

USING PODCASTS AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EXTENSIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Erik Yuda Pratama & Winda Kurnia

Universitas Ibn Khaldun Bogor
erikyuda.pratama@uika-bogor.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The focus of the study is to explore the role of podcasts in enhancing students' extensive listening skills in learning English as a foreign language. The research involved eight students from the English Education Department of a private university in Indonesia, and data were collected through interviews, questionnaires, and guided reflective journals. The Case Study 2.0 framework was employed to collect and analyze data, which involved leveraging digital tools and platforms to enhance the traditional case study approach. The data collected were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques such as content and frequency analysis. The findings of the study revealed that podcasts were an effective tool for enhancing students' extensive listening skills, improving their pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension of English spoken by native speakers. The study also found that podcasts were engaging and motivating for students, leading to better learning outcomes. The study concludes that using podcasts is a beneficial approach to teaching listening skills in language learning.

Keywords: Extensive Listening, Podcast, Stimulating

INTRODUCTION

Listening skill is crucial for effective message reception and is a prerequisite for other language skills. Therefore, it should be the primary skill to be acquired when learning a new language. Cheung (2010) supports this argument, explaining that the acquisition of listening skills leads to the acquisition of other language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing, which require high levels of concentration and energy. Listening skill is necessary for successful communication, and students often engage in listening activities more than speaking activities in the EFL classroom.

The status of English as a foreign language in Indonesia also influences Indonesian students' skill development. Cahyono and Widiati (2009) explain that using English native speakers' utterances as models of pronunciation and understanding messages in various contexts is necessary

for students' education and social environment. Listening skill is influenced by this factor, encouraging students to practice listening extensively to get exposed to the language. Renandya (2012) suggests that one of the effective ways to expose students to the language is through learning English via listening, and extensive listening involves all types of listening activities that allow learners to receive a large amount of comprehensible and enjoyable input (Bozan, 2015).

Extensive listening is beneficial for learners, and Renandya (2012) identifies three potential learning benefits of extensive listening: it can help learners with fast speech rates, expose them to a range of language forms and functions, and enhance their motivation for language learning. The emergence of information and communication technologies (ICT) has played a significant role in language teaching and learning, and the use of

podcasts has proven to be an effective application in mediating students' listening activities (Hlasna, Poulouva, & Klimova, 2017). Hasan and Hoon (2013) describe podcasts as a series of digital audio and video recordings uploaded on the web with the aid of Rapid Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds.

Podcasts offer many benefits for language learning, particularly in enhancing listening and speaking skills, as they consist of audio or video files that can be downloaded and listened to on a computer, mobile phone, or any portable playback device that supports MP3 files (Shiri, 2015). English learning podcasts can be utilized for both extensive and intensive listening activities, and they provide optimal exposure to native speakers' speech (Rosell-Aguilar, 2015). This study aims to investigate the role of podcasts in stimulating students' extensive listening skills.

METHOD

In this study, the Case Study 2.0 framework was employed to collect and analyze data, as it was deemed the most suitable research method for investigating the phenomenon of using podcasts to enhance students' extensive listening skills. Case Study 2.0 involves leveraging digital tools and platforms to enhance the traditional case study approach (Levin, 2013). This approach aligns with the principles of Case Study 2.0, which aims to create a more engaging and immersive learning experience for students or a more comprehensive analysis of a problem or issue (Keesing-Styles & Keegan, 2017). Therefore, by employing Case Study 2.0 as the framework for this research, the study was able to incorporate digital tools and platforms to enhance the research process and gather a wider range of data from participants, ultimately leading to a more

impactful analysis of the use of podcasts in enhancing students' extensive listening skills.

The study involved eight students from the English Education Department of a private university in Indonesia, and data were collected through interviews, questionnaires, and guided reflective journals.

In this present study, interview was used to gain and to make sure the review of participants' experience in using Podcasts application in extensive listening activity. There were five open-ended questions in an asynchronous semi-structured interview to gain data from the participants through instant messaging (WhatsApp). Creswell (2012) mentioned that an open-ended response interview allowed the participants to create the options for responding so that the participants would tell their best voices and experiences unconstrained by any perspectives. The second instrument used in this study was questionnaire. Further, questionnaire was an inquiry document, which contained a systematically compiled and well organised series of questions intended to elicit information which would provide insight into the nature of the problem under the study (Annum, 2017). Questionnaire was used for gaining the data of the participants' review and opinion about extensive listening and Podcasts. There were thirteen open-ended questions distributed to the participants. The data from questionnaire were calculated through Likert Scale. The third instrument used in this present study was guided reflective journal. Bashan and Holsblat (2017) described reflective journal as a kind of important part of documenting the practice of different professions. Guided reflective journal was used to get the review of participants' experience in using Podcasts in extensive listening activity.

In this study, qualitative data analysis techniques were used, including content and frequency analysis. The questionnaire data was collected using a Likert Scale and analyzed accordingly. Additionally, the interviews and students' reflective journals were transcribed, translated, and analyzed using content analysis to identify significant themes that emerged from the data. Content analysis is a qualitative research method used to analyze textual materials such as interviews, journals, and observations, with the goal of deriving meaningful insights from theoretical frameworks (Mayring, 2000).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the role of Podcasts in enhancing students' extensive listening skills by incorporating them into their language learning process. To achieve

this aim, data was collected from multiple sources and analyzed. The data collection tools used in this study were interviews, guided reflective journal, and questionnaire. These methods were utilized to gather rich and diverse insights from participants about their experiences with using Podcasts to learn English.

Participants' Listening Frequency

This data was obtained from a questionnaire that included five questions: Q-1 ("How often do you listen to English songs?"), Q-2 ("How often do you watch English films?"), Q-3 ("How often do you listen to English radio?"), Q-4 ("How often do you watch English videos?"), and Q-5 ("How often do you face difficulties in listening or watching English?"). The results of the data are described below.

Table 1. Participants' Listening Frequency

No	Participants' Listening Frequency							
	P-1	P-2	P-3	P-4	P-5	P-6	P-7	P-8
Q-1	Always	Always	Always	Often	Always	Seldom	Always	Always
Q-2	Seldom	Often	Often	Often	Often	Often	Seldom	Seldom
Q-3	Never	Seldom	Seldom	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never
Q-4	Sometimes	Sometimes	Often	Often	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes
Q-5	Sometimes	Often	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Often	Sometimes

*Q = Question; P = Participant.

Table 1 shows that almost all participants engaged in extensive listening unconsciously because they enjoyed listening to English materials beyond their classroom requirements. In Q-1, six out of eight participants reported always listening

to English songs because they found them fun and easy to listen to, and they believed that listening to songs could help improve their listening skills, enrich their vocabulary, practice their pronunciation, and increase brain function. In Q-2, five out of eight participants enjoyed watching

English films because they considered them entertaining and useful for improving their language skills, such as enriching their vocabulary, practicing their pronunciation, and learning various native accents.

Regarding listening to English radio in Q-3, six out of eight participants reported never listening to it due to lack of interest and limited access to English radio channels or applications. In Q-4, six out of eight participants enjoyed watching English videos because they found them interesting and believed that they could enhance their language skills in listening, speaking, and reading. However, in Q-5, participants faced difficulties mainly related to the speaker's speed, pronunciation, and unfamiliar vocabulary. The table provides insights into the participants' extensive listening activities and their frequency.

Podcasts as the Learning Sources

Based on the findings obtained from the questionnaire, it is suggested that podcasts may serve as effective learning sources for all the participants. The podcasts were found to cover a diverse range of authentic topics, which were related to the participants' interests and hobbies. This was evident from their responses to Question 10 of the survey, where they expressed their opinions on the interest level of the topics discussed in the podcasts.

P-1: "Yes, because I think the topics are interesting enough even though some topics are hard to understand."

P-3: "Yes, because I interest at the topics that discuss about drinks, food, and literacy."

P-6: "Yes, the topics are interesting enough and also challenging."

The aforementioned findings were corroborated by the participants' responses to the first question in their reflective

journals, where they were asked to indicate why they had chosen their respective topics.

P-4: "I chose the topic because it sounded interesting, and the vocabulary used was easy to understand."

These responses suggest that the participants found the majority of the topics in the podcasts to be interesting, and that they stimulated their curiosity. Additionally, the participants acknowledged that some of the topics were simple and easy to comprehend. From a listening perspective, it may be inferred that the podcasts' topics piqued the participants' interest and excitement, which had a positive impact on their learning motivation.

The statement regarding the effectiveness of podcasts as a learning source was further supported by the participants' responses to the first question during the interview session, where they were asked to express their opinions on the interest level and knowledge enrichment associated with the topics discussed in the podcasts.

Podcasts provide a unique repository of authentic oral language materials. This finding emerged in the questionnaire which revealed Podcasts as learning sources for all of the participants since it provided various of authentic and interesting topics that discussed about their favourites and hobbies so that they could choose their own topic and felt willingness in learning extensive listening through Podcasts. Extensive listening usually took place outside the classroom and it was a kind of listening for pleasure. Podcast is an originally a tool for conveying information, news, and entertainment, which detected by educators who properly noticed the potential of podcast for mediating students' listening activities. This finding also strengthened by the result of guided reflective journal and interview which found that all of the

participants stated that almost all of the topics in Podcasts were interesting and made their curiosity appeared. Seen from the aspects of listening, it was proven that the topics in Podcasts had stimulated their interest affected their learning emotion. Thus, they became more excited and curious toward those particular topics. Guo and Wills (2005) explained that students' interests were the foundation of learning process also listening process, because those two particular aspects stand as the basic part of learning which influences the students' learning emotion. Therefore, it could be concluded that the topics in Podcasts stimulated and enhanced their interest and learning emotion.

Podcasts Stimulate Students' Learning Motivation to Improve Their Extensive Listening Skills

The findings from the guided reflective journal's third question ("Do Podcasts provide you with any benefits?") indicate that the participants have identified several advantages of using podcasts. They mentioned that listening to podcasts on a regular basis helped them to become better at understanding spoken English and identifying different accents. Another advantage that was identified was the convenience of podcasts, as they can be accessed and listened to at any time and in any place. Additionally, some participants mentioned that podcasts also increased their motivation to learn English and provided them with new insights and perspectives on various topics. These findings suggest that podcasts have the potential to be an effective and convenient tool for language learning.

Student's Reflective Journal:

(P-4): *I chose a podcast that focused on topics that I was interested in, such as*

current events and popular culture. At first, it was challenging to follow along with the conversation, but as I continued to listen, I began to notice a significant improvement in my ability to comprehend spoken English. I found that listening to the same podcast multiple times helped me to become more familiar with the sound and intonation of English words.

Furthermore, I noticed that podcasts have increased my motivation to learn English. Unlike traditional classroom activities, podcasts provide a unique and engaging way to practice listening skills. The hosts of the podcast often speak in a conversational tone, making it easier for me to follow along with the conversation.

Based on their responses, the participants noted that the topics they listened to on Podcasts provided them with motivation, knowledge, and exposure to new information. This demonstrated that these topics stimulated their motivation to learn, which is crucial as it serves as the foundation of the learning process. The student recognizes the positive impact of Podcasts in enhancing their extensive listening skills, and how it fuels their desire to learn more, especially new vocabulary. These findings were consistent with the responses to the twelfth question of the questionnaire, which revealed that Podcasts motivated the participants to learn English more. Additionally, some participants felt that listening to Podcasts made them more familiar with English sounds and vocabulary, further enhancing their listening skills.

(P-2): *"Yes, because Podcasts improve my extensive listening skill, especially in understanding various English accents and contexts."*

(P-3): “Yes, because Podcasts are easy to use and improve my extensive listening skills, which in turn help me master new vocabulary.”

(P-4): “Yes, Podcasts improve my extensive listening and make me want to learn more, especially new vocabulary.”

The participants have identified that podcasts not only improve their listening skills, but also help them expand their vocabulary. This can be attributed to the fact that podcasts offer a wide range of topics and use natural language, providing listeners with exposure to new words and phrases in context. Furthermore, the enjoyment and engagement that comes from listening to podcasts can enhance the learning experience and lead to better retention of vocabulary. Podcasts were essentially appropriate for extensive listening activities which can stimulate students’ extensive listening skills (Waring, 2008).

Podcasts Can be a Benefit Tool to Enrich Students’ Vocabulary

The result obtained from the second question of the interview (Are you familiar with the vocabulary used in the Podcasts?) indicated that podcasts successfully enriched the participants' vocabulary. They also mentioned that they tried to look up the meanings of unfamiliar words while listening to the podcasts, which helped them to understand the context and meaning of the content better. Therefore, it can be concluded that listening to podcasts is an effective way to improve vocabulary skills.

P-3: “Almost all of the vocabularies used are unfamiliar for me, so that I look for the meaning of them.”

P-5: “Almost all of the vocabularies used are unfamiliar for me, so that I look for

the meaning of them, but there is a kind of audio transcript that helps me so if there are some words that I don't know I can see them in there and look for the meaning of them.”

P-8: “Almost all of the vocabularies used are unfamiliar for me, so that I look for the meaning of them. Those answers showed that Podcasts used unfamiliar vocabulary so that the participants should look for the meaning of those unfamiliar vocabulary and this had considered enrich their vocabulary.”

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P-1: "Yes, Podcasts add and enrich my vocabulary."

P-4: "Yes, Podcasts add my vocabulary."

P-8: "Yes, Podcasts add and enrich my vocabulary."

Students can also learn new vocabulary in context and acquire more accurate and natural pronunciation, as well as gain a better understanding of idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs. Additionally, some podcast hosts often provide explanations or definitions of new words, which can further enhance students' vocabulary acquisition.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides evidence of the potential of podcasts as a valuable tool for enhancing students' extensive listening skills in language learning. The findings reveal that podcasts serve as effective learning sources that cover a diverse range of authentic topics related to the participants' interests and hobbies. The study also shows that podcasts stimulate students' learning motivation by piquing

their interest and excitement, which has a positive impact on their learning emotions. Furthermore, the convenience of podcasts, as they can be accessed and listened to at any time and place, is another advantage for language learners. Therefore, educators and language instructors may consider incorporating podcasts into language learning curricula as a means of facilitating extensive listening activities for their students.

The participants in this study were not bound to listen to a specific material provided by the teacher. Instead, they listened to materials based on their interests, which granted them total freedom in choosing what to listen to for the sake of joy and pleasure (Djebbari, 2016). The potential of technology, such as podcasts, could increase access and improve the relevance and quality of education (Mikre, 2011) and generate an online learning experience (Davila & Bolliger, 2014). Thus, most of the participants stated that podcasts were an appropriate app for language learning, particularly for improving listening proficiency and enriching vocabulary.

Additionally, in this study, podcasts were integrated into English language instruction as an innovative supplementary instructional tool rather than a main educational tool aimed at helping the students to develop their listening proficiency independently (Li, 2009).

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