

Students' perception of the use of english podcasts in listening skill to the 4th Semester Students Of English Department At University Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang

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ABSTRACT

Listening is a key component in English language learning, enabling students to understand spoken language and communicate effectively. Recently, English podcasts have gained popularity as a tool to enhance listening skills, offering authentic content, various accents, and real-world contexts. This study explores how fourth-semester students at the English Education Department of University Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang perceive the use of English podcasts in improving their listening skills. A qualitative descriptive method was used, involving purposive sampling. Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, closed-ended questionnaires using a Likert scale, and documentation. Five students participated in interviews, and seven others completed the questionnaires. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

The results showed that students generally held positive perceptions of using English podcasts. They found them enjoyable, flexible, and helpful in improving pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension. Students felt more confident in their listening skills and preferred podcasts over traditional materials due to their authenticity and relevance. Nonetheless, challenges such as fast speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, and absence of transcripts were noted. English podcasts are perceived as effective and motivating tools for developing listening skills. Their accessibility and engaging content make them a valuable resource in English language learning.

INTRODUCTION

Listening is one of the essential skills in learning English, allowing students to effectively understand and engage with spoken language. In language acquisition, listening plays a significant role, as it is the channel through which learners receive input that supports their speaking, reading, and writing skills. However, many English learners face challenges in mastering listening skills due to factors like speed of speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, and diverse accents. As language learning evolves, digital tools like podcasts have become a valuable resource for improving listening skills. Podcasts offer an authentic experience by exposing learners to varied accents, real-world contexts, and natural speech, making them an appealing alternative to traditional language learning methods. Podcasts, as an innovative and accessible learning medium, have grown significantly in popularity, providing learners with opportunities to practice listening at their convenience. The format of podcasts allows students to choose content that aligns with their personal interests, offering flexibility in terms of listening time and location. This form of digital media serves as an effective tool for enhancing comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and exposure to different speaking styles and cultural references. As a result, podcasts are increasingly being integrated into language learning environments to facilitate better listening practices, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students.

While podcasts hold promise in developing listening skills, the effectiveness of this tool depends significantly on students' perceptions of its value and usability. Perception plays a crucial role in the way students approach and engage with learning methods. Positive perceptions about podcasts can motivate learners to incorporate them into their study routines, whereas negative views could deter them from using podcasts effectively. Understanding students' experiences and perceptions of using podcasts is essential to assess their potential impact on listening proficiency.

The primary aim of this research is to explore the perceptions of fourth-semester students in the English Education Department at the University Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang regarding the use of English podcasts to improve their listening skills. This study is important because it not only examines the effectiveness of podcasts as a learning tool but also provides insights into the challenges students face when using this medium. By evaluating students' experiences, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how podcasts contribute to enhancing listening comprehension and how they align with students' learning preferences.

Previous studies have highlighted the positive effects of podcasts on students' language learning, particularly in listening skills. For instance, students have reported that podcasts offer valuable exposure to diverse accents, improve their vocabulary, and increase their confidence in understanding spoken English. However, some challenges have also been noted, such as difficulties in understanding fast speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, and the absence of transcripts for certain podcasts. These challenges raise important questions about how students interact with and benefit from podcasts, and whether these issues affect their overall learning experience. In this study, qualitative methods were employed to gather data through interviews and questionnaires. The interviews focused on obtaining in-depth insights from students about their personal experiences with podcasts, including the advantages, challenges, and impact on their listening abilities. The questionnaires, on the other hand, offered a broader perspective by collecting responses from a larger group of students, allowing for a more

generalizable understanding of their perceptions. By combining both methods, this research provides a comprehensive analysis of students' views on using podcasts as a tool for improving listening skills.

The results of this study will have practical implications for English language teaching, particularly in the context of integrating digital media into the curriculum. If students hold positive perceptions of podcasts, educators can consider incorporating them into lesson plans to enhance listening instruction. Moreover, the findings will contribute to the body of knowledge on educational technology and its role in language acquisition, providing valuable insights into how podcasts can be used effectively in language learning settings. Through this research, the study aims to answer two main questions: how do students perceive the use of podcasts for enhancing their listening skills, and how do they experience the relationship between podcast usage and improvements in their listening abilities? By addressing these questions, the study will shed light on the potential of podcasts as a versatile and engaging tool for developing listening proficiency in English language learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Listening is a crucial skill in second language acquisition, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. It is the foundation for effective communication, enabling learners to comprehend spoken language and respond accordingly. According to Vandergrift (2007), listening comprehension involves not only the ability to hear sounds but also the ability to interpret meaning from those sounds. Successful listening requires the integration of several cognitive processes, such as decoding speech, understanding syntax and semantics, and activating prior knowledge. The difficulty of mastering listening skills in a foreign language arises from factors like speech rate, unfamiliar accents, and the use of idiomatic expressions, all of which can hinder comprehension.

Podcasts have become a popular tool in language learning due to their accessibility and the authentic language exposure they offer. According to Godwin-Jones (2018), podcasts are an effective medium for improving listening comprehension because they provide learners with real-world language used by native speakers. Unlike traditional language-learning materials, podcasts often feature diverse accents, informal language, and natural speech patterns that mirror real-life conversations. This exposure to different speech rates, accents, and colloquial expressions helps learners become more adept at understanding spoken language in its natural context.

The flexibility of podcasts makes them an appealing choice for students with busy schedules. Beetham and Sharpe (2013) highlighted that one of the main advantages of podcasts is their portability; learners can access them anytime and anywhere, whether they are commuting, exercising, or engaging in other daily activities. This flexibility increases the likelihood that students will consistently practice their listening skills, contributing to gradual improvements. The ability to select topics that align with students' interests also enhances motivation, making learning more engaging and personalized (Ryan & Deci, 2020). By choosing podcast topics that are relevant or intriguing, students can stay engaged and motivated to improve their listening skills.

However, the effectiveness of podcasts as a tool for improving listening skills is influenced by students' perceptions. Research by Smith and Johnson (2022) suggests that students' engagement with new technologies, including podcasts, is significantly impacted by how they perceive the medium. Positive perceptions, such as viewing podcasts as enjoyable, engaging, and helpful, increase the likelihood that students will incorporate podcasts into their language learning routines. Conversely, negative perceptions, such as frustration with fast speech or difficulty in understanding certain accents, may reduce students' willingness to use podcasts regularly.

Several studies have examined how podcasts can aid in developing listening skills. For example, Muliasari (2020) conducted a study at Senior High School 5 Bulukumba and found that podcasts had a positive impact on students' listening comprehension. The study indicated that students who regularly used podcasts improved their ability to understand English in real-life contexts, particularly in terms of recognizing different accents and picking up new vocabulary. Similarly, Hanafi and Sari (2022) found that podcasts helped EFL students at the State University of Surabaya improve their listening comprehension, particularly in understanding accents and spoken language used in natural settings. These findings emphasize that podcasts expose students to a variety of linguistic features that are often absent in traditional learning materials.

Despite their benefits, there are challenges in using podcasts for language learning. One of the main issues is the speed of speech, which can be overwhelming for learners who are not yet proficient in the language. As noted by Rahimi and Soleymani (2015), students may struggle to keep up with rapid speech in podcasts, especially if they are not accustomed to listening to fast-paced English. In addition, some podcasts lack transcripts or subtitles, making it difficult for students to verify unfamiliar words or expressions. The absence of transcripts is a barrier to comprehension, as students may be unable to fully understand the material without written support (Gómez & Vargas, 2020).

In addition to speech speed and the lack of transcripts, students may face difficulties in understanding various accents and dialects. According to Sweeney and Tang (2020), podcasts often feature speakers with diverse accents, such as British, American, or Australian, which can present challenges for students who are more familiar with one particular accent. This variability in accents requires students to adapt their listening skills to understand different speech patterns, which may be challenging, particularly for beginners or intermediate learners. However, exposure to these different accents is beneficial in the long term, as it prepares students to understand a wider range of spoken English, thereby enhancing their overall listening comprehension.

Despite these challenges, many studies have highlighted the significant role podcasts play in enhancing listening skills. According to Fatika and Rahayu (2021), podcasts offer a dynamic learning environment where students can engage with content that is relevant, authentic, and motivating. The diverse range of topics, from news and culture to storytelling and entertainment, allows students to tailor their learning experience according to their interests and proficiency levels. By exposing students to real-world language and offering a flexible learning experience, podcasts provide a valuable resource for improving listening skills in a way that traditional textbooks and classroom activities cannot.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the perceptions of students regarding the use of English podcasts in improving their listening skills. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions toward a specific phenomenon. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is ideal for exploring complex phenomena and provides rich insights into participants' lived experiences. The primary aim of this research was to understand how students perceive the effectiveness of podcasts as a tool for enhancing their listening abilities and to identify any challenges they face while using this medium.

The research was conducted at the University Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang, specifically targeting fourth-semester students from the English Education Program. This group of students was selected because they had already acquired basic language skills and were familiar with different methods of language learning, making them well-suited to provide meaningful insights into the use of podcasts. By focusing on this group, the study aimed to capture their perceptions based on their experiences with podcasts in the context of their formal English education.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for this study, as it allows for the selection of individuals who are most knowledgeable or experienced with the phenomenon under investigation (Sugiyono, 2013). Five students were selected for in-depth semi-structured interviews, while seven other students completed a closed-ended questionnaire. The interviewees were chosen based on their regular use of English podcasts as part of their language learning practices. This sampling strategy ensured that the study participants could provide valuable and relevant information regarding their experiences with podcasts.

Data collection in this study involved two primary methods: semi-structured interviews and a closed-ended questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather detailed, qualitative insights into the students' perceptions of using podcasts for listening practice. The semi-structured interview format allowed the researcher to explore a set of predefined questions while also offering flexibility to ask follow-up questions based on the responses given by the participants. This approach helped to capture the richness of students' experiences with podcasts. The interviews were conducted in-person and were audio-recorded for accurate transcription and analysis.

In addition to the interviews, a closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data on students' perceptions. The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," to measure the students' attitudes toward the effectiveness, accessibility, and challenges of using podcasts for language learning. The questionnaire was distributed to a broader group of students to complement the interview data and provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions. The responses to the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively, allowing for the identification of trends and patterns in students' views on podcast usage.

Data analysis followed the qualitative approach outlined by Miles and Huberman (2014), which involves three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

The first stage, data reduction, involved organizing and simplifying the data by focusing on the most relevant information to address the research questions. In this stage, the interview transcripts were carefully reviewed, and key themes and patterns were identified. Data display was the second stage, where the analyzed data were organized in a clear and accessible format, such as tables and summaries, to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusion drawing involved interpreting the data and identifying the key insights related to students' perceptions of podcast use.

The findings from both the interviews and the questionnaire were then triangulated to provide a comprehensive analysis of the students' perceptions. Triangulation is a method used in qualitative research to ensure the validity and reliability of the results by comparing data from multiple sources (Denzin, 1978). In this study, the triangulation of interview data and questionnaire responses helped validate the findings, ensuring that the conclusions drawn from the data were well-supported and reflective of the students' true perceptions. Ethical considerations were also an important aspect of this study. The participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research and were assured that their responses would be kept confidential. Consent was obtained from each participant before conducting the interviews and distributing the questionnaire. Participants were also given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. This ethical approach ensured that the research was conducted in a manner that respected the participants' rights and maintained the integrity of the study.

Result and Discussion

The findings of this study were based on the data collected from interviews and questionnaires conducted with the fourth-semester students of the English Education Program at the University Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. Five students participated in semi-structured interviews, while seven additional students completed a closed-ended questionnaire. The results from both methods were analyzed to explore students' perceptions of using English podcasts to improve their listening skills.

From the interviews, several themes emerged regarding students' perceptions of the use of podcasts. Most participants reported positive impressions, describing their experiences as enjoyable and beneficial for improving their listening skills. For example, one participant mentioned that they found the podcasts "engaging" and that the diversity in accents helped them improve their ability to understand different varieties of English. Similarly, several students reported that listening to podcasts had made them feel more confident in understanding spoken English and recognizing various accents. However, a few challenges were also noted, such as issues with fast speech rates, unfamiliar vocabulary, and the absence of transcripts for some podcasts.

In the questionnaire, which measured students' attitudes using a five-point Likert scale, the results also reflected the overall positive perception of podcasts. The majority of respondents agreed that podcasts helped them improve their listening skills, with 64% agreeing and 20% strongly agreeing with the statement that English podcasts are an effective method for improving listening skills. Additionally, 69% of respondents acknowledged that podcasts helped them better understand various English accents. However, the results also indicated some challenges, with 48% of respondents agreeing

that they found it difficult to understand certain words or phrases in English podcasts. Table 1 below presents the results from the questionnaire.

Table 1: Questionnaire Results

No	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Average
1	I feel that English podcasts are an effective method for improving my listening skills.	4%	0%	12%	64%	20%	3.71
2	English podcasts help me understand the context of conversations in English better compared to other methods.	4%	0%	12%	64%	20%	3.71
3	I enjoy learning listening skills through English podcasts more than other sources such as books or articles.	0%	6%	8%	33%	28%	3.86
4	Podcasts help me improve my understanding of various English accents.	0%	7%	0%	69%	17%	4.00
5	Podcasts help me recognize and understand new vocabulary in English.	0%	13%	9%	25%	30%	3.71
6	I feel more confident in understanding English conversations after regularly using podcasts.	0%	6%	8%	33%	28%	3.86
7	Podcasts train me to understand English in natural, everyday contexts.	3%	0%	9%	24%	44%	3.71
8	I can easily access English podcasts through various digital platforms such as Spotify, YouTube, etc.	3%	0%	9%	24%	44%	3.86

Overall, the data suggests that students viewed podcasts as an effective and flexible tool for improving their listening skills. They appreciated the ability to choose content that suited their interests, as well as the opportunity to practice listening in natural contexts. The challenges mentioned, such as issues with fast speech and accents, did not overshadow the positive aspects of podcast use, indicating that students were still motivated to use podcasts regularly.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal several important insights into students' perceptions of using English podcasts to improve their listening skills. The majority of students reported that podcasts were an effective method for enhancing their listening abilities. These findings are consistent with previous research by Muliasari (2020) and Hanafi & Sari (2022), who found that podcasts contributed to improved listening comprehension by exposing students to a variety of accents and real-life language use. Students in this study also noted that podcasts made listening practice more engaging and enjoyable, which aligns with Ryan & Deci's (2020) assertion that motivation plays a key role in language learning when students find the material interesting and relevant to their needs.

The positive perception of podcasts is further supported by the high percentage of respondents who agreed that podcasts helped them better understand different English accents and recognize new vocabulary. This exposure to authentic language use is crucial in developing listening proficiency, as it prepares students for real-world communication, where they encounter diverse accents, speech rates, and idiomatic expressions. Similar findings have been reported by Gómez & Vargas (2020), who emphasized that podcasts offer students the opportunity to engage with language in natural contexts, thereby improving their comprehension skills.

Despite these positive perceptions, the study also highlighted some challenges that students faced when using podcasts. The most common obstacles included fast speech rates, unfamiliar vocabulary, and the lack of transcripts for some podcasts. These challenges are consistent with the findings of Rahimi & Soleymani (2015), who noted that fast speech and complex language structures in podcasts can overwhelm learners, especially those who are still developing their listening skills. The absence of transcripts, which would allow students to verify and understand unfamiliar words, also posed a barrier to comprehension, as mentioned by Gómez & Vargas (2020).

In addition to speech speed and vocabulary challenges, students expressed difficulty understanding different accents, particularly those that were not familiar to them. This challenge was particularly evident for students who struggled with British accents, preferring American English for its clearer pronunciation. While exposure to various accents is beneficial in the long term, as it broadens students' ability to understand spoken English, it can also be intimidating for learners who are not yet accustomed to the variations in speech patterns. This finding is in line with Sweeney & Tang (2020), who emphasized that exposure to multiple accents can be challenging but is ultimately a necessary skill for effective communication in English.

Another notable finding is the students' appreciation for the flexibility and accessibility of podcasts. Most participants reported enjoying the freedom to listen to podcasts anytime and anywhere, which made it easier to incorporate listening practice into their daily routines. This flexibility is one of the key advantages of podcasts, as highlighted by Beetham & Sharpe (2013), who noted that digital media provides learners with the opportunity to engage with content at their own pace, making language learning more adaptable to students' individual schedules and preferences.

The positive feedback regarding podcasts' ability to make learning more enjoyable and less monotonous also supports the idea that podcasts can motivate students to continue their language learning journey. As noted by Ryan & Deci (2020), intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in language learning, and podcasts, by offering diverse and engaging content, are able to maintain students' interest and enthusiasm for learning. Students who reported feeling more confident after using podcasts regularly also exhibited a positive shift in their attitudes toward language learning, further suggesting that podcasts contribute to building self-efficacy in listening skills.

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the potential of podcasts as a valuable tool for enhancing listening skills in EFL learners. While challenges such as speech speed and accent variation remain, the benefits of using podcasts, such as increased motivation, exposure to authentic language, and flexibility, make them an effective resource for language learners. The results suggest that educators should consider incorporating podcasts into their teaching strategies to provide students with diverse and engaging listening practice. Additionally, offering support tools like transcripts or slow-paced podcasts could help address the challenges that students face, ensuring that podcasts can be used effectively to improve listening skills.

Conclusion

This study explored the perceptions of fourth-semester students in the English Education Program at the University Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang regarding the use of English podcasts to improve their listening skills. The findings suggest that

students generally hold positive views of podcasts as a valuable and effective tool for enhancing their listening abilities. The flexibility and accessibility of podcasts were highlighted as key benefits, as students appreciated the ability to choose content based on their interests and to listen at their convenience. Exposure to diverse accents and real-world language use further contributed to their listening development, increasing their confidence and comprehension skills.

Despite the positive reception, the study also identified several challenges faced by students, including fast speech rates, unfamiliar vocabulary, and the lack of transcripts for some podcasts. These barriers can hinder students' understanding and affect the overall effectiveness of podcasts in language learning. However, students were still motivated to use podcasts regularly, suggesting that the benefits of podcast listening outweigh the challenges. These findings emphasize the need for educators to provide additional support, such as transcripts or slower-paced content, to maximize the potential of podcasts as a learning tool. Podcasts offer a flexible and engaging way for students to improve their listening skills. While challenges remain, particularly in terms of comprehension speed and accent variation, the overall benefits of podcasts in enhancing listening proficiency are evident. This research underscores the importance of incorporating digital media into language learning and suggests that, with appropriate support, podcasts can be an invaluable resource for EFL students seeking to develop their listening abilities in a natural and authentic context.

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