

ENHANCING STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILL THROUGH PODCASTS

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of podcasts in improving the listening skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The research was conducted at Yusuf Abdussatar Islamic Vocational School in Kediri West Lombok Indonesia Indonesia (n=35, Grade 11), the research employed an experimental design with interviews and questionnaires. The findings reveal that majority of students (55%) perceived podcasts as facilitating easier learning, further integration strategies could be explored for optimal benefit. Although 75% found podcasts somewhat effective and enjoyable, further research could identify aspects to maximize their impact. Encouragingly, all students agreed that podcasts could improve listening skills. Additionally, 90% of participants reported increased motivation to learn further after using podcasts. The study also revealed positive perceptions regarding podcasts' contribution to keeping up with educational media trends (16.7% strongly agreed) and fostering independent learning (83.3% agreed or strongly agreed). These findings suggest that podcasts can be a valuable tool for EFL classrooms. Conclusion: Incorporating podcasts into EFL classrooms appears to be a promising method for improving listening skills and fostering a positive learning environment.

Keywords: Enhancing, Listening Skills, Podcasts, EFL Learning

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education is undergoing a dynamic transformation. With the rise of technology, educators are continually seeking innovative approaches to enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes, particularly in the crucial domain of listening skills.

Listening comprehension serves as the cornerstone for effective EFL acquisition. Learners who can grasp spoken English in diverse contexts and at varying speeds are better equipped to actively participate in conversations, absorb cultural nuances, and readily acquire new vocabulary and grammatical structures. Mulyadi et. all investigates the impact of technology-enhanced instruction on listening comprehension in EFL classrooms. The researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data, to examine the effectiveness of technology-enhanced instruction in improving listening comprehension skills among EFL learners. The study highlights the potential of technology to cater to diverse learning styles and preferences, enhancing the overall listening comprehension abilities of EFL learner (Mulyadi et al., 2021). However, Dewi explores the role of authentic materials in enhancing listening comprehension in EFL classrooms. The researchers examined the impact of using authentic materials, such as podcasts, videos, and audio recordings, on EFL learners' listening comprehension skills. The study found that the use of authentic materials significantly improved learners' listening comprehension abilities, particularly in terms of vocabulary acquisition and grammatical structures (Citra Dewi, 2018). Larandang investigates the impact of background noise on listening comprehension in EFL classrooms. The researchers examined the effectiveness of noise reduction strategies, such as noise-cancelling headphones and quiet classrooms, on EFL learners' listening comprehension skills. The study highlights the importance of creating a conducive learning environment that minimizes distractions and enhances learners' ability to focus on the listening task (Larandang et al., 2023).

The Podcast Revolution and its EFL Learning Potential

The potential of podcasting and vodcasting technology in promoting extensive listening and improving overall L2 listening skills investigated by Gonulal, the results showed that students spent approximately one hour per week on extensive listening with podcasts or vodcasts outside the classroom. Vodcasts were found to be less commonly preferred than

podcasts by students. Further, as measured by listening progress tests and proficiency tests, students were able to make significant progress in their overall listening skills by the end of the year. Additionally, students found extensive listening practice with podcasts and vodcasts highly effective not only in helping them improve as L2 listeners but also enhancing their pronunciation abilities and knowledge of words and phrases (Gonulal, 2022).

The effectiveness of podcasts is linked to the level of teacher involvement and the careful selection of podcast material that aligns with the learners' goals. The study confirms the initial hypothesis that podcasts can be a beneficial tool in EFL education, particularly for vocabulary expansion. It also highlights the need for schools to consider factors such as recording quality, time management, the availability of electronic devices, and the technological proficiency of teachers when integrating podcasts into the curriculum. In essence, podcasts are a valuable asset in both the teaching and learning process, with the study's findings endorsing the use of podcasts to improve EFL students' listening skills (Abdulrahman et al., 2018). A study highlights the effectiveness of YouTube and video-podcasts in enhancing listening comprehension among younger learners with limited English proficiency. However, technology alone is insufficient; teachers play a crucial role in making the listening lesson more effective. Teachers must facilitate students' learning, act as role models, and provide constructive feedback. They should also develop technological skills and establish global networks to collaborate with other teachers, creating more authentic learning materials and improving listening comprehension (Yaacob et al., 2021).

However Fardavoodi in his study found that using educational podcasts significantly improved the listening comprehension skills of male language learners in Tehran. The results showed that the experimental group, which used educational podcasts, outperformed the control group, which used traditional methods. The study suggests that educational podcasts can be an effective tool for improving listening comprehension skills, particularly in language learners (Fardavoodi et al., 2020).

Additionally, Sayadi et.al in their study investigated the impact of using podcasts on the listening comprehension ability of Iranian autonomous and non-autonomous EFL learners at the pre-intermediate level. The results showed that both autonomous and non-autonomous learners improved their listening comprehension skills after receiving five sessions of podcast-based instruction. The study suggests that podcasts can be an effective

tool for enhancing listening comprehension skills, particularly for pre-intermediate level learners (Sayadi & Heidar, 2018).

The study investigated the impact of English podcasts on the English listening skills of XII Language class students in SMA Negeri 1 Manado. The results showed that the use of podcasts significantly improved students' listening skills, with a mean score increase from 67.81 to 85. The study suggests that podcasts can be an effective tool for enhancing English listening skills, particularly for students who struggle with understanding videos and find the teaching-learning process boring (Rorintulus et al., 2024). Bakhsh in his study investigated the impact of podcasting on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension skills. The results showed that podcasting had a statistically significant effect on improving listening skills, with the experimental group demonstrating significant improvements compared to the control group. The study suggests that podcasting can be an effective tool for enhancing listening comprehension skills, particularly for intermediate-level learners (Bakhsh & Gilakjani, 2021).

The study investigated the effects of podcasts on students' listening comprehension during online learning and their perceptions of using podcasts for listening classes. The findings suggest that podcasts are an accessible, helpful, and suitable medium for teaching virtual listening, particularly for eleventh-grade students at Az-Zahrah Islamic Senior High School Palembang. However, the study also highlights the challenges faced by students, such as slow internet connections and monotonous learning, which can affect their focus and motivation. The teacher's interest in using podcast media to attract students' attention and interests and motivate them to learn virtual listening independently to improve their listening skills and comprehension is a promising approach (Gonulal, 2022).

The study investigated the impact of using Google Podcasts on developing prospective EFL teachers' listening comprehension skills. The results showed that the podcast-based extensive listening sessions significantly improved participants' recognition of literal meaning, purpose determination, reasoning analysis, and conclusion drawing. However, inference making and evidence finding skills were not significantly developed. The study suggests that Google Podcasts can be an effective tool for enhancing listening comprehension skills, particularly in terms of literal meaning, purpose determination, and conclusion drawing (Naeem, 2022).

Finally, based on the description above, This study investigates the effectiveness of podcasts in enhancing or improving the students' listening skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at Yusuf Abdussatar Islamic Vocational School in Kediri West Lombok Indonesia Indonesia.

METHODS

Place and Research Timeline

This study was conducted at Yusuf Abdussatar Islamic Vocational School on Jl. Kali Babak, Karang Bedil Utara, Kediri, Kec. Kediri, Kabupaten Lombok Barat, Nusa Tenggara Barat. This research was carried out from January 3 to March 30 2024.

Setting the Stage: Research Location and Participants

This study was conducted at Yusuf Abdussatar Islamic Vocational School in Kediri, West Lombok, Indonesia. The research aimed to investigate the impact of using podcasts on students' listening skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.

Focus on the Students: The Informants

The primary participants in this study were the eleventh-grade students at Yusuf Abdussatar Islamic Vocational School. A total of 35 students participated in the research, providing valuable insights into their experiences with podcasts and their perceived effectiveness in enhancing listening comprehension.

The researcher employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the data, focusing on the characteristics of the data, the process of listening instruction, and the methods used in teaching listening. This approach involves collecting data by interpreting phenomena in natural settings, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument. Qualitative research aims to provide comprehensive insights into the object of study, which contains meanings and generalizations, without relying on statistical calculations (Partiwi, 2022).

Here's how this methodology aligns with the research objectives:

1. **Unveiling Student Perceptions:** Qualitative methods excel at capturing rich and nuanced descriptions of student experiences. Interviews and open-ended questionnaires allowed students to freely express their thoughts and feelings about using podcasts for learning, providing valuable insights into their perceptions of

ease of use, effectiveness, enjoyment, motivation, and potential for fostering independent learning.

2. **Understanding the Learning Context:** By adopting a qualitative approach, the research delves deeper into the "natural setting" of virtual listening instruction (Partiwi, 2022). Examining student-podcast interactions within the context of their virtual learning environment enables a more holistic understanding of how podcasts influence the learning process.

Data Collection Instruments:

To gather rich and detailed data, the study utilized two primary data collection instruments:

1. **Semi-structured Interviews:** Individual interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of students. This method allowed for in-depth exploration of student experiences with podcasts, following a pre-determined interview guide with open-ended questions. Encouraging students to elaborate on their responses provided valuable insights beyond simple "yes/no" answers.
2. **Questionnaires:** A researcher-designed questionnaire, piloted for clarity and effectiveness, was administered to all participants. The questionnaire employed a mix of open-ended and Likert-scale questions to capture a wider range of perspectives while also enabling some degree of quantification for ease of comparison.

The Researcher as the Research Instrument:

As highlighted by Jaya in Pratiwi, qualitative research acknowledges the researcher as a key instrument. In this study, the researcher actively engaged with participants during interviews and ensured a safe and comfortable environment for open communication. Additionally, the researcher carefully reviewed and analyzed all collected data to identify emerging themes and patterns that illuminate student perceptions of podcasts in the virtual listening classroom (Partiwi, 2022).

Data Analysis Procedures:

The collected data from interviews and questionnaires underwent a rigorous thematic analysis process. The researcher meticulously reviewed all transcripts and responses, coding them for recurring themes and patterns related to student perceptions of podcasts. This

iterative process involved constant refinement of codes and categories until a clear and comprehensive understanding of the data was achieved.

Ensuring Research Credibility:

To ensure the credibility of the research findings, member checking was employed. Interview transcripts and key findings were shared with a subset of participants to verify their accuracy and resonance with their experiences. Additionally, the research design and methodology were meticulously documented to enable transparency and potential replication by future researchers.

By employing a descriptive qualitative approach, this study aimed to capture the multifaceted nature of student perceptions regarding the use of podcasts in virtual English listening instruction. The richness of the data and the in-depth analysis process contribute to a deeper understanding of how this technology can potentially enhance the EFL learning experience.

RESULTS

Exploring the Impact of Podcasts on Listening Skills

This chapter delves into the key findings of the study and explores their implications for using podcasts in listening instruction.

Data Collection Methods

The research employed a mixed-methods approach to gather data from both teacher and student perspectives. Interviews with the English teacher provided valuable insights into current classroom practices and openness to using podcasts. Ten questionnaire items were administered to students to gauge their perceived effectiveness of the existing learning media used for listening comprehension. Two interview sections were conducted with the teacher. The first, a face-to-face interview, focused on the teacher's approach to listening classes, preferred learning media, and receptiveness to podcasts as learning tools. The second section, conducted via WhatsApp chat after implementing podcasts, aimed to understand their perceived impact on student listening comprehension.

Teacher Perspectives on Podcast Integration

The face-to-face interview with the English teacher (Teacher 01, eleventh grade) revealed the following:

- **Current Listening Class Practices:** Teacher 01 described how listening classes are typically structured and the types of learning media currently used.
- **Openness to Podcasts:** Teacher 01 expressed interest in considering podcasts as potential learning media for listening instruction.

The follow-up WhatsApp chat interview, conducted after implementing podcasts in class, aimed to understand their perceived impact:

- **Observations on Student Listening Comprehension:** Teacher 01 shared observations on how podcasts might enhance student listening skills.

DISCUSSION

Podcasts and their Potential for Listening Skill Enhancement

The findings from the teacher interview provide valuable context for understanding the potential of podcasts in the classroom. Teacher 01's interest in exploring podcasts aligns with existing research suggesting the benefits of authentic audio content for improving listening skills (Gonulal, 2022).

However, further research with a larger sample size could provide more robust data on the observed improvements in student listening comprehension reported by Teacher 01. The student questionnaire data, presented in the next section, will further illuminate student perceptions and their learning experiences with podcasts.

Unveiling Student Perceptions: Exploring Podcasts in Listening Instruction

This study delves into student perceptions of podcasts as a tool for enhancing listening skills in English language learning. By investigating student experiences through questionnaires, the research sheds light on the perceived ease of learning, effectiveness, and motivational potential of podcasts in a listening instruction setting.

Learning with Podcasts: Room for Optimization

The initial focus explored how students perceive the ease of learning English through podcasts. While a majority (55%) reported "slightly agreeing," suggesting a generally

positive perception, it also highlights potential areas for improvement in integrating podcasts for optimal learning efficiency. This finding underscores the need to explore strategies for maximizing the learning potential of podcasts within the listening curriculum.

Effectiveness and Enjoyment: A Mixed Bag

The subsequent questions delved deeper, examining student perceptions of both effectiveness and enjoyment. Interestingly, both questions garnered "slightly agree" as the most frequent response, with 75% and 100% of students responding in this category, respectively. This suggests that students perceive podcasts as somewhat effective and enjoyable for improving listening skills in a non-classroom environment. However, it also indicates the potential for further exploration of aspects that could enhance the impact of podcasts on learning outcomes.

Enhancing Listening Skills and Motivation

The study then moved towards investigating the potential benefits of podcasts for listening development. Notably, all participating students (100%) agreed to some degree (11.5% agreed, 88.5% strongly agreed) that podcasts could enhance listening skills. This finding is particularly encouraging, highlighting the potential of podcasts to contribute significantly to improvement in a crucial language acquisition area. Similarly, with 77.7% (highest score) agreeing that video podcasts aided listening comprehension (22.3% agreed, none disagreed), the data suggests that the added visual element can further support understanding.

Furthermore, the study explored the motivational impact of podcasts. With 90% of participants reporting feeling motivated to learn further after engaging with video podcasts, the findings indicate a positive influence on student motivation. However, the presence of 10% who remained neutral suggests the need for further investigation into the specific motivational factors associated with podcasts.

Time-Saving Benefits and Accessibility Considerations

Additionally, the research examined the potential time-saving benefits of podcasts. The data revealed a positive response, with 70.7% of students reporting significant time savings and 29.3% agreeing with some degree of time reduction. This suggests that podcasts can contribute to efficient learning, potentially allowing students to learn effectively within shorter timeframes.

Accessibility considerations were also addressed. All students agreed that a mobile phone was necessary to access podcasts (highest score: 40%). This finding underscores the dependence of this learning tool on digital devices, highlighting the importance of ensuring mobile device accessibility for students to fully benefit from podcast integration.

Fostering Independent Learning

Finally, the study explored the potential of podcasts for fostering independent learning habits. Here, a significant majority (83.3%) agreed to some degree (16.7% agreed, 83.3% strongly agreed) that podcasts could encourage students to learn independently. This finding suggests that podcasts may possess specific features that promote self-directed learning. Further research could identify these specific features and explore how they can be leveraged to cultivate independent learning habits within students.

Conclusion and Future Directions

This study provides valuable insights into student perceptions of podcasts as a tool for enhancing listening skills in English language learning. The findings highlight the perceived ease of learning, effectiveness, enjoyment, positive impact on motivation, time-saving benefits, and potential for fostering independent learning. However, the research also identifies areas where further optimization might be possible, such as exploring strategies for maximizing learning ease and effectiveness. Additionally, future research could delve deeper into the specific features of podcasts that contribute to fostering independent learning habits and explore how educators can leverage these features to create more impactful learning experiences.

By understanding student perceptions and investigating areas for improvement, educators can effectively integrate podcasts into the listening curriculum, maximizing their potential to enhance listening skills and motivation, ultimately fostering efficient and independent language learning.

CONCLUSION

Finally, based on the description of the findings and results of the discussion above, the use of podcast media into EFL classrooms seems to be a promising method for improving listening skills and fostering a positive learning environment. This can be seen based on analysis of the questionnaire results, including: The findings reveal that majority of students (55%)

perceived podcasts as facilitating easier learning, further integration strategies could be explored for optimal benefit. Although 75% found podcasts somewhat effective and enjoyable, further research could identify aspects to maximize their impact. Encouragingly, all students agreed that podcasts could improve listening skills. Additionally, 90% of participants reported increased motivation to learn further after using podcasts. The study also revealed positive perceptions regarding podcasts' contribution to keeping up with educational media trends (16.7% strongly agreed) and fostering independent learning (83.3% agreed or strongly agreed). These findings suggest that podcasts can be a valuable tool for EFL classrooms.

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