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The Use of Podcasts as Learning Media: Students' Perceptions in Listening Comprehension

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Abstract

This study explores students' perceptions of using podcasts as a medium for learning listening comprehension. A descriptive qualitative design was employed to capture in-depth insights from learners, with four respondents purposively selected based on their prior exposure to podcasts in language learning contexts. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, allowing the researcher to investigate students' experiences, attitudes, and challenges in utilizing podcasts as a learning resource. The findings indicate that students perceive podcasts as engaging, authentic, and effective tools for improving listening comprehension. They emphasized that podcasts provide flexible access to learning materials anytime and anywhere, thereby promoting autonomous learning. Moreover, the exposure to authentic speech and natural language use was considered beneficial for enhancing listening fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation awareness. Despite these advantages, several challenges were also reported, including the speed of native speakers' delivery, the presence of unfamiliar vocabulary, and occasional difficulty in sustaining concentration during extended listening. To address these issues, students suggested the integration of supportive materials such as transcripts, guided tasks, or teacher scaffolding to maximize learning outcomes. Overall, the study highlights podcasts as a valuable innovation in language learning, particularly in developing listening comprehension skills. The findings provide pedagogical implications for EFL teachers, suggesting that podcasts can be effectively incorporated into listening activities when complemented with appropriate instructional support. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of fostering learner autonomy and motivation through the use of digital media in English language education.

Keywords: Podcast; Listening Comprehension; Language Learning Media

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Introduction

Listening comprehension is an essential skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, serving as the foundation for effective communication. It involves not only understanding spoken language but also interpreting context, tone, and intent. For many students, developing this skill presents significant challenges due to the limited availability of authentic listening materials and insufficient engagement in traditional classroom activities. Students' limited understanding of the materials or lessons taught in class can be a barrier to their progress in English (Efrizah et al., 2024). Therefore, educators continuously explore innovative approaches to enhance students' listening comprehension. One such method that has gained increasing attention is the use of podcasts as a learning medium.

Podcasts, as audio-based digital media, offer a unique platform for language learning. They provide access to authentic spoken English, ranging from everyday conversations to professional discussions, making them a valuable resource for EFL learners. Unlike conventional learning materials, podcasts allow students to engage with real-world language use in a flexible and personalized manner. This flexibility, coupled with the ability to pause, rewind, and replay, makes podcasts an ideal medium for listening practice. Research indicates that the repetitive exposure to authentic language provided by podcasts helps learners improve not only their listening comprehension but also their vocabulary, pronunciation, and overall language proficiency.

Numerous studies have highlighted the advantages of using podcasts in EFL classrooms. Sengang et al. (2022) found that podcasts can effectively enhance students' speaking and listening skills, as they expose learners to various accents and linguistic expressions. noted that podcasts foster active listening by requiring students to concentrate and process auditory information. This aligns with findings from Mutmainah & Parmawati (2023), who reported that students view podcasts as an engaging and efficient medium for learning listening comprehension.

The role of podcasts in developing listening skills extends beyond mere comprehension. Hayati & Suryaman (2021) observed that podcasts encourage independent learning, enabling students to take control of their own progress. The self-directed nature of podcast-based learning aligns with modern educational practices that emphasize student autonomy. Meanwhile, Pratiwi (2022) pointed out that podcasts provide exposure to diverse linguistic contexts, helping students grasp cultural nuances and real-life communication patterns, which are often absent in traditional learning materials.

Podcasts have also proven to be a useful resource during the COVID-19 pandemic when face-to-face learning was disrupted. According to Pusvita et al. (2022), students perceived podcasts as an effective supplementary medium for improving English-speaking and listening skills in Indonesia. Their study highlights how podcasts bridged the gap in learning continuity by providing accessible and engaging materials, even in remote settings. This adaptability underscores the potential of podcasts to complement formal education in various scenarios.

Furthermore, the variety of topics covered in podcasts makes them appealing to students with diverse interests. Lailatuzzahrollathifah et al. (2021) found that students appreciate the freedom to choose podcast content that resonates with their personal preferences, which increases motivation and enthusiasm for language learning. This sense of choice and personalization often leads to higher engagement levels and better learning outcomes. Additionally, podcasts introduce learners to a wide range of accents, dialects, and speaking styles, as highlighted by (Humairoh et al., 2024). Such exposure enhances students' adaptability in understanding spoken English in global contexts.

While the use of podcasts in EFL education has gained momentum, there are still gaps in understanding their full impact on listening comprehension. For instance, Widodo (2020) investigated the effects of podcasts on listening comprehension and noted significant improvements among students who actively engaged with podcast materials. However, further research is needed to explore how students perceive podcasts as a learning tool, especially in terms of their accessibility, usability, and effectiveness in different learning environments.

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In addition to the educational benefits, podcasts offer practical advantages for both teachers and students. Teachers can integrate podcast episodes into their lesson plans, using them to supplement textbook content and create interactive activities. On the other hand, students can use podcasts outside the classroom for additional practice, allowing them to reinforce what they learn at their own pace. The accessibility of podcasts through smartphones and other digital devices ensures that learning can happen anytime and anywhere, making them a versatile tool for modern education.

The findings of existing studies emphasize the importance of understanding students' perceptions of podcasts in enhancing listening skills. Students' attitudes toward a particular learning tool can significantly influence their engagement and outcomes. Therefore, exploring students' perceptions of podcasts not only provides insights into their preferences and challenges but also informs educators on how to optimize podcast-based learning.

This study purpose to investigate students' perceptions of using podcasts as a medium for learning listening comprehension. By examining their views on the effectiveness, accessibility, and overall learning experience, this research seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on integrating technology into EFL education. Ultimately, understanding how students perceive podcasts can guide educators in designing innovative and effective listening comprehension strategies that cater to learners' needs in the 21st century.

In addition to understanding students' perceptions, it is also essential to consider how the integration of podcasts into language learning can align with various pedagogical approaches. Podcasts offer the potential to implement blended learning models, where students can engage with both digital and face-to-face components of learning. This hybrid approach allows for greater flexibility in how content is delivered, catering to diverse learning preferences. Moreover, podcast content can be easily tailored to different proficiency levels, enabling teachers to provide differentiated learning experiences that cater to individual student needs.

Furthermore, the use of podcasts can encourage the development of critical listening skills. In traditional classrooms, students often engage with scripted materials, which may not reflect real-life communication challenges. In contrast, podcasts expose learners to unscripted, authentic speech, which includes various speech patterns, accents, and contextual cues. This exposure is vital in helping students develop the ability to process and understand spoken language in real-life scenarios, which is a crucial skill for effective communication in global settings.

The impact of podcasts on motivation is another critical factor in their effectiveness. Many students report that they find podcasts more engaging than traditional textbook exercises, especially because of their flexibility and the variety of topics they offer. The ability to choose podcast episodes based on personal interests can foster a sense of ownership over the learning process. This self-directed nature of podcast-based learning not only motivates students to engage more actively but also encourages lifelong learning, as students can continue to explore new content outside of the classroom.

Another benefit of podcasts is their ability to support metacognitive development. As students listen to podcasts, they can practice self-monitoring their comprehension and listening strategies. Many podcast platforms allow students to adjust the speed of the audio or replay sections they find difficult, which helps them develop better listening strategies. Additionally, students can take notes, pause to reflect on the content, and engage in discussions based on their listening experience, which reinforces active learning and cognitive processing.

Despite the advantages, there are still several challenges that need to be addressed to maximize the effectiveness of podcasts in language learning. One significant issue is the potential for passive listening, where students may play podcasts without actively engaging with the content. To counter this, educators can incorporate follow-up activities such as quizzes, discussions, or reflection exercises to ensure that students are processing the material in a meaningful way. By creating an interactive learning environment, teachers can help students move beyond passive listening and develop deeper comprehension skills.

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Moreover, it is important to consider the accessibility of podcasts for all students. While podcasts are available on various platforms, not all students may have equal access to the necessary technology or internet connections. In some regions, limited access to smartphones, data plans, or high-speed internet can hinder students' ability to fully utilize podcasts as a learning tool. To address these disparities, institutions could consider providing offline options or ensuring that students have access to devices that support podcast use.

Finally, the future of podcasts in language learning looks promising, as technological advancements continue to evolve. With the development of AI and machine learning technologies, podcasts could be further enhanced with personalized content recommendations, automatic transcription services, and real-time translation features. These innovations have the potential to make podcast-based learning even more accessible and effective, providing students with more tailored and supportive learning experiences.

In conclusion, the integration of podcasts into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education presents a wealth of opportunities to enhance listening comprehension skills. By exploring students' perceptions of podcasts, educators can refine their teaching strategies, address challenges, and harness the full potential of this innovative learning tool. As digital education continues to grow, podcasts represent a valuable resource that can support flexible, engaging, and effective language learning experiences for students around the world.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore students' perceptions of using podcasts as a medium for learning listening comprehension. The qualitative method was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of students' thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding the use of podcasts in their learning process (Pratiwi et al., 2023). By focusing on the detailed narratives and responses of the participants, this study aimed to capture rich and meaningful insights into the effectiveness and challenges of integrating podcasts into EFL listening instruction.

The participants of this study were five students from the fifth-semester PBI (*Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris*) class 5i. The participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that they had prior experience in using podcasts as a learning medium. The purpose like other qualitative research design, was to collect cases that were considered a lot of information for the purpose of suturing the data (Lambert, 2012). This sampling technique allowed the researcher to focus on individuals who could provide relevant and valuable information for the study. The small sample size was intended to facilitate an in-depth exploration of the participants' perceptions and experiences.

Data collection was conducted through two primary methods: questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire was designed to gather information on students' general perceptions of podcasts as a learning tool for listening comprehension. The interviews were structured, enabling the researcher to delve deeper into the participants' responses and clarify any ambiguities from the questionnaire.

The main instrument used in this study was the questionnaire, which was carefully developed to align with the study's objectives. The questionnaire comprised questions addressing students' views on the accessibility, engagement, and effectiveness of podcasts in enhancing their listening comprehension skills. The interview guide was also designed to complement the questionnaire, focusing on eliciting more nuanced insights and examples of students' experiences with podcasts in their learning journey.

The primary purpose of this study was to understand students' perceptions of using podcasts as a medium for learning listening comprehension. By analyzing the responses from the questionnaire and interviews, this study sought to identify the benefits and challenges students encountered when engaging with podcasts for language learning. The findings aim to provide educators with valuable insights into how podcasts can be effectively utilized to improve students' listening skills in EFL contexts.

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Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study based on the data collected through questionnaires and interviews. The results are discussed in relation to the students' perceptions of using podcasts as a medium for learning listening comprehension, focusing on key themes such as accessibility, engagement, and effectiveness.

Findings

1. Accessibility of Podcasts

The study confirmed that podcasts were widely perceived as accessible learning tools. Respondents, such as RD and RF, highlighted that podcasts could be accessed anytime and anywhere through platforms like Spotify, YouTube, and educational websites. This flexibility allowed students to integrate learning into daily routines like commuting or relaxing, as mentioned by RS.

Portability emerged as a significant benefit, with participants appreciating the freedom to learn without geographical or temporal constraints. As RD noted, the wide variety of topics and genres also catered to individual interests, enhancing motivation and personalization. RF emphasized the diverse content available, enabling users to select episodes suited to their goals and proficiency.

However, limitations in internet connectivity posed challenges, particularly for students in rural areas. RN suggested downloadable episodes for offline access to mitigate this issue, ensuring uninterrupted learning. Additionally, usability was praised, with platforms offering intuitive interfaces and curated playlists to streamline the search for relevant materials.

Overall, podcasts empowered learners with autonomy, as students like RT expressed confidence in exploring content independently. Addressing internet reliability and expanding offline options could enhance usability further, especially for students in less-developed regions.

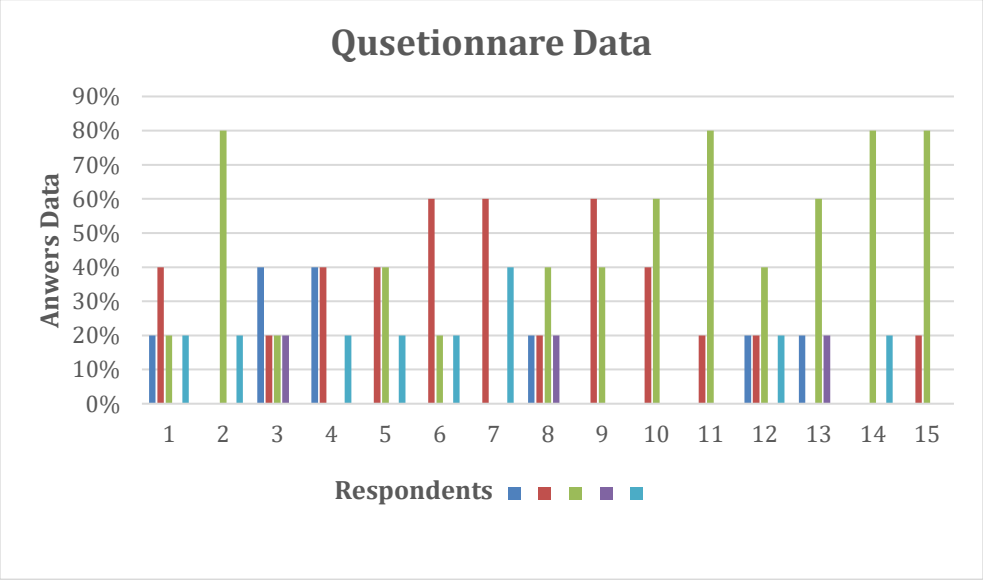

Figure 1. Questionnaire Data

The study revealed that podcasts were widely regarded as highly accessible by the respondents. According to the questionnaire data, 60% of participants strongly agreed and 20% agreed that podcasts were easy to access for listening activities, highlighting the convenience and availability of podcast platforms such as Spotify and YouTube. Additionally, 60% of respondents agreed that the podcast format made it comfortable to learn anytime and anywhere, aligning with

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their digital habits and enabling them to integrate learning into daily routines like commuting or exercising.

However, accessibility challenges were noted, such as 20% of respondents strongly disagreeing about ease of access, particularly due to internet connectivity issues. This underscores the importance of offering downloadable podcast episodes for offline use.

Moreover, usability features like user-friendly interfaces were also valued, with participants noting that curated playlists and recommendations made the selection process smoother. This accessibility fostered learner independence, enabling 60% of participants to agree that they could replay podcasts to review challenging sections, enhancing their ability to learn autonomously.

Podcasts were unanimously described as more engaging than traditional listening materials. The questionnaire responses revealed mixed opinions on motivation, with 80% of participants remaining neutral about whether podcasts increased their motivation to improve listening skills. However, interviews highlighted that real-world relevance and diverse topics were key contributors to engagement.

Participants valued the authenticity of podcasts, with 60% agreeing that podcasts provided a variety of interesting topics relevant to listening practice. Playback features also supported engagement, as 60% of respondents strongly agreed they could pause and rewind to understand difficult parts. These tools allowed learners to practice at their own pace, reducing anxiety and improving attentiveness.

The questionnaire also reflected emotional engagement, as 20% of participants strongly agreed and 20% agreed that podcasts made listening learning fun and less boring, although 40% remained neutral. These results suggest that podcasts have significant potential to engage learners, particularly when they align with students' personal interests.

2. Engagement with Learning

Podcasts were unanimously described as engaging by all respondents. RD and RN highlighted the conversational tone and authenticity of podcast content, which created immersive experiences and stimulated curiosity. These characteristics made students feel part of a real-world conversation, increasing attentiveness and motivation.

Personalization of topics also played a key role in sustaining engagement. RS and RN enjoyed selecting episodes that aligned with their personal interests, such as storytelling or cultural discussions, making the learning process enjoyable and relatable. Playback features like pausing and speed adjustments allowed students to revisit challenging sections at their own pace, reducing frustration. RN emphasized how this flexibility improved learning outcomes, especially for unfamiliar or fast-paced content.

Additionally, podcasts exposed students to authentic language use, including natural pronunciation and cultural nuances. RF appreciated hearing varied accents, such as American or British, which enhanced adaptability in global communication contexts. Emotional connection further motivated learning, as RD shared that podcast episodes often sparked discussions among peers, promoting collaborative exploration.

Interactive elements, such as follow-up exercises, were identified as beneficial for accountability and active engagement. These findings underscore that podcasts are a versatile and engaging tool for modern learners. Podcasts were unanimously described as more engaging than traditional listening materials. The questionnaire responses revealed mixed opinions on motivation, with 80% of participants remaining neutral about whether podcasts increased their motivation to improve listening skills. However, interviews highlighted that real-world relevance and diverse topics were key contributors to engagement.

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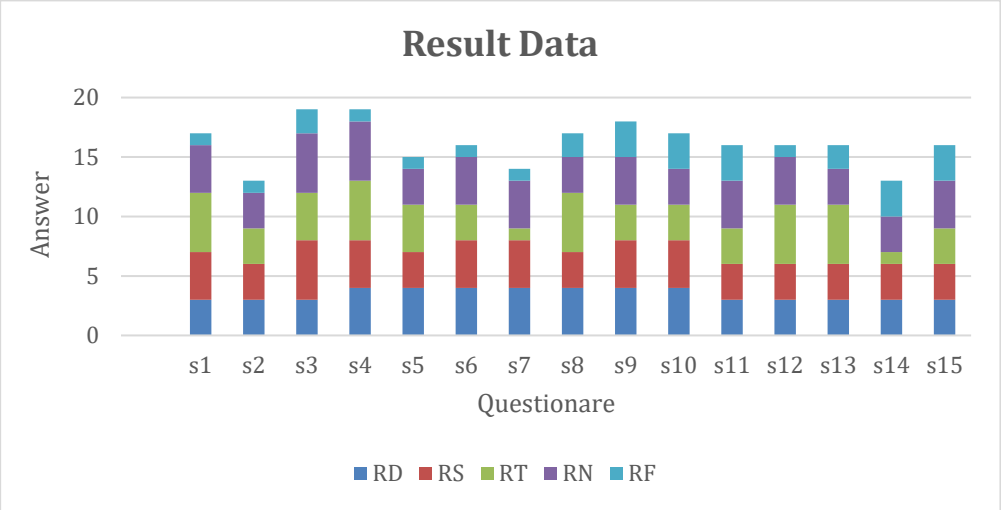

Figure 2. Result Data

3. Effectiveness in Listening Skills

Participants, including RF and RS, unanimously agreed that podcasts effectively enhanced listening comprehension. The most notable benefits were exposure to authentic pronunciation and intonation, helping students grasp natural rhythm, stress, and tone.

Vocabulary acquisition was another strength. RN mentioned encountering new terms in real-life contexts, aiding understanding and retention. Podcasts helped bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical application, enabling students to internalize new words more effectively.

Exposure to diverse accents was a unique advantage. RF emphasized how listening to various English accents, including Australian and British, improved adaptability and confidence in understanding different speakers. However, challenges like fast speech and dense vocabulary were noted, particularly for less-advanced learners. RD and RS recommended adjusting playback speed and selecting content aligned with their proficiency to address these difficulties.

The contextual learning provided by podcasts also enhanced relevance, as RN stated that podcasts connected language skills to real-world applications. This approach made listening practice more meaningful, demonstrating the effectiveness of podcasts in promoting listening comprehension.

Participants generally perceived podcasts as effective tools for enhancing listening skills. Notably, 40% of respondents strongly agreed and 40% agreed that podcasts helped them enrich their vocabulary, emphasizing the benefit of contextual learning. Similarly, 60% agreed that podcasts provided exposure to a variety of English accents, which improved their adaptability in understanding diverse speakers.

However, challenges such as fast speech were highlighted, with 20% of participants disagreeing about the ability of podcasts to help them understand detailed information in English conversations. This indicates a need for supplementary tools like transcripts or slower playback options.

Podcasts were particularly valued for their flexibility, as 40% of participants agreed they were more adaptable than other listening methods. Repeated listening also contributed to

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understanding natural pronunciation and intonation, bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical use.

4. Challenges and Suggestions

Despite their advantages, podcasts presented certain challenges:

- Fast-paced speech
  RD and RN found rapid dialogues challenging, especially in conversational podcasts. Playback adjustments were suggested to improve comprehension.
- Unfamiliar vocabulary
  As RF noted, dense episodes with technical jargon could overwhelm learners. Transcripts or subtitles were proposed to aid understanding.
- Lack of structured guidance:
  RT expressed that learning independently required high discipline. Respondents suggested integrating podcasts into classroom activities, where teachers could guide content selection and provide supplementary exercises.
- Content length
  RN and RS observed that lengthy episodes reduced focus and retention. Short, topic-specific episodes were recommended for better engagement.
- Supplementary tools
  Respondents proposed combining podcasts with apps or discussion forums to enhance learning experiences and address individual needs.

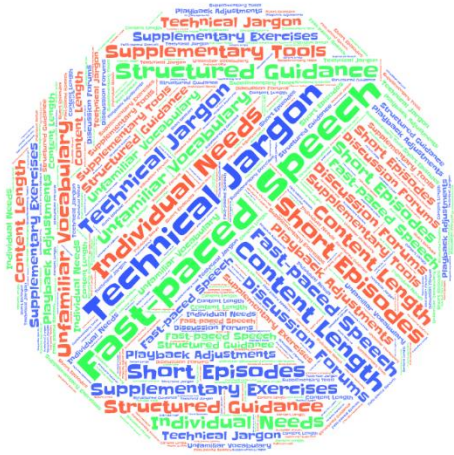

Figure 3. Interviews data

While the benefits of podcasts were widely acknowledged, some participants expressed challenges in adapting to this learning medium. For example, 20% of participants disagreed that podcasts helped them become confident in understanding English conversations, indicating that podcasts might not fully meet the needs of less advanced learners.

Additionally, 20% strongly disagreed that podcasts helped improve understanding of listening material, underscoring the importance of structured guidance. Respondents suggested integrating podcasts into formal lessons to provide additional support, such as teacher-curated exercises or discussions.

The length of podcast episodes was also a concern, with respondents favouring shorter, focused content over lengthy discussions. Complementary tools, such as vocabulary apps, could address issues like unfamiliar terms and enhance the overall learning experience.

Discussion

The findings of this study reaffirm the growing recognition of podcasts as an effective medium for learning listening comprehension. The results align with existing research, such as

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that by Mutmainah & Parmawati (2023), who emphasized the role of podcasts in creating engaging and immersive learning experiences. Similarly, the respondents in this study consistently highlighted the accessibility and practicality of podcasts, echoing Pratiwi's (2022) findings that students value the flexibility and ease of access provided by this medium.

Podcasts offer significant advantages in their ability to cater to individual learning preferences. As observed in this study, students appreciated the opportunity to choose topics that resonated with their interests, fostering greater motivation and engagement. This finding supports the work of Lailatuzzahrollathifah et al. (2021), who also noted that personalization in podcast selection enhances students' autonomy and commitment to learning. Unlike traditional listening materials, which often lack variety, podcasts provide learners with a diverse range of content, making learning both relevant and enjoyable.

The authenticity of podcast content is another key factor contributing to its effectiveness. The exposure to natural speech, including intonation, stress patterns, and accents, allows learners to familiarize themselves with real-world language use. This was highlighted by respondents who felt that podcasts provided a more realistic and practical listening experience compared to textbook audio. Such exposure aligns with the findings of Hayati & Suryaman (2021), who emphasized that podcasts can bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-life communication.

However, the study also identified challenges, particularly regarding the pace and complexity of some podcast episodes. Fast speech and unfamiliar vocabulary emerged as common difficulties among respondents, consistent with the observations of Widodo (2020). While these challenges can hinder comprehension, they also present opportunities for pedagogical innovation. The inclusion of transcripts or subtitles, as suggested by participants, can act as a scaffolding tool, enabling learners to follow along and build confidence in understanding challenging content.

Another noteworthy finding was the importance of integrating podcasts into structured classroom activities. While the respondents valued the independence that podcasts afford, they also acknowledged the benefits of guided learning. This perspective aligns with the recommendations of Rahmiyati et al., (2021), who argued that teacher involvement in podcast-based learning can enhance its effectiveness. Teachers can curate appropriate episodes, design pre-listening and post-listening tasks, and provide targeted feedback to address learners' specific needs.

The flexibility of podcasts also emerged as a significant advantage. Participants appreciated the ability to listen to podcasts on-the-go, during commuting, or while engaging in other activities. This aspect of podcasts promotes continuous learning, as it allows students to practice listening outside formal classroom settings. This finding reinforces the conclusions of Supraptiningsih et al. (2022), who noted that the portability of podcasts contributes to their popularity among learners.

Despite their advantages, the use of podcasts requires careful consideration of learners' proficiency levels. The diversity of accents and speech styles, while enriching, can also be overwhelming for beginners. This observation aligns with the work of Humairoh et al. (2024), who emphasized the need for selecting podcasts that match learners' current abilities to ensure a positive learning experience. Providing beginner-friendly content or introducing podcasts gradually can help mitigate these challenges.

Participants in this study also highlighted the importance of playback features, such as speed adjustment and the ability to rewind or pause. These features, which are not always available in traditional listening materials, were praised for allowing students to control their learning pace. This flexibility not only reduces anxiety but also encourages learners to revisit difficult sections until they feel confident in their comprehension.

In terms of vocabulary development, respondents noted that podcasts provided exposure to new words and phrases in context, which facilitated better retention and application. This finding supports the conclusions of Ramadhani et al. (2022), who observed that contextual

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vocabulary learning through podcasts is more effective than rote memorization. Participants suggested pairing podcasts with supplementary tools, such as vocabulary apps or dictionaries, to maximize this benefit.

The study also revealed the potential of podcasts to foster cultural awareness. Listening to authentic content exposed students to cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and real-life situations, enriching their understanding of the target language's sociocultural aspects. This aligns with the findings of Sengang et al. (2022), who noted that podcasts are a valuable resource for introducing learners to the cultural dimensions of language use.

One area of improvement highlighted by respondents was the need for shorter, focused episodes. Overly lengthy podcasts were found to reduce attention spans, particularly when the content was not directly aligned with students' interests. This suggests that educators should consider recommending episodes that are concise and topic-specific to maintain engagement and prevent cognitive overload.

The role of motivation in podcast-based learning cannot be overstated. Participants reported that the engaging nature of podcasts, combined with the freedom to choose content, significantly increased their willingness to practice listening. This observation supports the work of Pratiwi (2022), who argued that motivational factors are key to the success of digital media in education. Encouraging students to set personal goals and track their progress can further enhance the motivational impact of podcasts.

Finally, the study highlights the potential for podcasts to be used in collaborative learning. While this research focused on individual listening, future studies could explore how podcasts can facilitate group discussions, peer feedback, and collaborative tasks. This approach would align with the social constructivist perspective, which emphasizes the role of interaction in language learning.

Conclusion

Podcasts have proven to be highly accessible learning tools, allowing students to integrate learning into their daily routines with ease. Platforms like Spotify and YouTube offer a vast selection of content that caters to individual interests, enhancing personalization and motivation. Despite their convenience, challenges like limited internet connectivity in rural areas remain significant. The availability of downloadable episodes for offline use and intuitive interfaces on podcast platforms ensures that podcasts remain user-friendly and widely usable for diverse learners.

In terms of engagement, podcasts were perceived as highly immersive and interactive, largely due to their conversational tone, authenticity, and real-world relevance. These features, coupled with playback options such as pausing and rewinding, allowed learners to revisit challenging sections, reducing frustration and increasing attentiveness. Personalization through topic selection made the learning process enjoyable and relatable, further sustaining students' interest and emotional connection.

The study also highlighted the effectiveness of podcasts in improving listening skills. They provided exposure to authentic pronunciation, diverse accents, and contextual vocabulary, helping students better adapt to real-world communication. Playback features and the ability to revisit content addressed some comprehension challenges, making podcasts particularly useful for developing listening comprehension. However, dense content and fast speech posed difficulties, especially for less proficient learners, underlining the need for carefully curated content.

To improve accessibility, podcast creators should prioritize providing downloadable episodes that allow learners to access content offline. Collaborations between educational institutions and podcast platforms could result in curated content collections tailored to students' needs. Additionally, promoting podcasts on low-data platforms would benefit students in areas with limited internet connectivity.

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To sustain engagement, shorter episodes with specific topics should be developed to maintain learners' focus and retention. Interactive features like quizzes, follow-up exercises, and group discussions could make the learning process more engaging. Content that aligns with students' personal interests and goals would further motivate learners and foster emotional connection.

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