Exploring The Use of Podcasts as Learning Media in Enhancing Listening Skills: EFL Students' Perceptions

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Abstract. This study explores EFL students' perceptions of podcasts media used by English teachers in teaching listening comprehension at an Islamic Senior High School in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. Using a case study design, data were collected from 27 tenth-grade students who enrolled in a listening class through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis, while data obtained from the interviews, observations, and documentations were analyzed thematically. The findings show that students generally held positive perceptions toward podcasts as learning media in enhancing their listening skills. Despite initial difficulties such as understanding native speakers' accents, rapid speech, and limited vocabulary, students overcame these challenges using strategies like repetition, subtitles, note-taking, and translation tools. Podcasts were also used to support improvements in pronunciation, vocabulary, and overall listening comprehension. Students also appreciated the flexibility, accessibility, and engaging content that podcasts offer, which enhanced their motivation in learning. However, some obstacles, such as a lack of consistency and motivation, were also reported. Still, students developed adaptive strategies to stay engaged. This study concludes that podcast media can be an effective tool for improving EFL students' listening skills when integrated with proper guidance and regular practice. The findings highlight the potential of podcasts as a supportive and accessible medium in English language instruction, specifically to foster students' listening skills.

Keywords: EFL listening class; EFL students; Listening comprehension; Listening skills; Podcasts as learning media

Abstrak. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi persepsi siswa EFL terhadap media podcasts yang digunakan oleh guru Bahasa Inggris dalam pengajaran pemahaman mendengarkan di sebuah Madrasah Aliyah di Palangka Raya, Kalimantan Tengah, Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan desain studi kasus, data dikumpulkan dari 27 siswa kelas X yang terdaftar di kelas mendengarkan melalui kuesioner, wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Data kuantitatif yang diperoleh dari kuesioner dianalisis menggunakan analisis statistik deskriptif, sedangkan data yang diperoleh dari wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi dianalisis secara tematik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa siswa umumnya memiliki persepsi positif terhadap podcasts sebagai media pembelajaran dalam meningkatkan keterampilan mendengarkan mereka. Meskipun mengalami kesulitan awal seperti memahami aksen penutur asli, ucapan cepat, dan kosakata terbatas, siswa mengatasi tantangan ini dengan menggunakan strategi seperti pengulangan, subtitle, pencatatan, dan alat penerjemahan. Podcasts juga digunakan untuk mendukung peningkatan pengucapan, kosakata, dan pemahaman mendengarkan secara keseluruhan. Siswa juga mengapresiasi fleksibilitas, aksesibilitas, dan konten menarik yang ditawarkan podcasts, yang meningkatkan motivasi belajar mereka. Namun, beberapa kendala, seperti kurangnya konsistensi dan motivasi, juga dilaporkan. Meskipun demikian, para siswa mengembangkan strategi adaptif untuk tetap terlibat. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa media podcasts dapat menjadi alat yang efektif untuk meningkatkan keterampilan mendengarkan siswa EFL jika diintegrasikan dengan bimbingan yang tepat dan latihan rutin. Temuan ini menyoroti potensi podcasts sebagai media yang suportif dan mudah diakses dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris, khususnya untuk mengembangkan keterampilan mendengarkan siswa.

Kata kunci: Kelas mendengarkan EFL; Keterampilan mendengarkan; Pemahaman mendengarkan; Podcasts sebagai media pembelajaran; Siswa EFL

1. INTRODUCTION

In mastering a foreign language, listening plays a foundational role. It is not only a receptive skill but also a prerequisite for developing other language competencies such as speaking, reading, and writing. In EFL context, listening is formally recognized as one of the four core skills (Arslan & Çifçi, 2024). However, it is often marginalized in classroom instruction, particularly at the secondary school level, where teachers tend to emphasize grammar and reading. This pedagogical imbalance has significant implications for learners' communicative competence.

One of the most prominent challenges faced by students is the difficulty in understanding authentic spoken English. Students frequently struggle with native speakers' accents, fast-paced delivery, and unfamiliar vocabulary. These difficulties are compounded by the lack of exposure to real-life language input and the use of uninspiring and scripted listening materials in many schools. Consequently, learners often fail to develop the necessary strategies for effective listening comprehension.

In response to these challenges, digital media, especially podcasts, have emerged as a promising solution (Carson et al., 2021; Syahabuddin & Rizqa, 2021). Podcasts offer authentic, diverse, and on-demand listening materials that can be accessed anywhere and anytime. Research has demonstrated the potential of podcasts to improve students' listening comprehension and motivation (Harahap, 2021; Rachmaniputri et al., 2021; Al-Mohawes, 2023). They allow students to engage with natural language in meaningful contexts and support learner autonomy. Despite this, most existing studies on podcasts in EFL education have focused on university students, leaving a significant gap in the literature regarding secondary-level learners, particularly those in Islamic educational settings.

This study aims to address that gap by exploring students' perceptions of podcast media used by English teachers in teaching listening comprehension at an Islamic Senior High School in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The novelty of this study lies in its context, an underrepresented pesantren-based school, and its qualitative approach, which captures students' voices through both questionnaires and interviews. Understanding students' perceptions is essential, as it provides insights into how educational technology like podcasts can be effectively integrated into language learning, particularly for EFL students in diverse educational environments.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Listening Comprehension in EFL Learning

Listening comprehension is recognized as one of the most vital and complex skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. According to Indahsari (2020), listening is not merely hearing sounds but involves active mental processes to understand, interpret, and respond to spoken language. It serves as a foundational skill for developing other language competencies, such as speaking and writing. Becker (2016) emphasized that without proper listening comprehension, students may fail to capture meaningful input, thus missing opportunities for language acquisition.

The challenges commonly faced by EFL learners in listening include varied accents, fast speech, limited vocabulary, and the absence of visual cues (Purwanto et al., 2021; Namaziandost et al., 2019). These difficulties are intensified in learning environments that prioritize reading and writing over listening skills, especially in non-native contexts like Indonesia, where listening tends to be underemphasized (Abdulrahman et al., 2018).

Technology Integration and Podcast-Based Learning

The advancement of digital technology offers new pathways to enhance listening comprehension (Starkey, 2020). One such innovation is the use of podcasts, digital audio files distributed via the internet that allow users to listen flexibly across various platforms and devices (Gonulal, 2020). Podcasts provide authentic and varied language input, ranging from interviews and discussions to storytelling and educational news reports.

Samuel-Azran et al. (2019) and Alfa (2020) reported that podcasts not only help learners access diverse topics but also increase motivation and learner autonomy. In the context of EFL classrooms, podcasts offer an alternative to traditional audio media by delivering real-life conversations, clear pronunciation models, and interactive formats that can enhance vocabulary and comprehension (Baguley, 2009)..

Podcast Audio-Assisted Listening and Its Procedure

Podcast audio-assisted listening refers to the intentional use of podcasts to support listening skill development. This method allows learners to listen repeatedly, use transcripts, and pause or rewind content as needed, offering a student-centered approach. As Harahap (2020) explained, podcasts are effective in improving both listening and speaking skills when used consistently.

The instructional design for using podcasts typically follows a three-phase approach: pre-listening (activating prior knowledge and setting purpose), while-listening (note-taking and identifying main ideas), and post-listening (discussion or comprehension questions). This structure allows learners to engage critically and meaningfully with the audio material (Rahman et al., 2018).

Students' Perception Toward Podcast Media

Perception plays a key role in how students engage with and benefit from learning tools. As Qiong (2017) and Abdous et al. (2012) explained, perception involves the processes of selection, organization, and interpretation of sensory information. Positive student perception often leads to higher motivation and learning outcomes.

Research by Jannah et al. (2020) and Lindawati (2022) supports the idea that students' positive perceptions of media used in the classroom, especially those they find engaging and accessible, like podcasts, can significantly improve learning effectiveness. Students who perceive podcasts as enjoyable and beneficial are more likely to use them autonomously and develop stronger listening comprehension skills.

Related Studies

Various studies have shown that the use of podcasts in language learning has a positive impact on students' listening skills. Chan et al. (2020) compared students' perceptions of two podcast-based language learning projects for Korean and Mandarin at the National University of Singapore. They found that podcasts enhanced listening comprehension and learner autonomy, especially when the podcast design matched students' preferences and was supported by teacher involvement. Similarly, Harahap (2020), in a study conducted with English Education students in Indonesia, found that the majority of students had a positive perception of podcasts, as they helped improve their understanding of native speakers' pronunciation and enriched their vocabulary. Rachmaniputri et al. (2020) researched high school students in Bandung. They found that podcasts increased students' motivation, interest, and listening abilities, although challenges such as speech speed and content complexity were noted. In Saudi Arabia, Al-Mohawes (2023) used a quasi-experimental method. They discovered that the use of episodic podcast series significantly improved listening test scores and reduced anxiety among beginner EFL learners at Imam University. In addition, Hasanah et al. (2021) concluded that podcasts were not only engaging and easily accessible but also helped students overcome difficulties in understanding spoken language used by native

speakers. Likewise, Rahmiyati et al. (2021), in their study at SMK Pembangunan Bukittinggi, revealed that 63% of students had a positive perception of using podcasts in listening activities, considering them effective in helping understand English materials more authentically and engagingly.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a case study design (Yin, 2018) to explore students' perceptions of podcast media used by English teachers in teaching listening comprehension skills. The case study method was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon within a real-life educational context (Yin, 2018). The research was conducted at an Islamic Senior High School in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The participants were the 27 tenth-grade students from class 10A, consisting of 12 male and 15 female students. This class was selected because the students were in the early stages of developing their English listening comprehension skills, making them suitable subjects for the study.

Data were collected in the form of quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2009). The quantitative data were gained through the questionnaires adapted from the relevant research. The questionnaire was used to gather general information about students' perceptions of using podcasts as learning media in a listening class. Meanwhile, the qualitative data were obtained from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The interviews allowed the researchers to gain deeper insights into the students' personal experiences and attitudes. The observations were conducted during podcast-based learning activities to assess students' engagement and behavior. In contrast, the documentation, such as teaching materials and student notes, was collected to support and validate the overall data.

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis, and the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and significant findings. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research, data triangulation was applied by comparing information from multiple sources, and member checking was conducted by asking selected participants to confirm the accuracy of the interpreted data. Peer debriefing with academic supervisors further strengthened the validity of the research process.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The data analysis results indicate that most students responded positively to the use of podcasts in listening activities. The questionnaire results showed that 77% of students stated

that podcasts were helpful enough in improving their listening comprehension. Additionally, 40% of students felt that podcasts made it easier for them to follow listening activities, and 37% believed that regular podcast use had improved their overall listening skills.

Furthermore, students expressed preferences for certain platforms and podcast formats. About 47% of students used Spotify as their main podcast platform, while 53% preferred storytelling podcasts, such as *Easy English Podcast*, which they found more engaging and easier to understand. In addition, 40% of students considered podcasts to be more flexible and accessible than other learning media. However, some challenges were reported: 33% of students had difficulty with unfamiliar vocabulary, and another 33% struggled to understand the speaker's accent in the podcast.

These findings were supported by interview data, which provided deeper insights into students' learning experiences. Although they initially encountered difficulties, students gradually adapted and developed independent learning strategies. For instance, one student, RA, stated that using podcasts was enjoyable and helpful because he could replay parts he did not understand. Another student, SA, mentioned that the fast speaking speed was difficult at first, but became easier over time. NA said that she sometimes listened while reading the transcript or guessed the meaning from context. Meanwhile, SY noted that her pronunciation improved because she often imitated how the speaker pronounced the words. These responses reflect that students were not just passive listeners, but actively applied strategies such as repetition, subtitle use, vocabulary note-taking, and digital translation tools.

The observation results showed that students were actively engaged during podcast-based learning. They often paused the audio to take notes or replay difficult sections, and were seen discussing unfamiliar vocabulary or content with peers. Compared to traditional textbook-based listening, podcasts increased students' focus and enthusiasm. The teacher also provided pre-listening guidance to help students grasp the podcast context and encouraged group discussions. These classroom behaviors indicated that podcast integration supported a more interactive and self-directed learning environment.

Documentation analysis also confirmed the effectiveness of podcasts in learning. Students wrote down new vocabulary and translated it into Indonesian, and some kept listening journals summarizing the podcast content. The teacher provided transcriptions, vocabulary lists, and comprehension exercises related to the podcast material. These findings showed that podcast use was not random, but well-planned and integrated into a structured learning design that supported students' understanding and skill development.

Considering all four data sources: questionnaire, interviews, observation, and documentation, podcasts positively contributed to students' listening comprehension. Podcasts provided accessibility, flexibility, and encouraged students to learn independently. Although challenges such as accent and unfamiliar vocabulary existed, most students were able to adapt by applying effective learning strategies. Therefore, when supported by teacher guidance and proper instructional design, podcasts are an effective learning medium for improving listening skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms at the senior high school level.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that most students of the Islamic senior high school in Palangka Raya hold positive perceptions toward the use of podcast media by English teachers in teaching listening comprehension skills. This aligns with several previous studies reviewed, as mentioned in the literature review.

The study by Harahap (2021) also reported positive student perceptions of podcast use, highlighting that podcasts enhanced students' ability to understand native pronunciation, improved listening skills, and stimulated their interest in audio-based materials. A similarity with the current study lies in the use of a qualitative approach, employing questionnaires and interviews. However, this research distinguishes itself by focusing on high school students specifically at an Islamic boarding school, who are in the early stages of developing their listening skills. Thus, it contributes a new perspective within the context of secondary education in Indonesia.

The research conducted by Wai Meng Chan et al. (National University of Singapore) emphasized the importance of podcast design that aligns with student preferences and the critical role of teacher support in maintaining student motivation. Although their study focused on learners of Chinese and Korean, the relevance to this research lies in the recognition of podcasts as flexible and engaging learning tools. The strength of the present study lies in its focus on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, providing an in-depth exploration of their perceptions of a single digital medium—podcasts—used in language instruction.

Rachmaniputri et al. (2021) similarly found that podcasts enhanced students' motivation and engagement in English listening classes. However, they also identified challenges such as difficulties in processing information, students' limited English proficiency, and technical constraints. Comparable obstacles were found in this study, such as initial struggles with native speakers' accents, fast-paced speech, and unfamiliar vocabulary (Hendrawaty, 2019). Nonetheless, students in this study were able to overcome these challenges using strategies

such as repetition, note-taking, subtitle usage, and digital translation tools. This confirms that podcasts are highly adaptable learning tools when accompanied by effective learning strategies.

Nourh Khaled Mohammed Al-Mohawes (2023) employed a quantitative approach and found a significant relationship between the use of audio podcasts and improvements in students' listening test scores. While that study provided statistical evidence, the present study offers qualitative depth by exploring students' perceptions and learning experiences in a specific Islamic senior high school context. This setting, which integrates national curricula with Islamic values, adds a distinctive dimension to the discourse on podcast-based learning in Indonesia.

Overall, the results of this study support the growing body of research indicating that podcasts are an effective medium for enhancing EFL students' listening comprehension. The key advantage of this research lies in its context-specific contribution, in-depth qualitative analysis, and focus on beginner-level students' experiences. These findings pave the way for future studies to explore the long-term effects of podcast use and its integration into the secondary school curriculum across different educational settings in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

This study explored EFL students' perceptions of podcasts media used by English teachers in teaching listening comprehension at an Islamic Senior High School in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The study found that it was perceived positively by the majority of students. Despite initial challenges such as difficulties in understanding native accents, fast speech delivery, and unfamiliar vocabulary, students showed the ability to adapt through strategies like repeated listening, using subtitles, note-taking, and translation tools. Over time, these practices helped them improve their listening comprehension, pronunciation, and vocabulary acquisition.

Students found podcasts to be flexible and accessible, allowing them to listen anywhere and at any time. The variety of podcast content, especially storytelling formats, increased their motivation and engagement in learning activities. Podcast integration not only supported listening skills but also fostered learner autonomy, as students became more independent in seeking understanding and practicing language skills beyond the classroom. Teacher observations and questionnaire results also confirmed these benefits, with most students agreeing that podcast media helped them better understand English material and made the learning process more enjoyable.

Therefore, this study concludes that podcast media can serve as an effective, flexible, and engaging tool in teaching English listening comprehension for EFL learners. The implementation of podcasts in language instruction, when combined with proper scaffolding and consistent practice, can significantly enhance students' listening proficiency. This finding contributes to the development of technology-based learning methods and supports the integration of digital audio resources into English language education, especially in Islamic senior high school contexts.

Although this study has provided valuable insights into students' perceptions of using podcasts in listening comprehension, it is not without limitations. First, the research was conducted in a single class at the listening class of an Islamic Senior High School in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia with a relatively small number of participants (27 students), which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Second, the data collection focused mainly on students' subjective experiences through questionnaires and interviews, without incorporating any pre- or post-test to measure objective improvements in listening comprehension skills. Third, the podcasts used were not standardized in terms of level, topic, or duration, which may have affected students' experiences differently. Finally, the study did not evaluate the teacher's role or instructional design in podcast-based learning, which could significantly influence student engagement and outcomes.

Future studies are recommended to expand the scope by involving participants from multiple schools or diverse educational levels to gain broader perspectives. It is also suggested that future researchers include experimental or quasi-experimental methods to measure the actual impact of podcast usage on students' listening performance quantitatively. Moreover, integrating classroom observation and teacher perspectives would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how podcast media affects the teaching and learning process. Researchers are also encouraged to explore the use of visual-podcast formats (vodcasts) to address the lack of visual elements noted as a limitation by students in this study. Lastly, further research could investigate the long-term effect of podcast exposure on learners' language acquisition and autonomous learning behavior.

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