

The Effect of Podcasts as a Medium on Students' Listening Comprehension at English Language and Education Study Program

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*Luqman Nurzamani, Hannisa Haris, Lusi Marleni^{abc} 

¹²³Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai University, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: luqmannurzamani3@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Listening comprehension is a crucial skill in English language learning, yet many university students still face difficulties in understanding spoken texts. This study aimed to investigate the effect of podcasts as a learning medium on students' listening comprehension in the English Language Education Study Program at Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai University. A quantitative approach using a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design was employed. The participants consisted of 23 first-semester students selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. The results showed a significant improvement in students' listening comprehension, with the mean score increasing from 50.61 in the pretest to 76.04 in the posttest ($p < 0.05$). These findings indicate that podcast-based learning has a significant positive effect on students' listening comprehension and can be used as an effective supplementary medium in listening instruction.

Keywords: *Podcast, Listening Comprehension, Specific Information, Gist, Inference*

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INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is a fundamental skill in English language learning, as it functions as the primary channel through which learners receive linguistic input. Effective listening enables learners to understand spoken messages and supports the development of other language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing. Nunan (1998) describes listening as an active process in which learners decode and construct meaning from spoken language, highlighting its essential role in achieving overall language proficiency, particularly in academic contexts.

Recent studies have increasingly emphasized the role of podcasts as an effective digital medium in language learning, particularly in developing listening comprehension skills. Podcasts provide learners with authentic, contextualized, and learner-controlled input, which supports both bottom-up and top-down listening processes. Goh & Vandergrift (2021) highlight that exposure to authentic spoken texts enhances learners' ability to process meaning, monitor comprehension, and develop metacognitive awareness in listening. Furthermore, research by Rahimi & Soleymani (2020) indicates that podcast-based instruction significantly improves learners' listening comprehension and motivation in EFL contexts. More recent findings by M. A. Alharbi (2022) and Artikasari & Anugerahwati (2022) confirm that podcasts contribute to better comprehension of specific information, gist, and inferential meaning due to repeated exposure and flexible access to audio materials. These studies suggest that integrating podcasts into listening instruction aligns with current pedagogical approaches that emphasize technology-enhanced and learner-centered language learning.

Listening comprehension is a fundamental skill in English language learning, as it functions as the primary channel through which learners receive linguistic input. Effective listening enables learners to understand spoken messages and supports the development of other language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing. Nunan (1998) describes listening as an active process in which learners decode and construct meaning from spoken language, highlighting its essential role in achieving overall language proficiency, particularly in academic contexts.

Despite its importance, listening comprehension remains a challenging skill for many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Students often experience difficulties in identifying specific information, understanding the general idea, and making inferences from spoken texts. These difficulties are frequently caused by limited exposure to authentic listening materials, unfamiliar speech patterns, and insufficient opportunities for repeated listening practice Hamouda (2013). As a result, learners struggle to process spoken English effectively, which negatively affects their listening performance.

To address these challenges, recent pedagogical approaches emphasize the integration of technology-based and authentic learning media in listening instruction. One medium that has gained increasing attention is podcasts. Podcasts provide authentic spoken language input that reflects real-life communication, including natural pronunciation, intonation, and speech rate. In addition, podcasts allow learners to access materials flexibly and repeatedly, which supports self-paced learning and reduces listening anxiety Aguilar (2007). According to Goh & Vandergrift (2021), exposure to authentic and meaningful listening materials enhances learners' comprehension processes and metacognitive awareness.

Empirical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of podcasts in improving students' listening comprehension. Rahimi & Soleymani (2020) found that podcast-based instruction significantly improved EFL learners' listening comprehension and motivation. Similarly, (Artikasari & Anugerahwati, 2022) reported that the integration of podcasts in listening classes enhanced students' ability to comprehend spoken texts and increased their engagement in learning activities. More recent research also confirms that podcasts facilitate learners' understanding of specific information, gist, and inferential meaning due to repeated exposure to contextualized audio materials M. A. Alharbi (2022).

Although previous studies have confirmed the benefits of podcasts in listening instruction, research focusing on specific listening comprehension indicators – namely identifying specific information, understanding gist, and making inferences – remains limited, particularly among first-semester university students in Indonesian EFL contexts. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effect of using podcasts as a learning medium on students' listening comprehension at the English Language Education Study Program of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai University. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence supporting the use of podcasts as an effective supplementary medium in listening instruction.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design. This design was used to examine the effect of podcast-based learning on students' listening comprehension by comparing their performance before and after the treatment. The design involved a single group of participants without a control group, with changes in scores used to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

Respondents

The participants of this study were 23 first-semester students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program at Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai University. Purposive sampling was applied, as the participants were taking a listening-related course and were considered appropriate for investigating the effect of podcast-based instruction on listening comprehension.

Instruments

The research instrument was a listening comprehension test consisting of 30 multiple-choice items. The test measured three indicators of listening comprehension: identifying specific information, understanding gist, and making inferences. Each indicator was represented by ten items. The same test format and level of difficulty were used for both the pretest and posttest to ensure consistency in measurement.

Procedures

The research procedure consisted of three stages. First, a pretest was administered to assess students' initial listening comprehension. Second, the treatment was conducted over four instructional sessions using English podcasts as the primary listening medium. The podcasts were selected based on clarity, relevance, and suitability for the students' proficiency level. Learning activities were structured into pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening stages. Finally, a posttest was administered to measure students' listening comprehension after the treatment.

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean scores and standard deviations of the pretest and posttest results. Since the data were not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was employed to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the use of podcasts as a learning medium had a significant positive effect on students' listening comprehension. The descriptive statistics show a clear improvement in students' performance after the treatment, as reflected in the increase in mean scores from the pretest to the posttest. This result suggests that podcast-based learning effectively supported students in comprehending spoken English.

The inferential analysis using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test further confirms the significance of this improvement. The obtained significance value ($p < 0.05$) indicates a statistically significant difference between students' pretest and posttest scores. This finding demonstrates that the observed improvement was not due to chance, but rather the result of the podcast-based instructional intervention. The result supports the effectiveness of podcasts as a supplementary medium in listening instruction, particularly in EFL contexts.

From a pedagogical perspective, the improvement in listening comprehension can be attributed to the characteristics of podcasts as authentic learning materials. Podcasts expose learners to natural spoken language, including variations in pronunciation, intonation, and speech rate. Consistent with Nunan (1998) view of listening as an active meaning-construction process, repeated exposure to authentic audio materials enabled students to develop better strategies for processing spoken input. This finding aligns with Goh & Vandergrift (2021) argument that authentic listening materials enhance learners' ability to monitor and evaluate their comprehension.

In addition, the results show improvement across the three indicators of listening comprehension: identifying specific information, understanding gist, and making inferences. Podcasts often present contextualized content that encourages learners to focus not only on explicit information but also on implied meaning. As suggested by Buck (2001), exposure to meaningful listening input supports both bottom-up and top-down processing, which is essential for effective listening comprehension. The flexible nature of podcasts, which allows learners to listen repeatedly at their own pace, may also have contributed to reduced listening anxiety and improved comprehension.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on the use of podcasts in language learning. Rahimi & Soleymani (2020) reported that podcast-based instruction significantly improved EFL learners' listening comprehension and motivation. Similarly, Artikasari & Anugerahwati (2022) found that integrating podcasts into listening activities enhanced students' comprehension and engagement. The present study extends these

findings by providing empirical evidence from an Indonesian higher education context, particularly among first-semester students in an English Language Education Study Program.

Overall, the findings and discussion demonstrate that podcast-based learning is an effective instructional approach for improving students' listening comprehension. By providing authentic input, flexible access, and opportunities for repeated listening, podcasts support the development of essential listening skills and contribute positively to students' listening performance.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the effect of using podcasts as a learning medium on students' listening comprehension in the English Language Education Study Program at Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai University. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' listening comprehension after the implementation of podcast-based learning, as indicated by the increase in posttest scores compared to pretest scores and supported by the results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. The results demonstrate that podcasts are effective in enhancing students' ability to identify specific information, understand gist, and make inferences from spoken texts. The use of authentic audio materials and the opportunity for repeated listening appear to support students' comprehension processes and engagement in listening activities. Based on these findings, podcasts can be recommended as a supplementary medium for listening instruction in EFL contexts. Future studies are encouraged to employ experimental designs with control groups or involve larger and more diverse samples to further investigate the effectiveness of podcast-based learning.

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