



UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD THE USE OF PODCASTS IN ENHANCING LISTENING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by the importance of utilizing digital media to enhance English listening skills. It aimed to investigate students' perceptions of podcast use, the extent to which podcasts improve listening skills, the difficulties encountered, and their role in independent learning. This study employed a quantitative descriptive approach using a Likert-scale questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. A total of 37 respondents participated, but only 33 responses were analyzed. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of mean scores. The results show that all indicators fall into the high category (3.5-4.1), indicating that podcasts have a positive impact on listening skills. However, students still experience difficulties related to vocabulary and speech rate. Overall, podcasts are effective as flexible learning media that support independent learning.

Keywords: Podcast, Listening skills, Students' perception, Independent learning

A. INTRODUCTION

In the field of education, technological advancements have brought about significant changes in the learning process, particularly in language learning (Andriani et al., 2024). Students can more easily access learning materials through digital media without being constrained by time or location (Hidayat et al., 2022). Technology is crucial in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction for providing authentic language exposure, which is often not optimally achieved in the classroom (Zheng, 2024). Additionally, the use of technology helps students learn independently as they can tailor lessons to their own pace and needs (Maghamil & Sieras, 2024). Consequently, technology has played a vital role in enhancing the quality of language learning in the contemporary era.

Listening is one of the key skills in learning English as a foreign language (EFL), which involves the ability to hear and understand speech delivered by a speaker (Nguyen, 2023). Sound recognition, vocabulary comprehension, and interpretation of general context are some components of the listening process (Boltiziar & Munkova, 2024). Furthermore, listening skills are crucial for the development of other language skills, such as reading, speaking, and writing (Bedah et al., 2026). Therefore, listening is an essential skill that students must master when learning English.



Bottom-up and top-down processing are the two main approaches to listening. The first approach processes language starting from its smallest units, such as sounds, up to meaning, while the second approach uses prior knowledge to understand the message as a whole. These two processes work together to help students better understand spoken language (Starowicz & Polok, 2025). However, limited vocabulary, the speed of native speakers, and variations in accents are some of the challenges many students still face when listening (Alamri, 2025). Additionally, another factor contributing to students' inability to listen effectively is a lack of exposure to English outside the classroom (Puspitasari & Dewi, 2023). Therefore, learning materials should provide authentic and consistent exposure to the language to improve students' listening skills.

With advances in digital technology, students can also improve their listening skills by accessing a wider variety of authentic learning resources (Gherdan, 2022). Students can be exposed to English in a more realistic environment through audio and video-based media. This helps them understand various speaking styles and accents (Wang et al., 2026). Recent studies indicate that continuous exposure to authentic language input can enhance language processing, particularly for broad and deep comprehension (Mekheimer, 2024). Listening strategies are essential for helping students understand what they hear. By using strategies such as note-taking, making predictions, and summarizing, students can improve their ability to process information more systematically (Wakuma, 2025). Studies show that students who use active listening strategies have better comprehension than those who do not.

Podcasts, which are a form of digital audio media that present a variety of content such as conversations, interviews, and discussions in English, are one of the most commonly used types of digital media for language instruction (Fitri et al., 2022). Podcasts allow students to listen to authentic English in various communication contexts, enhancing their understanding of language use in daily life. Due to their exceptional flexibility, students can access content anytime and anywhere they choose (Chaves-Yuste & de-la Peña, 2023). Additionally, the replay feature allows students to better understand the material at their own pace, supporting independent and sustained listening practice (Bozavlı, 2024). Podcasts also have the potential to increase students' motivation to learn because their content is engaging and relevant to daily life (Tarihoran et al., 2025). Therefore, podcasts can be considered an effective and flexible learning medium that supports both listening comprehension and independent language learning.

Listening to podcasts can also help students learn how to communicate in various contexts (Perry, 2024). Students can listen to a variety of topics that align with their interests, making the learning process more meaningful and adaptable to individual needs (Gulo et al., 2023). According to other research, regularly listening to podcasts can help students expand their vocabulary and boost their confidence in oral comprehension (Hernandez-Lopez & Mendoza-Jimenez, 2025). However, there are some challenges associated with using podcasts in learning. New vocabulary, speaking speed, and variations in accents often pose challenges for students (Acevedo de la Peña & Cassany, 2024). Additionally, the lack of visual cues while listening to podcasts can make it difficult for them to fully grasp the content (Sevnarayan & Mohale, 2022). Therefore, although podcasts offer various benefits for language learning, their effectiveness may be influenced by several challenges that need to be addressed to optimize students' comprehension.



Previous studies have examined the benefits of podcasts in English language learning, particularly in listening. Many studies have focused on measuring the effectiveness of podcasts using experimental designs such as pre- and post-tests to assess improvements in students' listening skills (Yazmin & Clara, 2024). Other research has also examined how students perceive podcasts and how they impact students' motivation to learn and their understanding of listening (Bozavlı, 2024). Additionally, according to the research, speaking speed, difficulty understanding accents, and unfamiliar vocabulary are some of the challenges students face when using podcasts (Nikbakht & Mazdayasna, 2023). Overall, the findings of this study indicate that podcasts can aid in listening comprehension.

Although podcasts have been used in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) instruction, there are still several research gaps that require further investigation (Luong Thi & Luu Quy, 2024). Podcasts do not always focus on a single aspect, such as effectiveness or perception, so existing research cannot provide a comprehensive analysis of how podcasts can help people learn to listen (Yazmin & Clara, 2024). Furthermore, very few studies combine various factors, such as student perceptions, improvements in listening skills based on perceptions, challenges faced, and self-directed learning (Sabrila & Apoko, 2022). Additionally, research is rarely conducted in Islamic higher education institutions (Yunus & Sri Damayanti, 2024). Consequently, this study offers a more comprehensive approach to examining the benefits of podcasts in teaching listening skills.

Consequently, this study provides a more holistic approach to investigate the benefits of podcasts in teaching listening skills, especially in the context of Islamic higher education institutions. This research investigates the effectiveness and practicality of podcasts in EFL instruction through an integration of different elements such as students' views, listening skill improvement, problems faced, and autonomous learning. This study aims to contribute to the identification of ways in which digital audio media can be developed to better support independent and meaningful language learning.

B. METHOD

To describe the phenomenon under study, this research employs a quantitative descriptive approach, which utilizes numerical data from respondents (Sugiyono, 2021). This method aims to analyze data trends comprehensively without altering the variables. It was used to examine how students perceive the use of podcasts in listening instruction.

Data was collected through the distribution of a digital questionnaire using Google Forms. In the initial stage, participants were asked to answer screening questions to verify their experience with podcasts; those who answered "no" were automatically directed to exit the questionnaire, thereby preventing them from proceeding to the main section. Therefore, the data analyzed comes only from respondents related to the use of podcasts in the learning process.

Students in the English Language Education Program at UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, particularly sixth-semester students, served as the respondents for this study. The criteria used to select respondents were students who had used podcasts as a medium for learning English, specifically for listening practice.



The data collection tool was a digital questionnaire, created with a Likert scale so as to evaluate the perceptions of the respondents towards the phenomenon (Likert, 1932). In line with the context of this study, this instrument was developed by integrating the technology acceptance framework by (Davis, 1989) and the listening instruction theories presented by (Richards, 2008). The questionnaire was made up of 20 statements that were specifically created to help answer the core research questions. This instrument is intended to explore students' perception towards the use of podcasts as listening exercise and to investigate to what extent podcasts can help them improve their listening skills. Moreover, the questionnaire was used to identify particular difficulties or problems the students have in using the podcasts and how the podcasts can support their independent or self-directed English learning. Each statement had five options: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree.

This study was conducted through several systematic steps. In the first stage, the questionnaire instrument had to be created and adapted to the research variables. The second stage involved distributing the questionnaire to students via a Google Forms link. To begin data collection, respondents first verified their experience with podcasts as a tool for teaching English. This stage served as a filter to ensure that the collected data met the sample criteria. Respondents who met the criteria then completed the entire questionnaire. Finally, the data was collected and processed for further analysis.

Next, the collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends in respondents' responses (Sugiyono, 2021). To complete the analysis, each statement item was assigned a mean value. The calculation of the mean was conducted using Microsoft Excel. To facilitate data interpretation, the analysis results were also categorized into high, medium, and low. These results were used to explain students' perceptions, improvements in listening skills, barriers, and the role of podcasts in self-directed learning.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study involved 37 participants who completed the questionnaire. However, only 33 participants met the criteria for using podcasts as a medium for learning English, and the 4 participants who answered "no" to the screening question were excluded from the data analysis.

The study participants were sixth-year English Education students. The participants used podcasts ranging from very rarely to very frequently. The research results are presented in the form of descriptive statistics, specifically as mean values for each item in the questionnaire.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on Students' Perceptions of Podcast Use

No.	Statements	Mean	Category
1	Podcasts are an interesting medium for learning English	3.8	High
2	Podcasts are easy to access and use for learning listening skills	4.0	High

3	Podcasts provide a flexible learning experience	3.9	High
4	The material in the podcast is relevant to listening learning needs	3.8	High
5	Podcasts provide authentic listening material	3.7	High
6	I feel comfortable using podcasts as a learning medium	3.8	High
7	Podcasts help me understand the main ideas in English conversations	3.7	High
8	Podcasts help me understand detailed information in audio format	3.5	High
9	Podcasts help me recognize different English accents	4.1	High
10	Podcasts help me understand pronunciation better	4.1	High
11	Podcasts help me enrich my vocabulary through listening activities	3.9	High
12	After using podcasts, I feel that my listening skills have improved	3.8	High
13	Podcasts encourage me to practice listening independently outside of class	3.5	High
14	I often replay podcasts to improve my understanding	3.5	High
15	Podcasts allow me to learn at my own pace	3.7	High
16	I feel more confident in my listening skills after using podcasts	3.5	High
17	I have trouble understanding certain vocabulary in the podcast	3.8	High
18	The speaking speed in podcasts is sometimes too fast for me	3.7	High
19	The variation in accents in the podcast makes it difficult for me to understand the audio content	3.7	High
20	I need a transcript to fully understand the content of the podcast	4.0	High

Discussions

Students' Perception of Podcast Use (RQ1)

The research findings indicate that students have a positive perception of podcasts as a medium for listening to lessons. Every indicator in this section falls into the “High” category, and students consider podcasts to be easy to use (mean 4.0), flexible, and enjoyable to learn from (mean 3.8), suggesting that podcasts are well-received as a technology-based learning medium.



Theoretically, these findings align with advancements in educational technology that enable students to access learning materials with flexibility that is not limited by time or place (Andriani et al., 2024; Hidayat et al., 2022). One of the main factors driving students' interest in digital media is ease of access. Additionally, exposure to the target language through technology helps students learn more effectively (Zheng, 2024). Here, podcasts serve as a practical and relevant medium for the needs of contemporary learners.

However, this positive perception does not always reflect the actual ease of use. This is demonstrated by research conducted by (Selviani & Ardiana, 2025), which shows that students still struggle to understand the content of podcasts even though the medium is easily accessible. In other words, ease of access does not always equate to ease of understanding. Prior learning experiences, levels of digital literacy, and the frequency of podcast use in learning can all contribute to these differences. It is likely that the students in this study had more experience using digital media, making them feel more comfortable and confident when using it.

Therefore, it can be concluded that not only the positive features of podcasts, but also students' readiness to use technology as a learning tool influence positive perceptions of podcasts.

Listening Skill Improvement through Podcasts (RQ2)

Based on the research findings, it was concluded that the use of podcasts can help students improve their listening skills, particularly in understanding pronunciation (mean 4.1), recognizing various accents (mean 4.1), and grasping main ideas and detailed information (mean 3.7). This indicates that podcasts help students learn to listen more effectively.

Theoretically, listening is a complex skill that involves sound recognition, vocabulary comprehension, and meaning interpretation (Boltiziar & Munkova, 2024; Nguyen, 2023). According to (Starowicz & Polok, 2025), this process is achieved through a combination of bottom-up and top-down mechanisms; students not only process sounds step by step but also use their prior knowledge to understand the context. Podcasts, which provide diverse exposure to authentic language, can support both of these processes in this context.

However, (Hardiyanto et al., 2021) state that listening remains the most difficult skill for students, particularly when it comes to comprehending spoken texts in their entirety. The results of this study contradict these findings. Furthermore, (Vo & Cao, 2022) states that speaking speed and variations in accent are the main obstacles to listening comprehension. These differences suggest that podcasts are not always effective, as their effectiveness depends heavily on the students' circumstances and the material.

Upon further analysis, the podcasts used in this study may have a level of difficulty that is better suited to the students' abilities. This would help them better understand the audio content. Additionally, the podcast's replay feature allows students to revisit difficult sections, which aids in decoding from the ground up. Conversely, selecting subjects related to everyday life can also help students use a top-down approach to grasp the overall context.

Therefore, it is possible that the improvement in students' listening skills observed in this study was due to various factors. Appropriate podcast content, the learning strategies employed, and the frequency of exposure to English may all have been contributing factors.



Students' Difficulties in Using Podcasts (RQ3)

Although the research findings indicate positive perceptions, students still face some challenges when using podcasts. This is evidenced by statements regarding difficulties in understanding certain vocabulary with a mean of 3.8 and speaking speed with a mean of 4.0 which suggest that the use of podcasts is not always free of challenges in listening comprehension.

The theory states that native speakers' speaking speed, limited vocabulary, and accent variations are the main challenges in the listening process (Alamri, 2025). Additionally, a lack of exposure to English outside the classroom is another factor that affects students' listening skills. Podcasts without visual cues can also increase cognitive load, so students must work harder to understand what is being conveyed (Sevnanayan & Mohale, 2022).

The results of this study are also consistent with the findings of (Kennisa Tazkiya Hidayah & Muhammad Handi Gunawan, 2025), who found that limited vocabulary is one of the main obstacles to listening comprehension. Furthermore, (Panjaitan, 2026) states that variations in accent and speaking speed can make it difficult for students to understand audio. This indicates that the students in this study face the same issues as those in previous studies, despite their optimism.

Upon closer analysis, it becomes clear that students still rely on visual cues to understand the audio, indicating that their listening skills have not yet fully developed on their own, particularly in terms of bottom-up processing aspects such as word and sound recognition. Therefore, while podcasts provide exposure to authentic language, transcripts are also necessary to enhance students' comprehension.

Podcasts and Independent Learning (RQ4)

In addition, the research findings indicate that podcasts can help students learn independently, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.5 (the "High" category), and students feel that podcasts allow them to adapt to various times and locations, supporting their independence in learning English.

In theory, technology enables students to learn independently at their own pace and according to their own preferences (Maghamil & Sieras, 2024). In addition to the podcast replay feature, which is accessible anytime and anywhere, students can take control of their own learning process (Bozavli, 2024; Chaves-Yuste & de-la Peña, 2023). Engaging and interesting podcasts can also encourage students to learn more (Tarihoran et al., 2025).

However, these findings do not fully align with the research by (Sulistina et al., 2023), which states that podcasts are not always effective without the right learning strategies. Additionally, (Selviani & Ardiana, 2025) found that students still need guidance on how to use podcasts properly. This suggests that, in addition to the media used, independent learning is also influenced by students' ability to develop their own learning strategies.



Further analysis reveals that the relatively low mean score (3.5) across all indicators suggests that self-directed learning is still needed. Although students may have taken advantage of the flexibility of podcasts, they may not yet be using active learning strategies such as note-taking, making predictions, or summarizing information, as suggested by listening strategy theory (Wakuma, 2025). Therefore, podcasts will be more beneficial if used in conjunction with learning strategies that can help students become more independent learners.

D. CONCLUSION

This study shows that students prefer podcasts as a learning tool because they are easy to use and flexible. Podcasts also help with listening comprehension, particularly in understanding pronunciation, accents, and content. However, students still face challenges such as limited vocabulary and the speaking speed of native speakers. Podcasts also support self-directed learning, though they are not ideal without the right strategies. Therefore, instructors must teach listening skills, students must actively practice, and researchers must develop more diverse and in-depth approaches to produce comprehensive results and provide practical recommendations for the development of technology-based learning in the context of higher education in the future. To generalise these findings, future researchers are highly recommended to investigate other variables which might influence the listening achievement such as students' motivation or anxiety level. In addition, future studies should have more diverse and larger sample sizes in order to provide more generalisable and comprehensive insights into this field.

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