

# The Haye Way podcast for Improving English listening skills A Conceptual Analysis

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i6.1865>\*Ahnif Adhhar Afkari, Arif Suryo Priyatmojo<sup>ab</sup> <sup>12</sup>Universitas Negeri Semarang, IndonesiaCorresponding Author: [ahnifafkari@students.unnes.ac.id](mailto:ahnifafkari@students.unnes.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

Listening skill is a crucial yet challenging aspect of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, particularly for junior high school students with limited exposure to authentic spoken English. Although podcasts have been widely used in language learning, existing studies mainly focus on empirical outcomes, while conceptual analyses linking podcast characteristics to listening theories remain limited. This article aims to conceptually analyze The Haye Way Podcast as a medium for improving English listening skills. Using a conceptual research design, this study synthesizes theories of listening comprehension, meaningful and comprehensible input, and podcast-based learning. The analysis indicates that the podcast provides authentic yet accessible spoken input, familiar thematic content, and affective support that may facilitate listening comprehension. This article concludes that The Haye Way Podcast has theoretical potential as a supportive listening resource in EFL contexts and offers pedagogical insights for listening instruction.

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## INTRODUCTION

Listening skill is widely recognized as one of the most challenging aspects of English language learning for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Listening requires learners to process spoken language in real time, which involves identifying sounds, understanding vocabulary, interpreting meaning, and integrating information simultaneously. This complex process demands a high level of cognitive engagement, particularly for learners who have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. In many EFL contexts, learners' exposure to spoken English is largely confined to classroom instruction, which restricts opportunities to encounter natural and varied spoken input. Previous studies indicate that many EFL learners experience persistent difficulties in listening comprehension due to unfamiliar pronunciation, rapid speech rate, limited lexical knowledge, and insufficient contextual support (Goh, 2017); (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015). These challenges are especially evident at the junior high school level, where learners are still developing foundational language skills. In classroom practice, listening instruction is often delivered through textbook-based or scripted audio materials that are designed for pedagogical control rather than authentic communication. Such materials may not adequately represent natural spoken language features, including reduced forms, spontaneous discourse, and varied intonation patterns, which learners commonly encounter outside the classroom. As a result, learners may struggle to transfer listening skills acquired in class to real-life communicative situations. Consequently, listening activities frequently become a source of anxiety and low confidence among junior high school EFL learners (Aryadoust et al., 2020). When learners repeatedly experience difficulty understanding spoken English, their motivation and willingness to engage in listening tasks may decrease. This situation highlights a pedagogical problem in EFL

listening instruction and suggests the need for alternative listening resources that can provide more authentic, meaningful, and accessible spoken input to support learners' listening development.

### **Authentic Listening Input and Digital Media in EFL Learning**

In response to the challenges faced by EFL learners in developing listening comprehension, recent discussions in language pedagogy have emphasized the importance of providing learners with authentic and meaningful listening input. Authentic listening materials are considered essential because they expose learners to natural spoken language features that are often absent from scripted classroom audio. Research indicates that overly controlled listening materials may limit learners' ability to cope with real-life speech characteristics such as reduced forms, natural rhythm, varied intonation, and spontaneous discourse (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012); (Gilmore, 2015). As a result, recent discussions in EFL pedagogy emphasize the importance of incorporating authentic and meaningful listening input to support learners' listening development and real-world communicative competence (Goh & Aryadoust, 2016).

Along with the advancement of digital technology, language learning has increasingly expanded beyond the physical classroom. Learners now have greater access to English input through various digital platforms that support flexible, autonomous, and repeated exposure to spoken language. Digital media provide opportunities for learners to engage with listening materials in more natural contexts and at their own pace. One form of digital media that has gained considerable attention in English language education is podcasts. Podcasts allow learners to access spoken English content anytime and anywhere, making them particularly suitable for supporting extensive and self-directed listening practice. Recent studies suggest that podcast-based learning can support listening development by enhancing learners' comprehension ability, vocabulary acquisition, and awareness of spoken language features (Rahimi & Soleymani, 2020); (Li, 2022). Compared to traditional listening materials, podcasts tend to present language in a more natural and contextualized manner, which is beneficial for EFL learners (Hasan & Tan, 2021). These characteristics suggest that podcasts may serve as an alternative listening resource that bridges the gap between classroom listening instruction and real-world language use.

### **The Haye Way Podcast and Topic Familiarity in Listening Comprehension**

Among various types of English podcasts, topic-based podcasts that employ clear pronunciation and relatively simple vocabulary are considered particularly suitable for EFL learners at the junior high school level (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2018). Topic-based content allows learners to engage with listening materials that are meaningful and relevant to their interests, which may increase attention and motivation during the listening process. The Haye Way Podcast is an English-language podcast that focuses on football-related topics and delivers content using accessible language and a conversational style.

The podcast features discussions, opinions, and commentary on football events, making it potentially appealing to learners who are interested in sports. Interest-driven content has been found to increase learners' engagement and attention during listening activities (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). In addition, familiar topics such as football may help learners activate their background knowledge, which plays an important role in supporting listening comprehension. When learners can draw on existing knowledge, they are better able to anticipate information, infer meaning, and compensate for gaps in linguistic understanding (Goh, 2017).

### **Theoretical Perspectives and Research Gap**

From a contemporary theoretical perspective, listening comprehension is viewed as an interactive process that involves the integration of lower-level linguistic processing and higher-level cognitive processing. Recent research highlights that successful listening depends on learners' ability to recognize sounds and words while simultaneously using contextual cues and prior knowledge to construct meaning (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015); (Aryadoust et al., 2020). When learners engage with listening materials that contain familiar themes, such as football, their background knowledge may facilitate higher-level processing and reduce

cognitive load during comprehension (Goh & Aryadoust, 2016). Furthermore, recent second language acquisition research emphasizes the role of meaningful and comprehensible input in supporting language development. Listening materials that are accessible in terms of vocabulary, delivery, and topic familiarity may provide input that is appropriate for learners' current proficiency levels and promote more effective listening engagement (Ellis, 2015);(Long, 2015)

Despite the growing body of research on podcast use in language learning, most existing studies focus on empirical outcomes or learner perceptions. There remains limited conceptual discussion on how the specific characteristics of an individual podcast can be theoretically linked to established models of listening comprehension and language acquisition (Rahimi & Soleymani, 2020);(Li, 2022). In particular, there is limited discussion on how the specific characteristics of an individual podcast can be theoretically linked to established models of listening comprehension and language learning. This lack of conceptual analysis suggests the need for further theoretical exploration in this area.

Therefore, this article aims to provide a conceptual analysis of The Haye Way Podcast as a supportive medium for improving English listening skills. By synthesizing recent theories of listening comprehension, meaningful input, and studies on podcast-based learning, this article examines how the characteristics of The Haye Way Podcast may contribute to learners' listening development. The analysis is expected to contribute to a deeper theoretical understanding of podcast use in EFL contexts and to offer pedagogical insights for teachers and learners interested in integrating podcasts into English listening instruction. Accordingly, this conceptual article analyses how characteristics of The Haye Way Podcast particularly its use of authentic spoken input, familiar thematic content, and accessible language can be theoretically linked to contemporary models of listening comprehension and second language acquisition with the discussion organized around these key themes in the following section.

## METHOD

This study employed a conceptual research design grounded in a literature-based analysis conducted through a systematic analysis of existing literature. Conceptual research aims to generate understanding by critically examining, integrating, and synthesizing existing theories and scholarly discussions rather than by collecting primary empirical data (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015);(Snyder, 2019). In the field of English language education, this approach is particularly suitable for examining pedagogical media and learning practices from a theoretical perspective.

The theories and scholarly sources analyzed in this study were selected based on their relevance to three key areas: (1) theories of listening comprehension in EFL contexts, (2) theories of meaningful and comprehensible input in second language acquisition, and (3) studies on podcast-based learning and digital media in language education. Seminal and recent works by scholars such as Vandergrift, Goh, Ellis, Long, and Aryadoust were prioritized due to their established contributions to listening research and second language learning.

The analysis was conducted through a thematic conceptual analysis. First, relevant theories and concepts were identified and categorized according to their focus on listening processes, input characteristics, and learner engagement. Second, the key characteristics of The Haye Way Podcast including its use of authentic spoken language, familiar thematic content, and accessible delivery were examined in relation to these theoretical frameworks. Finally, the study synthesized the theoretical insights to explain how the podcast can be conceptually understood as a supportive medium for improving English listening skills among junior high school EFL learners.

Rather than evaluating learning outcomes or learner performance, this study focused on establishing theoretical links between podcast characteristics and established models of listening comprehension and second language acquisition. Therefore, a conceptual research design was considered the most appropriate methodological approach to address the purpose of the study.

**Respondents**

This study did not involve human respondents or participants. Since the research adopted a conceptual design, no students, teachers, or educational institutions were recruited. The absence of respondents is consistent with the nature of conceptual research, which relies on secondary data sources and theoretical reasoning rather than direct observation or experimentation involving participants (Snyder, 2019). Consequently, issues related to sampling techniques or participant characteristics were not applicable in this study.

**Instruments**

In this conceptual study, no empirical research instruments such as listening tests, questionnaires, interviews, or observation sheets were employed. Instead, the primary analytical materials consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and scholarly publications related to English listening comprehension, second language acquisition, and podcast-based learning in EFL contexts. These sources functioned as the main instruments for conceptual examination and theoretical synthesis.

The selected literature provided both theoretical foundations and empirical insights that informed the analysis. Previous studies on listening processes, meaningful input, and digital audio media were used to support the conceptual mapping of podcast characteristics to relevant learning theories (Xie et al., 2019).

**Procedures**

The analysis procedure followed a structured and systematic sequence of steps. First, relevant literature published within the last ten years was identified through academic databases and scholarly platforms. The selection of literature was guided by relevance to key themes, including listening comprehension processes, comprehensible input, background knowledge activation, and the pedagogical use of podcasts or audio-based media in EFL learning.

Second, key theoretical concepts were identified and extracted from the selected literature. These concepts included bottom-up and top-down listening processes, the role of background knowledge in comprehension, and the importance of meaningful and comprehensible input in second language acquisition (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). Third, the main characteristics of The Haye Way Podcast, such as its focus on football-related topics, use of relatively simple vocabulary, conversational delivery style, and accessibility for learners, were examined based on publicly available information and content descriptions.

Finally, the identified podcast characteristics were conceptually mapped onto the selected theoretical frameworks. This mapping process aimed to explain how the features of the podcast may theoretically facilitate listening comprehension and support English listening development among junior high school EFL learners. The procedure allowed the study to establish logical connections between pedagogical theory and practical media use.

**Data analysis**

The data analysis employed a thematic and conceptual synthesis approach. The selected literature was carefully examined to identify recurring themes related to listening comprehension, cognitive processing in listening, and the use of podcasts as learning media (Braun & Clarke, 2021). These themes were then organized and synthesized to form coherent conceptual categories.

Through this analytical process, theoretical relationships were established between the characteristics of The Haye Way Podcast and principles of listening skill development. The outcomes of the conceptual synthesis were interpreted to explain the potential pedagogical value of the podcast for junior high school EFL learners. The result of this analysis provided the foundation for the findings and discussion presented in the subsequent section of the article. Specifically, the thematic synthesis resulted in several key conceptual themes that explain how characteristics of The Haye Way Podcast align with theories of listening comprehension and language acquisition.



## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

#### **The Haye Way Podcast as a Source of Authentic and Comprehensible Listening Input**

The conceptual analysis identifies that The Haye Way Podcast contains key features of authentic spoken English. The podcast episodes are characterized by spontaneous speech, natural pronunciation, varied intonation patterns, and the use of conversational discourse markers commonly found in informal spoken interaction. These features reflect the use of English as it occurs in everyday communication rather than scripted or pedagogically simplified language.

In addition to authenticity, the analysis indicates that the podcast maintains a level of linguistic accessibility suitable for junior high school EFL learners. The spoken input generally employs common and topic-related vocabulary, with clear articulation and a consistent speaking pace. These characteristics suggest that the podcast presents authentic language without excessive linguistic complexity.

Overall, the findings show that The Haye Way Podcast can be identified as a listening resource that combines natural spoken language with accessible delivery, allowing learners to engage with spoken English input without extensive modification or visual support.

#### **The Role of Familiar Thematic Content in Supporting Listening Comprehension**

Another finding of this conceptual analysis concerns the thematic focus of The Haye Way Podcast. The podcast consistently centers on football-related topics, including matches, players, and commentary on football events. These themes are commonly encountered in popular media and are likely familiar to many learners.

The analysis indicates that topic familiarity enables listeners to anticipate content and recognize key ideas during listening. Familiar themes allow learners to draw on prior knowledge when processing spoken input, even when some linguistic elements are unfamiliar. As a result, learners can focus on understanding the overall message rather than individual words.

Additionally, the findings show that the consistent use of familiar topics contributes to sustained listener attention. The relevance of the content encourages continued engagement with the listening material across multiple episodes.

#### **Podcast-Based Listening and Affective Support for Learners**

The findings also highlight affective characteristics associated with podcast-based listening. The Haye Way Podcast functions as an informal listening medium that can be accessed outside the classroom setting. The flexible nature of podcasts allows listeners to control playback, including pausing and replaying content as needed.

The analysis indicates that this flexibility creates a listening environment that differs from traditional classroom-based listening tasks. Learners are not constrained by time limits or evaluative pressure, which allows for repeated exposure to spoken input.

Furthermore, the interest-based nature of the podcast content is identified as a factor that encourages voluntary engagement with listening activities. The findings suggest that The Haye Way Podcast provides conditions that support sustained listening practice through learner-controlled access and topic relevance.

### Discussion

#### **Authentic and Comprehensible Input in Relation to Listening and SLA Theories**

The findings regarding The Haye Way Podcast as a source of authentic yet accessible spoken input can be interpreted through contemporary theories of listening comprehension and second language acquisition. Listening development is widely understood as a process that requires exposure to naturally occurring spoken language, enabling learners to become familiar with real communicative features such as intonation, reduced forms, and discourse markers (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015). Authentic input plays a crucial role in helping learners bridge the gap between classroom listening materials and real-world communication. (Gilmore, 2015).

At the same time, second language acquisition theories emphasize that input must be comprehensible and appropriate to learners' proficiency levels to facilitate learning (Ellis, 2015) (Long, 2015). Input that is excessively complex may hinder comprehension and increase learner frustration. The characteristics identified in The Haye Way Podcast suggest that it aligns with the notion of meaningful and comprehensible input, as the language remains natural while being delivered in an accessible manner. Conceptually, this supports the view that podcasts can function as effective listening media when authenticity and comprehensibility are carefully balanced.

### **Topic Familiarity and Top-Down Processing in Listening Comprehension**

The findings related to familiar thematic content can be discussed in relation to interactive models of listening comprehension, which highlight the interplay between bottom-up and top-down processing (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015) (Aryadoust, Goh, & Lee, 2020). Top-down processing allows learners to use background knowledge, contextual information, and expectations to support meaning construction during listening.

In the case of The Haye Way Podcast, football-related themes provide a meaningful and familiar context that supports higher-level cognitive processing. When learners are familiar with the topic, they are better able to predict content, infer meaning, and compensate for gaps in linguistic knowledge. This supports the argument that topic familiarity can reduce cognitive load and enhance overall listening comprehension (Goh & Aryadoust, 2016)

From a pedagogical perspective, this discussion reinforces the importance of selecting listening materials that align with learners' interests and background knowledge, particularly for junior high school learners who are still developing foundational linguistic skills. Conceptually, this reinforces the importance of content selection in listening instruction.

### **Affective Factors, Motivation, and Sustained Listening Engagement**

The affective findings can be interpreted through theories that emphasize the role of motivation and emotional factors in language learning. Listening anxiety and low confidence are widely recognized as barriers to effective listening comprehension, especially among EFL learners at the secondary school level (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). High anxiety and low confidence may hinder listening performance, while positive emotional experiences can enhance attention and persistence.

Podcast-based listening, as exemplified by The Haye Way Podcast, offers conditions that may support more positive affective experiences. The flexibility to control listening pace and the absence of immediate evaluative pressure allow learners to engage with spoken input more comfortably. Repeated and voluntary exposure to listening materials has been shown to support gradual improvement in listening comprehension and learner confidence (Goh, 2017; Li, 2022).

Thus, this discussion highlights that the pedagogical value of The Haye Way Podcast lies not only in its linguistic characteristics but also in its potential to foster supportive affective conditions. Cognitive and affective dimensions of listening work together, and podcast-based listening media may address both aspects simultaneously in EFL contexts.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This conceptual article examined The Haye Way Podcast as a supportive medium for improving English listening skills among junior high school EFL learners by synthesizing contemporary theories of listening comprehension, meaningful and comprehensible input, and affective factors in second language learning. The analysis indicates that the podcast provides authentic spoken English while remaining accessible to learners' proficiency levels, reflecting key principles of listening development that emphasize exposure to natural yet manageable input (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015); (Ellis, 2015); (Long, 2015). In addition, the football-related thematic focus of the podcast may activate learners' background knowledge, support top-down processing, and reduce cognitive load during listening, thereby facilitating overall comprehension (Goh & Aryadoust, 2016). The interest-driven and flexible nature of podcast-based listening also highlights its potential to support positive affective conditions, such as increased motivation and reduced listening anxiety, which are essential for sustained

listening engagement (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Overall, this conceptual analysis strengthens the theoretical understanding of podcast-based listening media in EFL contexts and underscores the pedagogical relevance of The Haye Way Podcast as a supportive listening resource.

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