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Department of Language and English Literature



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Submitted by: Nour El Yasmine **BENRIALA**

Exploring Students' Perceptions Regarding the Use of Podcasts to Enhance their listening Skills

The Case Study of Second Year EFL Students at Biskra University

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Language and English Literature in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Sciences of the Language

Submitted by: Nour El Yasmine **BENRIALA**

Supervisor: Pr. Ramdane **MEHIRI**

Board of Examiners

Mrs. Lamia BENTAHAR	Chairperson	University of Biskra
Pr. Ramdane MEHIRI	Supervisor	University of Biskra
Dr. Nadjat MOUSSAOUI	Examiner	University of Biskra

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Declaration

I, BENRIALA Nour El Yasmine, do hereby declare that the work presented in this dissertation is my work and the result of my own efforts.

Also, I confirm that it has not been submitted to any other institution or university previously.

This research work was conducted and completed at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra.

Full Name: Benrialala Nour El Yasmine

Master Student in Applied Linguistics

Dedication

In the name of Allah, I am grateful for His guidance in completing this work.

*This work is dedicated to my parents, whose love shaped my path, and to the
version of me that kept moving forward.*

To my beloved brother and sisters, you mean the world to me.

May Allah bless all of us with success.

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Abstract

This dissertation explores students' perceptions of using podcasts as a tool to enhance their listening skills in EFL contexts at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. Since technological tools are widely integrated into language learning to support students' language development, podcasts are gaining importance due to their significant impact on learners' language skills, particularly listening skills. The aim of this study is to recognize how students perceive and experience podcast-based listening, what advantages they identify, the difficulties they face, and the podcast-based activities they prefer the teacher to employ when integrated. It was hypothesized that students would be receptive and show positive attitudes toward podcast-based listening, and also perceive it as a beneficial supplement to traditional instruction; however, challenges may vary depending on language proficiency levels. A qualitative research approach was employed, using two data collection tools: a semi-structured questionnaire and focus groups. The findings confirmed the research hypotheses and noted that students hold podcasts in high regard due to their effectiveness in enhancing their listening skills. Also, they reported some difficulties encountered when listening, such as unfamiliar vocabulary, lack of visual support and subtitles. Additionally, students showed preferences for structured and supportive podcast-based activities that align with their learning needs. Accordingly, the effective use of podcasts with teacher guidance, careful selection, and students' involvement, would significantly improve listening skills in EFL classes.

Key words: Listening skills, Podcasts, Students' perceptions, EFL, Podcast-based activities.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

MKUB: Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

RSS: Really Simple Syndication

MP3: MPEG-1 Audio Layer 3

MP4: MPEG-4 Part 14

XML: eXtensible Markup Language

URL: Uniform Resource Locator

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الملخص

General Introduction

Introduction

Technology is widely integrated in today's educational contexts due to its great impact on various aspects of language learning. It has enhanced the teaching and learning process, also, aid in adopting new instructional strategies. Technological tools have become vital in creating interactive learning experiences. Among these tools, podcasts are considered to be a valuable resource for language learning. They are digital audio programs or recordings that cover different topics, including educational contents, news, entertainment...etc.

It is agreed that podcasts have a great importance in developing students' language skills. One of the key skills that they can help develop is listening. Listening is one of the language skills that need to be well acquired for a better communicative competence. It is an essential component in communication, as it enables the learner to understand what others have said, interpret the meaning, and give feedback as a response. In EFL classrooms, educators seek to implement new strategies and integrate authentic materials that help to improve students' listening outcomes. In this context, it is suggested that podcasts might be a solution for this issue as a supplementary tool.

1. Statement of the Problem

Listening skills are essential for students' effective communication and language competency, however, they might find it difficult to develop these skills in regular classroom settings because listening practices are often restricted. Some existing research suggests that podcasts, unlike traditional materials, may effectively attribute to listening skills development.

Despite the previous studies on podcast use in education, and their frequent recommendation for language learning, there is still a lack of comprehensive research into students' own perceptions of podcasts' usefulness for improving listening skills. It is still unclear whether students fully consider them as a useful tool for enhancing their listening

abilities. At Mohamed Kheider university of Biskra, exploring students' perceptions of using podcasts may be helpful for developing effective language instruction strategies based on students' preferences. Focusing more on exploring students' attitudes and experiences, the factors that influence the integration of podcasts into language learning will be uncovered. This can also give teachers useful information that can guide them in implementing podcast-based activities in their lessons and help overcoming possible challenges, which could lead to better listening skills for students.

2. Research Questions

This current research seeks to answer the following questions:

- a. How do students perceive the use of podcasts for enhancing their listening skills?
- b. What advantages do students identify in using podcasts for listening practices?
- c. What difficulties do students face when using podcasts as a part of their listening activities?
- d. Which activities do students prefer to be employed by the teacher when using podcasts to boost their listening skills?

3. Research Hypotheses

The researcher hypothesizes that:

- Students may be receptive and consider podcasts as useful for their listening skills improvement.
- Podcasts may offer many advantages for students' listening and they might encounter different difficulties when using podcasts for listening practice.
- Students may show a preference for specific activities when the teacher incorporates podcasts in the class.

4. Research Objectives

This study aims to:

- _ Explore students' perceptions of using podcasts to enhance their listening skills.
- _ Identify the benefits that podcasts provide and the difficulties students encounter when using them for learning.
- _ See which podcast-based activities students prefer their teacher to employ to develop listening skills.

5. Significance of the Study

The study sheds lights on the importance of podcasts as a supplementary tool in EFL classrooms. It attempts to explore students' perceptions of using podcasts, whether they really argue their usefulness for listening skills development. When students express their attitudes and identify both the advantages and difficulties, it helps teachers to design more effective listening practices with podcasts. Also, integrating podcasts based on students' preferences and their learning needs, this would help in creating an engaging learning environment that supports listening development and encourages a deeper connection with the English language.

6. Research Methodology

6.1. Research Approach

The qualitative research approach is adopted to investigate this study, as it is seen appropriate to collect comprehensive data into students' perception regarding the use of podcasts for a better listening skills development.

6.2. Data Collection Tools

To answer the research questions, the researcher relies on a semi-structured questionnaire and focus groups as data collection tools.

6.3. Population and Sample

For this study, the targeted population is second-year EFL students at MKUB. They are selected because these students are still in a stage of developing their English language skills. They may encounter some challenges, specifically when improving listening skills. Students are expected to deal with authentic spoken English, and that is what podcasts can offer. A sample of 30 students was selected from this population to participate in the research.

7. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of three main chapters. The first chapter entitled understanding listening skills, dealt with definition of listening, process of listening, types of listening, sub-skills and micro-skills of listening in language learning, the importance of listening skills in language learning, factors and challenges in second language listening development, characteristics of a good listener, and teacher roles in promoting and developing students' listening skills in the EFL classroom.

The second chapter presents an overview about podcasts in language learning. It discussed the role of technology in language education, definition of podcasts, history of podcasts, understanding the podcasting process, types of podcasts, educational podcasts and their types, the role of podcasts in language learning: enhancing the four language skills, the contribution of podcasts to EFL listening proficiency: review of existing literature, and reported challenges of podcast use in language learning.

The final chapter presents the field work and data analysis. It analyzes and interprets the data obtained from the questionnaire and the focus group.

Chapter one:

Understanding listening skills

Introduction

This chapter entitled understanding listening skills. It presents a literature review about listening as a language skill. This current chapter discusses specific points, starting with what the concept of listening means, where different perspectives are explored. Next, it explains the stages of the listening process: receiving, understanding, evaluating, remembering, and responding. Furthermore, it addresses the diverse types of listening, including active, passive, empathic, critical, comprehensive, and appreciative listening. The chapter identifies the sub-skills and micro-skills of listening, and highlights its importance in language learning, in addition, outlines the factors that affect this skill. Likewise, it identifies the characteristics of a good listener. Furthermore, it sheds light on the teacher's roles in enhancing students' listening abilities. Finally, the chapter summarizes the main points discussed in the conclusion.

1.1. Definition of Listening

Listening is one of the four essential language skills—speaking, reading, writing, and listening—that learner must master for better communicative competence. Many researchers have proposed different definitions to this concept. Steinberg (2007, as cited in Bingol, 2017, p. 109) stated that: “listening is a process of a person's recognition of the addresser's verbal output(s) by using audial organs”. It is the process through which an individual perceives and identifies spoken language produced by a speaker using their auditory system. It requires recognizing and interpreting the words of the speaker.

Syhabuddin and Rizqa (2021, p.51) mentioned that “listening is a complex interactive process in which the learners interpret what they know and what they hear and then apply linguistic knowledge in the understanding of the message”. In other terms, it is a process that goes beyond merely perceiving sounds. It requires the listener to engage with the spoken input, process it, and derive meaning by integrating prior knowledge with new auditory information.

It also requires applying linguistic knowledge in terms of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and discourse patterns, all of which help in accurately understanding the meaning within a specific context.

However, the listener works to form a clear understanding and make sense of the message based on the surrounding situation. O'Malley, Chamot, and Kupper (1989, as cited in Bahzaz, 2021, p. 8) said that “listening comprehension is an active and conscious process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual information and existing knowledge while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfill the task requirement”. A listener actively constructs meaning by using contextual clues such as tone, gestures, or surrounding information; and their own knowledge to understand the message. They also apply different strategies, like focusing on key words, predicting what comes next, or mentally organizing the information, to fully grasp what is being communicated.

Lynch and Mendelsohn (2013) explained:

Listening involves making sense of spoken language, normally accompanied by other sounds and visual input, with the help of our relevant prior knowledge and the context in which we are listening. Rather than thinking of listening as a single process, it is more accurate to conceive of it as a bundle of related processes, recognition of the sound uttered by the speaker, perception of intonation patterns showing information focus, interpretation of the relevance of what is being said to the current topic and so on. (p. 180)

Moreover, Purdy (1997, p. 8) defined listening as “the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering and responding to the expressed (verbal and non-verbal) needs, concerns, and information offered by other human beings”. After reviewing various definitions of the notion of listening, in summary, listening is not passive, it is an active

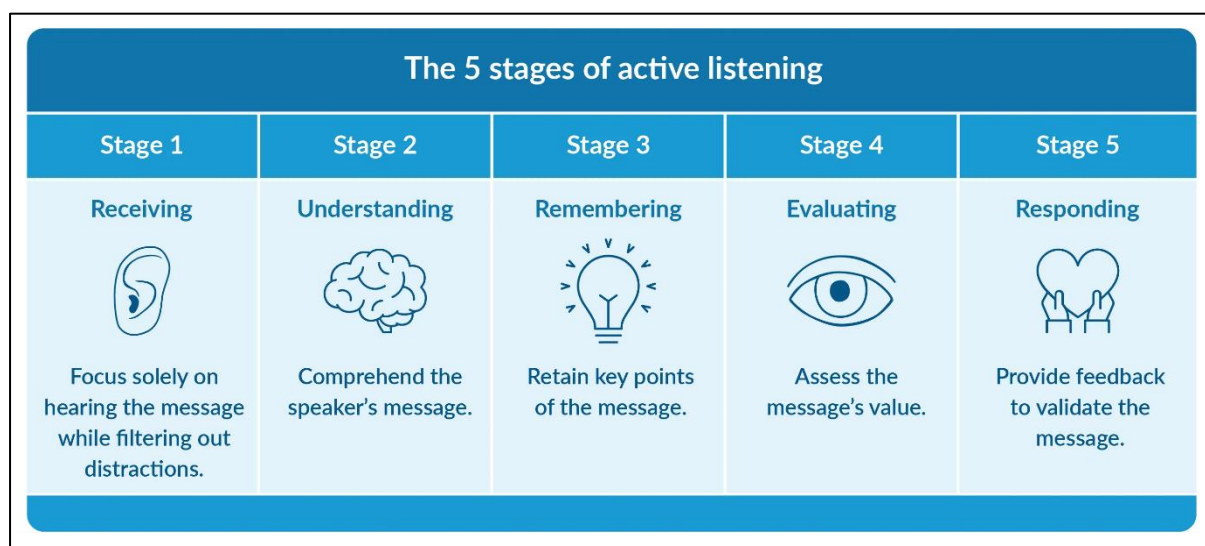
process that requires multiple cognitive stages, enable the listener to reply properly and engage successfully in different communicative settings.

1.2. Process of Listening

It is crucial to understand that listening entails more than just processing the words we hear (Bennetch et al.,2021). Listening is a cognitive process that contains different stages that ensure effective comprehension and response. Author Joseph DeVito identified five stages of the listening process: receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding (DeVito, 2000, as cited in Turner et al., 2022, p. 88).

Figure 1

Stages of Listening



Note. From *Engage your audience: The secret weapon of active listening in presentations*, by S. Sakar, n.d., Prezent.ai. Retrieved from <https://www.prezent.ai/zenpedia/active-listening-in-presentations>

1.2.1. Receiving

Receiving is the initial stage of the listening process, it has to do with the listener's auditory ability in which he perceives different sounds and signals sent by the speaker. Tyagi (2013, p. 2) mentioned that "it is referred to the response caused by sound waves stimulating the sensory receptors of the ear; it is physical response; hearing is perception of sound waves; you must hear to listen, but you need not listen to hear (perception necessary for listening depends on attention)".

1.2.2. Understanding

It is all about decoding the received message, comprehending and interpreting its meaning. In this phase the listener attempts to determine the speaker's intended meaning. Comprehension takes place when both the speaker and the audience share a mutual understanding of meaning, serving as the initial stage of the listening process (Bennetch et al., 2021).

1.2.3. Remembering

It concerns with retaining the key points of the message. According to Tyagi (2013), remembering plays a crucial role in the listening process as it signifies that an individual has not only received and understood the message but has also stored it in their memory. Bennetch et al. (2021) further explained that the remembering stage involves the audience organizing and storing the information they have received from the speaker for later use.

1.2.4. Evaluating

This stage refers to judging and assessing the message's value. "During the evaluating stage, the listener determines whether or not the information they heard and understood from the speaker is well constructed or disorganized, biased or unbiased, true or false, significant or insignificant" (Bennetch et al., 2021, para. 14).

1.2.5. Responding

It is when the listener provides feedback to the speaker to validate the message. In other words, they take the message and react to it by sending their own response. According to Tyagi (2013, p. 2), the receiver completes the process by providing verbal and/or nonverbal feedback, as this is the only way for the speaker to confirm that the message has been received.

1.3. Types of Listening

Listening is a fundamental communicative skill. It serves many purposes, and different situations require different types of listening (Turner et al., 2022, p. 92). Arootah (2023) outlined five main types, each type differs from the other: active listening, passive listening, selective listening, empathetic listening, and finally attentive listening.

1.3.1. Active Listening

It goes beyond simply hearing words. It requires concentration, understanding, engagement and interaction. The listener actively engages with the speaker, shows interest, questions, responds and gives feedback. As stated by Bennetch et al. (2021), the concept refers to a communication technique in which the listener responds to the speaker by restating or paraphrasing the message in their own words. This process aims to confirm the listener's understanding and ensure both parties share the same interpretation.

1.3.2. Passive Listening

Passive listening is another type; it is less interactive than active listening; where the listener just listens and pays attention to the speaker's talk with no given feedback, participation, or engagement.

1.3.3. Selective Listening

It is a partial listening, where the listener focusses on specific parts and forgets the other details. "It involves in listening to a few selective things which you require to listen to or you

think important and ignore the balance of speech or message (Raju, 2018, p. 43). For instance, when the teacher gives feedback to the student regarding their work, but they only pay attention to the compliments and ignore the critical feedback for more improvement.

1.3.4. Empathetic Listening

It refers to paying attention and focusing on understanding the emotions and feelings of the speaker. It has been argued by Raju (2018) that the listener experiences the feelings and emotions of the speaker, rather than just listening to the words.

1.3.5. Attentive Listening

Attentive listening involves carefully focusing on the speaker's words and remembering what is said. Yet, this does not mean that they truly understood the directed message. The listener may miss the speaker's intended meaning or understands their emotions.

Perry (2024) added other types of this skill: critical, comprehensive, and appreciative listening.

1.3.6. Critical Listening

It is all about judging, evaluating and criticizing what the speaker have said. It refers to thinking carefully, analyzing, making sense and evaluating the message. Lundsteen (1963:18, as cited in Azizoglu & Okur, 2023, p. 1) defines critical listening as "criticizing a narrative, comparing ideas, making decisions, and applying them within the framework of objective evidence on the subject".

1.3.7. Comprehensive Listening

Another type of listening, refers to understanding the full meaning of the speaker's message. Taking into consideration the context of the conversation, focusing on the speaker's tone and understanding not only the words meaning, but also the non-verbal or

body language. Raju (2018) argued that postures and gestures are essential in understanding language and the messages being conveyed.

1.3.8. Appreciative Listening

Wolvin and Coakley stated that listening is “the highly individualized process of listening in order to obtain sensory stimulation or enjoyment through the works and experiences of others” (Waack, 1987, p.78). listening for enjoyment or a pleasure like music, a story, or a speech...

1.4. Sub-skills and Micro-skills of Listening in Language Learning

Effective language learning requires mastering all aspects of language skills. In simple terms, learners should not focus on one skill alone, yet, they have to improve all of these skills together: speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, it is important to be aware that each skill also includes sub-skills. In this case, taking listening and its sub-skills as an example.

Generally, listening has an essential role in enhancing language learning. Nevertheless, it involves other sub-skills that enables the learner to understand spoken language and perform successfully. Thaine (2021, para. 3) explained that in listening lessons, learners can practice different subskills including: listening for gist, listening to infer information (e.g., the speaker's point of view), listening for detail, listening for text or discourse patterns, scan listening, and listening for language items. All of these skills contribute to a learner's overall listening proficiency.

From a more detailed perspective, Rost (1990, as cited in Lynch & Mendelsohn, 2013, pp. 185-186) divided listening into micro-skills in terms of two categories: “enabling skills: perception and interpretation”, those employed to perceive what the speaker is saying and to interpret what they intend to mean, and “enacting skills: response”, employed to respond appropriately to the message. These skills contribute to better listening, as they involve

recognizing the speech patterns, decoding, interpreting, understanding the message, till responding meaningfully. In a classroom context, students apply these micro- skills, for example, when the teacher plays an audio recording and asks students to listen and then answer on certain question. They begin processing the received information, interpreting and comprehending it, and they come to answering the question which is reflected as a response.

Table 1*Micro-Skills Clusters of Listening Comprehension*

Skill Category	Skill Type	Micro-skills
Enabling skills	Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognizing prominence within utterances, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discriminating sounds in words (e.g., phonemic contrasts) • Discriminating strong and weak forms, phonetic changes at word boundaries • Identifying stress and pitch (e.g., information units, emphasis)
	Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formulating content sense of an utterance, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words • Inferring implicit information • Inferring links between propositions ▪ Formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing discourse markers (e.g., clarifying, contrasting) • Constructing a theme over discourse • Predicting content • Identifying elements that form an overall schema • Maintaining and updating context ▪ Interpreting speaker intentions, including : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying interpersonal frames • Monitoring prosody for consistency • Noting contradictions or ambiguities • Differentiating fact from opinion
Enacting Skills	Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Making appropriate responses based on the skills above, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting key points • Transcoding information (e.g., note-taking) • Identifying unclear points • Integrating with other sources • Providing feedback to the speaker

Note. Adapted from Rost (1990, pp. 152–153), as cited in Lynch & Mendelsohn (2013, p. 186).

1.5. The Importance of Listening Skills in Language Learning

Listening is the first step in acquiring, processing, and understanding any new language. As it was mentioned before, listening encompasses different sub-skills, which help learners receive, process, and better understand what is being heard. It is agreed that these skills are crucial, as they form the basis for effective communication. They have great importance in language learning, playing a key role in interacting effectively with others. Referring back to statistics provided by Feyten (2010, as cited in Abdulrahman et al., 2018, p. 25), listening as a language skill is used more than 45% in communication, indicating its significance in human language. Furthermore, Rost (1994, pp. 141–142 as cited in Nunan, 2002, p.239) pointed out, “listening is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner. Without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin. Listening is thus fundamental to speaking.”

Furthermore, listening skills can promote active engagement and deep comprehension in the teaching and learning process. They encourage students to participate and engage with the instructor in the class; when the listener is actively listening, they can focus, comprehend and give feedback. Active listening may foster critical thinking, as it helps acquire new vocabulary, as well as improves speaking through listening to various accents. Latha (2018, p. 1) argued that students who are highly engaged in listening learn more efficiently, make sounder judgments, and make better decisions based on what they hear.

Despite the importance and benefits of listening in the learning process, it might be difficult to master.

1.6. Factors and Challenges in Second Language Listening development

Anderson and Lynch (1987, as cited in Rubtcova & Varlamova, 2019, pp. 192_193) noted that second language listening is confronted by number of difficulties and identifies four main difficulties listener encounter:

1. the listener may not hear adequately what has been said due to competing back-ground noise, unfamiliarity with the speaker's accent.
2. Speech may contain words and phrases that the listener can hear adequately but is unable to understand because of serious problems with the syntax or semantics of the foreign language.
3. There are times pans when the listener is perfectly able to hear and understand the speaker, but may have switched off consciously or unconsciously.
4. There are those messages which the listener attends to fully and from which he tries to construct a coherent interpretation. The latter situation is an example of maximally cooperative listening, in the sense that the listener is both able and willing to play his part in the reciprocal activity of communication.

In language learning settings, developing listening skill can be affected by different factors. According to Syahreza et al., (2019, p. 158), these factors stem from numerous challenges encountered during the process of listening. Teng (2002, as cited as in Chao, 2013) said that there are two factors affecting listening comprehension: internal and external.

Internal factors refer to the inner challenges that might hinder the listener's ability to understand, such as interest and motivation. For instance, if the topic being discussed is irrelevant, they may feel uninterested and demotivated, leading to reduced attentiveness. Likewise, deficiencies in auditory perception and the inability to retain information can

influence listening. Furthermore, when a listener is stressed or anxious, this can negatively impact listening performance.

External factors can be demonstrated by the speaker's tone, intonation, and speed. When a speaker communicates in a complex manner, such as speaking quickly or using sophisticated vocabulary, listeners may find it difficult to understand the message. Research conducted by Hamouda (2013, as cited in Shah Reza et al., 2019) at Qassim University identified various listening problems in listening comprehension, such as speed rate, unfamiliar words, the length of the spoken text, a variety of accents, lack of concentration and pronunciation. Additionally, the environment in which communication occurs can significantly impact listening skill. For example, a noisy and distracting physical setting can make it harder for listeners to focus and comprehend the message being conveyed.

1.7. Characteristics of a Good Listener

Active listening is essential for producing a complete, meaningful, and effective human communication. As mentioned before, listening is more than just hearing the words, it requires understanding, engagement and giving feedback. Hattingh (2013, p. 11) believed that teachers are responsible for encouraging learners to take charge of their language development, but also, they have to be active participants in listening, both for comprehension and acquisition. However, not any listener is a good one. This latter is characterized by different traits that collectively enhance communication. A good listener always focuses on developing their listening skills and communicative efficiency. Moreover, a good listener is active, motivated, as well as adopts new listening strategies.

Research findings of Takkac and Akdemir (2015) investigation of the characteristics of language learners and listeners presented several characteristics including:

- Respectfulness. Is a quite dominant characteristic of the listeners whether the speaker is their teacher or their classmates or even a foreigner.
- Interrupting is an indicator of being a poor listener. Being a non-interruptive and caring, even if when the topic is not interesting or not attractive, is a feature of a good listener.
- Being a participatory and responsive listener was one of the main behaviors of a good listener. Giving feedback was seen as an indicator of comprehension.

Purdy and Newman (1999, as cited in Takkac & Akdemir, 2015, p. 117) outlined different characteristics of a good listener. The latter uses eye contact appropriately, attentive to speaker's verbal/nonverbal behavior, patient and does not interrupt, responsive using verbal/non-verbal expressions, asks questions, paraphrases/restates/summarizes what the speaker says, provides constructive feedback, works to understand the speaker (is empathic), does not criticize, is nonjudgmental. Finally, a good listener is open-minded.

1.8. Teacher Roles in Developing Students' Listening Skills in the EFL Classroom

Effective communication remains a necessary skill for student success. Listening skills are gaining more significance in foreign language classrooms, due to their role in promoting understanding and active interaction. Many language learners often consider listening to be one of the most challenging aspects of language acquisition. Developing strong listening abilities requires not only personal effort but also effective guidance and encouragement from the teacher.

The teacher plays a crucial role in enhancing students' listening skills. Morley (as cited in Khan & Karim, 2014, p. 38) argues that students need to recognize that listening is an active skill, not a passive one. It is, therefore, the teacher's responsibility to help students understand that improving their listening skills requires as much effort as mastering reading, speaking, and writing. An instructor can encourage this view by incorporating different active techniques into

their courses. They have to create a supportive environment where these skills could be developed. Establishing a classroom atmosphere that encourages students to communicate and give feedback. Similarly, implementing interactive activities and varied listening exercises, such as using group and peer discussions, debates as well as integrating technological tools could help the teacher in fostering improvement. As stated by Underwood (1989, pp. 21- 22, as cited in Hue, 2019, pp. 274-275) “in listening classes, a teacher needs to be imaginative and creative in developing their teaching methods to develop good atmosphere and make English lessons more exiting. In this way, the listening teacher has to be able to create interesting materials for the students in the process of teaching and they have to know how to apply them”. They can use different audio-visual aids like audiobooks, and other interactive apps to offer them with various listening experiences. Rost (2011, as cited in Hattingh, 2013, p.7) suggested a method for teaching listening that involves carefully choosing the input sources: appropriate, authentic resources that are engaging, diverse and challenging. It is the teachers’ job to well choose the proper teaching materials that align with the students’ interests, abilities, taking into consideration both their academic level and language proficiency. More importantly, during the teaching and learning process, educators need to assess, change, and apply new teaching methods that may ensure effective learning experiences and improve students’ outcomes.

Furthermore, as pointed out by Hattingh (2013):

Teachers may find that the motivation for learning may be bolstered when the students feel released from immediately having to do lots of speaking. They might feel more comfortable and motivated in a class that has a strong complement of listening activities. Language teachers need to recognize the importance of listening for its role in language learning and the confidence it gives the beginner learner. (p.4)

Conclusion

In conclusion, listening is an essential skill that involves multiple stages and types, in addition to the various micro-skills, all contributing to effective communication and comprehension. It is particularly important in language learning, as it facilitates the acquisition and processing of information. Teachers play an important role in enhancing students' listening abilities by implementing effective strategies and fostering a supportive learning environment. Strengthening listening skills not only improves communication but also enhances academic performance and overall understanding in different contexts.

Chapter Two

Podcasts in Language Learning

Introduction

The current chapter presents an overview about podcasts in language learning. It discusses the role of technology in language education, definition and history of podcasts, explains the podcasting process, and the three types podcasts: audio-podcasts, video-podcasts, and enhanced podcasts. Then, the chapter discusses educational podcasts and their various types, in addition to how podcasts contribute to enhance language skills. It emphasizes the role of podcasts in improving students' listening skills. Besides, it elucidates some challenges and limitations of using podcasts for language learning based on existing research.

2.1. The Role of Technology in Language Learning

Technology is an essential aspect in our current time. It influenced diverse domains, including education. The spread of technology has changed the way we teach, acquire, and learn a language. It has become very important, as it helps to create a more engaging and effective learning environment. It has not only facilitated the learning process, but it has also introduced advanced teaching methods and enhanced autonomous learning. Hakverdi-Can and Dana (2012, as cited in Hechter et al., 2012, p. 2) believed that teachers integrate technology into teaching and learning for various reasons, such as promoting student engagement, developing 21st-century skills, adopting best teaching practices, staying current, enabling hands-on interactive learning, varying instructional methods, conducting labs and demonstrations, and facilitating research and communication.

Overall, the integration of technology in education enhances interactive learning experiences, as well as enables educators to tailor instruction and support diverse learning styles for better students' outcomes.

2.2. What is a podcast?

Podcast is a new technological tool; it can be defined as an audio program that listeners can access anytime and anywhere. It is an audio file or a record available on media platforms, often discusses different subjects or themes. The Oxford learner's pocket dictionary defined a podcast as "recording of something that you can download from the internet and listen to on a computer or MP3 player" (Oxford University Press, 2008). The word podcast was derived from the two concepts "iPod and "Broadcast" (Sinha, 2022).

Furthermore, podcasts are series of audio and video episodes that cover various themes, allowing for ongoing engagement with listeners. Users can access and listen to these files easily on platforms such as google podcasts, Spotify, YouTube, Apple podcasts...etc. Besides, podcasts target to deliver several contents, for instance: interview, storytelling, news, entertainment, and even educational subjects. Podcasts have become spaces for creative and artistic content. As McGregor (2022, para. 2) noted, they serve as "sites of new artistic creation—including documentaries, fiction, and scripted or improvisational comedy—as well as sites of critical conversation organized around fandoms, media properties, reading communities, and more."

Figure 2

What is a Podcast?



Note. From *What Are Podcasts?*, by Jenkins, 2020, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, <https://news.va.gov/82090/what-are-podcasts>.

2.3. History of Podcast

In the 1980s, podcasting was first known as “audio blogging”. Later, it was referred to as ‘net casting’ before eventually adopting the term we use today. However, the term ‘podcast’ was first introduced by journalist Ben Hammersley in a 2004 article for The Guardian, where they talked about the growing popularity of audio content on the internet (Selwood, 2014).

Podcasting has continued to develop regularly over the years. Rather than fading away, the medium has expanded both in terms of content creators and audience engagement. Podcasts saw a significant increase in popularity between 2008 and 2015. Bottomley (2015, p. 2) stated that by 2013, it was estimated that more than 250,000 unique podcasts were available online, providing a large collection of more than eight million episodes in over 100 languages (Williams, 2013). This growth trend continued, with the number of podcasts rising to approximately 285,000 by early 2015 (O’Connell, 2015). These numbers highlight the increasing importance of podcasting as a dynamic and accessible means for sharing information, narratives, and entertainment.

The history of podcasts demonstrates their evolution into a powerful technological tool for diverse functions.

2.4. Understanding The Podcasting Process

The term podcasting refers to the whole process of making and creating a podcast, either audio or a video podcast. Meng (2005, as cited in Sinha, 2022) mentioned that podcasting refers to “the process of recording an audio event, song, voice, or combination of sounds and uploading that digital sound object to a website or blog in an RSS 2.0 envelope (or feed)” (p.

1659). In this regard, RSS stands for “Really Simple Syndication”, it allows websites to share and distribute their updated contents, like news, podcast episodes, blogs...etc. According to Colby’s (2022) view, RSS feeds have served as the core technology supporting podcasting. The researcher defined it as “an XML file that stores the data about the podcast and links to the place where the actual audio files themselves are stored”.

The process of making and publishing a podcast encompasses four phases, as they are classified by Colby (2022) into create, upload, submit, and listen. In the creation phase, involves recording the content, editing for clarity or removing mistakes, adding elements such as sounds or effects, and when it is done, the episode is saved as a file that can be easily shared and played (in an MP3). Next, is uploading the audio file to a podcast hosting platform such as Anchor, Libsyn, and Buzz sprout. After this, an RSS feed is created automatically. Then, to ensure that the episodes are accessible and directed to listeners, the RSS feed URL have to be shared and submitted to directories like Spotify and google podcasts.

2.5. Types of podcasts

Podcasts have become a popular technological tool with several formats, according to Trevor (2007, Abdeddaim, 2013), there are three types of podcasts: audio podcasts, video podcasts, and enhanced podcasts.

2.5.1. Audio Podcasts

Audio podcasts are usually in the form of an MP3 file. They consist only on audio contents. They are characterized by:

- Audio podcasts occupy small space for storage to be downloaded on a portable or static device (Bahzaz, 2021).
- Effortlessly accessible on many streaming platforms.
- Easy to be produced.

2.5.2. Video Podcasts

Video podcast or “vodcast “, it is a type of podcasts that includes both audio and visual elements, allowing viewers to both watch and listen at the same time. It can be found on media platforms such as You Tube. Unlike the audio podcasts, video podcasts are more engaging due to visual elements.

Figure 3

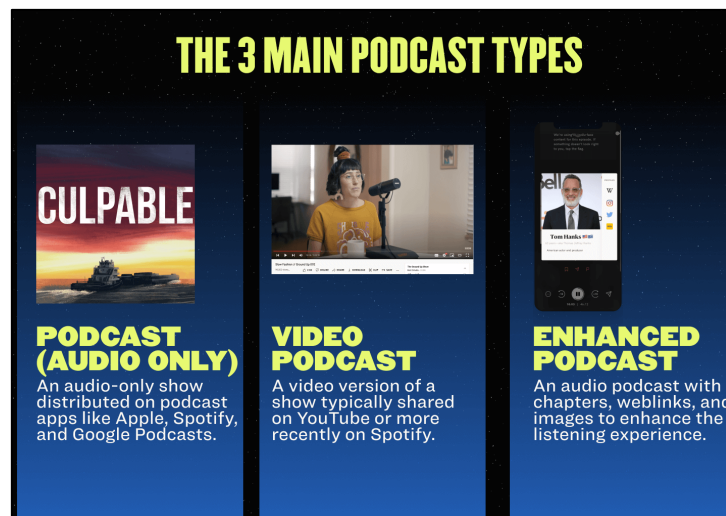
Difference between audio and video podcasts



Note. From *Video podcasting: 9 crucial steps to launch your own show*, by Donovan, 2024. (<https://www.uscreen.tv/blog/video-podcasting/>).

2.5.3. Enhanced Podcasts

Enhanced podcasts are hybrid type of podcasts. They are a type of audio podcasts that include interactive multimedia elements along with the audio such as images, slides, links, charts and even videos to enrich the listening experience. Often used for educational content. They usually take the form of MP4 format (Hassen, 2016).

Figure 4*Types of Podcasts*

Note. From *What is a podcast? (Everything you need to know)*, by Colby, 2022, Resound.fm (<https://www.resound.fm/blog/what-is-a-podcast>).

2.6. Educational Podcasts

Educational podcasts are podcasts formats created to help learner to learn the language better. They share knowledge, clarify concepts, or can be used to offer additional support for lessons, making learning easier and flexible. Tely (2025) defined educational podcasts as “specialized audio programs that significantly enhance learning by providing accessible and engaging content across a variety of educational topics” (para.1).

Additionally, Kim and Reeves (2007, p. 217, as cited in Drew, 2017, p. 202) noted that educational podcasts act as “cognitive tools” by not only enhancing e-learning environments but also complementing a learner’s cognition, which in turn supports deep learning online. Therefore, the major aim of these informative contents is to enhance the learning experiences, as well, they may be helpful for teachers likely because they serve as a supplementary teaching material that may affect their language learning development. As mentioned by Tely (2025),

they can be delivered in various formats, like interview-style education podcast, narrative-driven audio programs narratives, or as conversational formats within education podcasts. They added “By engaging with this education podcast, educators can gain insights directly applicable to their practice, thereby bridging the gap between technology and advanced learning” (para. 20).

2.7. Types of Educational Podcasts

Educational podcasts take different formats and come in various types. Sinha (2022, p. 1660) categorized these types into: lecture podcasts, supplementary podcasts, integrated podcasts, summary podcasts, primer podcasts, and student podcasts.

2.7.1. Lecture Podcasts

They refer to the recordings of classroom lectures or lessons which are set up by the teacher delivered to students. Harris and Park (2007, as cited in Palenque, 2016) suggested that Teaching-driven podcasting, is one of the characteristics of educational podcasting in institutions of higher learning (p. 5). This type of podcasts is available online usually on YouTube channels for students either in case of missed classes or additional review. Based on Hew's (2009, as cited in O'Bannon et al., 2011) reports, the instructor uses podcasting to duplicate the classroom lectures, to share additional information with students, or to introduce or prepare the learner for new information that will be covered during the subsequent class period(s) (p. 1886).

2.7.2. Supplementary Podcasts

These podcasts are made to provide additional explanation outside the classroom. They give the opportunity for further discussions of the lesson, specifically to expand information about what have been learnt in the class. Sinha (2022) explained, “they are made to supplement already-existing lectures and learning resources and to offer more in-depth or extended analysis

of a subject. These may be created by the instructors of the courses, or students may be led to other pertinent internet podcasts” (1660).

2.7.3. Integrated Podcasts

As described by Sinha (2022), they take the format of conversations between experts from various fields or knowledgeable people who discuss interesting topics related to a course. Schools or teachers can create these podcasts by bringing in coworkers, collaborators, and guests to record conversations, which may help students learn by providing different viewpoints and aid to enrich their learning experience through important discussions. O'Reilly (2021) stated that “most academics enjoy talking about their areas of research and with a little planning, recordings of these fruitful conversations can offer students new or alternate insights into the academic discussions around their disciplines” (para. 9).

2.7.4. Summary Podcasts

In simple terms, these podcasts are created to review key points of a lecture, a lesson, or any different topic. Sinha (2022) noted when outlining educational podcasts that summary podcasts are “used to summarize a lecture or a particular subject of study's main ideas” (p. 1660).

2.7.5. Primer Podcasts

This type of educational podcasts primarily aims to update students with the upcoming lectures, in a way of giving background or basic understanding of what is going to be discussed in the next session. They also make the students aware of the work projects, assignments, or event tests.

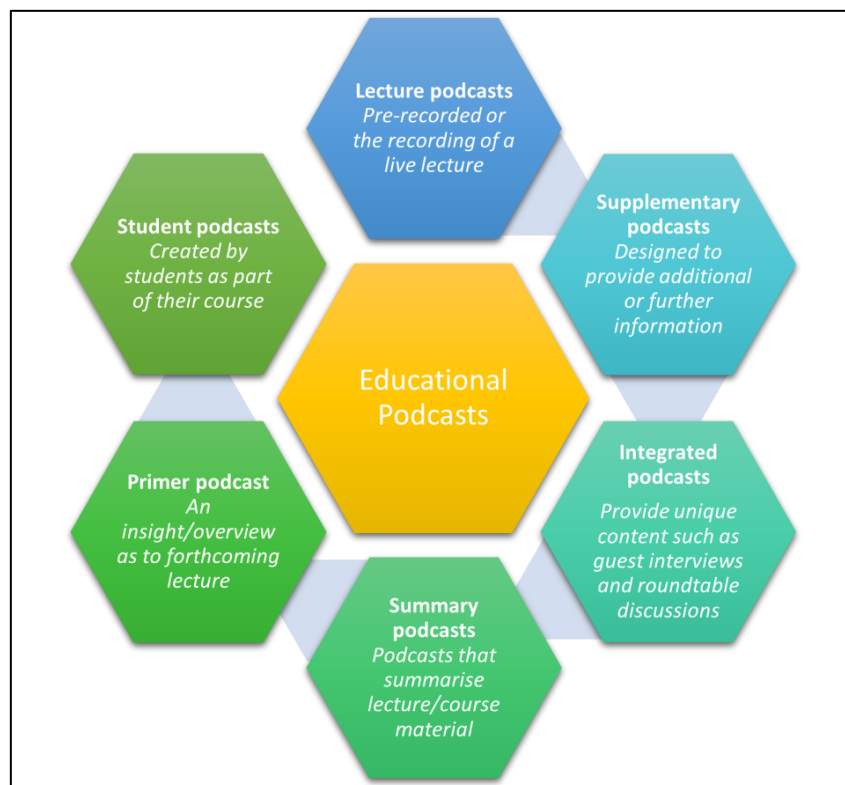
2.7.6. Student Podcasts

They are podcasts created by students to afford learning objectives either academic assignments or group projects. Jolley (2022, para. 1) stated that this practice can contribute to

developing students' learning development skills “such as: research, collaboration, criticality, debating, and presentation skills alongside digital and creative skills such as script writing and audio editing, combining theoretical critical thinking and reflection within a digital and interactive medium”.

Figure 5

Types of Educational Podcasts



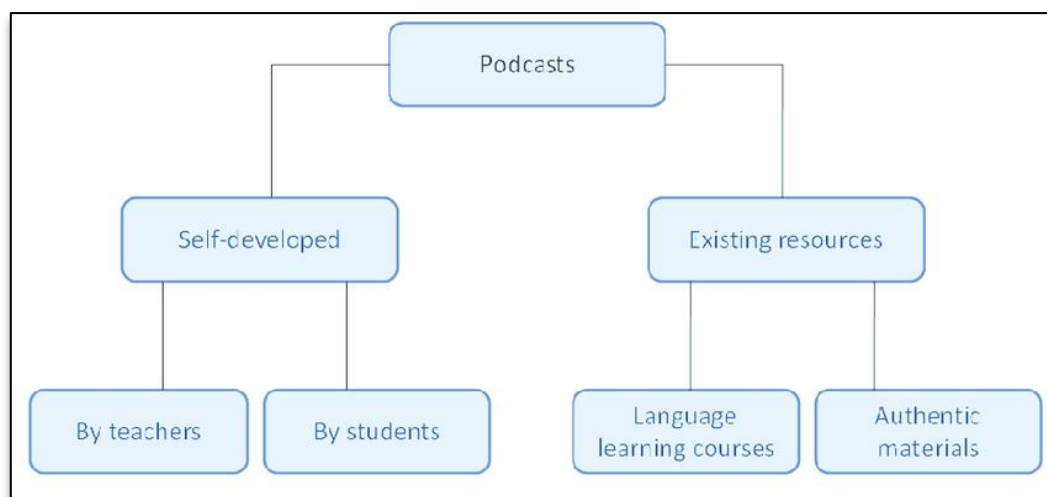
Note. From “*Listen to this! Using podcasts for online learning*”, by O'Reilly, 2021. (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/listen-using-podcasts-online-learning>)

From another perspective, Drew (2017, pp. 204-207) categorized educational podcasts into three main genres. First, the quick burst genre consists of short and focused episodes delivering concise information on specific topics. Second, the narrative genre “has the communicative purpose of telling a story about a topic” (p. 206). In other words, they are podcasts that weave educational content into engaging narratives. Third, “the chat shows

genre's communicative purpose is the utilization of institutionalized conversation between two or more participants to explore various ideas and concepts" (p. 207). They provide diverse perspectives on educational subjects. The research also stated, "short 'Quick Burst' podcasts, long-form 'Narrative' podcasts and conversational 'Chat Show' podcasts have each proven themselves to be popular educational texts for learners outside of formal institutions to learn and engage with communities of like-minded learners" (p. 209).

Figure 6

Taxonomy of uses of podcasting for language learning



Note. Adapted from “*Top of the pods—In search of a podcasting “Podagogy” for language learning*”, by Rosell-Aguilar, 2007, p. 476, as cited in “Podcasting as a language teaching and learning tool”, by Rosell-Aguilar, 2015, p. 33.

2.8. The Role of Podcasts in Language Learning: Enhancing the Four Language Skills

Previous literature studies have confirmed the benefits of integrating podcasts into education. As Sinha (2022) noted, “Numerous educational institutions that have introduced podcasting into their curricula have noted success. This can be ascribed to the simplicity with

which podcasts can be produced and consumed, as well as to the different ways in which educational podcasts can improve students' learning" (p 1661). According to Fox (2008, as cited in Cabrero Sancho, 2024), incorporating podcasts into foreign language learning not only offers active and engaging learning experiences but also enhance teaching strategies compared to traditional teaching methods.

Podcasts have significantly impacted the four language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Speaking is considered one of the most important language skills to be developed efficiently. It was hypothesized that podcasts play a significant role in improving students' speaking skills, by enhancing their pronunciation through listening to different accents. Based on previous studies, many researchers have discussed this topic and reached positive results. Díez and Richters (2020) argued that when used with effective teaching tasks, podcasts can contribute to the development of spoken language and lead to an improvement of articulation issues and the acquisition of correct pronunciation (pp. 45_46).

Furthermore, developing better listening abilities was another objective behind using podcasts in EFL classrooms. It has been confirmed that this technological tool helps improve students' listening skills, since it offers different advantages in this context. Research conducted by Hassen (2016) on the influence of podcasts on EFL students' listening comprehension asserted that "podcasts are helpful in language learning during which they enrich the learners' English language knowledge, vocabulary store, and English culture, as they also develop the learners' language skills, chiefly listening" (p. 69).

The integration of podcasts into English language learning may be a valuable addition to improving reading skills. Satharatthana (2024) conducted research aimed at enhancing English reading skills for undergraduate students using podcasts. As a result, the findings indicated that podcast-based learning enhanced students' reading comprehension and overall

academic performance. The researcher stated, "The research revealed positive student engagement throughout the activities, with participants actively involved and expressing enjoyment. Students were observed as they practiced reading aloud, repeating words and, striving to improve their pronunciation" (p. 289).

Moreover, from another perspective, researchers have also found that podcasts contribute to the development of EFL writing skills. Podcasts offer authentic linguistic input, including different vocabulary and grammatical structures, that can effectively contribute to the enhancement of learners' writing abilities. Bamanger and Alhassan (2015) found that using podcast lectures positively affects English as a foreign language learners' writing performance. They stated, "The results showed that students who received the podcast lectures along with the in-classroom lectures achieved better writing performance than those who received the classroom lectures alone" (p. 71).

2.9. The Contribution of Podcasts to EFL Listening Proficiency: Review of Existing Literature

Podcasts have become valuable resources used to develop learners' language skills. Previous studies emphasized their value, as they play a significant role in improving students' listening skills. They serve as a powerful strategy to help listeners develop their comprehension and their cognitive abilities.

The exposure to authentic language use is one of the benefits of podcasts that cannot be neglected. It helps develop linguistic competence and communication skills. Listening to podcasts introduces students to real-world English language; encountering language in its natural form as spoken by native speakers in real contexts. Hassen (2016) noted, "the findings proved the usefulness of podcasts in enhancing the learners' listening skills through exposing them to authentic materials i.e., the learners will benefit from the varieties of oral language and

different English accents” (69). Also, the findings of the same study by Hassen revealed that podcasts are also useful to learn more about the culture of English-speaking people (p. 66).

Listening to podcasts significantly impacts listeners' cognitive abilities and encourages the use of different listening strategies. It can require them to write down what they hear in the episode like writing important information they have grasped, which helps to foster their thinking abilities and understand better. Alfarisi, Sarair, and Farsia (2024) found that “43.33% of the respondents often utilize transcription when listening to English podcasts, indicating that many students believe transcription to be an effective technique for increasing comprehension” (p. 62). In addition, summarizing a podcast episode or visualization; i.e., the listener starts to create mental images of some concepts discussed in the podcast, are other cognitive strategies that can aid to understand more.

One of the main advantages of podcasts is their impact on pronunciation. When students are being exposed to authentic language or real English native speakers' conversations, they become aware of how words are really pronounced. Hassen (2016) explained, “as learners listen to English materials, they will become able to differentiate between the various English accents and draw the idea of how the use of English in real-life may appear in terms of vocabulary use, grammar, and style (formality and informality)” (p. 42). Additionally, “it helps them to get accustomed with the different features of language that may manipulate the meaning when listening, such as stress and intonation” (p. 66).

Furthermore, listening to podcasts enhances vocabulary acquisition when learners encounter many words and phrases used in natural conversations. They discuss various topics in different fields; thus, listeners can learn and retain new words or specific terminologies related to those fields. Bueno-Alastuey's (2020, as cited in Ramirez, 2024) confirmed in their research findings that the “participants were able to acquire new vocabulary through podcasting

and had the impression that they were able to use the vocabulary learned through podcasting in oral interaction” (p. 52). As learners listen to podcasts, they may acquire the language effectively and learn some new English language idioms, slangs, and dialects.

2.10. Reported Challenges of Podcast Use in Language Learning

Despite the fact that it is agreed between researchers that podcasts usage may be effective and beneficial for language learning, other research studies confirmed that they can have several difficulties and weaknesses that could lessen their effectiveness for some educational purposes.

Bell, et al., (2007, p. 2) outlined various disadvantages of using podcast as a learning tool, “the medium does have disadvantages, such as the lack of visual content, the difficulty of taking notes, and the divided attention of the listener between environmental distractions and the material on the podcast. Also, the material will be of most benefit to auditory learners, and does not appeal to all students”. From another perspective, research findings of Amalia (2023) presented that, students find obstacles while listening to podcasts: accents, speakers speak too fast, lack of vocabulary, difficult to understand, laziness, lack of consistency, unfamiliar words. Since podcasts are made for native speakers, the language may be difficult to be understood, i.e., it affects negatively on comprehension through fast speech, sophisticated vocabulary, idioms, as well as cultural differences. Audio podcasts are mainly focusing on listening skills; they lack transcripts or written texts; so, students may have difficulty to take notes.

Conclusion

Based on the presented theoretical background about podcasts in education, the researcher concluded that podcasts become a supplementary technological and educational tool for language learning. They are significantly getting great importance in today's educational settings due to their crucial role in developing students' skills specifically listening skills, fostering engagement and enhancing the teaching and learning process.

Chapter Three

Field Work and Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter presents the fieldwork and data analysis of the current study, which was conducted to explore students' perceptions regarding the use of podcasts to enhance their listening skills. It consists of two sections. The first section deals with a review of the research methodology applied, including the research approach, research design, population and sample, data collection tools. The second section focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected. It aims to analyze and discuss the findings to answer the research questions. Finally, the chapter concludes with summarizing the points being discussed.

3.1. Review of The Methodology Employed

In this section, the researcher attempts to discuss the methodology applied in this research. Methodology is a concept that refers to the overall framework that outlines how a study is systematically conducted, including the research design, research approach, sampling, data collection tools, and data analysis procedures. Bryman (2008, p.160) defined the term methodology as “the study of the methods that are employed. It is concerned with uncovering the practices and assumptions of those who use methods of different kinds”. Furthermore, research methodology in the view of Remenyi, Williams, Money, and Swartz (1998, as cited in Adejimi et al., 2010, p. 51), “provides the procedural framework within which the research is carried out and a way to systematically solve the research problem”.

3.1.1. Research Approach

Generally, there are three types of research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches.

The qualitative approach focuses on understanding human behaviors and describing social phenomena in details. Vishnevsky and Beanlands (2004, p. 234) claimed: “in simple terms, qualitative research is a “way of knowing” and learning about different experiences from

the perspective of the individual”. However, quantitative research approach focuses on numerical testing of hypotheses. In Creswell (1994, as cited in Sukamolson, 2007, p. 2) view, quantitative research is “a type of research that is explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)” is defined as social research that employs empirical methods and empirical statements”. Moreover, based on Apuke (2017, p. 41) definition, quantitative research involves collecting and analyzing numerical data to understand patterns and relationships. It is used to answer specific questions such as who, what, where, when, how much, and how. This method relies on statistical techniques to produce objective and measurable results.

Researchers differentiated between the above two approaches. According to Bazen, K. Barg, and Takeshita (2021), qualitative research approach develops theory, finds patterns, and observes and records phenomena. Though, the quantitative research approach examines relationship among variables, proves or disproves hypotheses.

Mixed-methods approach, is the combination of the two research approaches: qualitative and quantitative. It integrates both interpretive and quantifiable data to produce comprehensive and rich findings for the research problem. As stated by Creswell (2005, as cited in Migiro & Magangi, 2011, p. 3757), “mixed method research is research in which the researcher uses the qualitative research paradigm for one phase of a research study and the quantitative research paradigm for another in order to understand a research problem more completely”.

In this regard, the present research adopts the qualitative approach, because it serves the nature of the study and it is believed to be appropriate for investigating the research objectives, as it allows for a comprehensive exploration of students' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward the use of podcasts and its impact on students' listening skills. “The

primary charge during qualitative research is to capture, understand, and represent participants' perceptions and meanings through and in their own words" (Ruona, p. 234). In simple terms, in qualitative research, the main goal is to deeply understand how participants see and experience things. The researcher aims to listen carefully to what participants say and try to express their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives accurately; using the participants' own words. Also, Bazen, et. al., (2021, p.242) confirmed that "whereas one of the main purposes of qualitative research is to generate hypotheses, it can also be used to explore already existing hypotheses about the behaviors, experiences, and perspectives of individuals or groups or to validate existing observations or theories". This type of research offers a richer and more detailed understanding of participants' viewpoints without manipulating variables.

3.1.2. Research Design

The current study focuses on exploring and understanding students' perceptions and experiences. To achieve this aim, a qualitative research design is adopted, as it is seen as appropriate to capture and understand how they perceive the use of podcasts to improve their listening abilities in language learning.

However, it is very important to note that while the study presents some numerical data (numbers and percentages), this does not mean it is mixed methods. The design includes both open-ended and close-ended responses, and using basic numerical summaries does not actually shift the study into a mixed methods approach, since these data are just descriptive and are not intended for statistical testing or inferential analysis.

3.1.3. Population and Sample

The population targeted in this study consists of second-year EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students. They were chosen because they are at a stage of improving their language skills, and may encounter some challenges, specifically with improving listening skills. In this

phase, instructional methods have to be sufficient and implemented effectively to ensure successful learning and target students' language skills development. A sample of 30 students from the entire population was selected to work with using the convenience sampling technique which is common in qualitative research. The researcher selected the participants based on accessibility and availability.

The sample size was determined based on feasibility and the need for detailed responses not a large-scale statistical generalization of data, because the purpose of our study is not to generalize findings to the whole population, as Holton and Burnett (2005, p. 30) confirmed that “qualitative methods are particularly strong at attaining deep and detailed understandings about a specific group or sample, but at the expense of generalizability”. A smaller sample is proper for qualitative research, as it allows for a profound exploration of students' perceptions. According to Ritchie et al., (2014, as cited in Doyle et al., 2020), “Sample size will also need to be considered and although small sample sizes are common in qualitative descriptive research” (p. 446).

3.1.4. Data Collection Tools

For data collection, two data collection tools were used: a semi-structured questionnaire and focus groups.

3.1.4.1. The Questionnaire

A semi-structured questionnaire was employed as a data collection tool in order to obtain data to understand students' experiences with podcasts in language learning, particularly their usage to enhance listening skills. This tool was chosen because it helps to collect various individual perspectives and attitudes at the same time. As Jordan, Clarke, and Coates (2021, as cited in Khan, Mohammadi, Nazari, Yousufzada, & Fayazi, 2024, p. 3225) confirmed that “semi-structured questionnaires are widely embraced in qualitative research across various

fields, including social sciences, market research, and healthcare studies. They are particularly advantageous in situations where understanding participants' motivations and experiences is paramount." Additionally, Nicolas (2024) identified that "qualitative research questionnaires are a structured or semi-structured set of questions designed to gather details, open-ended participant responses."

3.1.4.2. Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed to 30 second year EFL students, during the fasting month (Ramadan). It consists of 16 open-ended and closed-ended questions to ensure both structured responses and opportunities for students to elaborate on their opinions clearly. It is divided into three sections.

The first section comprised four questions which dealt with the students' general information: gender, age, how they rate their English listening skills, besides, whether their teacher uses digital tools during oral sessions or not.

The second section, entitled students' familiarity with podcasts. It contains seven questions (Q5-Q11), and aimed to figure out if students are familiar with this tool, and what types of podcast content they prefer for English learning, also, whether they agree or disagree with the idea of podcasts' influence on improving listening skills.

Lastly, section three (Q12-Q16) is about exploring the advantages and students' challenges with podcasts usage, how they overcome the difficulties they encounter while learning, and what they suggest for a better incorporation of podcasts in EFL classes.

3.1.4.3. Focus Group

In addition to the conducted questionnaire, the researcher also opted for focus groups as a data collection method.

Bazen, et. al., (2021) stated that:

Focus groups allow each individual an opportunity to reflect on his or her own experiences in the context of others' experiences. Focus groups represent small-scale communities in which moderators can observe how interactions among participants impact descriptions of their own experiences as well as gain an overall sense of consensus among the group members. (p.242)

Focus groups were chosen to encourage discussion among students. They were able to express their thoughts easily and spontaneously, and react to each other's opinions, which helped gather diverse data that contributed to recognize how they perceive the use of podcast for enhancing listening abilities.

3.1.4.4. Description of the Focus Groups

The focus group discussions enabled students to clearly and easily share their experiences with podcasts. Four focus groups were conducted during the second week of April, 2025, three groups consisted of eight students, while the other group included seven students. Six (6) questions were asked, aiming at addressing the fourth research question that was concerned with exploring which types of podcasts-based activities students prefer to be employed by the teacher to enhance their listening skills.

3.2. Data Analysis

The second section of the chapter presents the analysis of data gathered from the questionnaire and focus groups discussions, and interpretation of the findings.

3.2.1. The Analysis of Students' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information

Item 01: Age

Table 2

Students' Age

Age	Students	Percentage%
19_23	29	96.67%
24 and above	1	3.33%
Total	30	100%

The above table represents the distribution of two age groups: 19–23 and 24 and above. It shows that the majority of the students are aged between 19 and 23 years old. However, only one student is aged 24 and above, representing a small percentage of the sample. This highlighted that most students in the sample are young.

Item 2: Gender

Table 3

Students' Gender

Gender	Students	Percentage%
Male	6	20%
Female	24	80%
Total	30	100%

The data set in the table represent the gender distribution of students in the sample. The data shows that a large number of students (24 out of 30) are female, while only six students are male. This signified gender imbalance, with a much higher representation of female students compared to males. This may reveal that female students have a desire to study English more than their male counterparts.

Item 3: Does your teacher use digital tools (e.g., audio, video) during oral sessions?

Table 4

Students' Responses Regarding the Use of Digital Tools in Oral Sessions

Options	students	Percentage%
Yes	28	93.33%
No	2	6.67%
Totals	30	100%

The data display that most of students reported that their teacher incorporates digital tools during oral sessions. This implies that technology is well integrated into the lessons and may contribute to increase student engagement and participation. However, two of students stated that digital tools are not used in their lessons. This could indicate either that the use of technology is not consistent across all sessions, or, some students may have attended lessons where videos or audio recordings were used, while others may have experienced sessions without any digital resources.

Section Two: Students' Familiarity with Podcasts**Item 4:** Are you familiar with podcasts?**Table 5***Students' Familiarity with Podcasts*

Options	Participants	Percentage%
Yes	27	90%
No	1	3.33%
To some extent	2	6.67%
Total	30	100%

From the data obtained, it is easy to capture the dominance of familiarity with podcasts among students. However, a small percentage reported no familiarity, which this data suggests that unfamiliarity with podcasts is relatively rare among the surveyed students. Additionally, the two of the students who are somewhat familiar with podcasts may know about them but not fully understand how to use them very well; or they are familiar with this tool and they do not usually use it. This may present a chance for educators to guide them in using podcasts as a learning tool effectively.

Item 5: Have you ever used podcasts for learning English before?**Table 6***The Use of Podcasts for Learning English*

Options	Responses	Percentage (%)
Yes	22	73.33%
No	8	26.67%
Total	30	100%

The results indicate that a significant number of respondents (22 out of 30 students) have used podcasts as a tool for learning English, highlighting their popularity in language acquisition. However, only eight respondents have never used podcasts for this purpose, which may point to a lack of awareness about podcasts as a learning tool or a limitation.

Item 6: How often do you listen to English podcasts (audio or video)?

Table 7

Frequency of Listening to Podcasts

Options	Students	Percentage (%)
Always	2	6.67%
Often	8	26.67%
Sometimes	14	46.67%
Rarely	5	16.67%
Never	1	3.33%
Total	30	100%

This question attempted to look for students' frequency answers of listening to podcasts. The findings indicate moderate engagement with English podcasts among students. Less than half of the students selected that they sometimes listen to podcasts, implying that many students occasionally incorporate them into their learning routines. Eight of them listen often. However, five students rarely listen, and other two students have answered "always", with 3.33% has never used podcasts, likely due to unfamiliarity with this tool or lack of interest.

Item 7: When you listen to podcasts, do you listen for:

Table 8

Purpose of Listening to Podcasts

Options	Participants	Percentage (%)
Pleasure	10	33.33%
Gathering information about specific topics	13	43.33%
Acquiring the target language	7	23.33%
Total	30	100%

The present findings investigate the purpose behind listening to podcasts. The data reveal that the primary reason students listen to English podcasts is to gather information on specific topics. Though, 13 students chose listening to podcasts for pleasure. Meanwhile, acquiring the target language was the least selected reason. It demonstrates that podcasts are often used as an educational or informational resource rather than pleasure.

Item 8: What types of podcast content do you prefer for learning English?

Table 9

Preferred Podcasts Contents for Learning English

Options	Students	Percentage (%)
Conversation & Interviews	13	43.33%
Storytelling & Narratives	14	46.67%
News & Current Events	2	6.67%
Educational lessons & Academic Discussions	1	3.33%
Total	30	100%

The researcher aimed to determine which types of podcast content students prefer for English language learning. The results illustrate that students preferred storytelling and narratives the most when learning English. Conversations and interviews are also highly preferred, selected by 13 students probably because they expose learners to diverse accents and real-life dialogue. In contrast, both news and current events and educational lessons or academic discussions are the least preferred types of podcast contents among participants. These podcasts may not match students' immediate language learning goals, such as improving casual listening or everyday vocabulary, otherwise, it could be that students may find these types of content less enjoyable.

Item 9: Podcasts are useful for improving your listening skills. Do you:

Table 10

Usefulness of Podcasts for Improving Listening Skills

Options	Participants	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	6	20%
Agree	18	60%
Neutral	4	13.33%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.33%
Disagree	1	3.33%
Total	30	100%

Based on the table above, the results reflect a strong positive perception of podcasts as a valuable resource. More than half of the students believe that podcasts help enhance listening skills. Eighteen students agree, and an additional six of them strongly agree. Also, four of them remained neutral, indicating that some students may not have a clear opinion. However, very few students responded that they do not consider podcasts useful for improving listening skills, with 3.33% selecting either “disagree” or “strongly disagree”.

Item10: Would you like podcasts to be regularly integrated into your classroom listening activities?

Table 11

Students' Willingness to Integrate Podcasts into Classroom Listening Activities

Options	Participants	Percentage (%)
Yes	17	56.67%
No	0	0%
Maybe	13	43.33%
Total	30	100%

According to the data above, the results indicate positive attitudes toward integrating podcasts into classroom listening activities. 17 students represented the highest percentage of 56.67% responded with “yes”, indicating that they would like podcasts to be integrated. Others selected “maybe”, suggesting uncertainty toward the idea. Nevertheless, there is no complete rejection, as none of students selected “no”, regarding podcasts’ integration into EFL classes.

Section Three: Advantages and Students' Challenges with Podcasts Usage

Item 11: Do you think podcasts are more engaging than traditional classroom listening activities?

Table 12

Students' Perception on Podcasts Engagement Compared to Traditional Classroom Listening Activities

Options	Participants	Percentage (%)
Yes	18	60%
No	2	6.67%
Unsure	10	33.33%
Total	30	100%

The data reveal a significant number of students find podcasts more engaging than traditional classroom listening activities, with 18 out of 30 participants answering “yes”. However, two students said that podcasts are less engaging, selecting the “no” option; meanwhile, ten students remained unsure. This may designate that podcast use enables to improve the learning classroom environment, and have good potentials in motivating, encouraging students more than traditional practices, in addition, impacting their listening abilities positively.

Item 12: In your point of view, what is the main advantage of using podcasts in your listening lessons?

Table 13

Main Advantage of Using Podcasts in Students Listening Lessons

Options	Participants	Percentage%
Exposure to real-life spoken English	13	43.33%
Flexible learning (anytime, anywhere)	4	13.33%
More interesting than traditional listening skills exercises	2	6.67%
Improve vocabulary	5	16.67%
Helps with pronunciation and accent recognition	6	20%
Total	30	100%

We can extract from the table that the majority of participants consider exposure to real-life spoken English as the main advantage, with 13 students selecting this option. This demonstrates that students hold podcasts in high regard for their ability to present authentic language use, helping learners engage with natural speech and everyday expressions that are often missing from traditional classroom materials. Following that, six students identified help with pronunciation and accent recognition as another important benefit, which highlights the role of podcasts in developing clearer speech. Five students pointed to vocabulary improvement. Additionally, flexible learning was selected by four students. The least selected option, by only two students, was that podcasts are more interesting than traditional listening activities.

Item 13: What are the main difficulties you face when using podcasts for learning?

Table 14

Difficulties of Using Podcasts for Learning

Options	Participants	Percentage (%)
Understanding native speaker speed	17	56.67%
Unfamiliar vocabulary	5	16.67%
Lack of transcripts or subtitles	1	3.33%
Difficulty focusing for long periods	7	23.33%
Total	30	100%

The table above presents data on the difficulties students encounter when using podcasts for learning. We can observe that the largest percentage represents students who struggle with understanding native speaker speed. Seven respondents stated that they find a difficulty in maintaining focus for long periods, while five had a difficulty with unfamiliar vocabulary. Additionally, only one student found the lack of transcripts or subtitles a problem. Accordingly, educators have to take into consideration these difficulties and work on how to overcome them effectively to better enhance listening skills.

Item 14: How do you usually overcome these difficulties?

This question attempted to obtain qualitative data about students' problem-solving behaviors and strategies to cope with difficulties they encounter when listening to podcasts. Also, aimed at informing pedagogical decisions on how to support learners more effectively to enhance their skills. After reviewing students' answers, it is indicated that the majority of them replay podcast episodes or specific parts multiple times. This allows them to understand more,

especially in case of the speaker accent is unclear. Some of their answers were shared as follows:

- _ “The accent of a native speaker is difficult for me, so I try to listen many times”.
- _ “I try to take a break and divide the podcast into parts to listen and focus better”.
- _ “By repeating the podcast again and again and focus more to understand the accent and get the idea”.

Other students expressed using “translation apps”, or actively “searching for unfamiliar words” as another common strategy. They clarified that they frequently pause the podcast to make sure they completely comprehend the meaning of strange terminology they come across while listening, Students stated:

“Sometimes when I listen to podcasts and I do not understand some vocabularies, I would like to use translation apps or dictionary. For native speaker’s speed, I would like to make the videos slow so that I can understand.”

- _ “Looking for vocabulary meaning or translation, forcing myself to listen more”.

Also, a student noted that they write down what they hear in the podcast, and finally, several participants mentioned that they select short podcast episodes with easy language and suite their level. For example:

- _ “I choose short episodes with easy language that I find it simple to understand”.
- _ “Personally, I usually select short podcasts not to get bored”.
- _ “I select suitable podcasts for my level of listening”.
- _ “Not listening for too long periods...”.

Item 15: What do you suggest for a better integration of podcasts in English language classes?

Despite the fact that not all students have answered this question, the data proposed many suggestions concerning the integration of podcasts in classrooms to enhance the learning experience. Importantly, the majority recommended selecting podcasts contents that are engaging and related, such as interviews, storytelling, narratives, and self-improvement topics. Students shared: “I suggest using story and narrative podcast by real-life spoken English (native speakers).”

_ “Conversation and interviews that help in the pronunciation.”

_ “I suggest to improve vocabulary and improve communications, through using and focusing on interviews and conversations”.

_ “I suggest integrate the podcasts of storytelling to get experiences from them.”

_ “I suggest some self-improvement podcasts, because are full of information and may help in improving students' self-confidence.”

These kinds of podcasts not only help with language learning but also sustain students' interest and motivation. Educational and those that support vocabulary building and listening comprehension, were also preferred: “I suggest to integrate podcasts... by choosing some topics and educational podcasts in our oral expression sessions. The most beneficial podcasts are the educational ones”. In addition to another student stated: “It can be integrated into English classes by using them for listening comprehension, and vocabulary building.”

Many students mentioned that podcasts should be selected carefully to fit their language level, suggesting that podcasts should contain simple language, with easy accent and clear pronunciation to be easily understood. They stated: _ “the teacher has to select interesting topics according to his students' preferences and their levels.” Moreover, short podcast

episodes instead of long ones were another common issue repeated by students. Students preferred short episodes in order not to feel bored, and manageable ones that fit well with class time. Students mentioned:

_ “the teacher has to select interesting topics according to his students’ preferences and their levels.”

_ “short podcasts with clear speaking, interesting topics.”

_ “yes, it is important to integrate ... choosing podcasts with simple language also with short periods or times.”

Due to the fact that visual components might facilitate understanding, both audio and video podcasts were strongly preferred to be incorporated. Additionally, providing transcripts was highly recommended: “select short podcasts, with transcripts or subtitles, do not focus only on audio but also video podcasts.”

_ “using both video and audio podcasts, also in the video prefer to choose ones with transcripts and writings.”

One of them also advised: “for the speed of native speaker, they reduce their speed of speech in the discussion in order I can understand them and also maybe using subtitles in the screen and make the periods very short.”

As for how to use them in class, students proposed using podcasts as homework, having students create their own videos as part of an assignment, or, listening together and discussing the main ideas. Some of them also mentioned podcasts to be used in online sessions as an option, or allowing students to choose topics based on their interests to boost engagement.

Some expressed: “yes, I wish, because it is important to learn English. So, make them as a homework for students.”

- _ “make the students do it (as a homework).”
- _ “choosing short podcasts, listen together with colleague, and explain the main ideas.”
- _ “It may work if they include them as online sessions.”

3.2.2. Interpretation and Discussion of Students' Questionnaire Results

After analyzing the student' questionnaire, the results reveal that podcasts have potentials in enhancing English listening skills, which agree with the data represented in the literature review. Although familiarity, engagement, and specific preferences, students generally recognize the importance of podcasts as a useful tool for language learning. They consider this tool as an engaging resource, mostly because of their ability to introduce students to natural English language, especially everyday conversations that are often absent from traditional classroom materials. This confirms and aligns with the research hypothesis that students may be receptive and consider podcasts as useful for their listening skills improvement.

Despite the fact that students have good intentions regarding podcasts' use for listening development, their responses also shed light on some common challenges they face. A big number of students said they have difficulty in understanding native speaker's speed, dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary, and staying concentrated during lengthy episodes. However, many students use practical strategies to overcome those obstacles, such as replaying episodes to understand better, using translation tools for the unknown words, and selecting podcasts that are interesting, engaging, and match their language proficiency.

Likewise, the results pointed that, students are familiar with podcasts and show a willingness to use them in the classroom. Most of them suggest podcasts that can be helpful in increasing comprehension, with short and concise episodes, also motivational, and level-appropriate. Others propose including both audio and video podcasts, as well as providing

transcripts and subtitles to aid understanding. Additionally, some of students indicate that they would like to regularly use podcasts in the classroom, suggesting using them as homework assignments as an option, to start a class discussion, or even urging students to create their own podcasts.

To conclude, students are ready and have a willingness to engage and incorporate podcasts as part of their learning experiences. Podcasts can contribute to students' listening skill development in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, only if they are integrated with a good, careful, thoughtful, and effective implementation.

3.2.3. Analysis of Focus Group Discussions

After collecting data from the focus group discussions with students, the researcher analyzed them thematically. The data obtained was the following:

Item one: Preferred Activity Type: Comprehension Questions or Gap-Filling in Podcast Listening

The majority of students showed a preference for both comprehension questions and gap-fill exercises. Accordingly, students have a preference for applying a mixture of activities, as they saw that applying both of them may be beneficial to focus more also to enhance engagement and comprehension.

However, a small number of students favored gap-fill activities specifically, because they are effective in promoting concentration and vocabulary acquisition. One student shared: "It lets me focus more word by word, and this may enhance my vocabulary."

Item Two: Listening Tasks: Individual or Group-Based?

When asked which types they prefer either individual or group tasks, most of students preferred individual tasks. According to them, working individually enhances focus,

encourages personal responsibility, and helps in recognizing one's own listening difficulties. They saw that working in groups can sometimes distract them (distraction from peers), and make it difficult to assess individual development (teacher cannot monitor individual performance), in addition to lack of equal participation. The participants' perspectives are presented as follows:

_ "The teacher can't recognize who understands and who does not... each one can figure out what he did understand and what he did not."

_ "individual tasks are better because in group tasks you may not focus, and you cannot listen well."

_ "In group work you cannot concentrate. For example, one colleague is talking when we are all supposed to be listening to the podcast."

_ "Let us suppose that we are working in groups and we have to listen and then answer the questions, I think the teacher cannot recognize who understands and who does not."

_ "By incorporating individual tasks, each one can figure out what he/ she did understand and what he/ she did not. Individual tasks make the student create and show his level."

_ "listening has to be individually, but it is okay if we work collectively and answer the questions."

Nevertheless, few students chosen group tasks. They argued that they are beneficial in sharing information among members of the groups, also, more explanation of unclear points. Students noted:

_ "I prefer group tasks because they are more enjoyable than individual."

_ "We can share information and knowledge about the topic, and at the same time explain difficult things to

each other.”

Item Three: Students' Choices Regarding Podcast Format (audio, video, or both)

In order to understand which type best supports students' engagement and listening skill development, the majority of group members showed a preference for combined audio-visual podcasts. They argued that integrating these both formats can enhance engagement, improve concentration, and are more comprehensible. Students highlighted that, video episodes and especially with subtitles, aid comprehension, particularly for those who struggle with fast speech, unclear accents, or sophisticated vocabulary. Students shared:

— “Both of them, because some of us can learn only by listening, but others prefer to see and watch.”

— “just listening is boring, I prefer to listen and watch together at the same time.”

— “When I just listen, I may not be fully concentrated with the content, I may focus on other things. But when I watch and listen, especially podcasts that contain subtitles I would be more enjoyed, concentrated, and understand better.”

— “Video podcasts, because I prefer to see visual expressions for examples and listen.”

— “Video podcasts with subtitles because I have a difficulty with the speaker's speed when he talks and vocabulary.”

Item Four: Understanding Students' Responses to Creative Podcast Tasks

Students generally reacted positively to the use of creative and engaging podcast-related tasks in the classroom, such as role-plays, debates, or creating different story endings. The majority of students consider them as enjoyable, engaging, motivating, and an opportunity to use English in real-life ways. Students perceived these activities as a chance to “live the language” and move beyond passive listening by using their speaking skills and creativity. That

is to say, these tasks were seen as a way to actively engage with the language, using not just listening but also speaking and creative thinking to expand students' learning experiences.

Students stated:

— “I would like creative activities based on podcasts, for example they help us to use English as it is used in real life. For instance, in role plays, you talk in English and live in it, this makes me feel enjoyed.”

— “For me I do not agree with the idea that I always just listen. I want to do something beyond listening, talk, create something new, and play with English in an effective way to learn and challenge myself.”

— “I would enjoy creative activities. For example, in creating an ending to a story, it may help to freshen my mind through imagination. I find this very enjoyable and engaging.”

— “Yes, for example in debates, even if you are poor in listening you may show more about your abilities, in speaking for example; especially if you have good pronunciation and accent.”

Despite this, a few students reported discomfort due to shyness and social anxiety. One student stated:

— “I could not enjoy because I am shy and I have social anxiety.”

Item Five: Students' attitudes toward podcasts as a homework:

Many students were receptive to the idea of incorporating podcasts into homework tasks. Students' reactions, such as smiles and excitement, indicated interest and strong engagement with this type of tasks. They were seen as entertaining, engaging, creative, and beneficial for speaking practice. Moreover, creating podcasts promoted independent learning by motivating students to research, explore into unfamiliar topics. They expressed their opinions as:

_ “Yes, it seems to be a good idea, which it may help me to show my colleagues that I am creative for example.”

_ “I may enhance my speaking; they can listen better to my accent and show them that I am good in speaking skill.”

_ “It helps in informing students about some topics that they know nothing about.”

_ “I find it enjoyable and engaging to make my own video podcast.”

_ “I may enjoy and be excited to do my homework through this way.”

_ “When we are in the process of making the podcast, we may know new information, get new ideas we ourselves do not know about it before.”

Item Six: Timing of Comprehension Questions

In terms of how the task was organized, most students prefer that the teacher provide comprehension questions after, not before, the listening task. Students preferred answering after listening to focus on overall understanding, and avoid selective listening i.e., they focus only on the answers of the given questions and ignore other parts of the audio, as often happens with pre-listening questions. That is to say, students thought that receiving questions after listening allowed them to focus entirely on the audio first, which enhanced their understanding and helped them answer more accurately.

Some of their perspectives were stated as:

_ “Questions after listening are better, because if the teacher gives us the questions we will focus only on the part where the answers are and we forget to focus on the other details, and when he asks us other different questions which have not been asked before, we barely find an answer.”

_ "...it is better to listen first and focus than we may answer the questions clearly and easily."

_ "For me, the benefit behind this is to understand better the topic, have a clear idea about it, and when it comes to answering questions, I know how and what to answer."

3.2.4. Interpretation of the Data of the Focus Group Discussions

The discussions with students presented different perceptions into how they experience and respond to podcast-based listening activities. Generally, the findings reveal that students are not only accepting podcasts as part of their lessons but also they actually prefer when these activities are varied, engaging, and give them a sense of involvement rather than simply listening passively.

Students' selection of applying different podcast-based listening activities indicates that they may help in fostering engagement and are convenient for better understanding. These tasks blend can target different angles, from overall comprehension, to vocabulary acquisition, and students' motivation. Moreover, it seems that students prefer to reflect on their own progress without the distractions or unequal participation often associated with group work. That is to say that, it may be one of the reasons behind their preference of individual over group-based tasks. They expressed that working individually aid in understanding, full concentration, creativity, recognition of one-self listening difficulties, compared to working in groups was seen as less effective and hinder from individual progress. Nonetheless, from another perspective, group-based activities are likely beneficial for increasing collaborative learning, that it is helpful in sharing knowledge, peer interaction, and increase clarification.

Additionally, there is a great acceptance towards integrating different format of podcasts in listening sessions. It is indicated that the combination of both types: audio and videos, support to cater different students' learning styles. While, there are students who prefer to learn through listening, there are also those who can understand and learn more easily

through watching. In students' view, this blend especially podcasts that contain subtitles; assists to focus and comprehend more, grasp information easily, as well as, may help to overcome listening challenges, including native speakers' accents and the unknown vocabulary. The results of the discussions with students also show a desire to engage more with the English language in a very expressive way through creative podcast-based activities. These types of activities were seen as motivating and enjoyable, as they also enhance critical thinking. Furthermore, when it comes to students' attitudes towards podcasts as a homework, they are very receptive. They found that it would be challengeable and motivational.

Lastly, most of the students chose post-listening questions over pre-listening comprehension questions. It is suggested that providing students with the questions after listening to the audio or video podcast, not before, can make them understand and fully concentrate on all parts of the content that would help them answer correctly and easily. However, providing these questions whether before or after the listening task depends on the teacher's intentions i.e., what the teacher wants the students to achieve, and the objective of the lesson.

Conclusion

This chapter represented the field work and data analysis related to students' use of podcasts for developing English listening skills. Through qualitative data collected from questionnaires and focus group discussions, it became clear that students generally perceive podcasts as an engaging and supportive tool for improving their English listening skills. This does not mean that podcast-based learning is just engaging, but also beneficial in targeting language learning from different angles. However, the data showed some disagreements concerned with, while podcasts may be useful, but are not totally sufficient. They need to be implemented with supportive strategies.

Pedagogical Recommendation

After reviewing students' perceptions and based on the findings, the researcher proposes the following suggestions:

- ❖ The teacher should recognize the importance of the listening skills more and work on better enhancing them by incorporating authentic and engaging materials.
- ❖ After realizing podcasts' value as an essential material in improving listening skills, the teacher has to be aware of how to integrate them effectively in their oral sessions, in order to make the listening practices more enjoyable and achieve improved outcomes.

When integrating podcasts, they have to:

- Select podcast content that aligns with the students' English proficiency and interests.
- Use both types of podcasts (audio-video podcasts) to accommodate students' different learning styles.
- Instead of passive listening, teachers can design structured podcast-based activities that include a combination of listening and answering questions to increase comprehension, filling in the gap's activities for vocabulary acquisition, and also employing creative activities like role plays, debates... to engage students and develop critical thinking.
- Involve both individual and group podcast-based tasks to make a balance between independent learning and collaborative engagement.
- Select podcasts with easy language, simple accents, and relevant topics.
- They can integrate podcasts as a homework or online session, and they can even encourage students to create their own podcasts episodes.

Limitation of the study

During the period of conducting this study, the researcher had some challenges. For instance, the process of collecting data took place during the month of Ramadan, which affected students' schedules. Some of them were absent. Also, due to fasting, some sessions had to be replaced or rescheduled, which was difficult to access all the participants. One another limitation was when conducting the focus group discussions. Teachers were busy preparing and giving tests to students. This made it hard to get their help or involve them in the research. These limitations led to a delay in collecting data on the right time, and having a lower sample size than the expected.

General Conclusion

This research has explored second year EFL students' perceptions in Biskra university, towards the use of podcasts to enhance their listening skills. It aimed at collecting data from students about their thoughts, experiences, and perspectives, that might help educators and instructors to better incorporate podcasts into EFL classrooms.

In order to approach the main objective of this study, three chapters were included. The first chapter entitled understanding listening skills. It discussed the listening skill from different angles. Moreover, the second chapter dealt with the concept of podcasts and their significance in today's educational environment. The final chapter presented the core of the study which is the field work and data analysis and interpretation. Through applying the semi-structured questionnaire and the focus group discussions as data collection instruments, it became clear that students perceive podcasts as an important tool, that impact positively their listening skills and help in their improvement.

The findings indicated that podcasts are essential, offering different advantages. First, podcasts introduce students into natural English language use, i.e., through every day conversations. They also encompass different contents and subjects that fit students' interests, which help to motivate them and stay engaged. Additionally, the results suggested that students recognize that listening to podcasts helps in enhancing vocabulary acquisition, and have a positive impact on speaking skill, through accent and pronunciation enhancement. Moreover, they are engaging more than traditional listening activities. However, from the data obtained students encounter some difficulties while using podcasts, such as native speaker speed and accent, as well as, new vocabulary. Yet, this does not hinder their potentials, because students themselves apply different strategies in order to address effectively these difficulties.

Students appreciated the integration of podcasts into their oral sessions, and suggested for teachers to incorporate podcasts contents that are interesting, engaging, level-appropriate, and with short episodes. In addition, they proposed different ideas that are concerned with podcasts-based activities and incorporating both types of podcasts (audio, video) to accommodate students' learning styles. Generally speaking, this study provided strong support for podcasts' effectiveness in enhancing students' language skills specifically listening.

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Appendices

Appendix 01

Questionnaire

Dear Students,

This questionnaire is a part of a study for data collection. It seeks to explore students' perceptions regarding the use of podcasts to enhance their listening skills. Podcast is an audio file or a record available on media platforms, often discusses different subjects or themes. Users can access and listen to these files easily on platforms such as google podcasts, Spotify, YouTube, apple podcasts. Your participation is highly valuable, we would be very grateful for your help.

Instructions:

- You are kindly requested to tick (✓) the appropriate answer. Some questions require you to choose the most suitable answer, while others require brief written responses.
- Please answer all questions honestly.

Section One: General Information

Q1. What is your age?

19-23 ☐ 24 and above ☐

Q2. What is your gender?

Male ☐ Female ☐

Students' Perceptions of the Use of Podcasts

Q4. Does your teacher use digital tools (e.g., audio, video) during oral sessions?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Section Two: Students' Familiarity with Podcasts

Q5. Are you familiar with podcasts?

Yes ☐ No ☐ To some extent ☐

Q6. Have you ever used podcasts for learning English before?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q7. How often do you listen to English podcasts (audio or video)?

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

Q8. When you listen to podcasts, do you listen for:

Pleasure ☐ Gathering information about specific topics ☐

Acquiring the target language ☐

Q9. What types of podcast content do you prefer for learning English?

Conversation & Interviews ☐ Storytelling & Narratives ☐

News & Current Events ☐ Educational lessons & Academic Discussions ☐

Others _____

Q10. Podcasts are useful for improving your listening skills. Do you:

Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

Students' Perceptions of the Use of Podcasts

Q11. Would you like podcasts to be regularly integrated into your classroom listening activities?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐

Section Three: Advantages and Students' Challenges with Podcasts Usage

Q12. Do you think podcasts are more engaging than traditional classroom listening activities?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

Q13. In your point of view, what is the main advantage of using podcasts in your listening lessons?

Exposure to real-life spoken English ☐

Flexible learning (anytime, anywhere) ☐

More interesting than traditional listening skills exercises ☐

Improve vocabulary ☐

Helps with pronunciation and accent recognition ☐

Q14. What are the main difficulties you face when using podcasts for learning?

Understanding native speaker speed ☐

Unfamiliar vocabulary ☐

Lack of transcripts or subtitles ☐

Difficulty focusing for long periods ☐

If others, please specify _____

Students' Perceptions of the Use of Podcasts

Q15. How do you usually overcome these difficulties?

Q16. What do you suggest for a better integration of podcasts in English language classes?

We really appreciate your kind participation, Thank you so much.

Appendix 02

Questions of the focus groups

Besides the conducted questionnaire, we have also chosen to make a focus group in order to gather more accurate data about students' perceptions regarding the use of podcasts to enhance their listening skills. Open-ended questions will be asked to students to encourage discussion and provide new perceptions into their experiences and opinions. The focus group will specifically explore students' preferences regarding the activities they believe are most effective when using podcasts to improve their listening skills.

Questions	Answers
1: Imagine your teacher is using a podcast in a lesson, what specific type of activity would you prefer the most for your listening improvement? a. Listening and answering comprehension questions. b. Filling in the gaps.	
2: Do you prefer listening activities that involve: a. Group tasks ? Why? b. individual tasks (like quizzes or written summaries)? Why?	
3: What types of podcasts do you think are most useful for improving listening skills in EFL classes? a. Audio b. Video c. Both together	

Students' Perceptions of the Use of Podcasts

4: Would you enjoy creative activities based on podcasts—like role-plays, debates, or creating your own ending to a story? Why or why not?

5: How do you feel about using podcasts for homework assignments?

6: Do you prefer activities where the teacher asks questions before listening or would you rather answer questions after listening? and why?

الملخص

تستكشف هذه الأطروحة تصورات الطلبة لاستخدامهم البودكاست كأداة لتحسين مهاراتهم السمعية في سياق اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية في جامعة محمد خيضر بسكرة. نظرا لان الأدوات التكنولوجية مدمجة على نطاق واسع في تعلم اللغة، فإن البودكاست أصبح يكتسب أهمية بسبب تأثيره الكبير على المهارات اللغوية للمتعلمين، تحديدا مهارات الاستماع. هدف هذه الدراسة هو التعرف على كيف يرى ويختبر الطلاب الاستماع القائم على أساس البودكاست، ما الفوائد التي يحددونها، الصعوبات التي يواجهونها، والأنشطة القائمة على البودكاست التي يفضلون أن يستخدمها المعلم عند دمجها. كان متوقعا أن الطلاب سيكونون متقبلين ولديهم انطباعات إيجابية تجاه استخدام البودكاست كوسيلة استماع، كما يرونها إضافة تعليمية فعالة بجانب الطرق التقليدية، رغم أن التحديات قد تختلف حسب مستويات الكفاءة اللغوية. تم استخدام نهج بحثي نوعي، باستخدام أداتين لجمع البيانات: استبيان شبه منظم ومجموعات نقاش. بشكل عام، أكدت النتائج فرضيات البحث وأشارت إلى أن الطلاب يحملون البودكاست في اعتبارهم العالي بسبب فعاليتهم في تعزيز مهارات الاستماع الخاصة بهم. كما ذكروا بعض الصعوبات مثل الكلمات غير المعروفة ونقص الدعم البصري والترجمات. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، أظهر الطلاب تفضيلات للأنشطة المنظمة والداعمة القائمة على البودكاست التي تتوافق مع احتياجاتهم التعليمية. وبناء على ذلك، فإن الاستخدام الفعال للبودكاست مع توجيه المعلمين، واختيار دقيق، ومشاركة الطلاب، ممكن ان يساعد في تحسين مهارات الاستماع بشكل كبير في اقسام اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية في جامعة محمد خيضر بسكرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مهارات الاستماع، بودكاست، تصورات الطلبة.