

Navigating Podcasts in the English Listening Classroom: A Library Research

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Abstract

Podcasts, which consist of digital audio files, gains immense popularity as a technical resource for language acquisition, particularly among English language learners. The podcasts are attractive due to their flexibility, enabling learners to access language learning resources anytime and anywhere. This study was a-library research, comprising two categories of data. The primary data was sourced from a book entitled "Academic Podcasting and Mobile Assisted Language Learning" edited by Betty Rose Facer and Mohammed Abdoes, published in 2010. The secondary data were gathered from journal articles, seminar proceedings, and undergraduate's thesis published from 2015 to 2023. The findings indicated that podcasts could serve as a valuable resource for boosting English language skills, especially listening skills. Whilst, factors affecting the effectiveness of using podcast in teaching listening skills were students' motivation, accessibility to authentic materials, individual differences, teachers' digital gap, and internet connectivity. Podcast provides some benefits when used in teaching listening skills. Podcasting utilizes authentic materials that can aid in the development of both receptive and productive language skills. It introduces the essence of language into the classroom, providing students with diverse forms of language input that can potentially improve their language proficiency. The podcast platform is user-friendly and easy to navigate. It encourages learners to take charge of their own learning, boosts their engagement and cognitive strategies, which in turn promote their ability to self-regulate during their studies, enhances critical thinking skills, offers extensive opportunities for collaborative and group learning, and increases their motivation to learn.

Keywords: Digital technology, listening skills, podcast

INTRODUCTION

Listening skills is crucial for effective communication and should be developed before other skills of speaking, reading, and writing. The act of listening involves both hearing the speaker's words and forming a psychological connection with the speaker. It is how individuals acquire a majority of their knowledge about education, the world, and interpersonal connections, including people's thoughts, beliefs, and perspectives. Listening serves as the foundation for language development, cognitive growth, and is crucial in the process of communication. Consequently, listening exercises are designed not only to receive the message's content but also to comprehend the information (Erniwati et al., 2024).

Listening is an active process as it involves effectively responding to messages, and the listener should be equally engaged as the speaker. Effective communication is not possible without the ability to listen well (Syofianis et al., 2015). The term "active listening" describes this fully involved process. Adults spend approximately 70% of their time engaged in communication and approximately 45% of the time spent is dedicated to listening, making it the most frequently utilized skill in English, as well as in any other language. Therefore, it is essential to invest extra time in listening using an effective teaching method and media including the use of digital technology (Mamasharifovich, 2020).

One digital technology preferably used and favoured by students to support teaching and learning listening skills at schools is podcasts (Noor & Daulay, 2023). Podcasts are the subscribed audio files in the format of MP3 that are distributed over the internet. They can be played on any digital device, such as laptops, tablets and smartphone so that users can listen to them whenever and wherever they want (Gonulal, 2022). A podcast, in basic terms, is a form of digital content that includes episodes in audio or video format centred around a particular topic and posted or share on You Tube, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, or directly through the podcasters' website.

Research indicates that podcasts not only enhance learning outcomes but also increase student motivation and practical skills. The use of audio podcasts in MP3 format is an exciting resource for learning material. Students find podcasts convenient for practicing English as they can be easily downloaded and stored on portable media players. This allows students to practice while walking, using public transportation, or before going to bed. Teachers can use podcasts for various themes and levels, making it easy to adapt to students' abilities. Compared to traditional sources, podcasts are more engaging and provide authentic spoken text, presenting real-world language (Sari, 2020).

While numerous studies focus on the use of podcasts for teaching listening skills, there is a limited amount of research on the effectiveness of podcasts themselves and the reasons behind their effectiveness. Further investigation and a more structured theoretical analysis are necessary for this issue. For that reason, this study delves into the use of podcasts in teaching listening skills, its nature, and its effectiveness, providing more comprehensive insights into their use and the factors contributing to their effectiveness. These questions are of the central interest of this study:

1. How is the implementation of the podcasts in teaching listening skills?
2. What factors affecting the effectiveness of podcasts for enhancing listening skills?

This research offers significant insights for both the research in ELT field and teaching of English listening skills. Previous studies primarily concentrated on using podcast to enhance students' listening skills, often without detailing the specific elements that contribute to those improvements. The results of this study provide additional insights regarding the application and implications of podcast; consequently, teachers can gain knowledge from it and make adjustments to better align with their students' needs or to

enhance its effectiveness. Future researchers can utilize these findings to explore the application of podcast in teaching other language skills and aspects.

The findings from this study are expected to make theoretical and practical contributions as well. In principle, this study will provide a new perspective for readers on the importance of podcasts in English language instruction, especially listening skills. This practically means that the results can provide input to teachers and students of how to use podcasts in teaching and learning listening skills. The findings of this study are expected to shed some light on digital technology approaches for teaching listening skills.

METHOD

This study used a library research method or literature study. Library research is a qualitative research process that gathers information and data from a range of resources in a library, including books, articles, notes, and journals. Information or factual data are utilized to address or resolve research queries. Two types of data were collected through this study called primary and secondary data. The primary data was taken from a book edited by Betty Rose Facer and Mohammed Abdoes in 2010 entitled "Academic Podcasting and Mobile Assisted Language Learning". The secondary data, furthermore, comprised of various materials including theses, journal articles, working papers, seminar proceedings, and related documents discussing the application of podcasts in teaching listening skills, all of which were published or posted between 2018 and 2024. The following are findings of both primary and secondary data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

RQ1: How is the implementation of the podcasts in teaching listening skills?

There are various methods to ensure that audio materials for podcasts are comprehensible. One approach involves reducing their length and slowing down the speech rate, particularly by incorporating longer pauses between phrases and sentences to give listeners time to process the information. Elaboration (as opposed to simplification) of the audio content also enhances comprehensibility by providing additional context that learners can use to construct a mental image of unfamiliar words or structures. Furthermore, including redundancy (such as different forms of natural repetition, amplification, and paraphrasing) and transparency (like clearly indicating topic relevance, logical chronological order of events, and frequently using present references) improves listening comprehension.

Another frequently utilized method to enhance comprehension involves pairing the audio content of the podcasts with their corresponding scripts, images, or a video element. Research has well-established the benefits of complementing audio materials with visual supports, as images offer additional information that aids in understanding. Beyond aiding language comprehension, enhanced podcasts can also lessen the need for extensive explanations and clarifications (including those that might require translation into learners' first language for beginning second language students) and may prove more engaging for the audience.

A third approach, introduced by Field (2008), focuses on pinpointing the listening processes that proficient listeners use when interpreting spoken discourse. He posits that L2 learners have been developing listening processes in their first language for many years, making them skilled L1 listeners. Consequently, instruction should aim at helping learners adjust their pre-existing listening processes to meet the distinct requirements of the L2, rather than teaching them new capabilities. He categorizes these processes into two types: (1) decoding processes and (2) meaning-building processes. The decoding processes refer to the ability to recognize the L2 at various linguistic levels, including phonemes, syllables,

words, syntax, and intonation groups. The meaning-building processes involve utilizing a range of contextual clues essential for fully comprehending the speaker’s message.

Regardless of the chosen method for teaching listening (whether skill-based, strategy-based, or process-oriented), researchers seem to concur that listening instruction should be delivered in small, manageable segments. In other words, educators might design a series of focused training exercises that emphasize a particular strategy (for example, predicting), skill (such as distinguishing word boundaries), or process (like recognizing intonation), or one that enables learners to individually choose strategies they find most suitable. The focus should be on providing ample practice in controlled environments, followed by opportunities for learners to reflect on and evaluate their performance.

Furthermore, after doing data collection, organization, analysis, and interpretation of the secondary sources, it was discovered that despite the differences in teaching listening skills through podcast, the outcomes were consistent; podcasting was successful in enhancing students’ listening skills. The specifics of the secondary data findings are outlined in the following table.

Table 1. Implementation of the Podcasts in Teaching Listening Skills

No	Researcher	Year of Publication	Setting	Technique of Data Collection	Teaching Procedures	Result
1.	Lutfi Jami Atur Rohmah	2023	SMP N 1 Batanghari	Paper-and-pencil method and observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher engages the students in activities that prepare them for listening practice. • The teacher gives each student a listening assignment sheet. • The teacher assists the students in learning important words or vocabulary. • The teacher provides the students with the audio podcast. • The students are assigned to complete and respond to the listening assignment sheet. • The students are put into groups. • The students discuss the audio podcast they have just listened to and tell what they understand about things they heard. • The teacher assigns the students to make a summary of the audio they heard in a paragraph. 	Using podcast can increase students’ listening skills

2.	Asmaa Youssef Abdelhamied Ghamry	2020	Elsadat Secondary School for Girls	Paper-and-pencil method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher shows some pictures for story. • The teacher asks some brainstorming questions about the story, the character, and the event. • The students listen to the audio podcast several times while doing some activities. • The teacher asks the students to retell the story in their own words using a microphone and this is recorded using audacity program. • The audio is uploaded to Edmodo site where students can listen again and again. 	Using podcast is effective in developing EFL listening comprehension skills.
3.	Alfian, Asrun Lio, and La Ode Sidu Marafat	2019	SMAN 1 Tanggetada	Paper-and-pencil method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students are put into a group of three or four. • The teacher asks questions to build students' background knowledge. • The teacher plays the audio podcast. • The students are assigned to discuss among their group to fill in the information gap. • The students share results of their group discussion to the class. 	Using audio podcast is more effective for improving the students' listening skills than conventional tools.
4.	Rengganis Siwi Amumpuni	2016	IKIP PGRI Madiun	Paper-and-pencil method, observation and interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher asks some questions pertaining to the topic. • The students are divided into groups. • The teacher plays the podcast. • The teacher leads the students to discuss among their groups. • The students are assigned to accomplish the listening assignment. • The students review the assignment. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Podcasting is an effective way to improve students' listening skills. 2. Teaching listening skills through podcast covers three steps – pre-activities, while-activities, and post-activities. Finding materials that suit teaching

5.	Sri Winayah	2015	Universitas PGRI Yogyakarta	Paper-and-pencil method, observation, interview, and survey method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher gives explanation about the objectives. • Teacher brainstorms on the topic learnt. • Teacher sets the students into a group of five. • Teacher gives model of expression. • Teacher plays an English podcast while students do notetaking. • Students discuss the main idea of the topic. • Teacher plays the podcast again while students continue the notetaking activity. • Students discuss for finding detail information and summarize. • Teacher asks students' opinion, checks and discusses their answer. • Teacher reviews on the grammatical/structure rules and asks students' feedback. 	<p>objectives from internet can be challenging. Podcast brings a positive impact on students' listening skills.</p>
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RQ2: What factors affecting the effectiveness of podcasts for enhancing listening skills?

Some factors affecting the effectiveness of podcast for enhancing listening skills including students' motivation, accessibility to authentic materials, individual differences, teachers' digital gap, and internet connectivity. Ensuring motivation and encouraging ongoing practice beyond the classroom are critical factors to consider (Yazmin & Clara, 2024). A multimodal strategy for instruction and education is promoted through podcasting, which also inspires students to engage with and produce authentic language beyond the classroom setting (Phillips, 2017). Podcasts can assist students in various ways, such as by enriching classroom lectures, providing additional resources for instruction, and promoting innovation, creativity, and teamwork among peers. Consequently, podcasting holds significant potential as a tool for language studies (Budiasningrum & Rosita, 2022).

The resources include audio recordings of native speakers enable students to listen to and mimic the natural sounds of the language. The students therefore can enhance their speaking and listening abilities in English more effectively. Podcasts serve as a distinctive computer-based learning resource that can enhance students' listening and speaking proficiency, as well as their comprehension skills. They offer students the opportunity to access authentic content, learning from and gaining insights from native speakers.

Moreover, podcasts present a wealth of information that can facilitate effective language learning. This makes the learning experience both engaging and enjoyable, potentially fostering a positive attitude toward using podcasts for mastering the English language (Ramirez, 2024; Budiasningrum & Rosita, 2022).

Podcasts can serve as an educational resource to enhance listening comprehension in the context of learning English as a Foreign Language. This approach integrates online and mobile learning to bolster both external and internal listening skills. The adaptable and self-guided nature of this method enables learners to practice their listening comprehension according to their personal preferences, highlighting the significance of students building their knowledge through their mistakes and experiences. This student-focused strategy has demonstrated improvements in both self-confidence and listening abilities, fostering a comfortable communicative atmosphere. The encouraging outcomes indicate that incorporating podcasts as a learning tool can be both effective and engaging for acquiring a new language (Yazmin & Clara, 2024).

There is significant potential for incorporating emerging technologies into the classroom; however, it's crucial to recognize that this process can be challenging for both teachers and students. To deliver effective instruction and encourage student engagement, teachers need to be proficient in these technologies (Phillips, 2017). The digital gap and the fact that many educators are technologically illiterate are two factors that hinder the use of podcasts in education. Despite the existence of numerous technological tools, many educators may not possess the knowledge or skills to effectively use them. Additionally, when teachers are not adequately trained or experienced, successfully acquiring new skills and knowledge through technology cannot be assured (Ramirez, 2024).

Discussion

Podcast can be applied in a variety of ways. However, when it comes to teaching listening skills, it is structured around three phases: pre-listening activities, whilst-listening activities, and post-listening activities. The pre-listening phase aims to grasp the basic idea of the content, to create a clear understanding of what will be heard before actually listening. This phase allows learners to have an insight into the listening material prior to engaging with it. During this stage, students can share their thoughts about what they will be listening to or make predictions about what is going to unfold in the listening lesson (Al Bloushi, 2024).

The while-listening phase is an essential part of the listening process and is viewed as the heart of it. The main goal of the while-listening phase is for students to listen for particular details. While-listening tasks aim to help students improve their ability to extract meaning from spoken language. This stage is when students directly engage with the recorded material. In some instances, students might need to listen multiple times to successfully complete the task. This phase is regarded as the most crucial part of listening since it demonstrates the student's level of proficiency. During this stage, the student actively applies their language skills to accomplish the assigned activity in class (Al Bloushi, 2024; Win & Maung, 2019).

The post-listening stage is likely a result of the while-listening stage. This phase reveals the outcomes of the while-listening phase. Furthermore, it showcases each student's performance since it is the final stage of the three phases. The English as a foreign language students must engage with what they have heard to enhance their thinking, and a well-structured post-listening activity serves as an effective tool for them to discuss and relate the lecture to their personal experiences. In addition, students participating in post-listening activities have the opportunity to evaluate how well they comprehended the listening task (Al Bloushi, 2024; Win & Maung, 2019; Liao, 2012).

The podcast is found to be effective in improving students' listening skills for some reason. Podcasting has leveraged genuine materials and enhanced listening comprehension. According to Widodo & Gunawan (2019), podcasts provide a valuable listening resource for foreign language learners to take advantage of. The significance of utilizing podcasts lies in the fact that every learner can experience global listening, even if they dedicate just three to five minutes daily. McBride (2009) emphasized the significance of authentic listening resources and their easy integration into podcasting projects. She suggested that when students listen to genuine podcasts, they respond to a set of questions aimed at developing top-down listening abilities and bottom-up skills through detailed, careful, and repeated listening activities.

Podcasting is regarded as a resource that can help develop both receptive and productive language skills. Educators believe that it is beneficial for listening as well as for speaking practice. On the receptive side, podcasts offer limitless access to authentic materials and can significantly enhance students' listening comprehension skills when used regularly and appropriately. In light of this, podcasting is an effective tool for enhancing linguistic competencies (Lomicka & Lord, 2010). Furthermore, Andersen & Dau (2021) noted that podcasts can facilitate deeper learning, as students actively engage in the learning experience while listening, such as by taking notes.

Moreover, podcasts promote learning independence. Numerous teachers integrate podcasts into language courses to promote students' self-regulation by providing class materials in podcast form, enabling students to access them at their convenience (Lomicka & Lord, 2010). Podcasts provide students with the flexibility to choose when and where they listen to them. They can enjoy podcast episodes at their own convenience, whether they are at home or on the move. This adaptability enables students to incorporate listening practice into their everyday activities, fostering a regular and sustainable learning habit (Gunawan et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, podcasts enhance student engagement and cognitive strategies, which subsequently foster their self-regulated abilities during their studies (Andersen & Dau, 2021). Podcasts enable students to listen while engaging in other activities, thereby directing their focus toward their learning, as one study indicates that listening to podcasts demands less mental effort compared to more conventional learning methods like textbooks (Riddell et al., 2020). Consistently, Dau et al. (2018) discovered that listening to podcasts instills in students a sense of preparedness and encourages them to eagerly anticipate further exploration of a subject.

Besides, the podcast fosters critical thinking skills. Podcasts frequently address current and intricate subjects that necessitate thoughtful consideration and analysis from listeners. Engaging with these podcasts motivates learners to reflect critically on the content, develop their own viewpoints, and express them clearly. Encouraging the learners to talk about the material with peers or classmates after listening, exchange their insights, ask questions, and discuss their perspectives will enhance their understanding of the content and help cultivate their critical thinking abilities (Kuchynska, 2024).

Podcasting has vast possibilities for group learning and collaboration. The podcast promotes collaborative efforts and teamwork. It encourages students to engage and converse with their classmates. Besides, it supports community and peer-based learning by joining discussions, exchanging knowledge, and uncovering new insights (Sičová, 2022). Educational podcasting encourages collaboration, enhances student engagement, and boosts motivation (Cain, 2020). When students are afforded the chance to articulate and explore their ideas openly, they feel a sense of empowerment in their learning experience (Cain et al. & Daigle, 2021; Dversnes & Blikstad-Balas, 2023). To foster teamwork and collaboration, educators can implement group podcast assignments (Robson, 2023).

Furthermore, podcast enhances student motivation to learn. Listening to podcasts designed for native speakers fosters a feeling of accomplishment and inspiration in learners, as they observe their capacity to understand and interact with genuine English content (Sotlikova & Haerazi, 2023). Expanding on this idea, Guillén-Gámez et al. (2019) suggest that learners' motivation to participate in language learning can be greatly enhanced when podcasts resonate with their personal interests and preferences. This perspective highlights the necessity of customizing podcasts to meet learners' particular areas of interest, thus cultivating a sense of relevance and boosting motivation.

The podcasts have brought the nature of language into the classroom, exposing students to various types of language inputs and potentially enhancing their language proficiency (Setiawan & Wahyuni, 2024). Lawlor & Donnelly (2010) indicated that podcasts contributed to students' vocabulary growth, improved their listening abilities, and elevated their language proficiency. Furthermore, Gunawan et al., (2023) points out that, integrating podcast audio-assisted listening activities in classrooms can greatly enhance students' listening abilities, broaden their vocabulary, encourage critical thinking, and offer adaptable learning experiences.

In addition, the podcast is simple to navigate. It serves as a fascinating resource since audio is predominantly in MP3 format. They can be conveniently accessed and saved on portable media devices, enabling students to enhance their English skills with ease. This setup allows students to listen while walking, using public transport, or winding down for the night (Rahayuningsih et al., 2021). Podcasts offer flexibility, enabling individuals to learn at their convenience and location. Podcasts can be found on various platforms such as Google, iTunes, and the Play Store, along with the websites of several prominent educational organizations and major broadcasting companies.

Despite the advantages of podcasts, certain students encountered difficulties in accessing them due to internet connectivity issues and content filtering (Farshi & Mohammadi, 2013). Incorporating new technology for language learning comes with significant obstacles for both students and educators. Some of the drawbacks include issues related to internet access and connectivity. Poor internet speeds and connectivity problems can also hinder the learning experience when using podcasts (Metruk, 2022; Klimova, 2019). Educators must take into account the quality of internet connectivity and ensure that any issues related to internet access are resolved (Indahsari, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Podcast in teaching listening skills can take various forms, but it primarily includes three key stages: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities. Several elements influencing the effectiveness of podcasts in improving listening skills include students' motivation, access to genuine materials, personal variances, teachers' digital divide, and internet access. Podcasting has characteristics that aid in enhancing students' listening skills, such as utilizing authentic materials, encouraging independent learning, increasing student engagement and cognitive strategies, promoting critical thinking skills, offering significant opportunities for collaborative group learning, and increases learning motivation. The podcast has brought real language contexts into the classroom, giving students exposure to different types of language inputs and potentially improving their language proficiency. Additionally, the podcast platform is user-friendly. Earlier research has primarily concentrated on the use of podcast for enhancing listening skills. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of in-depth analysis regarding how this method can effectively boost students' listening skills. Therefore, subsequent research should address at least three essential components: interpretation, implications, and limitations.

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