Podcast reach the first position of 24 English students (as seen in the following figure 1).

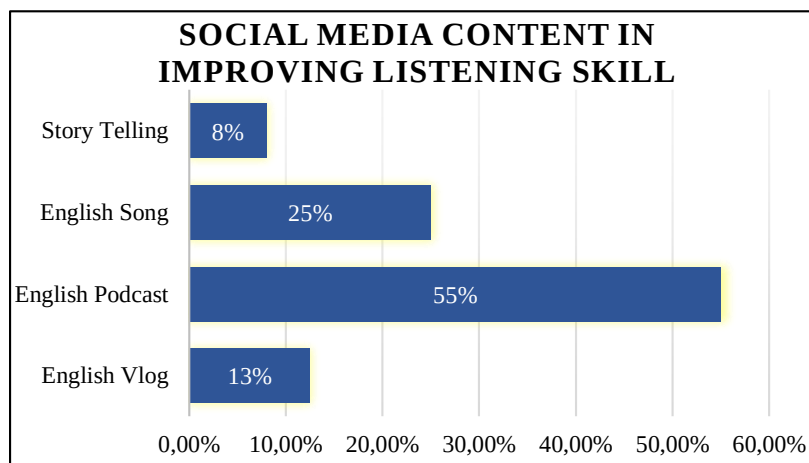


Figure 1. Students' Interest in Social Media Content

In this particular instance, the number of English students who decided to watch English podcasts reached fifty-five. This indicates that out of a total of twenty-four English students ($n = 13$), individuals decided to watch and listen to English podcasts in order to improve their English listening skills. In the second position, students preferred watching English vlogs rather than listening to content telling stories in English, students ($n = 6$) out of a total of 24 preferred to improve their listening skills by listening to English

songs, while students ($n = 3$) out of a total of 24 preferred to improve their listening skills by watching English vlogs rather than listening to content telling stories ($n=2$) in English. It is possible to draw the following conclusion from the data that was presented earlier: the younger generation presently enjoys podcasts as one of the different types of content that can be found on social media. Currently, there is a significant amount of interest among younger generations in podcast content. This can be attributed to the fact that podcasts contain a wealth of educational materials in the form of digital text, pictures, audio, video, and other interactive features. This finding was also in line with (Abdi & Makiabadi, 2019) who discovered that the wide range of podcasts feature from the most renowned, educated, and well-liked channels with their verbatim and word lists may be quite beneficial and effective in learning. As a consequence of this, many young people in Indonesia are more likely to select material from social media platforms when learning English, particularly for the purpose of improving their listening abilities. Katada stated that with a total of 35.6% and a user age group that spans 15–24 years, Indonesia is the world's second-largest country to listen to podcasts (Gusfira & Putri, 2022). When compared to other topics, the word of affirmation is one of the podcast subjects that is currently enjoying the greatest level of popularity among the younger population. This can be demonstrated by the findings of a survey that was carried out, which revealed that out of 13 individuals who selected podcasts in an effort to improve their English listening skills ($n = 8$), some of them chose the word affirmation topic. This indicates that more than fifty percent of students are interested in the topic. The subject of the podcast titled “Daily Life,” which received votes from four out of a total of thirteen people, came in at number two on the list of topics that students are most interested in learning about. After that, “experience” is the podcast subject that students are the least interested in listening to. This is demonstrated by the proportion of the data collected in which only a single participant opted to discuss this subject (as can be seen in the following Figure 2). One of the love languages that has gained popularity in this region among people of a younger generation is the language of affirmation. As human beings, we can reap a great many advantages from listening to and repeating positive affirmations to ourselves. This finding was also consistent with the finding of (Layous et al., 2017) who showed that there was a connection between better academic accomplishment and positive affirmations, especially among students whose grade point averages are falling. Based on the statement of various previous research provided it can be concluded that those who utilized positive affirmations increased the amount of physical activity they engaged in when the emphasis of their affirmations and objectives was placed on engaging in physical movement.

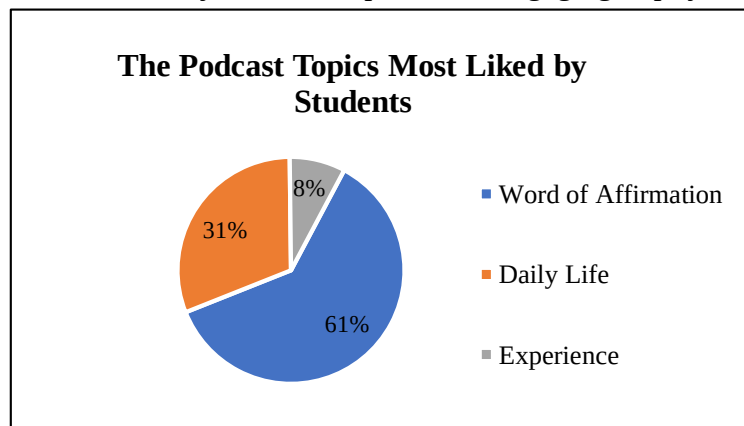


Figure 2. The Most Interest Topic for English Student

2. Positive Influences in Listening English Word of Affirmation Podcast

The researchers found two important themes about how listening to English podcasts helped their listening skills. The first theme was getting students motivated to practice their listening skills, and the second theme was improving their listening skills. Both of these themes were found based on the data analysis of the interview results about how listening to English podcasts about words of affirmation helped their listening skills. The following is a description of the particulars:

Theme One: *Encouraging students' motivation in practicing their listening skills*

The majority of students majoring in English believed that listening to the English Word Affirmation podcast would boost their motivation in practicing listening skills. The information gleaned from the interviews led to this conclusion. The following excerpt serves as evidence of this:

"Listening to the English word affirmation podcast inspires me to take specific actions, such as practicing English on a daily, which helps me focus on achieving my goals and gives me the ability to shift my negative thought patterns and substitute them with positive ones. As a result, I am more motivated to learn after listening to an English word affirmation podcast, particularly to practice my listening skills." (**Excerpt 1, Student 1, Interview**)

"After listening to the English word affirmation podcast, I feel more interested in practicing my listening skills because the podcast offers more various subjects of word affirmation. As we all know, the content of listening is always monotone conversation, which easily bores me when practicing my English." (**Excerpt 2, Student 4, Interview**)

"I became more enthused while listening to the English word affirmation podcast because affirmations can provide me with energy, inspiration, and a new viewpoint....That's why since podcast happening right now, I can spend the time in practicing my English listening skills is longer than usual because I am more excited to increasing my listening by using podcast than others..." (**Excerpt 3, Student 5, Interview**)

As shown by some of the representative quotations that were presented earlier in this section, it can be seen that students can be motivated to become more enthusiastic about exercising their English listening skills by listening to this English word affirmation podcast. This cannot be separated from what they listen to (word affirmation), in which the content of the podcast can inspire and suggest that they take certain positive actions in their lives, such as encouraging them to study harder so that negative mindset thoughts will be replaced. This cannot be separated from what they listen to (word affirmation), with a constructive mentality that inspires them to take action in the future (as seen in the first excerpt). Because there is a correlation between higher academic achievement and positive affirmations, particularly among students with lower GPAs, it is important so that people who do not have enthusiasm for learning can be advised to listen to word affirmation podcasts. This is because there is a correlation between higher academic achievement and positive affirmations (Layous et al., 2017), When students listen to podcasts to improve their English listening skills, it's important that they don't quickly

become bored with the content because the podcast offers a variety of topics that students can enjoy each time they practice their listening skills. This keeps students from becoming easily bored when they listen to podcasts (as can be seen in excerpt 2). As a consequence of this, students are enthusiastic about honing their listening skills by listening to English word affirmation recordings, which enables them to devote more time than is customarily allotted to academic pursuits (as shown in excerpt 3). According to the assertion that was presented earlier, they take great pleasure in listening to podcasts that are produced by native speakers. They might feel relaxed and have reduced stress levels as a result of listening to podcasts. Students believe that podcasts give them access to real content and interesting learning activities, which increases their motivation to study English (Abdulrahman et al., 2018). Furthermore, students believe that podcasts give them access to real content and interesting learning activities. This finding was supported by (Kohar & Salam, 2014) who stated that listening to podcasts was an enjoyable and fun method to learn new information. Podcasts were also simple to obtain and offered a wide variety of engaging subjects. It was also supported by the statement that students enjoyed listening to podcasts and that podcasts can be readily accessed and used by students. Podcasts were also interesting to listen to and could help them increase their level of education (Rahmatia & Widiastuty, 2018). The environment of the classroom, the manner in which listening exercises are conducted, and the degree to which instructors get along with the students are significant contributors to the level of motivation exhibited by the students. As a consequence of this, many people in younger generations are now interested in the content of podcasts because the conversations that are offered on them are more engaging and laid-back.

Theme Two: Increasing students' listening skills

The second positive influence that researchers found in this study is that listening to English word affirmation podcasts regularly can enhance students' listening skills. This is clear from the excerpt below, where students say that people who don't understand English at first do after listening to English podcasts regularly. Apart from that, the improvement in students' listening skills can also be seen in the way they understand the contents of the podcast; whereas students previously had to play a podcast repeatedly to understand what the speakers were saying, there was no need to repeat. For details, see the following excerpt:

“By always listening to various English podcasts, my listening skills have increased unconsciously. Before I started listening to English podcasts, I could not understand when someone spoke English, but since listening to podcasts regularly, I have started to understand what it means when someone speaks English. (Excerpt 4, Student 2, Interview)

“...I believe my listening skills are increasing because I frequently listen to Native Speakers speaking English on podcasts. When I was listening to the previous podcast, I had to repeat the video or audio to understand what was said, but now I only have to listen it once..” (Excerpt 5, Student 4, Interview)

These findings were supported by research that discovered that listening to English podcasts provides a multitude of benefits, some of which include assisting English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and students in improving teaching and learning outcomes, particularly in listening skills (Barjesteh & Ghaseminia, 2019). After

that, (Asoodar et al., 2016) showed in their research that listening to podcasts in English can enhance the listening abilities of language students. Podcasts are an effective teaching medium for improving the speaking and listening abilities of Indonesian students because they may give students access to real materials, encourage self-directed learning, boost language confidence, and promote active learning (Yoestara & Putri, 2019). This is in addition to the fact that podcasts are an effective teaching medium for improving the reading abilities of Indonesian students. Many researchers assign a great deal of importance to podcasts in fostering L2 development, particularly in developing their listening comprehension (Cross, 2014; Gonulal, 2020; Şendağ et al., 2018). It is possible to draw the conclusion that podcasts have a beneficial influence on the listening skills of students. This conclusion is supported by the findings and previous research that have been presented.

CONCLUSION

The growth of technology has made it much simpler for both students and teachers to carry out the various stages of the learning process. Podcasts are a type of social media content that can be used to practice English listening skills at anytime, anywhere, and in any manner by listening to various topics from a variety of apps such as Spotify, Youtube, Tiktok, Instagram, and so on. Podcasts are thought to have many advantages, as shown by the results of this study, which demonstrate that podcasts have a positive influence on students' listening skills. More specifically, podcasts are thought to improve students' listening skills by motivating students to listen to English-language content, which in turn leads to improved listening skills. Due to the limited scope of this research, the researchers recommend that future researchers dig deeper into other social media content that can be integrated into the English learning process, particularly for students' listening skills, as reference material for teachers and students in improving their English skills.

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