

Exploring Undergraduate Students' Perspectives on the Integration of Podcasts for Enhancing Listening Skills

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Abstract

Podcasts have gained popularity among a vast number of listeners who utilize them to enhance their English listening skills. However, limited classroom time is allocated for focused listening practice. This research aims to investigate students' perceptions of using podcasts as an effective means of improving their listening abilities. Three participants volunteered to take part in the study, and additional recruitment efforts were made to encourage more student volunteers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data, allowing for the exploration of individual experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs related to the use of podcasts. Four key themes emerged from the participants' perceptions: 1) Hearing the message, 2) Interpreting the message, 3) Evaluating the message, and 4) Responding to the message. Listening involves interpreting the communicative behavior of others to comprehend its meaning, and effective listeners ensure they have all the necessary information before forming opinions. The findings indicate that podcasts facilitate clear message reception, provide verbal and non-verbal cues for deeper interpretation, offer features to optimize the listening process, and provide an authentic experience of listening to native speakers. Future research is recommended to explore students' perceptions of using podcasts for improving other English language skills.

Keywords: Listening Skills; Podcasts; Students' Perspectives

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INTRODUCTION

The internet has become an integral part of technological advancement in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT). It offers numerous benefits and opportunities for both educators and learners. One of the key advantages is the vast amount of authentic and up-to-date resources available online, such as articles, videos, interactive exercises, and language learning platforms. These resources expose learners to real-world language use and cultural contexts, enhancing their language proficiency and cultural awareness. Integration of the internet in ELT involves incorporating online tools and resources into teaching and learning activities. This can be done through various approaches, such as blended learning, where traditional face-to-face instruction is combined with online components, or fully online

courses. Teachers can utilize online platforms and tools for delivering instructional materials, facilitating interactive activities, and assessing learners' progress.

Indonesia has witnessed a substantial surge in internet usage (Justianto et al., 2022; Siste et al., 2021). Learners, on the other hand, can access online materials, participate in collaborative tasks, engage in online discussions, and receive personalized feedback, all of which contribute to a more dynamic and learner-centered learning experience. The significant number of podcast enthusiasts presents an intriguing subject for analysis, particularly in the context of how individuals utilize podcasts to enhance their English listening skills. Listening is considered the fundamental skill in language acquisition and plays a vital role in the overall learning process. Typically, speaking, reading, and writing skills develop after listening skills (Deveci, 2018). By honing their listening abilities, students can enhance their language production skills, such as speaking and writing, by incorporating the vocabulary and language patterns they acquire through listening (Andriani et al., 2023). Additionally, listening serves as a receptive skill that allows beginner language learners to absorb new words and phrases from what they hear (Hendrawaty, 2019). According to Ur (2002), proficiency in a foreign language for most individuals implies the ability to speak and comprehend that language. However, classroom time for practicing listening skills is limited. Developing effective listening skills requires time and consistent practice (Liubinienė, 2009). Therefore, students are encouraged to independently work on improving their listening abilities.

Podcasts can be utilized as a medium to enhance students' listening skills. Podcasts are digital audio files that can be downloaded from the internet and accessed on computers and mobile devices. They are often available in series and can be automatically received by subscribers. Podcasts can be a valuable tool to support English language learning, especially in developing listening skills. Through podcasts, students can explore English materials that align with their interests, such as education, lifestyle, and politics. Most smartphones, including iPhones and Android phones, come equipped with a media player that allows users to subscribe to podcasts, stream or download episodes, and customize their listening experience. Popular platforms for accessing podcasts include Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, Overcast, Podcasts Addict, and YouTube.

Previous research has provided evidence of the effectiveness of podcasts in teaching and learning English as a foreign language, particularly in the domain of listening comprehension. Several studies have examined the benefits of incorporating podcasts into language learning, specifically in enhancing listening and speaking skills, and have consistently shown improvements in students' performance (Bentley, 2010; Diem & Abdullah, 2020; Gonulal, 2022; Huriyah & Contessa, 2020; Saeedakhtar et al., 2021). Moreover, studies have also indicated that the use of podcasts as a learning tool contributes to increased motivation and positive attitudes toward language learning (Rahman, et al., 2018; Rmelah & Pornwiriyaakit, 2023). For instance, an experimental study conducted with Iranian EFL students demonstrated that those who utilized podcasts achieved higher scores in listening comprehension and displayed greater motivation to learn compared to those who did not use podcasts (NamazianDost et al., 2017). These previous research findings provide strong support for the integration of podcasts into language learning practices.

However, most previous studies were conducted at the middle school level and did not specifically focus on the impact of podcasts on listening skills. Consequently, there is a need for further research, particularly in the context of university-level English students. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the perceptions of English students who have obtained high scores in listening courses, regarding their experience using podcasts to enhance their listening skills. Through a qualitative descriptive case study approach, the research aims to answer the following research question: "What are the students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of using podcasts for improving their listening skills?". In essence, this research aims to explore the viewpoints of university-level English students on the effectiveness of podcasts in enhancing their listening skills. It builds upon previous research that has demonstrated the advantages of podcasts in language learning, with a specific emphasis on their potential impact on listening comprehension. By gathering insights from participants who actively engage with English podcasts and have achieved notable success in listening courses, this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of integrating podcasts into language learning within a university setting.

METHOD

Design

Qualitative approach is used in this research to investigate the students' perceptions in using Podcasts for their listening. Using this design has been implemented in the previous research which focuses on the Podcast and listening learning in EFL context (Fatika & Rahayu, 2021; Rachmaniputri et al., 2021) and the use of technology in the classroom (Rahman, et al, 2018)

Participants

This study was conducted at a state university in Tasikmalaya, Indonesia. The participants consisted of three English Education major students who used podcasts to improve their English skills, particularly their listening ability. These participants achieved an "A" score in both the Intensive Listening and Extensive Listening courses. They regularly listened to English podcasts for approximately one to two hours per day, primarily for enjoyment and study purposes. The participants chose podcasts based on their personal preferences, such as participant 1 (P1) who listened to astronomy podcasts due to a personal interest in the subject, participant 2 (P2) who preferred educational podcasts like BBC Podcasts, and participant 3 (P3) who listened to podcasts that provided general insights to broaden their worldview.

The selection of these participants was based on the criteria of being English Education students who were familiar with podcasts, regularly listened to English podcasts, and had achieved high scores in the relevant listening courses. These participants were chosen using purposive random sampling to ensure diverse data and allow for data. Member checking present the results or interpretations to the participants and ask for their approval (Birt et al., 2016). In doing so, participants might attest to the correctness and reliability of the data or offer further insights into their own perceptions. It means that the participants volunteered to be part of the study, and the researcher encouraged them to invite others to participate as well.

Data Collection/Instrument

The interviews were conducted with three university students using Google Meet, with each session lasting approximately 15-30 minutes. The interviews were recorded for data

analysis purposes. The questions aimed to gather information about the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness, efficiency, and appropriateness of using podcasts to improve listening skills in English language learning. The questions were developed in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure understanding and facilitate participants' responses. The author developed a total of eleven questions after an extensive literature review and input from discussions. The questions were based on the four factors of effective listening, namely hearing the message, interpreting the message, evaluating the message, and responding to the message. The interview format was open-ended, allowing participants to elaborate on the raised topics in an empirical manner. Open-ended questions enable respondents to express their opinions without being influenced by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the interview data. This approach involves identifying and summarizing key themes within a large dataset, resulting in a clear and organized final report. Thematic analysis provides a structured framework for handling data and drawing meaningful conclusions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is particularly useful for examining the perspectives of research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unexpected insights. It also aids in summarizing key features of a large dataset, ensuring a clear and organized final report.

The six phases of thematic analysis were followed: Familiarization: The researcher gained an overview of the transcribed interview data. Coding: The researcher categorized the data using initial codes to highlight students' perceptions of the effectiveness of podcasts in improving their listening skills. Each code was assigned a color and represented an idea or feeling expressed in the text. Reviewing themes: The researcher reviewed the identified themes related to students' perceptions of the effectiveness of podcasts in improving listening skills to determine if they formed a coherent pattern. Defining and naming themes: The researcher interpreted each theme that emerged as an answer to the research question, defining what each theme meant and providing a concise and easily understandable name for each theme. Writing up: In the final step, the researcher prepared a report based on the research findings concerning students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using podcasts to improve their listening skills.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter also reports on the findings and discussion of the study to answer the research question which is categorized into four emergent themes: 1) Hearing the message, 2) Interpreting the message, 3) Evaluating the message, and 4) Responding the message. Each of the themes can potentially answer the research question and was presented along with the data and discussion below:

Students Considered Podcasts as Medium to Help in Hearing the Message

Hearing serves as the initial stage in the listening process, where information is perceived and selected from the speaker's communication (Miller & Pennycuff, 2008; Rahayuningsih et al., 2021). The hearing process commences when the brain acknowledges sound upon its entry into the ear. Listening, on the other hand, is an active process (Chen & Zhang, 2022; Nguyen & Hung, 2021). During the process of hearing the message, additional "listening channels" such as our eyes and emotions seek validation of the message through the speaker's nonverbal cues, including body language and tone of voice. As emphasized by Bonet,

(2001), there are three essential elements to effectively hearing the message: attentiveness, paying close attention, and discerning what is significant.

This theme delves into the participants' perceptions and experiences in using podcasts to enhance their hearing process as a part of effective listening. According to the participants, utilizing podcasts has improved their ability to hear the message. They find the content of the podcasts important and are genuinely interested in the information being presented. Additionally, they highlight the flexibility of podcasts as a medium, as they can absorb the podcast content while engaging in other activities. Overall, the participants express positive views on the impact of podcasts on their hearing process, emphasizing the importance of interest, relevance, and the convenience offered by this medium. The voices are shown below:

"I personally like to listen to English speakers talk and especially the topics that I'm interested in. When I listen to Podcasts, I can also do other activities. Sometimes I also focus on listening, because the video is also viewed while chatting, not just audio. So, there's something to see too. So sometimes also listen to it while doing other activities. If it's in the form of a video, there are visual aids that make us watch it to get it. If a Podcasts contains speech, if you get the audio, you will get the content, and it will automatically improve your listening skills too, I think so." (Excerpt 1. Data translated from P1)

"While listening to Podcasts, I can do other things. Even though not all the words are fully heard, I can still manage to comprehend them. Listening to Podcasts makes me more familiar with English words. For Podcasts, the rhythm is usually the same, yes, for movies there are a lot of distractions." (Excerpt 2. Data translated from P2)

"Podcasts can improve listening skills because as stated at the beginning, I was completely blank with English, especially native speakers, but by listening to Podcasts often, now I feel more familiar when listening to native speakers." (Excerpt 3. Data translated from P3)

Based on the data, it is evident that podcasts have the potential to enhance one of the fundamental elements of effective listening skills, namely "hearing the message." Podcasts can be a highly suitable medium for listening activities, effectively meeting the need for target language input in language teaching and learning (Goldman, 2018; Gonulal, 2022; Kelly et al., 2022; Nisa et al., 2022). The students' listening comprehension varied between the groups before and after engaging with podcasts as part of the treatment.

Podcasts offer a wide range of topics that listeners can choose from based on their personal interests. This aspect enables listeners to actively engage with the audio content since they feel genuinely interested in the discussions. Furthermore, one of the participants (referred to as P1) mentioned that various platforms, such as YouTube, provide visual aids in the form of videos alongside the audio. This visual element enhances P1's engagement as the speaker's body language provides a deeper understanding of the topic being discussed.

The ability to select content of interest also contributes to increased motivation among students, as they can integrate their personal interests into the learning process (Dörnyei, 1998). According to P2 and P3, regularly listening to podcasts has made them more familiar with the English language. In countries like Indonesia, where English is considered a foreign language (Kachru, 1994), students have limited exposure to English outside of formal educational settings. Consequently, their English proficiency remains relatively low and requires improvement (Huang, 2021). Listening to podcasts serves as a means for students to address this issue. This finding aligns with Yoestara's (2018) statement, which emphasized the

significance of podcasts as a valuable learning tool for enhancing students' listening and speaking performance.

In conclusion, students perceive podcasts as a medium that significantly aids them in improving their ability to hear and understand the message being conveyed. The availability of diverse topics and the integration of visual aids contribute to their engagement, while the personalized content selection and increased exposure to English further enhance their motivation and language proficiency.

Students Experienced Podcasts as Medium that Can Boost Their Interpreting Process of the Messages Conveyed by the Speakers

Interpreting refers to the process of reaching a shared understanding of the speaker's intended meaning (Alyousef, 2020). In essence, listening can be conceptualized as a dynamic process that involves the interpretation of intentionally transmitted messages in order to comprehend and respond to them appropriately (Bentley, 2010; Miranty & Rachmawati, 2016). Listening entails interpreting the communicative behaviors of others to grasp the underlying meaning behind those behaviors. It is, therefore, a collaborative process in which the listener aims to understand the goals and intentions of the message source, while the source aims to facilitate the listener's comprehension. Both parties' behaviors typically unfold in support of their mutual and complementary goals.

During the interpretation of messages in the listening process, individuals often have preconceived ideas about the content, which are based on their existing knowledge about the information being heard (Ur, 1996). Throughout the listening process, the listener may employ various verbal and nonverbal behaviors to signal to the message source the level of understanding achieved regarding a message, as well as the specific type of assistance required to enhance that understanding (Girardelli et al., 2020). Additionally, Bonet (2001) highlights three crucial factors in interpreting messages: understanding filters, attentiveness to the tone of the message, and recognition of nonverbal cues.

Therefore, interpreting in the context of listening involves the collaborative effort of understanding the intended meaning behind the speaker's message. Listeners bring their existing knowledge and preconceptions into the process while utilizing various verbal and nonverbal cues to convey their level of understanding and seek further clarification. The keys to effective interpretation include being aware of personal filters, attentively considering the tone of the message, and recognizing nonverbal signals.

Understanding filters

Interpreting process, both speakers and listeners have mental filters which help or hinder the process. Some examples of filters are : memories, biases, expectations, values, feelings, language and vocabulary, age, assumptions, perceptions, attitudes, past experiences, knowledge, intelligence, needs and motives, self-esteem, and sensory acuity (Bonet, 2001; Widodo & Gunawan, 2019). In this research, it is found that students considered Podcasts as a medium that can boost their interpreting process of the messages conveyed by the speakers. This perspective is in line with Ur's assertion that in real-life situations, it is uncommon to listen to someone without any expectations regarding the content. Consequently, someone often holds preconceived notions about the information we are about to hear, which are rooted in our existing knowledge (Ur, 1996).

Ur (2002) highlights that when engaging in listening, listeners typically approach the task with certain expectations or assumptions. These expectations are shaped by their prior knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. In other words, their past experiences, background knowledge, and familiarity with the topic influence the way they interpret and make sense of incoming information. In practical terms, this means that our listening process is not solely passive reception, but rather an active engagement with the speaker's message. As listeners, they filter the incoming information through the lens of our preconceived ideas and knowledge, allowing us to make connections, draw inferences, and construct meaning from the message being conveyed. Ur's assertion emphasizes the complex nature of the listening process and underscores the active role listeners play in interpreting and understanding the message. By recognizing the influence of their preconceived ideas and knowledge, they can approach listening with a more critical and discerning mindset, enhancing our ability to engage with and comprehend the information being presented. The result can be seen below:

P1 and P3 mentioned that he could interpret the message of the Podcasts if he has prior knowledge about the topic.

"If the Podcasts displayed the speaker, we could see how the speaker speaks. So, sometimes it's good to listen to it from there, especially if we have prior knowledge of the topic or what we like and the drawback is that there are no other assistance/aids, such as no text, no speakers". (Excerpt 4. Data translated from P1)

"If I listen to Podcasts when I focus, I can do it while doing other activities. Even if we've heard of the topic a little bit, we can say, "Oh yeah, that's for sure", we can predict that". (Excerpt 5. Data translated from P1)

"It depends on the topic, yes, depending on what is being listened to, whether it contains content that is a bit heavy or for example the language is easy to understand. If the topic is a bit foreign, then the words are not familiar, and it makes you often rewind. There were about two or three rewinds, but they didn't get rewinded from the start, only certain parts were rewinded which was "oh, I haven't caught this part yet". (Excerpt 6. Data translated from P3)

In addition, P2 mentioned that listening to Podcasts has helped her to add some new vocabulary as shown in the excerpt below:

"The benefit of listening Podcasts is that the first one becomes more familiar with English words, then the pronunciation also makes you know "oh this is how you read it", like that. "It turns out that all this time it was wrong", that's all. So, it makes us remember how to pronounce certain words better. Also, if for example there is a new word, you will know too, increase your vocabulary, so you will be more familiar with certain words and more familiar with listening to English words." (Excerpt 7. Data translated from P2)

Based on the results of analyzed data above show that the participants have a positive experience while using Podcasts as they can choose their own preferable topic, and they have prior knowledge about it which it minimized misinterpretation of the audio. In certain instances, individuals may encounter difficulties in understanding what others have said, either due to an inability to hear or comprehend specific words, phrases, or statements. Fortunately, such problems can typically be resolved easily. It is common for individuals to assume that any statements they missed or did not comprehend will be clarified through subsequent conversation, leading them to believe that little or no intervention is required

(Cohen-Nissan et al., 2023; Marschall et al., 2021). On one end of the spectrum, people can rely on minimal cognitive effort, elaboration, or capacity when thinking about the social

world. They draw upon their prior knowledge, heuristics, stereotypes, experiences, scripts, and schemas to impose structure and order on new situations (Brown et al., 2021). In these situations, people often exhibit a somewhat "automatic" behavior, forming their understanding through a "top-down" approach, where existing preconceptions are applied to new information.

Additionally, listening to podcasts has proven to be beneficial in improving vocabulary mastery. Therefore, podcasts offer a positive experience for students in the process of understanding messages. By engaging with podcasts, students can expand their vocabulary and enhance their overall understanding of the content being presented. Therefore, when faced with challenges in understanding spoken information, individuals often assume that subsequent communication will clarify any missed or unclear statements. This perspective aligns with the idea that people rely on existing knowledge and preconceptions to make sense of new information. Furthermore, podcasts not only contribute to students' comprehension but also serve as a means of improving their vocabulary skills, thus providing a positive learning experience.

Tone of voice

Voice conveys approximately 30% of the meaning of a message. Voices can be calm, insistent, pleading, questioning, whining, demanding, etc. Think of tone as the "mood" of the voice (Bonet, 2001). Participants shared their perspective related to the tone of voice of Podcasts that affect their listening skills in the excerpt below:

"Well, Podcasts present a more natural tone of voice of the speakers. Podcasts are more about how natural speakers speak, so it might be a bit difficult to understand because they are naturally like that, but on the positive side, we know more about how to speak natural English." (Excerpt 8. Data translated from P1)

"The tone of voice of the speakers is different from what we hear in daily conversations with people around us, but through listening to Podcasts regularly, we become trained." (Excerpt 9 Data translated from P3)

Regarding the excerpts above, participants perceived Podcasts as a media which presents experience where we could listen to English audio with authentic or natural tone of voice. Podcast enables students to be exposed to authentic language use of English (Goldman, 2018; Gonulal, 2022). Moreover, P1 claimed that it impacted them positively, so he came to know how the way native speakers chat in their daily life. In addition, P3 stated that the tone of voice of the speakers in the Podcasts is different from her native language, so Podcasts have helped her to become more familiar with the tone of voice of someone who speaks English. This is particularly, because the materials in Podcasts cover a wide range of topics with real-life speech and are generally prepared by native speakers (Rachmaniputri et al., 2021; Sabrila & Apoko, 2022). In summary, students perceived Podcasts as a media which presents experience where we could listen to English audio with authentic or natural tone of voice.

Non-verbal Signal

A non-verbal cue, also known as body language, encompasses various messages conveyed through a speaker's gestures, facial expressions, eye movements, and posture. Skilled listeners possess the ability to interpret a speaker's non-verbal feedback through multiple channels, including their ears, eyes, heart, mind, and intuition. Non-verbal cues, in conjunction with the tone of voice, can either affirm or contradict the verbal message being conveyed. In fact, more than half of human interaction is conducted through non-verbal communication.

According to the data obtained from the interviews, participants expressed that podcast not only provide audio content but also often incorporate visual aids, such as showing the speakers as they talk. This finding aligns with the notion that podcasts can offer more than just auditory information. By including visual elements, such as videos or images, podcasts enhance the overall listening experience by presenting additional non-verbal cues that complement the spoken words. These visual aids enable listeners to observe the speakers' expressions, gestures, and body language, which can further enrich their understanding and interpretation of the message being conveyed. In summary, non-verbal cues, including body language, play a crucial role in communication. Skilled listeners are adept at interpreting these cues through various channels, alongside the tone of voice, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the speaker's intended message (Rahayuningsih et al., 2021). The interview data suggest that podcasts not only provide audio content but also frequently incorporate visual aids, allowing listeners to observe the speakers' non-verbal cues and enhancing their overall comprehension and engagement with the material.

“I personally prefer to use Podcasts where people seem to speak. If the Podcasts also show the video of the speakers, I could see how people talk about it. So, from there, sometimes it's good to listen to it.” (Excerpt 10. Data translated from P1)

From the data above, it can be concluded that to understand the message, non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expression, posture, and tone of voice are needed to get a thorough understanding. It helped them to comprehend more about the subject discussed. Listening process, the listener may employ a variety of behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, to signal the message source about the degree of understanding obtained about a message and the kind of help that the source can provide to improve this degree of understanding (Madero, 2021).

Podcasts Help Students in Evaluating Messages by Speakers

A hallmark of effective listeners is their commitment to acquiring all the necessary information before forming an opinion. They avoid jumping to conclusions based on biases or incomplete data. Their agreement or disagreement with a speaker is not determined by automatic compliance but rather through a thoughtful evaluation process. Effective listeners carefully consider and analyze all available evidence before making a final decision or expressing a judgment, whether verbally or in writing (Bonet, 2001).

To effectively evaluate a message, three key factors come into play: asking questions, analyzing the evidence, and refraining from hasty conclusions. These elements contribute to a comprehensive assessment of the information at hand. By asking relevant questions, listeners can gain further clarity and deepen their understanding of the message. Analyzing the evidence involves critically examining the supporting facts, arguments, and reasoning presented by the speaker. It entails scrutiny and assessment to ensure a well-informed evaluation. Additionally, avoiding premature conclusions allows listeners to maintain an open mindset and consider all perspectives before drawing a final judgment.

In the following excerpts from participant interviews, various perspectives were shared regarding the use of podcasts in relation to the message evaluation aspect of effective listening. These insights shed light on how podcasts can influence the listener's ability to ask thought-provoking questions, critically analyze the evidence presented, and refrain from prematurely

forming conclusions. By providing access to diverse content and expert opinions, podcasts offer listeners a valuable resource for enhancing their evaluative skills in the listening process.

Overall, effective listening involves a deliberate and thorough process of evaluating the message. It requires active engagement, careful questioning, evidence analysis, and a willingness to withhold judgment until all relevant information has been considered. The perspectives shared by participants highlight the potential benefits of podcasts in facilitating effective message evaluation within the context of listening.

“If I don’t focus or don’t understand the audio, I usually repeated the Podcasts but not all the entire content, only parts that aren’t clear can be heard. Usually, if we repeat it, we will focus again, right? well after that I thought again “oh it turns out like this” then continue again.” (Excerpt 11. Data translated from P1)

The data above showed that P1 uses the feature of Podcasts that allows the listener to repeat or rewind the Podcasts if the audio was not heard. Podcasts have features that allow the user to use it to maximize the listening process. Thus, Podcasts allow the listener not to jump to their conclusions. Other data is shown below:

“Oh yeah, to deal with words that are less familiar, I usually listen to them again, stop like that, listen again, repeat, and check again with google translate. Then if you watch it on YouTube sometimes with subtitles, you’ll find the words.” (Excerpt 12. Data translated from P1)

The excerpts above showed that the students have the perception that using Podcasts developed their listening skills to be more effective. They explain that if they did not focus listening to the audio are less familiar with some vocabulary from the speakers, they will repeat the Podcasts or just stop the audio and then search for the meaning using another source like Google translate. This means, Podcasts have contributed to motivating students to be able to learn English independently. The convenience that Podcasts offers, such as 24/7 accessibility, automaticity, simplicity, and portability, allows students to listen to the English language repeatedly at almost anytime and anywhere (Şendağ et al., 2018).

It is aligned with the statement by P1:

“While listening to podcasts, I can also do other activities. Sometimes you also focus on listening, right? Because you can also watch the video while chatting, not just the audio. So, there’s something to see too. So sometimes (listen to it) while doing other activities.” (Excerpt 13 Data translated from P1)

He mentioned that podcasts are an easy to access medium. He can listen to podcasts while doing other activities and access it anytime and anywhere. It allows the listener to have such a self-regulated learning. This self-regulated learning is also essential to develop students’ autonomy, which will further improve their language learning performance (Birenbaum & Nasser-Abu Alhija, 2020; Mudra, 2020; Rezai et al., 2024). To conclude, students have the perception that using Podcasts developed their listening skills to be more effective.

Podcasts Can Improve Students’ Response to The Message Ability

Effective listeners take responsibility for providing feedback to the speaker, thus contributing to the completion of the communication process. They possess a genuine desire to establish a shared understanding between themselves and the speaker. It is the listener’s responsibility to communicate to the speaker that the message has been heard, understood, and appropriately evaluated. To effectively respond to a message, three essential elements come

into play: seeking a common understanding, acknowledging what is heard, and avoiding any form of confusing communication (Bonet, 2001).

When seeking a common understanding, effective listeners actively engage in clarifying any areas of uncertainty or confusion. They strive to bridge any gaps in comprehension by asking questions, seeking additional information, or requesting further clarification from the speaker. This proactive approach ensures that both parties are on the same page and are working towards aligning their understanding of the message. Furthermore, acknowledging what is heard is a crucial aspect of providing feedback as a listener. By acknowledging the speaker's message, listeners convey that they have attentively listened to and understood the content being communicated. This acknowledgment can take various forms, such as summarizing key points, paraphrasing the speaker's ideas, or reflecting on the main message. Through these actions, listeners demonstrate their active involvement and validate the speaker's efforts in conveying their thoughts. Lastly, effective listeners make a conscious effort to avoid sending confusing messages. They strive to convey their feedback and responses in a clear, concise, and coherent manner. By communicating their thoughts and evaluations with clarity, listeners can ensure that their feedback aligns with their actual understanding of the message. This minimizes the potential for miscommunication or misunderstandings between the listener and the speaker. Therefore, good listeners assume responsibility for providing feedback to the speaker, playing an active role in completing the communication process. They aim to establish a common understanding by seeking clarity, acknowledging what is heard, and avoiding confusing messages. These key elements facilitate effective response and feedback, enabling effective communication and fostering meaningful interaction between the listener and the speaker (Abdurashidova & Kobilova, 2023; Picard & Velautham, 2016).

In the following data based on the results of the interviews, the three participants stated that with the use of Podcasts, they felt that Podcasts can improve their ability to respond to messages. Here, the participants express their voice about Podcasts can improve their response to the message ability. To begin with P1:

"Yes, the use of Podcasts can improve my listening skills. Besides being able to help with listening, we also get information from topics that we like, passive learning, maybe we call it. Listening skills from one topic will also be applied to other topics in English as well. So being able to listen to speeches, announcements, even listening to songs is also a benefit so it's easier to understand too, listening to lectures too." (Excerpt 14. Data translated from P1)

P1 stated that by using Podcasts, besides he able to improve his listening skill, he also gets beneficial insight from the Podcasts. In addition, he mentioned that listening Podcasts helped him to be able to listen to speeches, announcements, and lecturers. On the other hand, P2 shared her experience while using Podcasts to improve her listening skills:

"In my opinion, obviously yes, the use of Podcasts can improve my listening skills if it is done regularly and according to our English level. For example, if we feel that our level is still a beginner, we start from a beginner. If it's improved later, using Podcasts with more intense material, and using more advanced vocab can also improve listening. Continue to familiarize yourself with English words, and later if you have good listening, you can influence speaking, etc." (Excerpt 15. Data translated from P2)

P2 stated that the use of Podcasts can improve her listening skills if it is done regularly and consistently. She mentioned that Podcasts provide English content according to personal English proficiency level, so the listeners can choose content according to their abilities. If their abilities have improved, then they can choose to level up. Moreover, she mentioned that if we have good listening skills, it will affect other English skills for instance speaking skills. Last, P3 voiced her perception of using Podcasts to improve listening skills:

“The reason why Podcasts can improve my listening skill, first, maybe we know how to pronounce the words correctly, then apart from pronunciation, the benefits can also be learning to understand what is being said, but also trying to understand the spoken text. That's the thing that stands out the most to me, I highly recommend that people who are interested also practice listening while gaining insight on how to use Podcasts.” (Excerpt 16 Data translated from P3)

P3 felt that the use of Podcasts has many benefits such as how to pronounce English words correctly, learn how to understand the use of the expression in speaking, and attain valuable information. The excerpts presented above reflect the perception of students regarding the beneficial impact of Podcasts on their listening skills. These students outlined four main benefits associated with the use of Podcasts, which contribute to the development of effective listening abilities.

Firstly, listening to Podcasts exposes listeners to a wealth of valuable information and insights related to various aspects of daily life and academic subjects. Podcasts encourage students to gain additional knowledge and insights on specific topics or hobbies (Rahman, et al 2018; Fitria et al., 2015; Widodo & Gunawan, 2019). By engaging with Podcasts, students can expand their understanding and stay informed on a wide range of subjects. Secondly, Podcasts offer content tailored to different proficiency levels in the English language. It emphasizes the importance of utilizing Podcasts in foreign language classes, catering to learners from beginner to advanced levels (Rmelah & Pornwiriyaakit, 2023). Beginners benefit from general listening practice and exposure to a new language, while intermediate learners gain access to authentic materials and exposure to diverse voices. Advanced learners can select Podcasts that align with their specific needs and goals. Thirdly, listening to Podcasts enables students to develop their ability to understand non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, within a spoken context. Lastly, regular exposure to Podcasts enhances students' pronunciation skills. The consistent practice of listening to Podcasts familiarizes learners with English pronunciation and assists them in accurately articulating English words. It highlights that Podcasts offer learners access to authentic resources within non-English speaking contexts, providing a real-life listening experience that benefits foreign language learners (Fatika & Rahayu, 2021; Goldman, 2018). Therefore, the students' perspectives emphasize that Podcasts contribute significantly to the development of effective listening skills. Through Podcasts, students gain access to valuable information, tailor their learning to their proficiency level, improve their understanding of non-verbal cues, and enhance their pronunciation abilities. These advantages, as outlined by the students, highlight the positive impact of Podcasts in the realm of language learning and the cultivation of effective listening skills.

Advancements in technology have become a crucial aspect of our current era, offering convenience and simplification in daily activities (Kristiani & Pradnyadewi, 2021). These developments bring numerous benefits and positive impacts to individuals across various

domains, including the economy, education, and healthcare (Tan et al., 2023). In the realm of education, technology proves advantageous to both learners and teachers. It facilitates the educational process by granting students access to a wealth of information relevant to their learning materials. Moreover, technology offers an enjoyable and effortless learning experience through engaging multimedia resources. Information and technology (IT) advancements enhance interactive learning for learners, providing captivating features to support their educational journey (Jeong, 2018). Progress in information and technology also offers abundant resources for language learning, including the enhancement of students' speaking skills (Al Jilani, 2024).

In the era of globalization, technology plays a crucial role in preparing students to face external competition. Furthermore, the impact of technology extends to the success and sustainability of learning (Ahmadi, 2018; Pradnyana et al., 2022). The preparedness of both teachers and students serves as an important indicator of online learning success (Chistyakova et al., 2017). This readiness can be observed through their ability to effectively engage in the learning process. Teacher readiness refers to their willingness and capability to conduct online teaching, while student readiness pertains to their willingness to actively participate in online learning (Oktariani et al., 2022). The readiness of teachers and students today depends on various factors, including device readiness, motivation, proficiency in online education, communication skills, and self-preparedness (Kustini et al., 2020; Valizadeh, 2021). These factors significantly influence the readiness and effectiveness of both teachers and students in the online learning environment (Abrar et al., 2018; Eppendi et al., 2021). Ensuring access to suitable devices, maintaining high levels of motivation, possessing the necessary skills for online education, including communication skills, and demonstrating self-readiness are all essential components of preparedness.

CONCLUSION

This era offers numerous avenues for enhancing English skills, particularly listening skills, and one of them is through the use of Podcasts. Podcasts are a valuable tool for addressing the time constraints often faced in traditional classroom settings when it comes to practicing listening skills. Developing effective listening abilities requires consistent practice, which can be facilitated by independent work outside of the classroom. Podcasts serve as a medium to strengthen students' listening skills. This study concludes that Podcasts have significant potential in assisting university students in improving their listening skills effectively.

Podcasts facilitate clear message comprehension, provide both verbal and non-verbal cues that aid listeners in interpreting the message more deeply, offer features that optimize the listening process, and provide an authentic experience of listening to native speakers. However, to integrate the use of Podcasts successfully into language classrooms, educators need to be mindful of potential obstacles such as internet connectivity and appropriate listening tools. Based on the research findings, the researcher suggests Podcasts as a medium for independent listening learning. It is important to note that this study solely focuses on university students' perceptions of the use of Podcasts in improving listening skills, using a case study approach. By using podcasts as an alternative teaching tool, language teachers can improve language learners' listening comprehension, promote learner autonomy, build vocabulary and language

structures, stimulate discussion and critical thinking, advance cultural awareness, make use of podcast resources, and adopt ongoing evaluation and feedback. Teachers can create dynamic and captivating learning experiences that meet the varied needs and interests of their students by incorporating podcasts into their language education. For future research, it is recommended to explore students' perceptions of utilizing Podcasts to improve other English language skills. Additionally, involving a larger number of participants would enrich the data collected.

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