

Podcast-Based Learning in EFL Classrooms: Enhancing Junior High School Students' Listening Skills and Motivation

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A B S T R A C T

This study investigates the effectiveness of podcast-based learning in enhancing junior high school students' listening skills and learning motivation in the Indonesian EFL context, where learners often have limited exposure to authentic spoken English and low engagement in listening activities. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed involving 68 ninth-grade students from a junior high school in West Java, Indonesia, who were assigned to experimental and control groups. Quantitative data were collected through listening pre-tests, post-tests, and motivation questionnaires, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that the experimental group achieved significantly higher listening gains than the control group. ANCOVA results confirmed a significant effect of podcast-based learning on listening achievement ($F = 39.4, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.377$), indicating a large effect size. Students also reported increased motivation, confidence, enjoyment, and engagement. Interview data further showed that podcasts provided authentic listening input, enhanced vocabulary and pronunciation awareness, and promoted learner autonomy. Overall, podcast-based learning offers an effective, authentic, and learner-centered approach to improving listening proficiency and motivation in secondary EFL education.

Keywords: *Podcasts, Listening Skills, Learning Motivation, EFL Learners, Junior High School Students*

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INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential international language used in education, technology, communication, and professional interaction across the world. In Indonesia, English is taught as a compulsory subject from elementary to senior high school levels. Despite years of formal instruction, many Indonesian students still demonstrate relatively low English proficiency compared to learners in several neighbouring Southeast Asian countries. One major challenge lies in students' limited ability to use English communicatively, particularly in listening and speaking contexts. This issue is partly attributed to the dominance of grammar-oriented and textbook-based instruction, which often provides limited opportunities for meaningful exposure to authentic spoken English. Consequently, many students develop passive language knowledge but struggle to comprehend and use English in real-life communication (Bachtiar et al., 2024; Datin Hulliyany et al., 2024; Humairoh et al., 2024)

Among the four language skills, listening plays a fundamental role in second and foreign language acquisition because it serves as a primary source of language input. Through listening, learners are exposed to pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical structures, and authentic patterns of communication. Listening also supports the development of other language skills, including speaking, reading, and writing (Panthee, 2024; Saleem Mahmoud & Khader Oraby, 2024). Nevertheless, listening instruction has historically received less attention than other language skills in many EFL classrooms. In Indonesian secondary schools, listening activities are often limited, highly controlled, and insufficiently integrated into communicative learning practices. As a result, students frequently experience difficulties understanding

spoken English, especially when exposed to natural speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, or different accents.

The difficulties experienced by EFL learners are closely related to the nature of traditional listening instruction commonly implemented in schools. Listening activities frequently rely on scripted dialogues and textbook-based recordings that lack the spontaneity and complexity of authentic communication. Such materials often fail to represent how English is naturally used in real-life situations. In the context of listening instruction, authentic materials are considered important because they expose learners to genuine language use, realistic communication patterns, and contextualized meaning-making processes. Exposure to authentic spoken input may help learners develop listening strategies and communicative competence more effectively than simplified classroom recordings (Coşkun & Uzunyol Köprü, 2021; Husnawati et al., 2024). However, many students remain dependent on slow and controlled listening materials, making them less prepared for real communicative interactions.

In addition to cognitive challenges, student motivation remains another critical issue in English language learning. Motivation strongly influences students' willingness to participate, persist, and invest effort in language learning activities. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), learners are more likely to demonstrate higher engagement and persistence when learning activities support autonomy, competence, and relatedness. However, listening instruction is often perceived as one of the least engaging classroom activities because students passively receive information without meaningful interaction. Repetitive classroom routines, limited contextual relevance, and lack of engaging learning materials may gradually reduce students' interest in listening activities. Consequently, students who perceive listening tasks as difficult or monotonous are more likely to become disengaged and anxious during the learning process (Dibdiyaningsih et al., 2024; Song, 2024).

To address these challenges, the integration of technology into language learning has increasingly attracted attention in recent years. Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) emphasizes the use of digital technologies to create more interactive, flexible, and learner-centered language learning environments (Chaves-Yuste & de-la Peña, 2023; Song, 2024). Within TELL perspectives, technology is not merely viewed as a delivery tool, but also as a means of facilitating active learning, learner autonomy, and authentic language exposure. One digital medium that has gained considerable attention in EFL learning is podcasts. Podcasts are digital audio materials that can be easily accessed through smartphones, computers, and online platforms, allowing learners to engage with language input beyond classroom boundaries (Datin Hulliyany et al., 2024; Isaadah et al., 2024). Unlike conventional textbook recordings, podcasts expose learners to authentic spoken English, natural pronunciation, varied accents, and real-world communication topics.

The use of podcasts in language learning is also closely related to constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful experiences and interaction with learning materials. Through podcasts, students are not limited to passive classroom listening activities but can independently explore, interpret, and repeatedly engage with authentic language input according to their learning needs. Learners can pause, replay, rewind, and repeat podcast episodes based on their individual comprehension levels and learning pace (Gonulal, 2022; Rime et al., 2022; Yunus & Damayanti, 2024). This flexibility supports autonomous learning and encourages students to take greater control over their learning process. In addition, podcasts are highly compatible with students' digital lifestyles and media consumption habits, making language learning more relatable and engaging.

Through repeated exposure to authentic language input, podcasts may help students improve vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation awareness, and comprehension strategies while simultaneously reducing listening anxiety (Bahri & Info, 2024; Humairoh et al., 2024). From an SDT perspective, the flexibility and accessibility of podcasts may strengthen learners' sense of autonomy and competence, which can positively influence learning motivation and engagement. Therefore, podcasts have the potential not only to improve cognitive language outcomes but also to foster positive emotional engagement in language learning.

Previous studies have reported various benefits of podcast integration in EFL classrooms. Research has shown that podcasts can improve listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation awareness, learner autonomy, and classroom engagement (Datin Hulliyany et al., 2024; Gunawan et al., 2023; Isaadah et al., 2024). Several studies also found that podcasts contribute positively to students' motivation because learners perceive podcast-based activities as more enjoyable, relevant, and interactive than conventional listening exercises (I. J. Mohammed, 2023). Furthermore, authentic and context-rich podcast materials may encourage students to engage more actively in listening practice both inside and outside the classroom. These findings suggest that podcasts can support both the cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning simultaneously.

Despite the growing body of research on podcast-based learning, several important gaps remain evident in the existing literature. First, many previous studies primarily focused on university students, adult learners, or senior high school contexts, while limited attention has been given to junior high school EFL learners (Fachriza, 2020; Fatika & Rahayu, 2021; I. J. Mohammed, 2023). Second, prior studies often emphasized either listening achievement or student motivation separately rather than examining both dimensions simultaneously. Third, limited research has explored podcast integration within Indonesian lower-secondary EFL contexts, where students commonly experience restricted exposure to authentic English input and limited opportunities for autonomous listening practice. In addition, relatively few studies have explicitly connected podcast-based learning with broader theoretical perspectives such as TELL, constructivist learning theory, and motivational frameworks in secondary EFL education. Consequently, further investigation is needed to better understand how podcast-based learning may support both listening development and learning motivation among adolescent EFL learners in Indonesian classrooms.

Based on these considerations, the present study aims to investigate the effectiveness of podcast-based learning in enhancing junior high school students' listening skills and learning motivation in the Indonesian EFL context. The study is expected to contribute to the growing literature on technology-enhanced language learning by providing empirical evidence regarding the pedagogical value of podcasts for lower-secondary EFL learners. In addition, the findings may provide practical insights for teachers, curriculum developers, and educational practitioners seeking more engaging, authentic, and learner-centred approaches to listening instruction in the digital era.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to investigate the effectiveness of podcast-based learning in enhancing students' listening skills and learning motivation. Mixed-methods research combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of educational phenomena (Creswell & Inoue, 2024). The quantitative phase was conducted first to measure students' listening achievement and motivation through tests and questionnaires, followed by a qualitative phase through interviews to explain and enrich the quantitative findings. This design was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to examine both the statistical impact of podcast-based learning and students' experiences during the learning process (Song, 2024).

Research Participants

The study was conducted in one junior high school in West Java province of Indonesia. The participants consisted of 68 ninth-grade students divided into two classes: an experimental group and a control group, with 34 students in each class. The participants were selected using purposive sampling because the study required students with relatively similar English proficiency levels, learning backgrounds, and classroom characteristics to ensure comparability between groups (Magnone & Yeziarski, 2024). In addition, the selected classes

had similar English achievement records based on the teacher's evaluation and had previously experienced conventional listening instruction using textbook-based materials.

The experimental group received podcast-based learning treatment, while the control group was taught using conventional listening instruction. The selection of ninth-grade students was also considered appropriate because students at this level had already received several years of formal English instruction and possessed sufficient basic vocabulary and listening ability to participate in podcast-based learning activities. Several students from the experimental group were further selected for semi-structured interviews to obtain deeper insights into their learning experiences and perceptions toward podcast-based learning. Purposive participant selection is commonly employed in educational research focusing on specific classroom interventions and contextual learning experiences

Research Instruments

Three research instruments were employed in this study. First, listening pre-tests and post-tests were administered to measure students' listening comprehension achievement before and after the treatment. The tests consisted of listening comprehension tasks adapted from junior high school English materials and were designed to assess students' ability to understand spoken English, identify specific information, and comprehend main ideas. Listening assessment plays an important role in evaluating learners' comprehension of authentic spoken language (Nguyen, 2020).

Second, a motivation questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale was distributed to students in the experimental group after the treatment. The questionnaire consisted of ten statements related to students' interest, engagement, confidence, and perceptions toward podcast-based learning. The use of questionnaires is commonly applied to measure students' motivation and attitudes toward language learning technologies (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students to explore their experiences, opinions, and perceptions regarding the implementation of podcasts in listening instruction. Interviews provided qualitative insights into students' motivation, confidence, and listening improvement during podcast-based learning (Dörnyei, 2020).

Procedures

The study was conducted over eight meetings during regular English listening classes. At the beginning of the study, both groups completed a pre-test to measure their initial listening ability. During the treatment period, students in the experimental group participated in podcast-based learning activities using selected podcast materials containing authentic English conversations and discussions appropriate for junior high school learners. The learning activities included listening comprehension exercises, vocabulary discussions, pronunciation awareness activities, and classroom discussions based on podcast content. Students were also encouraged to replay podcast audio independently to improve comprehension and familiarize themselves with authentic English pronunciation and accents. The use of authentic audio materials is considered beneficial in improving learners' listening comprehension and exposure to natural spoken English (Gonulal, 2022; Indahsari, 2020).

Meanwhile, the control group received conventional listening instruction using textbook-based materials and ordinary classroom listening activities without podcasts. At the end of the treatment, both groups completed a post-test to measure students' listening achievement after the intervention. The experimental group also completed a motivation questionnaire, and several students participated in interviews.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability testing were conducted to ensure the quality of the questionnaire instrument. The validity test was carried out by comparing the correlation coefficient (r -count) of each item with the critical value (r -table). The results indicated that all questionnaire items exceeded the required threshold value of 0.36, indicating that all items were valid. The reliability of the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. The

analysis showed a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.832, indicating a high level of internal consistency. A Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.70 is generally considered acceptable in educational research (Özkaya et al., 2021). Therefore, the questionnaire was considered reliable for measuring students' motivation and perceptions toward podcast-based learning.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the pre-tests, post-tests, and questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to summarize students' listening achievement and questionnaire responses. Before conducting inferential analysis, assumption tests consisting of normality and homogeneity tests were performed. The normality test was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk test, while homogeneity of variances was examined using Levene's Test. These assumption tests were conducted to ensure that the data met the assumptions required for parametric statistical analysis. To examine the effectiveness of podcast-based learning on students' listening achievement, the data were analysed using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), with pre-test scores treated as covariates. Meanwhile, qualitative interview data were analysed using Braun & Clarke (2022) thematic analysis. The analysis focused on identifying recurring themes related to students' motivation, listening improvement, confidence, and perceptions toward podcast-based learning (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Impact of Podcast-Based Learning on Listening Skills

The findings revealed significant improvement in students' listening comprehension after the implementation of podcast-based learning. Before conducting ANCOVA, assumption tests confirmed that the data fulfilled the requirements for parametric analysis. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the data were normally distributed ($p = 0.346$), while Levene's test showed homogeneity of variances ($p = 0.608$). The normality test and homogeneity of variances test are shown in table 1 and 2.

The experimental group demonstrated greater improvement compared to the control group. The mean score of the experimental group increased from 60.0 in the pre-test to 80.4 in the post-test. In contrast, the control group improved from 64.4 to 72.5, as shown in Figure 1.

Descriptives				
	Pre_Control	Post_Control	Pre_Experiment	Post_Experiment
N	34	34	34	34
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	64.4	72.5	60.0	80.4
Std. error mean	3.09	2.26	2.46	1.78
Median	62.5	70.0	60.0	75.0
Mode	60.0	60.0	60.0	75.0
Sum	2188	2465	2041	2735
Standard deviation	18.0	13.2	14.4	10.4
Variance	324	173	206	108
Range	73	50	60	30
Minimum	20	50	33	70
Maximum	93	100	93	100

Figure 1. Summary of Pre-Test and Post-Test Findings

The findings indicate that students in the experimental group achieved greater listening improvement than those in the control group. This suggests that podcast-based learning contributed positively to students' listening comprehension development.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	η^2p
Class_Control-Experiment	1848	1	1848.1	39.4	<.001	0.377
Pre Test	6230	1	6229.8	132.7	<.001	0.671
Residuals	3051	65	46.9			

Table 2. ANCOVA Results

ANCOVA results in Table 2 revealed a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups ($F = 39.4$, $p < 0.001$) with a large effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.377$). These findings indicate that podcast-based learning effectively enhanced students' listening comprehension. One possible explanation is that podcasts provide authentic spoken English exposure, allowing students to become more familiar with natural pronunciation, real conversational patterns, and different English accents (Gonulal, 2022; F. G. Mohammed & Khadawardi, 2024). Podcasts also enable students to replay audio materials repeatedly, helping learners regulate their own learning pace and improve comprehension (Yunus & Damayanti, 2024). These findings are consistent with previous studies reporting that podcast integration positively contributes to listening development and language comprehension (Fachriza, 2020; Gunawan et al., 2023).

Students' Motivation toward Podcast-Based Learning

Questionnaire findings showed that students responded positively toward podcast-based learning. The reliability analysis demonstrated a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.832, indicating high reliability of the questionnaire instrument. The majority of students selected Agree and Strongly Agree responses toward statements related to podcast-based learning. Approximately 85% of the responses reflected positive perceptions toward podcasts in listening instruction. Students reported that podcasts improved listening comprehension, increased learning motivation, enhanced confidence, made learning more enjoyable, and helped them understand native speaker pronunciation more effectively.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic of Students' Response

No.	Items	Mean	SD
1.	I enjoy learning listening in English using podcasts.	3.91	0.712
2.	Listening to podcasts makes me more interested in learning English.	4.12	0.686
3.	Listening to podcasts motivates me to improve my English.	4.06	0.851
4.	I think podcasts are useful for everyday English communication.	3.97	0.758
5.	I am more willing to practice English outside the classroom after listening to podcasts.	3.47	0.662
6.	I feel more confident listening to native speakers after listening to podcasts often.	3.68	0.727
7.	I can focus better when listening to podcasts than when using textbooks or worksheets.	3.94	0.886
8.	Podcasts make learning English feel more enjoyable.	4.24	0.699
9.	I still try to understand a podcast even when the content is difficult.	3.91	0.866
10.	Podcasts make me believe that my listening skills can improve.	4.09	0.753

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 3 indicate that students generally had positive responses toward podcast-based learning. All items show mean scores above 3.00, suggesting that students tended to agree with the statements. The highest mean score was found in Item 8 ($M = 4.24$), indicating that students strongly perceived podcasts as making learning English more enjoyable. This is followed by Item 2 ($M = 4.12$) and Item 10 ($M = 4.09$),

which suggest that podcasts increased students' interest in learning English and strengthened their belief in improving their listening skills. Meanwhile, the lowest mean score was observed in Item 5 ($M = 3.47$), indicating that students were comparatively less inclined to practice English outside the classroom, although the response still falls within the agreement category. These findings suggest that podcasts created a more engaging and emotionally positive learning environment. The findings support the idea that enjoyable and authentic learning experiences can strengthen learners' intrinsic motivation and engagement in language learning (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Song, 2024). Podcasts may also align well with students' digital lifestyles and learning preferences, making listening activities more interactive and less monotonous (Ahmad Shahrizal et al., 2022; Chaves-Yuste & de-la Peña, 2023).

Students' Perceptions and Learning Experiences

The qualitative findings revealed four major themes: increased learning motivation, listening and language improvement, increased confidence and learner autonomy, and positive affective responses toward podcast-based learning. Students described podcast-based learning as interesting, enjoyable, and more flexible compared to conventional listening activities. Several students reported that podcasts helped them improve vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation awareness, and understanding of spoken English. Some students also stated that they independently practiced listening outside the classroom using podcasts, songs, and videos. This finding indicates the development of learner autonomy and self-directed learning habits. Previous research has similarly highlighted that podcasts can encourage autonomous learning and independent listening practice among EFL learners (Bachtiar et al., 2024; Cahya Ningtias et al., 2020; Indahsari, 2020). In addition, students reported feeling more confident when listening to spoken English because they became more familiar with authentic pronunciation and speaking speed. These findings suggest that podcast-based learning contributes not only to cognitive improvement but also to students' emotional engagement and confidence in language learning.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that podcast-based learning effectively enhances junior high school students' listening skills and learning motivation in the Indonesian EFL context. Students who participated in podcast-based learning achieved significantly greater improvement in listening comprehension than those receiving conventional instruction. The findings also indicate that podcasts increased students' engagement, confidence, vocabulary awareness, pronunciation familiarity, and learner autonomy, supporting both the cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning. By providing authentic and flexible listening experiences, podcasts offer a learner-centered alternative to traditional listening instruction and contribute to the advancement of Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL). These findings highlight the value of integrating authentic digital resources into EFL classrooms to improve listening instruction. However, the study was limited to one junior high school with a relatively small sample and a short intervention period, restricting the generalizability of the findings. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples, longer treatment periods, and different educational contexts to further examine the long-term effectiveness of podcast-based learning.

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