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The Influence of Podcasts on EFL Student's Listening Comprehension.

The Case of Third year EFL Students at Mohamed Keider University of Biskra

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The Influence of Podcasts on EFL Student's Listening Comprehension.

The Case of Third Year

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to:

My grandfather “May Allah bless his soul”

My beloved parents with my endless LOVE

My dear family

My friends and the ones I love

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Abstract

It is well established that communication comprises of both listening and speaking; thus, listening is regarded to be a crucial skill that EFL learners need to develop in order to seek a proper understanding of the speaker and basically to avoid or lessen communication breakdown. The purpose of this study is to measure the effects of using podcasts in enhancing EFL learners' listening comprehension. For the sake of accepting or rejecting the hypothesis, which imply that podcasts will help EFL learners to develop their listening comprehension, a questionnaire was distributed to fifty (50) third year students of English at Mohamed kheider of Biskra, in addition to an interview that was conducted with four (4) oral expression teachers from the English department of the same university. The results obtained from analyzing the accumulated data have supported the primary idea, which is podcasts can help EFL learners to enhance their listening comprehension. Teachers consider it as an effective tool that facilitates teaching listening courses. Furthermore, the findings revealed that video podcasts are more effective than audio podcasts in terms of listening development. Moreover, it enriches the learners' store of knowledge regarding the target language.

Keywords: Audio podcasts, communication breakdown, EFL learners, Listening comprehension, Podcasts, Video podcasts.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACC: Advanced Audio Coding

CBT: Computer Based Training

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

E-tool: Electronic tool

HTML: Hyper Text Markup Language

IBM: International Business Machines

L2: Second Language

MB: Mega Byte

PC: Personal Computer

PLATO: Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

T-tools: Technological tools

TV: Television

WBT: Web Based Training

WMA: Windows Media Audio

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General Introduction

General introduction

Technology has evolved lately on a very quick scale and becomes one necessary part in almost every field of life, beginning from houses to markets and from small institutions to big industries. Its impact has infiltrated the majority of the countries of the world, which make it difficult to separate people from T-tools such as internet, audio-visual systems, and so many other tools.

The internet is one of the most important tools that a tremendous role in globalizing E-tools. It broke the limitations of long distance communication and shaped the world into a diminutive place where all people have the advantage to meet and share anything. Its contribution extends to developing education, economic, and business of a lot of countries.

In the field of education, the World Wide Web has become a great boon and a reliable source for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and learners. It provides updates and new approaches for both teaching and learning. EFL learners rely on its various resources to develop their language skills. Online tools such as web blogs, podcasts, and social media can be good examples that may fulfill the needs of the learner to evolve their skills.

Podcasts is one common tool that internet users depend on to enrich their knowledge about other cultures, to check the news, or to use it for educational purposes. EFL learners depend on it to enhance their listening comprehension skill in a way that they get exposed to different variants of oral language, and get their ears acquainted with the various sounds and rhythms of English.

The core of this research is to investigate the effects of podcasts on EFL learners' listening comprehension, as well to study and measure the behaviors of both learners and teachers towards the use of such tool in teaching and learning.

1. Statement of the problem

Listening is crucially important skill in language learning. EFL learners rely on such skill in order to build the other skills and to better their communicative potentials.

Classrooms are not quite the ideal setting for listening courses, which cause various challenges that hinder the development of the learners listening skills.

Overcrowded classrooms, for instance, may cause problems for both teachers to teach listening, and for learners to develop their listening. The lack of laboratories, which are dedicated especially for listening courses, also lessen the chances for learners to evolve their listening and discourage their interest to learn English.

2. Aim and significance of the study

This research intends to raise the attention of the curriculum designers to blend E-tools within the study curriculum. The use of podcasts in laboratories will allow EFL learners and teachers to profit from such asset to improve a comprehensive listening. This work will investigate the use of podcasts in EFL classes, and to measure its effectiveness in developing the learners' listening comprehension. The primary aim regards the following:

- 1- Driving attention to the importance of listening skill.

- 2- To investigate the effects of podcasts on EFL learners' listening comprehension.
- 3- To measure the attitudes of both learners and teachers towards the use of podcasts in EFL teaching and learning.
- 4- To help learners to find remedies for their listening challenges.
- 5- The urge to provide enough providence of laboratories for EFL learners to practice their listening.

3. Research questions

This research addresses the following questions:

- 1- How can E-tools facilitate EFL learning?
- 2- To what extant does the use of podcasts affect the development of EFL learners' listening comprehension?
- 3- What kind of problems EFL learners may encounter while listening to podcasts?

4. Research hypothesis

It is hypothesized that the use of podcasts in EFL classes will develop the learners' listening skill.

5. Limitations of the study

Because of the limited period of time given for the study, the variables were treated following the descriptive method rather than the experimental one. Additionally,

the lack of laboratories, equipments, and internet access also led to the choice of such method. As far as the previous reasons are concerned, the descriptive method is regarded to be the fit for this research in order to pinpoint the relationship between the variables.

6. Research methodology

This research is conducted following quantitative method in order to seek content answers. The variables were treated following the descriptive method. An interview for oral expression teachers and a questionnaire for third years of students of English have been conducted at Mohamed Keider University in Biskra for the sake of studying the attitudes of both teachers and learners towards the use of podcasts in enhancing EFL learners' listening comprehension.

7. Population and sampling

For the sake of investigating this study, fifty (50) third year students of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra have been chosen randomly for the study with no regard of their age, gender, or social status. They are the chosen population because third year students may already have experienced studying in laboratories in oral expression in the previous years (first and second year), in addition to the probability of being exposed to various sorts of technology in this session. This will help them to grasp the idea of the study and drive them to give their sincere opinions about the subject. In addition to the students' questionnaire, an interview was conducted with four (4) teachers of oral expression, who are well experienced in the field, in order to seeking more views and insights about the subject matter.

8. Data gathering tools

For the sake of collecting the data required for the research, a questionnaire was made for third year student of English in order to measure the effects of podcasts on EFL learners' listening comprehension. Furthermore, an interview made for teachers in order to evaluate their attitudes towards the use of such e-tool to facilitate teaching listening and to developing the learners' listening skills.

9. Research structure

This research is severed into two main parts: the theoretical part and the fieldwork. The former include two chapters, which are devoted for studying the two variables. The first chapter focuses on podcasts and its various shapes, in addition to the different aspects and variants of E-learning. The second chapter, however, focuses on the second variable, which is listening comprehension. It provides the different types, models, and stages of listening, as well as its significance in EFL teaching and learning. The third chapter covered the analysis, description, and discussion of the data accumulated from the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview.

Chapter One:

E-learning and Podcasts

Chapter one

E-learning and Podcasts

Introduction

This chapter provides a brief overview of E-learning and podcasts including historical backgrounds, definitions and perspectives, forms and variants, and their influence on language teaching and learning. It aims to illustrate how podcast, as an e-learning tool, may help the learners to enrich their knowledge store and develop their skills, chiefly the listening skill.

1. E-learning: definitions and perspectives

E-learning is a compound noun that is composed of the letter E, which stands for the word Electronic, and the word learning, which refers to the act of obtaining knowledge. By combining the two words, Electronic learning can be defined as the act of transferring or obtaining information through the use electronic devices. The different views of researchers led to various definitions of the term. Horton (2011) mentioned that some people limit it solely to web browsing with the needless of other learning resources, yet he, Horton, offered a simple definition of E-learning which is the creation of experiences that educate the human being by using the internet and digital technologies. In 2002, Meyen et all define it as the use of electronic means to facilitate the acquisition process. Moreover, “E-learning is formally defined as electronically mediated asynchronous and synchronous communication for the purpose of constructing and confirming knowledge” (Garrison and Anderson, 2003, p. 2).

As far as the above definitions are concerned, it is clear that there is no firm definition of e-learning, yet they all share the thought of using electronic means in learning and teaching, which is considered to be the key feature of e-learning. So, E-learning in plain words is learning with technology integration.

2. E-learning: Historical background

E-learning is mostly regarded as a new form of learning since it delivers materials and interactive programs to distant communities through the use of the internet, yet the term was first utilized in 1999 at a CBT (Computer Based Training) seminar. The concept, then, has evolved to take different names that were given by various researchers seeking the attempt to give it an accurate description such as online learning and virtual learning. The groundwork behind E-learning; however, has been well documented through history. “There is even evidence which suggests that early forms of e-learning existed as far back as the 19th century” (Epignosis, 2014, p. 8).

E-learning has its roots back to the postal correspondence courses, which started with the course of Sir Isaac Pitman in 1840. Such courses constituted the first attempt to use a way that differs from the usual learning, which is the use of communication infrastructure to extend training beyond the sound of the human voice (Horton, 2001). The postal correspondence courses played a major role in the rise of e-learning forms. Horton (2001) explained it as follows:

The Postal correspondence courses proved many of the concepts at the core of e-learning: that students could pace their own learning, that learning was possible without face-to-face contact, that large numbers of students could be

taught independently on separate schedules. In fact, it should come as no surprise, then, that one of the earliest forms of successful e-learning was the email correspondence. (p. 4)

In the late 1950s, computers were first used in teaching as a result of the cooperative action between Stanford University and IBM. The use of computers to administrate drills and practice activities to primary school children was quite effective, although computers were not quite developed. Such simple experiments led to the emergence of a more sophisticated system that is called the PLATO system. It was used to “deliver over 40 million hours of instructions on a variety of sophisticated subjects from the mid-1960s through the mid-1980s” (Horton, 2001, p. 4).

The arrival of the PC has removed the requirement for the expensive mainframe computer. The former added new characteristics which simplify the substantial courses, such as advanced quality graphics, voices, animation, and the availability of CD-ROM storage, which aids the distribution of the courses for home learning (Horton, 2001)

The rise of the World Wide Web in the 1990s has revolutionized the field of education and breaks the constraints of distance learning. The HTML, Hyper Text Markup Language, provided a facilitated construction of computer displays, and internet-connected computers of the world to facilitate communication and distributing training broadly (Horton, 2001).

Passing through the historical phases of e-learning development, the postal correspondence courses is regarded to be the inspiration that led to the rise of distant learning.

3. E-learning: forms and varieties

E-learning can be divided into two main forms, which are synchronous learning and asynchronous learning. The former is more for learners who like to maintain the atmosphere of being in a classroom with an instructor, whereas the latter is more for those who want to study by themselves.

3.1 Synchronous learning

It is also called rapid self-directed learning. This form requires the virtual presence of the instructor and the learners (online interaction). Discussion, presentations, and lectures occur at a specific hour which demands all students to be present in the virtual class at the time established for the session. “All students must be online at that specific hour in order to participate” (Haslam, 2014). This type, yet, requires quality tools and high-velocity network connection. It is characterized by granting the learners the advantage of being involved in a real-time with class experience, as well as the benefit of receiving instant feedback at the mere ask of a question or offering a comment. This type is considered to be fruitful in terms of the instant interaction between the learners and the instructor. The following picture shows synchronous learning.

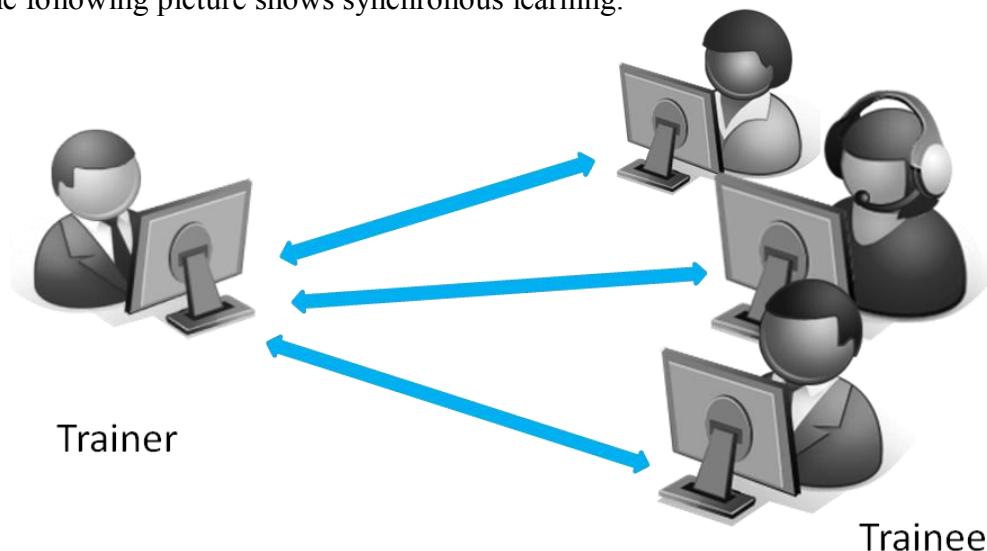


Figure 1. A picture shows synchronic learning

3.2. Asynchronous learning

The second form of e-learning is the asynchronous learning. It is also called rapid, controlled learning. It is a stand-alone approach that is designed specifically for self-study which allows the learners to access the materials, lectures, tests, and assignments provided by the instructor at anytime and anyplace. “Asynchronous learning occurs when the interaction between the instructor and students is not constrained by time and place” (Kelly, 2014). Asynchronous learners are sometimes given a period of time, usually one week, to access the materials provided by the instructor and do the assignments given. The overall, yet, is that they are free to contribute (Haslam, 2014). This form does not include a direct interaction between the learner and the instructor. It is rather for learners who do not want to be bound to learn at a specific time. This type of learning grants them the privilege to set the suitable timing for their learning.

For better understanding the two forms, the following table provides the characteristics of each form (See page 12).

4. E-learning approaches

Among the numerous approaches to e-learning, the self-based approach and the facilitated and instructor-led approach are the two general approaches to e-learning that are proposed by Ghirardini (2001). The facilitated and instructor-led learners follow an instructor that guides and facilitates learning, whereas the self-based learners are dependent learners. They study on their own.

Forms	Features
Synchronous Learning	Real-time
	Live
	Usually scheduled/time-specific
	Collective and collaborative
	Simultaneous virtual presence with other learners and facilitators or instructors
	Concurrent learning with others
Asynchronous Learning	Intermittent access or interaction
	Self-paced
	Individual or intermittently collaborative
	Independent learning
	Usually available anytime
	Recorded or pre-produced

Table 1. Features of synchronous and Asynchronous learning (www.digitel.com)

4.1. Self-paced approach

In Self-paced approach, the learners are provided with web courses which are also named as web-based training (WBT). As far as the learners' needs are concerned, the feature of this approach is that the learners are the controllers of the learning pace based on their learning needs and priorities. The instructors of the web courses do not schedule learners through a certain process, yet they have the freedom to access them anytime they want. For the sake of making the learners self-sufficient, the content is constructed regarding a set of objectives with the use of various media elements like Audio, video, and graphics and a lot more (Ghirardini, 2001).

The learners following the self-paced approach have no urge to get access to the materials that follows a scheduled learning; rather, they have the complete control of the learning pace and time which are determined by their different needs, interests, and priorities.

4.2. Facilitated and instructor-led approach

The second approach is the facilitated and instructor-led approach. In this approach, the instructor follows an established curriculum which consists of a set of elements and tasks for the learners. The course led and facilitated by the instructor through a scheduled course. The learners need to meet online at the time established for each session in order to have a guided learning. There are various tools to maintain communication and interaction among the instructors, facilitators, and learners such as chat rooms, discussion forums, Video calls, whiteboards and a lot more (Ghirardini, 2001).

Unlike self-paced approach, the facilitated and instructor-led approach is based on the courses that are prepared and presented by the instructor, and the learners are bound to be present at the time allocated for the session for learning and practicing.

5. E-learning components

There are five main components that play a crucial part in e-learning. The understanding of these components will assist the instructors to develop courses that meet the needs of the learners, as well as to select the appropriate materials for the objectives of the computer-based training. These five components are the audience, course structure,

content engagement, page design, and usability. The following figure shows the components of e-learning (“E-learning Components”, 2013).

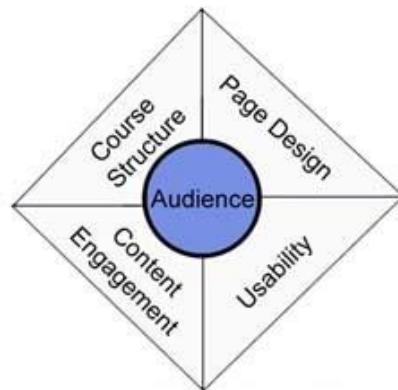


Figure 2. The components of E-learning (www.instructionaldesignexpert.com)

Among all of the components, none plays a larger role than the Audience. There would be no course design if the audience is absent. The instructor first needs to analyze the needs of the learners which are considered to be the lead to the determination of the basic structure of the remaining components. The learners' expectations, learning environment, job responsibilities, and learning abilities are some key considerations that should be regarded by the instructors in order to develop an online course (“E-learning Components”, 2013).

5.2. The course structure

The second component is the course structure. It refers to the way the course is designed for e-learning which plays a critical role in how the audience will learn the material. The course should be designed in a way that enables the learners to assimilate and understand the materials given by using different tools, such as considering the use of pictures, graphics to explain ideas, or dividing the structured information into small

pieces which will facilitate the process of following the course (“E-learning Components”, 2013).

5.3. The page design

The third component is the page design. It also plays a major role in capturing the interest of the learners, as it also affects the learning process. The Appearance of the course page must not hinder the learning process. The reason of the course is to instruct the learners, yet the design and the order of the page can affect the learners’ interest towards learning. The layout of the course should be well set, plain, and well understood, because the learner will not achieve the learning objectives if the layout is poor. The balance between texts and graphics also can affect the understanding and interest of the learners (“E-learning Components”, 2013).

5.4. The content engagement

The Content engagement is one important component of e-learning that maintains interaction of the learners within a given course. Some previous literature shows that the learning experience is greatly enhanced and the learning objectives are well obtained when the learners are engaged in the course. “Interaction will guide the learners to the vase genres of language learning” (Amrita, 2010). This can be realized through creating fun activities such as games or any sort of educational methods that support interactive learning (“E-learning Components”, 2013).

5.5. The usability

The last component of e-learning is the usability. It refers to the process of testing the E-learning content and application in order to spot the weaknesses. The online course

designer should constantly conduct the usability to obtain the learning objectives (“E-learning Components”, 2013). The latter can be attained by considering the following:

1. Ensuring that all links work perfectly.
2. Ensuring those activities are functioning as designed.
3. Ensuring that the course works appropriately
4. Verifying if the layout of the course is appropriate.
5. Verifying that the course objectives are met.

The knowledge of the five component of e-learning is crucially important for the instructors in order to enhance the quality of the designed courses which, in return, will lead the learners to meet the learning objectives.

6. Advantages and disadvantages of E-learning

Whether we use technology in learning or not, the act of learning is a firm process that does not change, yet the access to technology in the field of education has been a great boon in developing the quality of teaching and learning.

Horton (2001) mentioned in his book, the leading e-learning, some advantages and drawbacks of e-learning. They are as follows:

1. The learners, in E-learning, have the advantage to control the order and pace of the learning experience.
2. E-learning considers the differences between the learners' level. Each learner may experience a different course through the same collection of materials.

3. E-learning grants each learner the freedom to choose when and where to learn, which make it easy to maintain the balance between learning and daily work.
4. One of the disadvantages of E-learning is that the motivation of the learners is not taken for granted. They can drop at any time with a single click.
5. The disadvantage of the non-physical presence of the learners makes it hard for the instructors to know the learners' thoughts, feeling, and private concerns.
6. The instructors cannot observe the facial expressions of the learners, their behaviour, their body language, nor their voice tone when asking or commenting which plays a crucial part in measuring the degree of the learners' tendency towards learning.
7. E-learning can be a stand-alone learning which makes it difficult for the learners to create interactions and relationships with the each other in a global network.

7. Podcasts: definitions and perspectives

The meaning of the word podcast according to Cambridge dictionary is “a radio program that is stored in a digital form that you can download from the Internet and play on a computer or on an MP3 player” (n.d). Podcasts are recordings or media files that are available for the internet users to listen, watch, or download in their portable devices, such as an MP3 player or an iPod. Additionally, it was developed and emerged in 2005 as a result of the merge of iPod with Broadcast (Swetha, 2013).

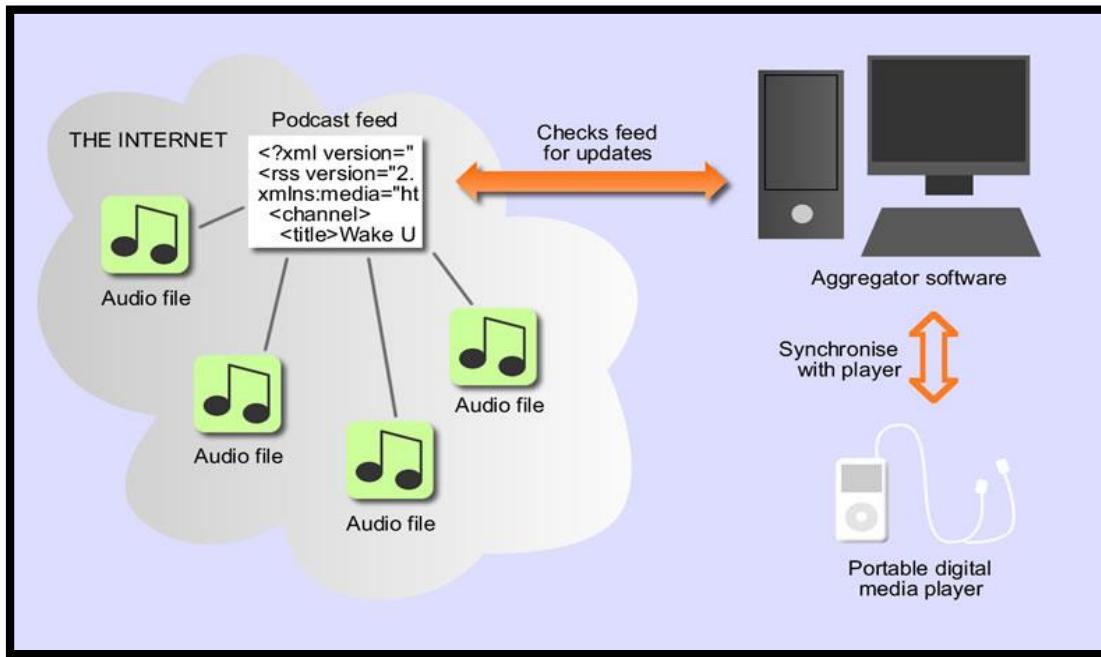


Figure 3. What are podcasts? (www.sddu.leeds.ac.uk)

As shown in the figure above, there is an interchangeable relationship between the computer and the internet. During the normal activities on the Internet, The computer is constantly uploading and downloading data. When it comes to the transfer of podcasts, this can be either downloading podcasts, which is the act when the computer receives files from the internet, or through uploading podcasts, which refers to the act of sending files from the computer to the internet (Kazmeyer, nd). After downloading the audio files from the internet, the podcast feed, they can be transferred to a portable device such as an iPod or an MP3 player.

8. The birth of podcasts

Podcasts and podcasting have emerged early in the millennium. The development of podcasting was a result of the new web-based technology which enables the distribution and accessibility to audio files. Furthermore, the burst of the personal devices

for playing audio was a major reason for the development of podcasts, and the visual aspects come afterwards (Mullner, 2000).

The word “podcasting” was first known as "audio blogging" (Hammersley, 2004), but the emergence of the concept was first coined by Hammersley in 2004. “He used it to identify the emerging practice of portable listening to audio-blogs on the most popular and available audio player at the time: the iPod” (Mullner, 2000, P. 3). The word “podcast” gained solely 24 hits on google in September 2004, yet the word took a place in the new Oxford American Dictionary as the word of the year in 2005 (Mullner, 2000).

9. Podcasts versus Broadcasts

Because of the slight different between podcast and broadcast in terms of pronunciation, so many people confuse them as one concept. Broadcasts are Transmissions via terrestrial radio (AM/FM) and online that output audio on various topics via talk shows. The programmes provided in the Broadcasts are live controlled in a studio. The interaction is the key characteristic of people listening in real-time. They are bound to listen to a certain programme at the specific time set by the studio controllers (Jamie, 2013).

Podcasts, on the other hand, are audio or video files that are available on Google Play, iTunes, or websites which can be downloaded to a computer or any portable device. People are free to download these files any time they want, unlike broadcasts (Jamie, 2013). The key difference between them is that Broadcasts are live controlled programs, while podcasts are not.

10. Podcasts variants

There are different file forms of podcasts. According to Swetha (2013), there are four types:

10.1. Audio podcasts

Audio podcasts are the most common and widely used type. They usually take form of an MP3 file format. AAC and WMA are rare file format of this type. Depending on the length, the audio file does not usually exceed 10 Mb, which makes it one positive side of this type (Swetha, 2013).

10.2. Video podcasts

The second type is video podcasts. It has many file formats, yet the most common used one is the MP4 format. Video podcast is a term used for the online delivery of video content which has a large population since the airing of television shows on the internet. Unlike audio podcasts, video podcasts usually have a larger file size which requires a higher bandwidth than required in downloading the audio files, typically upwards of 100 MB depending on the length (Swetha, 2013).

10.3. Enhanced podcasts

One unique type of podcasts is the enhanced podcasts, which refers to the combination of audio files with images. It often contains many images that change like a slide show that is accompanied with an audio file, which makes it more like a narrated slideshow. It is considered as an extended version of audio podcasts that is capable of showing additional information. They usually take the form of MP4 format. What

characterized this type is that it presents both visual and audio content, yet the size is almost like audio podcasts or less (Swetha, 2013).

10.4. Podcast novels

The last type of podcasts is the podcast novels. It is also known as audio books. Similar to traditional novel, this type takes the form of a series of literary work. It provides an online delivery of chapters that is formed into series of audio recordings, wherein each chapter is delivered individually. It allows the novelists to expand their stories to the audience (Swetha, 2013).

On the basis of the type of the media content which is associated with podcasting, the audience chooses the type of podcasts that serves their needs and fit their learning strategies.

11. Creating a podcast

Listening to a podcast may lead the thoughts to ask the question: how to produce a podcast? Creating a podcast is almost as easy as listening to one. Stephanie (2005) stated that the process includes four steps and they are as follows:

1. The first step is plugging the microphone into the computer. The microphone is a crucial element that the creation of a podcast cannot proceed without having one.

2. The installation of the audio recording, which refers to the programme in the computer that need to be installed that allows and manages the recording and the edition. The microphone cannot record if it is not accompanied by the recording programme.

3. Creating, editing, and saving of the audio file. With the presence of the microphone and the recording programme, it is allowed to record the content whether it is

a conversation, a song, or anything else, then, editing it through eliminating or adding a part, after that we save it on the computer.

4. Uploading the recorded file. This step includes the distribution of the podcast through uploading it in a podcasting websites which make it available for the internet users to listen to it, watch it, or download it.

Producing and distributing a podcast to reach other people is as easy as mentioned in the previous steps. The simple means and the plain steps allow all people to create their own podcasts.

12. Podcasts and language teaching

The main difference between the traditional teaching and the recent teaching is the integration of technological tools. Such integration has facilitated the process of language teaching by aiding the teachers with various tools that facilitate the delivery of the content materials. Many teachers are using podcasts for teaching purposes. Bharti (2014) provided some teaching purposes as served by podcasts.

1- It helps teachers to deliver quality research content and lessons in order to help students who need it.

2- Teachers are able to record their podcasts and provide it to the learners as a learning material.

3- Teachers can record podcasts to provide feedback.

4- The availability of the different variants of podcasts allows the teacher to provide the learners with the suitable sort that fits their level.

5- Teachers integrate podcasts in the course content to develop certain skills within the learners such as developing good communication skills, problem solving ability, researching, improving vocabulary, and a lot more.

13. Podcasts and language learning

“Technology has revolutionized the field of education” (Oak, 2012). Its importance cannot be ignored, which made it easy for teachers to impart knowledge and for students to acquire it. Podcasts are one of the effective technological tools that become widely used in language teaching and learning, which “have reported really positive results” (Gray, 2013). Podcasts in education offer the chance to plainly send and receive multimedia content through audio or video. The simple use of such tool in schools engages learners and improves their learning practices.

The flexible availability of podcasts facilitates the process of language learning. The simplicity of accessing to its various kinds grants the learners different learning recourses without any considerable efforts, which make it convenient for flexible learning (Gray, 2013). One of the valuable and interesting concepts related to the use of podcasts in classrooms is student related content. The teacher may allow the learners to produce their own podcasts in a form of tasks. They may take the shape of a presentation, discussion, or an interview, and make them available for their classmates. Such process encourages learners to take control of their education, as it also maintains interaction, which is considered to be the main part required for learning (Gray, 2013).

To many learners of the current generation, learning through listening is more favourable and less tedious. As Gray (2013) said, ”perhaps one of the greatest pedagogic

characteristics offered by educational podcasting is the chance to learn through listening". In addition to that, podcasts are equally useful in cases where visual impairment makes traditional learning methods difficult which support the emphasis on listening.

Moreover, the use of podcasts to enhance the language skills is considerably regarded. Listening, as one of the crucial skills in language learning, can be developed through exposing the learners to the different types of podcasts. It offers a real-time listening source for second language learners to benefit from it. With the distinctive sounds, rhythms, and intonation patterns provided in the podcasts, the learners will get acquainted with the sounds of the target language (Constantine, 2007).

Regardless to the numerous technological tools used in education, podcasts are one of the tools that have a positive influence on language teaching and learning, as well as developing the language skills.

Conclusion

As provided in this chapter, technology has a positive influence on language learning and teaching. More precisely, podcasts, as an e-learning tool, has the prospect to enrich the learners' knowledge, enhance their skills, and facilitate language learning. Furthermore, it affects the teaching process which makes it much easier for teachers to present the materials and help them to attain the teaching objectives. Such e-tool creates a new and joyful learning atmosphere that varies from the traditional learning, which directs and raises the learners' interest and motivation towards language learning.

Chapter Two:

Listening Comprehension

Chapter two

Listening Comprehension

Introduction

Among the four skills of language, the development of the listening skill in language learning is rather necessary. The learners need to comprehend the different sounds and rhythms of the target language in order to meet learning. For the sake of making an acquaintance with the listening skill, this chapter aims to cover different aspects, such as listening variants, models, and importance in EFL teaching and learning.

1. Listening: definitions and perspectives

It is well established that communication comprises speaking and listening, and there is no point to separate between them (Martian, 2011). Consequently, listening is one of the major keys that are required in order to construct an effective communication. The absence of listening in oral communication will lead to communication breakdown during which the speaker may easily get provoked, frustrated, or irritated. Listening is mostly regarded as a simple process, yet it is not as simple as it may seem. It was partially neglected in language teaching (Richard and Schmidt, 2010). Such significant skill is quite needed for language learners that requires a hard work to develop it in order to avoid its relative issues, as well as to “recognize their strengths and weaknesses when it comes to listening and to help them develop strategies to increase their listening effectiveness” (Downs, 2008, p 1).

Listening, as a word, is defined as “making an effort to hear something; to pay attention or heed” (Downs, 2008, p 1). Based on the latter definition, Listening and

hearing are two different processes. Listening is vital and it requires more effort than hearing. It is commonly seen as a passive skill, yet in fact, it is an active and dynamic process (Steinberg, 2007). What makes it dynamic is that listening in communication is not merely for understanding what is being said, but also to provide feedback (Borkar, 2015).

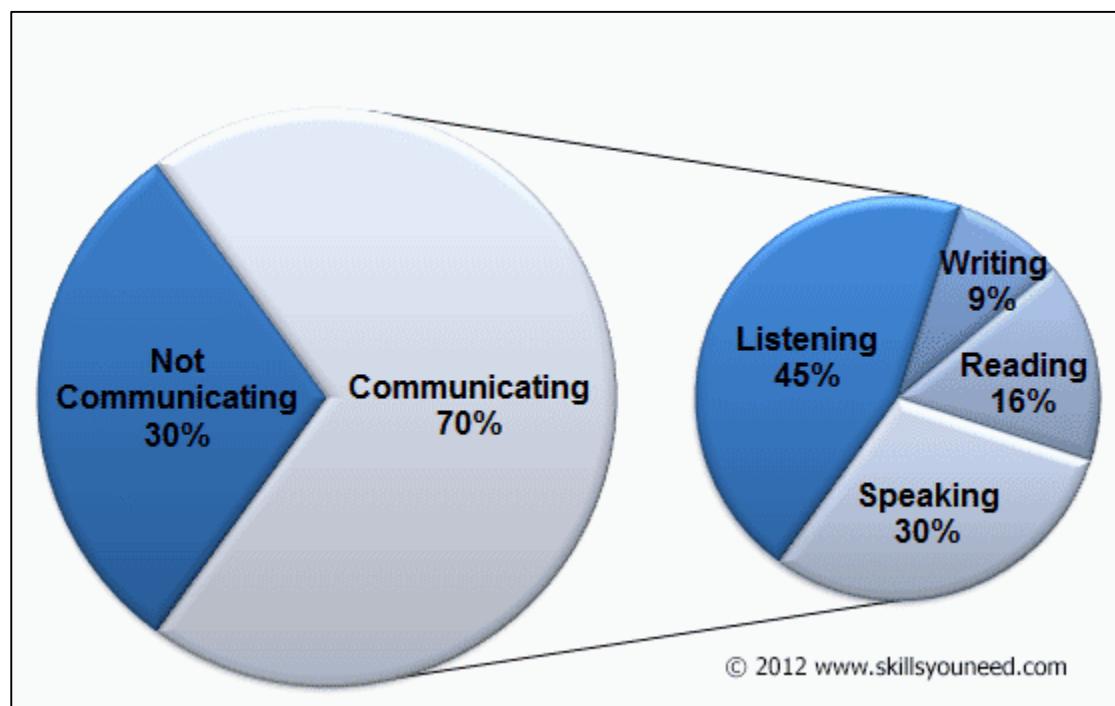


Figure 4. The time spent in communication (www.skillsyouneed.com)

Based on the research of Adler, Rosenfeld, and Proctor (2001), adults take most of the times in a day communicating, which represents the average of 70% in the figure, and 30% not communicating. Listening takes the presence when the individual is not communicating, which represents almost the average of 50% of the language skills circle. Consequently, comparing the representations of the language skills in the above pie charts opposes the thought that listening is passive.

2. Listening VS Hearing

Hearing and listening are two different processes. According to Downs (2008), hearing refers to the “physiological process of the ear absorbing sound waves and transferring them along neural pathways to parts of the brain” (p 1). The process of hearing is spontaneous; the reception of the different surrounded sounds of the environment occurs with or without any consent of the individual (Karen, 2015). Listening, in the other hand, is the process of paying attention to a specific sound, which requires more effort than hearing. Furthermore, Listening requires consciousness i.e. “paying attention to the words that are being spoken with the intention of understanding the other person” (Karen, 2015). The following table illustrates the key differences between the two processes.

Point of difference	Hearing	Listening
1.Difference	Receiving any message through ears is known as hearing.	On the other hand explanation of the received message can be labeled as listening.
2.position in the listening process	It is the first step of listening process.	It is the next step of listening process.
3. function	Function of hearing is just to receive the verbal message.	Listening involves decoding or interpretation of the message.
4. consciousness	Consciousness is not required in hearing.	On the other hand listening is a conscious human behavior.

Table 2. The difference between hearing and listening (<http://communication-business.blogspot.com>)

3. Variants of listening

The purpose of listening when someone is speaking determines the type of listening. Additionally, the different everyday situations that the individual face entails various listening skills. According to Jin (2014), there are four types of listening.

3.1 Content listening

This type is purely for solely understanding what the speaker is saying. The listener usually remains silent. Regardless to the few interactions that may take the form of short questions or comments, yet the core of this type of listening is to identify and focus on the key points of the message (Jin, 2014).

3.2 Critical listening

The main goal for the critical listener is to focus on evaluating the message at various levels, such as the rationality of the message, the validity of the message, the strength of the evidence, and the intentions of the speaker. It is difficult to receive a flow of information and evaluate it at the same time, yet the critical listener generally involves interaction and observes the non verbal signals to reach a good evaluation (Jin, 2014).

3.3 Empathetic listening

The empathetic listening concentrates chiefly on understanding the feeling of the speaker for the sake of helping to solve a problem. As the speaker expresses the problem, the empathetic listener tries to interpret the psychology of the speaker and attempt to provide a suitable solution for the situation. Merely listening, however, helps the individual to evacuate the odd feelings (Jin, 2014).

3.4 Active listening

Active listening is the last and the core of all types. It is crucially important because the active listeners give so much energy attempting to fully understand what the speakers are saying, and help them to expressing and extending their thoughts. They help to create a free zone that is empty of criticizing which make it easy for the speakers to express themselves (Jin, 2014). The active listening is quite important in teaching foreign languages. It helps the learners to practice and share their thoughts, as it also helps them to enhance their learning motivation, because they are emotionally connected to learning (Kelly, 2014).

4. Stages of listening

Because of the rapid occurrence of listening, it is commonly regarded as a simple process, yet it is a complicated process that passes through different stages. These stages are: receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding (“Stages of Listening”, 2012).

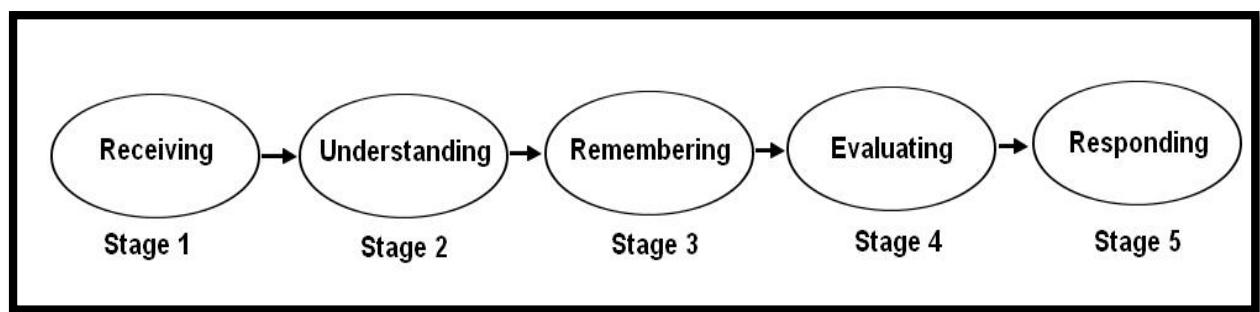


Figure 5. The Stages of Listening (mine)

4.1 Receiving

It is the first stage of the listening process. Receiving refers to the attentive act of hearing the message of the speaker, which is needed for the next stage. It requires filtering all the surrounded sounds at the mere entrance into the ear, which keeps the voice of the speaker and discards the additional ones that are not needed (“Stages of Listening”, 2012).

4.2 Understanding

In this phase, the individual tries to create meaning of the words and sentences that were received in the previous stage. The way the messages are understood is reflected by the perceptions and experience of the individual. Therefore, the case when the speaker and the hearer have different backgrounds may cause difficulty to create meaning and the understanding of words in isolation will not be sufficient. The creation of the meaning in such case requires pre-existed knowledge and experience (“Stages of Listening”, 2012).

4.3 Remembering

The third stage, remembering, is related to the memory - which is the act of recalling a pre-existed knowledge. Such act starts with listening. If it is difficult or not possible to remember, listening might not have been activated. This means that listening and remembering are quite attached to each other. Improving the memory of the messages is important for learning, and the key to such development is to process these messages meaningfully (“Stages of Listening”, 2012).

4.4 Evaluating

Evaluating is the fourth stage of listening, which refers to the judgment of the value of the messages. The evaluation of the same message may differ from one listener to another. As mentioned in the former stage, the diverse in life experiences and backgrounds also lead to the diverse of the evaluation of the same message. Consequently, the standards of evaluating the received messages differ from one individual to another (“Stages of Listening”, 2012).

4.5 Responding

The last stage of the listening process is responding, which is a result of all the previous stages. This stage also referred to as feedback. As a result of listening, the individual will be involved in speaking, and any act the listener does may be considered as a feedback i.e. the feedback mostly take the form of verbal behavior, yet the non-verbal responses are also considered as a form of feedback, such as nodding or a shrugging (“Stages of Listening”, 2012).

5. Listening comprehension: definitions and perspectives

It is rather important for EFL learners to understand the exposed oral input in the class in order to meet learning, which entails the development of the listening comprehension skill. The word comprehension refers to the potential to perceive what is read or listened to. Durkin (1973) defined comprehension as an “active and intentional thinking in which the meaning is constructed”. Moreover, comprehension is “an ability to understand something, which indicates an intelligent power of abstract thought and reasoning of humans or intelligent system” (Wang and Gafurov, 2015). Despite of the

different perspectives, all the definitions above share the thought that comprehension is the act of understanding something.

Listening comprehension is a complex skill and its importance extends to effect the development of the second language competences (Larry, n.d). Fang regarded such skill as a dynamic process which entails the individual to focus on a selected aural input, then construct the meaning and associate it with the previously existed knowledge (2008). Listening comprehension simply is the act of perceiving a certain acoustic messages in order to build a meaning of something.

6. Models of listening comprehension

There are numerous models that have been developed in order to illustrate the listening comprehension of L2 and help language learners to regulate their own listening. The most famous processes in listening are the bottom-up processing and the top-down processing. The latter processes describe cognitive behaviors of the individual during the listening act, which requires some important knowledge to draw each of the processes.

6.1 Bottom-up processing

The bottom-up model was the first to be developed, which extends back to the 1940s and the 1950s. It is a rather active process in which listeners construct gradual understanding beginning from the smallest units of the acoustic message to increasingly larger units of meaning i.e. the phonemes combine into words, and words together create phrases, clauses, and sentences, then finally the sentences of the individual combine to construct the concepts and ideas (John and Miller, 2005). Listeners of the bottom-up rely heavily on the linguistic knowledge to comprehend the speech, which implies the

phonological, lexical, and syntactic knowledge of the target language. Relying solely on the latter, however, is not adequate for comprehension, because the listener cannot be able to follow the whole sound stream (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

6.2 Top-down processing

The top-down processing is more for advanced learners who have mastered a basic linguistic knowledge, which make the focus on developing such sort of listening processing sound more suitable. The top-down listener “primarily involves the application of the context and prior knowledge to interpret the message” (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012. p 18). It works as a compensation strategy to perceive the meaning of an unclear message, which are interpreted based on the context (John and Miller, 2005). It means that the listeners imply a pre-existed knowledge of the context of a listening topic in order to draw the comprehension. Listeners apply various sorts of knowledge that are primarily stored in the long term memory of the listener ,which take the form of schemes in order to attain the objectives of the task, such as experiential knowledge, pragmatic knowledge, cultural knowledge, and discursive knowledge of the target language. The use of the prior knowledge alone, however, may not be sufficient to attain a complete comprehension, because the listeners may not share the perspectives of the subject matter that are required for an accurate interpretation (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). The following figure illustrates how the two processes work (see page 37).

7. the challenges of Listening in EFL teaching

Listening plays a significant role in second language teaching and learning. If the learners encounter a problem in process and comprehending auditory input, the solely result would be a failure to meet the objectives of teaching and learning. Thus, dealing

with poor listening issues is rather significant. Basically, the issues are linked to four main factors, which are the message, the speaker, the listener, and the physical setting. The problems are mostly caused by the pace of the utterances, Vocabulary, and pronunciation (Renukadevi, 2014). Renukadevi proposed the following main reasons that cause listening issues (2014).

1. Learners put great effort to understand each and every word they listen to.
2. The difficulty to construct their vocabulary reflects their listening and hinders the development of the language skill.
3. Standardizing the articulation of the words make it hard for the learners to understand the varieties of pronunciation and accents.
4. Unlike the other skills; speaking, reading, and writing, listening requires much concentration effort which greatly affects the development of listening skill of the learners.
5. The physical setting in which listening is processed may cause distractions and affects the listening concentration of the learner.

7.1 Listening comprehension: teaching strategies

The knowledge of the various reasons that affect listening comprehension is quite important and helpful for teachers to spot the problem and deal with it accordingly. Teachers can promote listeners through various ways as they communicate with learners. There are many strategies that help to overcome the listening issues in the classroom. Dr. Ken Shore's (n.d.) proposed the following strategies that help dealing with poor learners:

1. Investigating possible reasons for listening difficulty i.e. identifying the problems that caused the listening problems.
2. Changing the seat of the poor listeners near the teacher to optimize understanding, which make them able to better understand the instructions and lessen the chances of destruction.
3. Gaining the attention of the learners before the presentation.
4. Monitoring the understanding of the learner.
5. Enhancing the understanding of the learners though speaking in plain and short, asking the learners to repeat what is been tackled, providing various answers of the same question, and supplying them with written materials that help them grasp the auditory one.

Listening comprehension is a primary channel of learning a language. Minimizing the listening issues helps the language learners to comprehend better, promote their listening skills, and enhance the language acquisition process.

8. Listening and speaking

In EFL teaching and learning, listening and speaking are the two basic language skills. The alternative naming of the two skills, which are oral and aural, make them sound the same. Oral language refers to speaking, and Aural refers to listening (Brown, 2006). Regardless to the significance of listening and speaking in language learning, the focus of the majority of teachers is often inclined to teaching reading and writing (Khan, 2013).

A good listener is a good speaker, which means that there is a strong relationship between listening and speaking. The former skill is rather significant for the development of the latter. Listening “helps students to acquire good speaking habits as a result of the spoken English they absorbed” (Saitakham, 2012, p. 50). In order to attain an effective communication, the mastery of listening and speaking are required. Thus, teaching the latter skills must be given weight to EFL learners, because the primary reason for learning a language is basically to communicate.

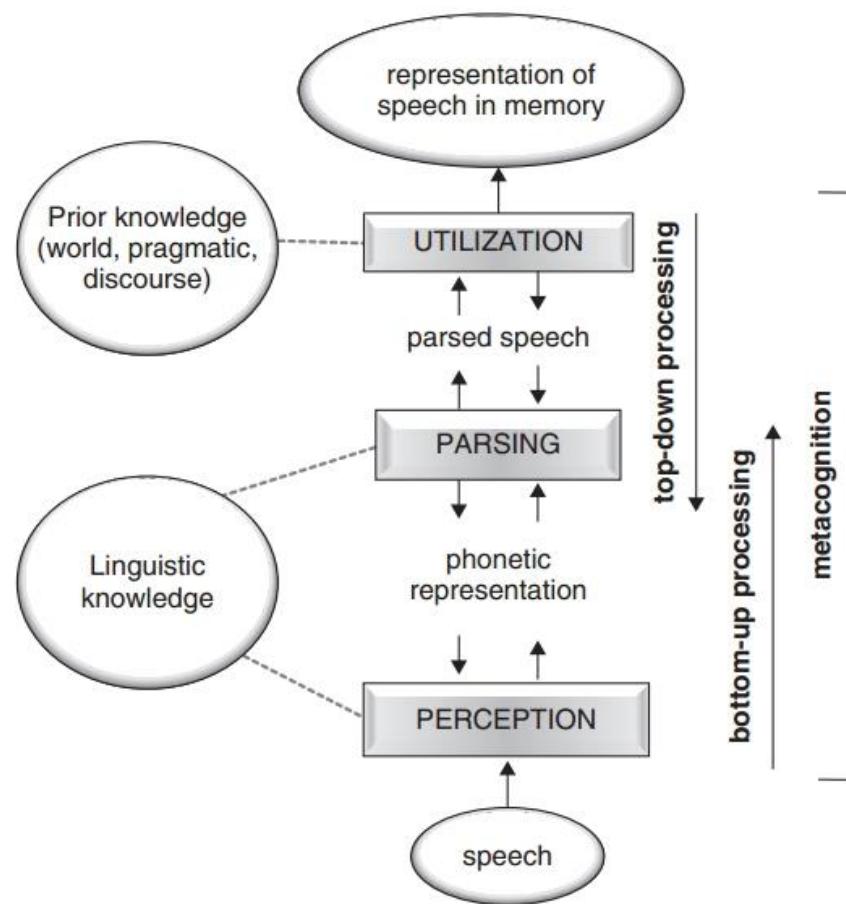


Figure 6. Cognitive processing in L2 listening (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012. p 27)

9. Listening and language learning

Listening skills is one major component of the second language acquisition process, yet “the importance of listening in language learning has only been recognized relatively recently” (Kim, 2004). As mentioned earlier, researchers have demonstrated that adults use almost 50% of their times listening. Thus, teachers should work on developing the L2 listening skills of the learners.

9.1 Intensive listening

Intensive listening activities are crucial for learners to promote their listening skills. This type of activities concentrates on the language forms and how it may affect the meaning i.e. it tends to lead the learners to the acquaintance with the different sounds, structures and lexis, and how the different choice of these elements may affect the meaning. According to Harmer (2007), “intensive reading or listening tends to be more concentrated, less relaxes, and often dedicated not so much to pleasure as to the achievement of a study goal” (p. 273). This means that learners are bound to listen to a certain material that is selected by the teacher to attain a certain learning objectives. The intensive listening activities must be placed in a context of language use i.e. to provide the learners with real life listening situations. In addition to that, the degree of the language complexity must be linked to the level of the learners (Michael, n.d.). Intensive listening usually takes place in the classroom and requires the presence of the teacher in order to guide and facilitate the listening activities, and help the learners recognize the element of language.

9.2 Extensive reading

Unlike intensive listening, extensive listening usually takes place outside the classroom. This kind of listening is more for pleasure. The learners are not bound to listen to a specific material that is provided by the teacher, yet they listen to the materials based on their incline, which grants them the total freedom of choosing what to listen for the sake of joy and pleasure. The role of the teacher in extensive listening is to guide their listening through recommending some materials that may serve the development of their listening skill such as to concentrate more on listening to a particular accent (Harmer, 2007). Learners listen extensively when they are intrinsically motivated. Thus, teachers also need to motivate their learners to practice listening when they are out of the classroom.

10. Listening as comprehension and listening as acquisition

The distinction between the two words; comprehension and acquisition, is quite obvious, but linking them to listening may cause confusion. Therefore, the distinction between listening as comprehension and listening as acquisition must be identified by SLA teachers, because the knowledge of the latter helps and enhance the listening skills of the learners, as it also consolidates language acquisition.

10.1 Listening as comprehension

Language learners get exposed to various sorts of input such as the auditory input. The latter requires learners to listen in order to understand the input, with the regard of the context. Thus, the main purpose for listening is to comprehend the meaning of the message. “Listening is based on the assumption that the main function of listening in

second language learning is to facilitate understanding of spoken discourse” (Richard, 2008, p. 3). Richards (2008, p. 14) provided an approach of teaching listening based on the assumptions below.

- Listening serves the goal of extracting meaning from messages.
- To do this, learners have to be thought how to use the both bottom-up and top-down processes to understand messages.
- The language of utterances – the precise words, syntax, and expressions – used by speakers are temporary carriers of meaning. Once meaning is identified, there is no further need to attend the form of messages unless the problem in understanding occurred.
- Teaching listening strategies can make learners more effective learners.

10.2 Listening as acquisition

In EFL teaching, listening skill is generally regarded as focusing on teaching learners the listening comprehension, yet a significant side “proposed for listening in language program, namely, its role in facilitating second language acquisition” (Richard, 2008, p. 15). In addition to comprehension, the listening courses can aid learners to acquire the language. Learners must be engaged to some sorts of activities that help them to use newly noticed language forms after the listening activity for the sake matching listening to acquiring the linguistic knowledge.

In order to realize the latter, Richard (2008) proposed two teaching activities: noticing activities, and restructuring activities.

10.2.1 Noticing activities

Noticing activities refers to the act of reverting to the listening material that is chiefly set for comprehension activities to focus more on recognizing the linguistic knowledge (Richard, 2008). This activity is the shift from the overall understanding of the material to specific items of the language. For better understanding, Richard (2008, p.16) provided an example for such kind of activities.

Students can listen again to a recording in order to:

- Identify differences between what they hear and a printed version of the text.
- Complete a cloze version of the text.
- Complete sentences stems taken from the text.
- Check off entries form a list of expressions that occurred in the text.

10.2.2 Restructuring activities

Richard define restructuring activities as “oral or written tasks that involve productive use of selected items from the listening text” (2008, p. 16). According to the latter definition, this type of activities is based on the listening materials that are provided by teachers in which learners are asked to produce their own spoken or written language. According to Richard (2008, p. 16), these activities may involve:

- Paired reading of tape scripts in the case of conversational text.
- Written sentence-completion task requiring use of expressions and other linguistic items that occurred in the texts.
- Dialog practice that incorporates items from the text.

- Role plays in which students are required to use key language from the texts.

In addition to the main reason of developing listening skill, which is comprehension, listening also enrich the knowledge budget of the learners and facilitating the language acquisition process.

11. The importance of listening comprehension in EFL teaching and learning

In the previous decades, listening comprehension received less attention as compared to other language skills, yet its importance in EFL teaching and learning is well established recently (Hogan, Adlof, & Alonzo ,2014). Listening as a skill in language learning is given more lights, because it is one of the major keys in communication. The constant exposure to the auditory materials, such as TV, podcasts, movies, or any other sorts of listening sources, develops listening comprehension of the learners. 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). Mike (2013) stated that “Regular long-term listening to various authentic English audio and video materials helps a learner produce his or her own sentences more quickly and with better wording when speaking than without adequate practice in listening comprehension in English”. Moreover, Modi (1991) said that:

It is the basic process in which an individual learns pronunciation, is acquainted with the right accent and stream; differentiate tones and intonation, acquires vocabulary, gets an idea of organized language (syntax

etc.). Besides, reception of ideas, feelings, thoughts, etc. take place through listening along, but without reception there can be no expression. (p .2)

The practice of Listening in EFL learning is rather significant. Because of the non-native English environment, English learners have little chances for a regular long-term communication with native English speaker, which is considered as a natural and fruitful source of feeding listening (Mike, 2013). Though the internet increases the chances of having real communication with native speakers, yet listening practice is important in terms of focusing on developing a particular aspect of listening skills. Consequently, EFL teachers have recognized the due importance of developing listening comprehension within learners through placing it in the curriculum.

Conclusion

The content of this chapter revealed the basic elements of listening skill, as it also provided the significance of listening comprehension in EFL teaching and learning. Developing such skill is strongly related to the promotion of other language skills; thus, it is rather necessary for EFL teachers to drive more attention to enhance listening comprehension within learners by varying the learning materials and classroom tasks that assist the learners to meet their learning objectives.

Chapter Three:

The field work

Chapter three

Field work

Introduction

The current chapter aims to describe and discuss the results accumulated from the questionnaires and the interviews. The former was dedicated for students in order to measure the listening challenges of the learners and their interest towards integrating podcasts to enhance their listening and learning. The latter was devoted for teacher, which generally seeks to investigate their interest and familiarity with the use of technology in teaching, precisely podcasts. The eminent characteristic of this part is to show how podcasts may affect EFL teaching and learning.

1. The Student's Questionnaire

1.1 Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is severed into two main sections. The first section generally regards the listening challenges and difficulties that the learners may have encountered in the classroom. The second section, on the other hand, seeks to know the learners' interest in using technological tools in EFL learning, measures their acquaintance with the term podcasts, and whether or not the latter may evolve their listening skills.

1.2 Aim of the Questionnaire

Through following the descriptive method, a semi-structured questionnaire has been conducted for the sake of investigating the problems and collecting the data required for the research, As well as to see how English language learners at Biskra University consider the use of podcasts as and e-tool to enhance their listening comprehension. The

questionnaire chiefly tends to study the different behaviors of the learners towards the use of podcasts in EFL learning.

1. 3 Participants

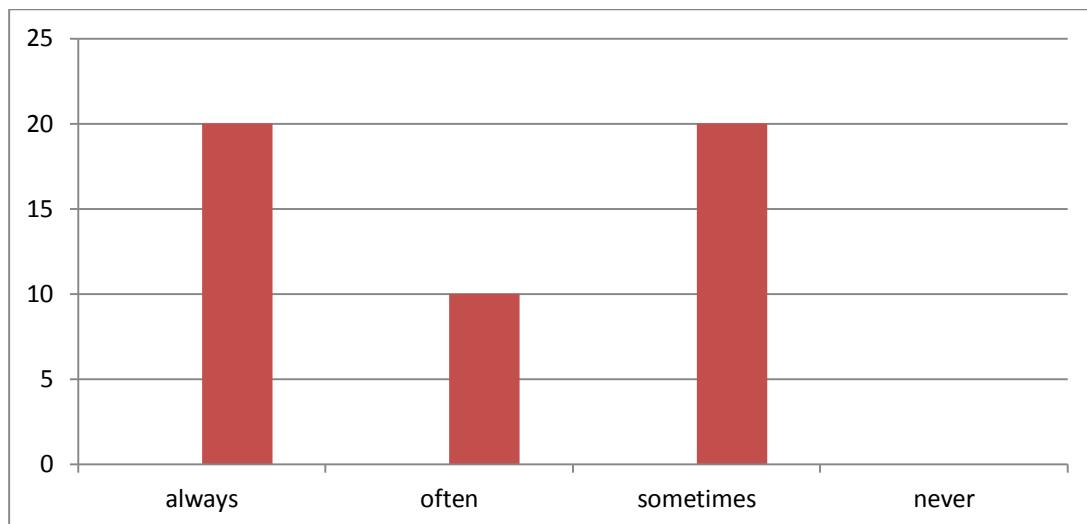
The questionnaire targets the third year students of the English department of Biskra University. There was a random selection of fifty (50) students, regardless to their age, gender, and social status. The main reason of targeting this population is due to the fact that they have already experienced two years studying English, and they are still undertaking oral expression courses, which raises the chances of experiencing sessions in laboratories.

1.4 The Analysis of the Questionnaire

1 - The frequency of listening to English:

Frequency	Percentage	Participants
Always	40%	20
Often	20%	10
Sometimes	40%	20
Never	0%	0

Table 3. The frequency of listening to English



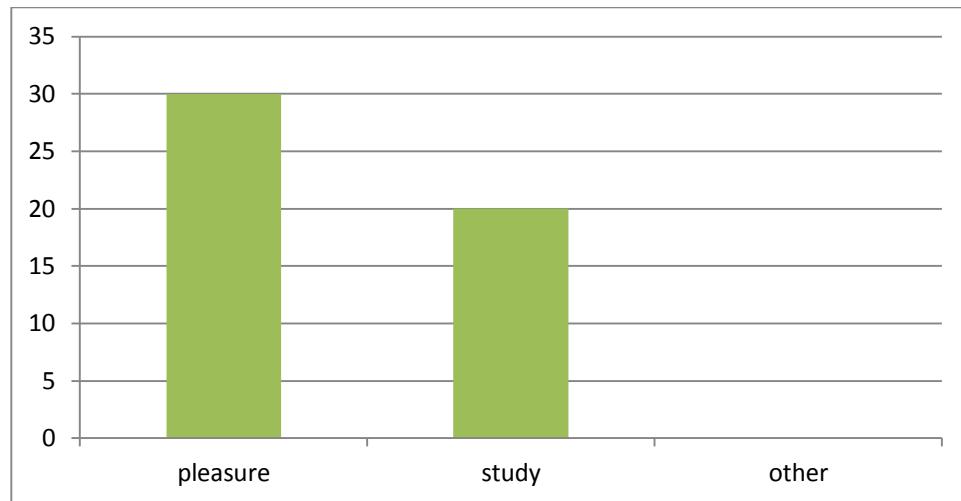
Graph 1. The frequency of listening to English

The above table demonstrates that all of the participants do listen to English. Those who always listen represent the average of 40%, as well as for the others who sometimes do. The remaining 20%, however, stands for the participants who often expose themselves to listening English. Regardless to the variety of the frequency of listening to English, the constant exposure to listening English will help the learners to get acquainted with the different sounds and rhythms of the language, which eventually will lead to evolve their listening skills.

2 – The reason of listening to English:

Choices	Percentage	Participants
Pleasure	60%	30
Study	40%	20
Other	0%	0

Table 4. The purpose of listening to English

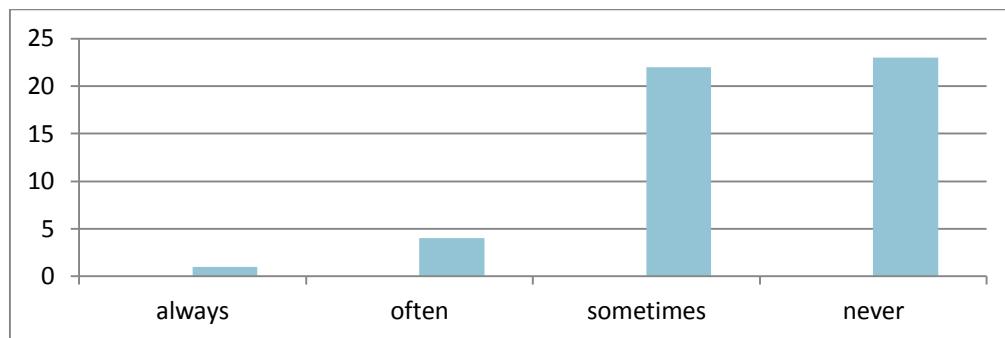
**Graph 2.** The purpose of listening to English

The results shown in the graph 2 illustrates the participants' purpose of listening to English. All of them have picked one of the two provided purposes, for pleasure or for study, which left no provision of any other reasons. The numbers of those who listen for pleasure, which represents the average of 60%, surpass the number of others who listen for the sake of educational purposes, who represents the average of 40 %.

3 - The difficulty of understanding the teacher:

Frequency	Percentage	Participants
Always	2%	1
Often	8%	4
Sometimes	44%	22
Never	46%	23

Table 5. The frequency of the understanding challenges in the class



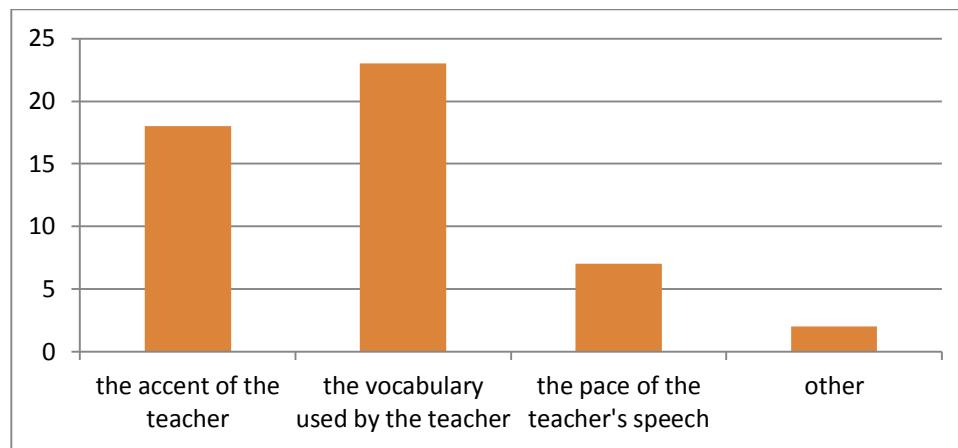
Graph 3. the frequency of understanding challenges in the class

The displayed results reveal the frequency of the understanding challenges that the participants may have encountered while listening to the teacher during the sessions in the classroom. The majority do not seem to find it difficult to understand the instructor when speaking in the class. 23 (46%) of the participants have never encountered any difficulty, while 22 (44%) of them sometimes face issues to understand the instructor. The rest of respondents, yet, have frequent meetings with the difficulty to understand the instructor, which represents the average of 8% for those who often face difficulties and 2 % for the others who always do.

4 – The causes of understanding difficulties:

Frequency	Percentage	Participants
The accent of the teacher	36%	18
The vocabulary used by the teacher	46%	23
The pace of the teacher's speech	14%	7
Other	4%	2

Table 6. The reasons of listening difficulties.



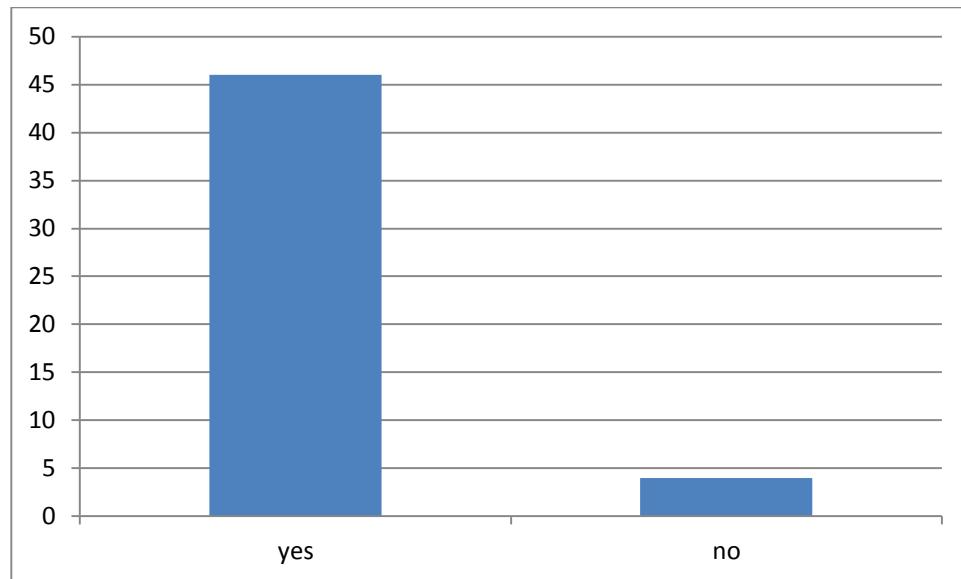
Graph 4. The reasons of listening difficulties.

Approximately, all of the participants have picked one of the provided reasons in the questionnaire that may cause them a difficulty to understanding the teacher in the class. 46% of the respondents regard the vocabulary used by the teacher as the key cause that glitch their understanding process, whereas some others consider the difficulty as a result of the teacher's accent, which represent the average of 46%. The pace of the teacher when speaking has caught the attention of 14% of the participants to pick it as a reason for their understanding challenges in the class. As far as the other reasons are concerned, 4% of the participants regard the way of delivering the course bring more alienation to the class and cause difficulty of understanding the teacher.

5 - The students' interest towards the use of technology in language learning:

Choices	Percentage	Participants
Yes	92%	46
No	8%	4

Table 7. The use of technology in language learning



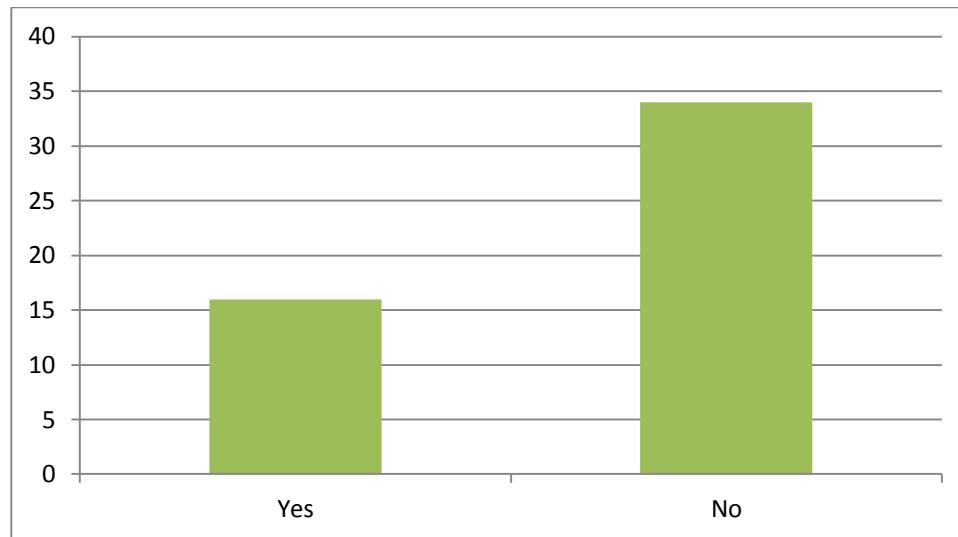
Graph 5. The use of technology in language learning

This part measures the participants' interest towards the use of technology in language learning. According to the results, almost all of the respondents are interested in using technology in language learning, which represent the average of 92%, while on the contrary, those who prefer language learning without the involve of any sort of technology seem to be more inclined to the traditional way of learning, which represent the average of 8%.

6 – Experiencing listening courses in laboratory:

Choices	Percentage	Participants
Yes	32%	16
No	68%	34

Table 8. listening and laboratory



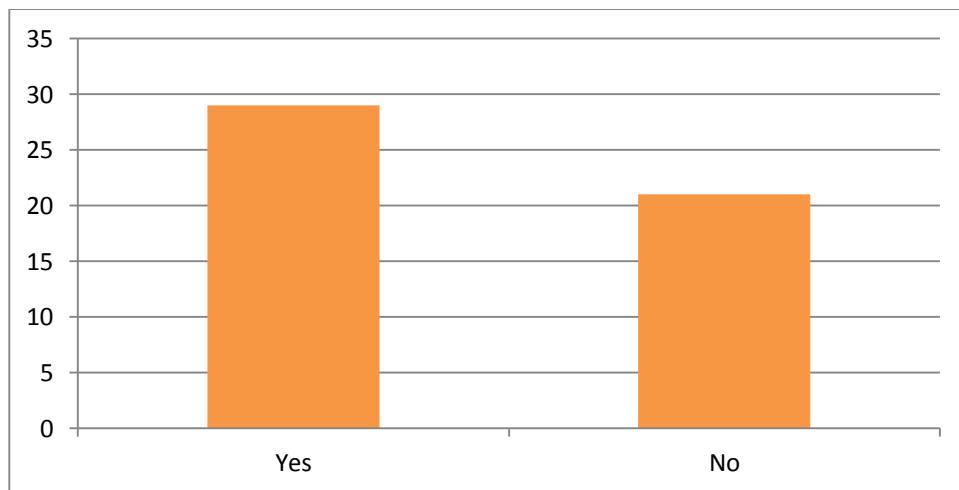
Graph 6. listening and laboratory

The displayed results in the graph 6 present the participants' experience of listening courses in laboratory. More than half of the participants have not experienced it, which indicates the average of 68%, while the rest of the respondents have not experienced listening courses at laboratories. The majority of those who chose "Yes" for laboratory courses experience one (1) session per week, which play a major part in enhancing their listening skills. The others who did not experience laboratory sessions whatsoever could be affected with the fact that the lack of laboratory sessions may discourage their listening development.

7- The participants' familiarity with the term podcasts

Choices	Percentage	Participants
Yes	58%	29
No	42%	21

Table 9. The Students' acquaintance with podcasts.



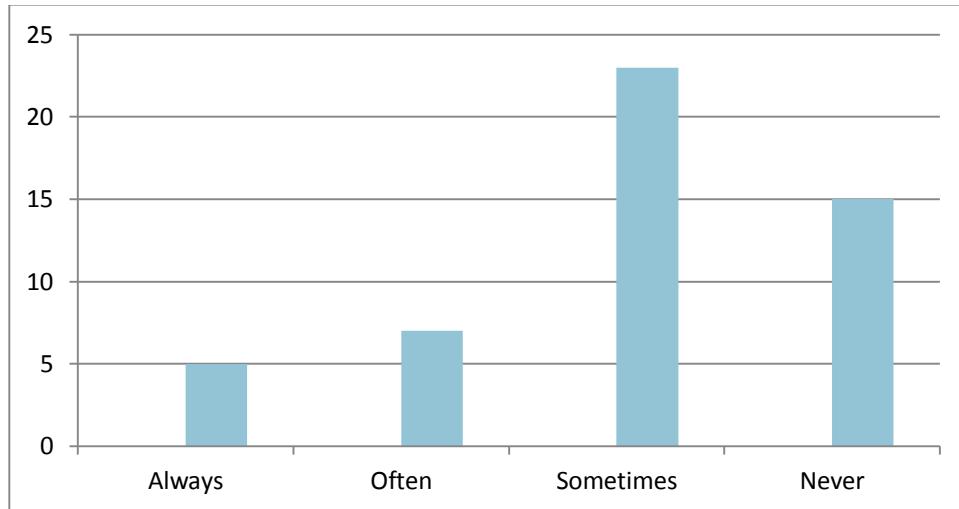
Graph 7. The Students' acquaintance with podcasts

As far as the term podcast is concerned, a remarkable quantity of the participants are not acquainted with the nature of the term, yet the number of those who are familiar with the term exceed those who are not, which represents the average of 58%. The cause behind the 42% of the respondents' unfamiliarity with the term may possibly be a result of the teachers' lack technology use, lack of laboratories, or the teacher's unfamiliarity with the term podcast itself.

8 – The frequency of listening to English podcasts:

Frequency	Percentage	Participants
Always	10%	5
Sometimes	46%	7
Often	14%	23
Never	30%	15

Table 10. The frequency of listening to English podcasts



Graph 8. The frequency of listening to English podcasts

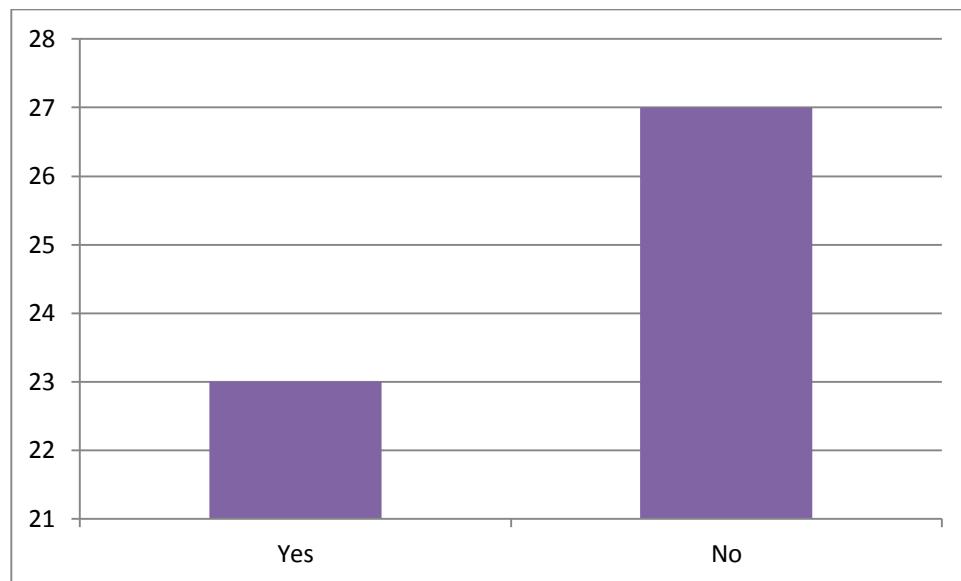
The presented data shows that 70% of the participants do expose themselves to English podcasts in various degrees. Almost half of the participants sometimes listen to English podcasts, while those who often listen to them outline 14%. The minority of the participants always listen to English podcasts, who form a percentage of 10%. A considerable percentage of the respondents, yet, have never listened to them, which represents the average of 30%, which make support the previously mentioned 32% of

respondents who never experience listening courses in laboratory. The teachers' neglect of the importance of laboratories will lead to the learners' negligence of developing their listening skills

9 – The challenges encountered while listening to podcasts:

Choices	Percentage	Participants
Yes	46%	23
No	54%	27

Table 11. The challenges of listening to podcasts



Graph 9. The challenges of listening to podcasts

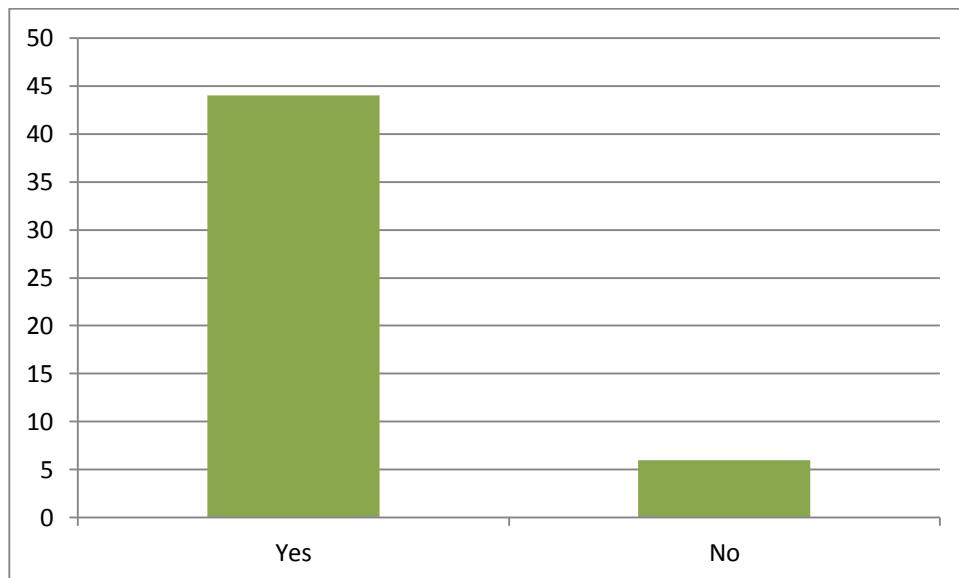
Statistically speaking, the difference between the participants who do not encounter difficulties in listening to English podcasts and the others who do is not quite immense. The former represents the average of 54%, while 46% represents the latter. The

respondents who encounter challenges in listening form a remarkable quantity which obviously seems to need more assistance and focus on enhancing their listening skills.

10 – The usefulness of podcasts in language learning:

Choices	Percentage	Participants
Yes	88%	44
No	12%	6

Table 12. podcasts and language learning



Graph 10. podcasts and language learning

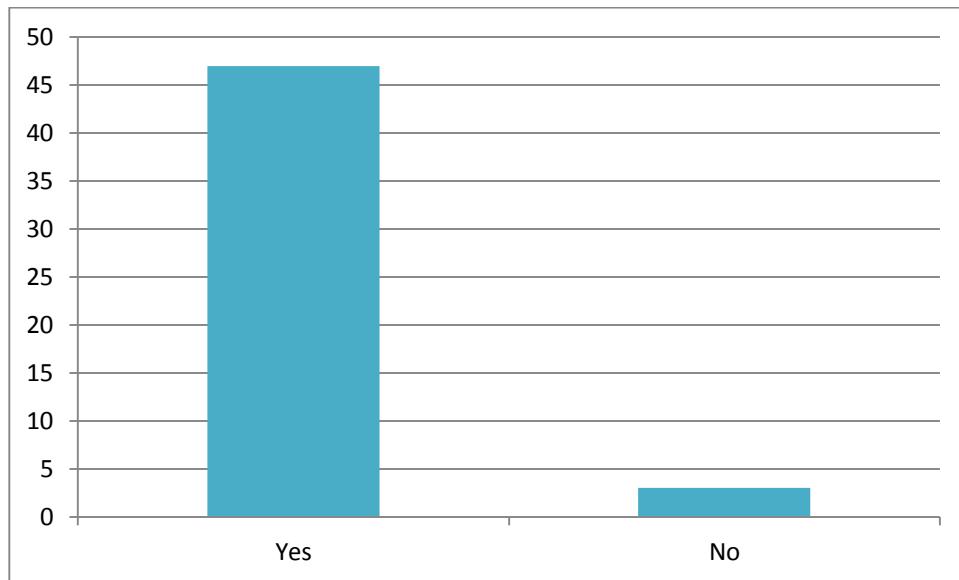
The above indicates the responses of the participants towards the usefulness of podcasts in language learning. The findings present a positive feedback towards the use of such e-tool in language learning. Forty four (44) participants agreed that it is a benefit

for language learning, while the remaining ones, six (6) participants, who present 12% of the whole respondents, have rejected its usefulness.

11- The development of listening through podcasts:

Choices	Percentage	Participants
Yes	94%	47
No	6%	3

Table 13. Podcasts and listening development



Graph 11. Podcasts and listening development

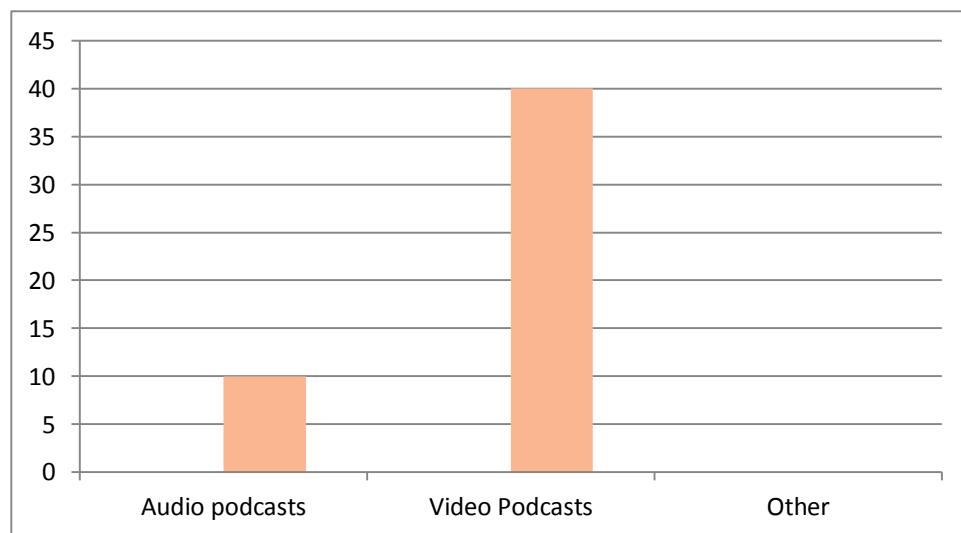
The participants were asked whether or not they agree with the use of podcasts to enhance their listening. The provided opinions lead to the result that the majority of the participants, who represent the average of 94%, agreed that podcasts enhance their

listening skills, while the rest of the respondent, who represent the average of 6%, have neglected its usefulness in enhancing listening.

12 – Types of podcasts and listening efficiency:

Types of podcasts	Percentage	Participants
Audio podcasts	20%	10
Video podcasts	80%	40
Other	0%	0

Table 14. Types of podcasts



Graph 12. Types of podcasts

According to Graph 12, the majority of the participants regard video podcasts as the type that is more effective in enhancing their listening skills, who represents the average of 80% in Table 12, Whereas the rest who consider audio podcasts to be more

effective in enhancing listening skills represents the average of 20%. The following table summarizes the reasons behind their choices:

Audio podcasts	Video podcasts
- Video podcasts distract the attention of listening.	- Gestures & facial expressions help in understanding unfamiliar words.
- It helps to put all focus solely on listening	- It facilitates remembering the new vocabulary through associating the new words with the video scenes.
	- In addition to enhancing listening, it also develops pronunciation through observing the movement of the speakers' mouths

Table 15. The effects of audio podcasts and video podcasts (mine)

1.5 Discussion

The results of the students' questionnaire analysis can be categorized into three main parts: the learners' listening challenges in the class, their acquaintance with podcasts, and their behaviors towards the use of podcasts in enhancing their learning in general, and their listening skills in specific.

Regardless to the frequency of listening, all of the participants expose themselves to English. The reason of listening took two streams: either for pleasure or for educational purposes. The former exceed the latter in terms of the quantity of the participants. Furthermore, some of the learners seem to encounter difficulties to understand the teacher in the classroom, which was mostly a result of the used vocabulary that seems difficult or new for the learners. Teachers are responsible for

explaining the vague terms in order to lessen their deviation from the course, or they could simply use a plain and simple language that fits their level of understanding.

Moreover, the teachers' accents and the pace of their speech also seem to confuse and hinder the learners' understanding, which requires them to work more on a clear and accurate pronunciation of the language followed by a regular pace. Additionally, the methodology of teaching should be highly considered, because it is one of the major reasons that keep the learners either in or out of the stream of the lesson.

Almost all of the learners are interested in involving technology in their learning since its use has revolutionized almost all fields of life. "With onset of computers in education, it has become easier for teachers to impart knowledge and for students to acquire it" (Oak, 2012). Measuring the learners' familiarity with the term podcast showed that the ones who are already familiar with it nearly equal those who are not. The latter involves a remarkable quantity, which leads to the lack of listening courses at laboratory as a probable reason, because it is found that the most of the participants do not experience session in laboratory. Additionally, the results proved that podcasts help EFL learner in learning English, as it also proved its effectiveness in enhancing the learners' listening skills. "For language learners specifically, podcasts provide a unique repository of authentic oral language materials, an aspect of language teaching which has often been neglected in the past in favour of text-based activities" (Anne, 2008).

Comparing video podcasts with audio podcasts, the majority of the participants chose video podcasts claiming that it is more effective in enhancing not just their listening skills, but also their speaking skills and their storing memory. On the other hand, the minorities chose audio podcasts as a type that is more effective in enhancing

their listening claiming that video podcasts can be more destructive and can kill their focus on listening.

2. Teachers' interview

In addition to the questionnaire for students, a semi-structured interview was conducted for the sake of collecting more data about the subject matter. The interview was administrated at the English department of Biskra University, which was dedicated for oral expression teachers. Four (4) teachers, who have a long experience in teaching, were appropriately selected to answer the questions of the interview in order to receive satisfactory and valid answers.

2.1 Description of the Teachers' Interview

The interview consists of nine (9) questions. The latter include both open-ended and close-ended questions which set to regard the teachers' acquaintance and experience with integrating technological tools in EFL teaching. The questions are premeditated to get more insight about the use of podcasts in teaching and its influence on both teaching and learning.

2.2 The Analysis of the Teachers' Interview

Question 01: How long have you been teaching English?

Teacher 01: More than 30 years.

Teacher 02: 10 years.

Teacher 03: 14 years.

Teacher 04: 14 years.

The teachers' feedback regarding their experience in teaching English revealed that the most recent of the teachers have experienced ten (10) years in teaching English, which is considered to be an enough period for them to be experienced in the field of teaching. Depending on their years of teaching, they can be a helpful source to draw a clear view about the subject matter.

Question 02: Do you use technology to teach English?

Teacher 01: Yes

Teacher 02: Yes, I sometimes do.

Teacher 03: Yes, in some cases and if available.

Teacher 04: Yes.

All of the participants responded that they use technology in teaching, yet one of the teachers have used remarkable expression when answering, which is "if available". This means that regardless to the teachers' tendency of integrating technology in teaching, they seem to encounter problems regarding the provision of the technological tools.

Question 03: What kind of technology do you usually use?

Teacher 01: I previously used language laboratory when the number of the students was not as huge as now. But now I am using Data show and mobiles.

Teacher 02: Few years ago, I used language laboratory to teach listening. Currently, I usually use data show.

Teacher 03: I use computer, data show, overhead projector, and smart phones.

Teacher 04: I use my personal computer and data show.

According to the teachers' responses, they use various sorts of technological tools such as data show, overhead projector, computers, and smart phones. Two of the teachers have pointed to a noteworthy part of their experience in using an important sort of technological tools in language teaching, which is laboratory. Both of them have used laboratory before, yet they currently do not. One of them claimed that the reason is due to the fact that the quantity of the learners is quite vast then before, which cause them difficulty to teach in laboratory nowadays.

Question 04: how can technology facilitate EFL teaching and learning?

Teacher 01: It creates a relaxing atmosphere, motivates students, and makes the job easy for teachers.

Teacher 02: Technology is a teaching aid. First, it captures students' attention and gets them involved. Second, it helps the teacher to deliver his/her lessons easily with audio visual support. Third, it exposes the learners to the real world of language (authenticity). Finally, it breaks routine and creates fun atmosphere in the class.

Teacher 03: Technology is a necessary element in teaching, especially when dealing with foreign language. It leads to motivation, raising interest, creating competition, and improves language skills.

Teacher 04: Technology helps in facilitating EFL teaching and learning in that it provides a new learning environment which is motivating to a great extent for both teachers and learners.

The teachers have provided various illustrations that support technology as an aid in EFL teaching and learning. Their responses show that technology is quite helpful for both teacher and learners in a way that it creates a new teaching and learning environment i.e. it spread motivation, interest, and competition within learners and facilitates the job for teachers.

Question 05: Do you know about podcasts?

Teacher 01: Yes.

Teacher 02: Yes, I know, but not too much.

Teacher 03: Yes

Teacher 04: Indeed no, it's my first time to hear about the term but I learn a bit about it from the net to have an idea so that I can answer your questions.

The primary purpose behind asking this question is to measure the teachers' acquaintance with the term podcast. Three of the teachers seem to be familiar with the term, yet one of them added that he/she is not well acquainted with it. Regardless to the long experience in teaching, it is remarkable that one of the participants seems to hear the term for the first time, which may raises the probability of lacking the knowledge about term for some teachers.

Question 06: Do you think that podcasts are useful tools in language learning?

Why?

Teacher 01: Yes, if they are appropriately chosen.

Teacher 02: As other technology-based loads, podcasts also are useful, if used properly.

Teacher 03: of course, EFL learners tend to be exposed to podcasts nowadays for many reasons.

Teacher 04: Somehow, it depends on the topics discussed and the way they are presented in terms of vocabulary. In other words, it helps learners to develop their vocabulary and enrich their knowledge in the target language.

As far as podcasts are concerned, the participants' responses to the usefulness of such e-tool in language learning were positive. Some of the teachers proved its usefulness if it is used properly i.e. podcasts should suits the learners' level and serve their learning objectives. Moreover, it is also helpful in a way that it builds the learners' vocabulary store. Based on the teachers' feedback, podcasts are useful in language learning.

Question 07: How can podcasts develop the learners' listening skills?

Teacher 01: The learners get accustomed to daily conversations as well as informal ones whose understanding is based not only on the language, but also on other features such as stress and intonation.

Teacher 02: They expose them to the oral language with all its varieties. They also familiarize students with different accents of English language and different speech contexts. Podcasts are also useful to learn more about culture of English-speaking people.

Teacher 03: They help learners to develop the four language skills in terms of language proficiency, research, writing, as well as the listening skills when being exposed to different speakers with different accents.

Teacher 04: I cannot answer you here because I don't know how podcasts really work.

This question seeks to have a close look on how podcasts may help in enhancing the learners' listening skills. All of the participants provided explanations, but one. Teacher number four (4) seems to lack a lot of knowledge regarding the subject, which lead to the refusal of answering the question. The other teachers demonstrates the idea of linking podcasts to the learners' listening development in a way that it help the learners to get acquainted with the language through exposing them to the different varieties of accents and oral language. Furthermore, it helps them to get accustomed with the different features of language that may manipulate the meaning when listening, such as stress and intonation. Consequently, podcasts can help learners to enhance their listening in various ways.

Question 08: What kinds of problems students may encounter while listening to podcasts?

Teacher 01: They sometimes do not understand due to the lack of vocabulary, the lack of the background of target language culture, and the use of aspect of speech, mainly weak forms in addition to elision and assimilation.

Teacher 02: Probably, technical problems especially if their digital deliver do not support the software. The right selection of podcasts also may cause problems (too easy or too difficult).

Teacher 03: maybe lack of vocabulary, cross-culture issues, or interest in topics.

Teacher 04: May be problems with vocabulary used or the speakers' intonation because not all podcasters are native speakers.

The feedback of the participants presented above shows various probable issues that the learners may encounter when they are exposed to podcasts. The lack of vocabulary is ranked as one of the major problems that learners face when listening, as well as the lack of cultural background of the target language. Additionally, the learners also may find it difficult to understand the podcast in terms of the nature of the subject, which can be either totally new or not capturing. The level of the podcasts also creates understanding challenges when it exceeds their level of comprehension, and likewise when it comes to the speakers' accent. The latter may cause confusions in listening and understand in terms of the phonological rules such as assimilation and elision. Moreover, a probable cause of the issues is due to the technical problems, which obviously cause difficulty of listening to the podcast.

Question 09: Do you think that podcasts enhance the learners' interest in learning English? How?

Teacher 01: Surely, because most of the podcasts are attractive, this triggers learners to look for others to develop their learning. This enables them to be autonomous learners. If we reach this, it means that the set objectives have realized, in other words, motivating students to be lifelong learners.

Teacher 02: Yes, it may enhance learners' interest only if they are interested to learn, otherwise, it will be like other sorts of mobile/ digital amusement.

Teacher 03: I agree. Learners may feel comfortable when dealing with podcasts and exchanging information and opinions with each other; they consider them as an active source of enhancing their knowledge.

Teacher 04: May be, just for the simple reason to live a new learning experience.

The participants' answers revealed that podcasts can enhance the learners' interest toward learning English in many ways. First, it is a tool that builds autonomy within learners i.e. they become more dependent in terms of looking for other sorts of podcasts that fulfill their needs. Second, listening to podcasts in laboratories as a new experience for some learners may raise their interest and motivation towards learning English. Finally, regardless to podcasts' role in enhancing interest of learners to learn English, one of the teachers agreed that they enhance the learners' interest only if the learners are basically interested in learning i.e. if the learners are interested in learning English, podcasts would be an effective factor that increases their interest in learning English, but if they are not, podcasts will not evolve their interest due to the fact that they are already not interested in learning.

2.3 Discussion

The overall findings of the teachers' interview provide positive responses towards the use of technology in EFL teaching and learning in general, and podcasts in specific. All of the teachers are attached to using different technological objects as an aid to facilitate the process of teaching and learning such as data show, computers, and smart phones, which shows the support of using T-tools in the department of English at Mohamed kheider Biskra.

As far as podcasts are concerned, "for the EFL teacher, the fact that English is still a dominant Internet language means that the choice is enormous" (Anne, 2008). The immense resources of English podcasts grant EFL teachers the advantage to pick the right podcasts that suits the level of learners. Moreover, 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. As it also enriches their vocabulary store, which is regarded as a major aspect that lessen the challenges of understanding, and the culture of English. Furthermore, it breaks the routine and grants a new learning experience which may increases interest, motivation, and autonomy within learners to learn English. The awareness of such e-tool, yet, should be spread within teachers in order to help them teach listening and detect the learners' listening challenges through the use laboratory. The latter is quite important for learners to practice listening, because they are especially dedicated for listening courses. Thus, providing laboratories to the learners is rather necessary for them to enhance their listening skills.

Conclusion

As provided in this chapter, the obtained results from the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview revealed that podcasts play a significant role in EFL teaching and learning, which confirmed the effectiveness of podcasts as an e-tool that enhances their listening skills, as well as its usefulness in language learning. Moreover, it fulfills the teachers' needs to deliver listening courses in a comfortable and easy way.

General Conclusion

And

Recommendations

General conclusion and recommendations

General conclusion

The aim behind the conducted work was to measure the effects of podcasts on EFL learners' listening comprehension at Biskra University. The research was severed into two main parts: the theoretical part and the fieldwork. The former include two chapters, which are devoted for studying the two variables. The first chapter focuses on podcasts and its various shapes, in addition to the different aspects and variants of E-learning. The second chapter, however, focuses on the second variable, which is listening comprehension. It provides the different types, models, and stages of listening, as well as its significance in EFL teaching and learning. The third chapter covered the analysis, description, and discussion of the data accumulated from the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview.

The data required for the study was obtained from third year students of English and four (4) oral expression teachers at Biskra University. Regardless to the learners' age, gender, and social status, the primary reason behind choosing the third year students is due to the fact that they have experienced oral expression in the previous two years, and they still experiencing oral courses for the third year, which may raise the probability of experiencing sessions at laboratory. Additionally, they also have been chosen for the sake of receiving neat, organized, and helpful answers. In addition to the students' questionnaire, the interview was conducted with four (4) teachers who are well experienced in teaching in order to support the investigation and to have more insights about the issue. The primary aim of choosing such tools of data gathering is because they

have fit the limited time given for the research in order to confirm or reject the usefulness of podcasts in enhancing EFL learners' listening comprehension.

The findings revealed a positive attitude regarding the use of technology in EFL teaching and learning. More precisely, it is found that podcasts are helpful in language learning during which they enriches the learners' English language knowledge, vocabulary store, and English culture, as they also develop the learners' language skills, chiefly listening. As far as the teachers' views are concerned, they supported the use of such tool in EFL teaching, in which it presents new way of teaching, simplify the teaching process, and breaks the routine for both teachers and learners. The prosperity and success of podcasts, however, depends on the teachers' acquaintance with the use of such e-tool and the appropriate selection of the materials in a way that guides the learners to meet the learning objectives.

To put in a nutshell, podcasts play a significant role in both teaching and learning. The revealed results have served the primary hypothesis, which is podcasts in EFL classes will develop the learners' listening skill. The findings led to conclude that it is a reliable and relevant tool to for listening practice and for enriching EFL learners' knowledge.

Recommendations

For the sake of integrating podcasts in EFL teaching and learning at Biskra University, the following recommendations need to be regarded:

- Merge the electronic tools within the curriculum.
- Teachers need training regarding the use of e-tools, especially podcasts.

- EFL learners should experience listening courses at laboratory.
- Providing more laboratories for learners in order to practice and better their listening.
- Produce original podcasts of the English department of Biskra University during which learners can download and benefit from them. Additionally, it is possible to enlarge their extension through sharing them with other universities in all over the world.

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Appendices

Appendix One
Students' Questionnaire

Dear students

This investigation aims to measure “the effects of podcasts on EFL learners’ listening comprehension” among 3rd year student of English in fulfillment of master dissertation. Your opinions are rather helpful and significant for the undertaken research. Rest assured that the provided answers are kept in the strictest confidentiality. Your participation is enormously appreciated.

Please, tick (✓) the appropriate answer

Section One: Listening comprehension

1- How often do you listen to English?

Always Often Sometimes Never

2- Do you often listen for:

Pleasure

Study

other

If “other”, please state it bellow:

.....

3- Do you find it difficult to understand the teacher when speaking in the classroom?

Always Often Sometimes Never

4- Do you think that the difficulty of understanding is a result of:

The accent of the teacher

The vocabulary used by the teacher

The pace of the teacher's speech

Other

If "other", please specify

.....

Section two: Podcasts and listening

1- Are you interested in using technology in language learning?

Yes No

2- Did you experience listening courses in laboratory?

Yes No

If yes, How many sessions per week?

.....

3- Have you ever heard of podcasts?

Yes No

4- How often do you listen to English podcasts?

Always Often Sometimes Never

5- Are there any problems that you have encountered while you are listening to the podcasts?

Yes No

If yes, state some:

.....
.....

6- Do you think that podcasts are useful for language learning?

Yes No

7- Do you think using podcasts will help to enhance your listening skills?

Yes No

8- Which type of podcasts you think is more effective in enhancing your listening?

Audio podcasts

Video podcasts

Other

Why?

.....
.....

Thanks for your time 😊

Appendix Two**Teachers' interview**

Would you please answer the following questions?

- 1- How long have you been teaching English?
- 2- Do you use technology to teach English?
- 3- What kind of technology do you usually use?
- 4- How can technology facilitate EFL teaching and learning?
- 5- Do you know about podcasts?
- 6- Do you think that podcasts are useful tool in language learning? Why
- 7- How can podcasts develop the learners' listening skills?
- 8- What kinds of problems students may encounter while listening to podcasts?
- 9- Do you think that podcasts enhance the learners' interest in learning English?
How?

ملخص

الهدف الأساسي من هذا البحث هو دراسة إستعمال البوتاست و تأثيراته على تطوير الكفاءة السمعية بالنسبة لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية و مدى تأثيرها في عمليتي التعليم و التعلم. و كذلك تهدف إلى قياس مدى تأثير أنواع هذه الأدات على تطوير هذه الكفاءة و مساحتها في زيادة المعرفة اللغوية و الثقافية للغة الإنجليزية. الفرضية تدل على مدى أهمية و تأثير البوتاست في تطوير الكفاءة السمعية لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية و ذلك بمساحتها في توفير أشياء عدة منها اللهجات الإنجليزية المتعدد. قمنا بتوزيع إستبيان على طلبة السنة الثالثة للغة الإنجليزية بجامعة محمد خضر بيسكرا من أجل قبول أو رفض الفرضية السابقة. زيادة على الإستبيان، قمنا بإجراء مقابلة مع بعض أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية من نفس الجامعة من لهم خبرة في مادة التعبير الشفهي. بناءً على تحليل المعلومات التي قمنا بجمعها من الإستبيان و المقابلات، أشارت النتائج إلى إيجابية و دعم الفرضية من كل الطرفين، الأساتذة و الطلبة، و التي تشير إلى أن البوتاست لها القدرة في تطوير الكفاءة السمعية لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية، بالإضافة إلى أن البوتاست السمعي البصري فاق تأثيراً على تطوير هذه القدرة من البوتاست السمعي فقط. النتائج أيضاً أضافت أنها تسهم في زيادة المعرفة اللغوية و الثقافية للغة الإنجليزية.