

CHALLENGES IN USING PODCASTS FOR DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS: A REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRAK

Perkembangan teknologi digital telah memengaruhi cara pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, khususnya dalam pembelajaran keterampilan menyimak (listening). Salah satu media teknologi yang banyak digunakan adalah podcast, yang menawarkan akses fleksibel terhadap materi audio autentik serta mendukung pembelajaran mandiri. Meskipun berbagai penelitian sebelumnya menunjukkan dampak positif penggunaan podcast dalam pembelajaran listening, sebagian besar penelitian masih lebih berfokus pada manfaat dibandingkan tantangan yang dihadapi siswa. Oleh karena itu, paper ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji studi-studi sebelumnya yang membahas tantangan penggunaan podcast dalam meningkatkan keterampilan listening pada pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Paper ini menggunakan pendekatan narrative literature review dengan menganalisis delapan (8) artikel jurnal bereputasi yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2020 hingga 2025. Artikel dikumpulkan melalui basis data akademik daring, terutama Google Scholar, menggunakan kata kunci yang berkaitan dengan podcast, keterampilan listening, dan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Studi terpilih kemudian dianalisis dan disintesis secara tematik. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa siswa menghadapi beberapa tantangan berulang dalam penggunaan podcast untuk kegiatan listening, yang dikelompokkan ke dalam tiga tema utama, yaitu kesulitan memahami ujaran lisan, keterbatasan kosakata dan strategi listening, serta kendala teknis dan motivasi. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun podcast memiliki potensi besar dalam mendukung pengembangan keterampilan listening, efektivitasnya dipengaruhi oleh kesiapan linguistik siswa, strategi belajar, serta lingkungan pembelajaran. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan pendampingan, pelatihan strategi, dan dukungan teknis yang memadai agar penggunaan podcast dalam pembelajaran listening dapat memberikan hasil yang optimal.

Kata kunci: podcast, keterampilan menyimak, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, tantangan, Ulasan Literatur Naratif

ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital technology has influenced the way English is taught and learned, particularly in listening instruction. One technological medium that has gained attention is podcasts, which provide flexible access to authentic audio materials and support independent learning. Although previous studies have reported positive impacts of podcasts on students' listening skills, many studies tend to focus more on their benefits rather than the challenges faced by students during listening activities. Therefore, this paper aims to review previous studies that discuss the challenges of using podcasts to improve listening skills in English language instruction. This paper employed a narrative literature review approach by analyzing eight (8) peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025. The articles were collected from online academic databases, mainly Google Scholar, using keywords related to podcasts, listening skills, and English language learning. The selected studies were reviewed and synthesized thematically. The findings reveal that students experience several recurring challenges when using podcasts for listening activities, which can be categorized into three main themes: difficulties in understanding spoken content, limited vocabulary and listening strategies, and technical and motivational issues. The review suggests that while podcasts have strong potential to support listening skill development, their effectiveness is influenced by learners' linguistic preparedness, learning strategies, and learning environment. Therefore, appropriate guidance, strategy instruction, and technical support are needed to maximize the benefits of podcast-based listening instruction.

Keywords: podcasts, listening skills, English language learning, challenges, narrative literature review

INTRODUCTION

Rapid technological innovations in recent years have transformed the way English is learned by providing a more flexible, student-centered learning environment, as digital technology allows learners to access learning resources

beyond the classroom and supports more independent learning (Nupu, 2024). By utilizing technology in language learning, students can access various types of digital media, such as online platforms, audio-visual media, and technology-based resources that help them practice the language outside the classroom.

Learners are given more exposure to listening materials through technology-based media, which might enhance their comprehension and interest in learning English (Siregar et al., 2024). In addition, (Fitria, 2021) stated that digital platforms are also frequently utilized in English language instruction to support listening exercises and give students real-world language exposure. Previous studies also suggested that integrating technology into the classroom can support students' motivation and active participation during the learning process, especially in listening skill development (Siregar et al., 2024). Therefore, technological developments have become a crucial aspect of language learning in this era, especially in supporting effective English listening instruction.

Listening is a fundamental skill in English language learning because it involves understanding spoken language and contributes to the development of learners' vocabulary, pronunciation, and overall communication skills (Shamsi & Bozorgian, 2024; Zulfizar, 2025). Digital technology has brought significant changes to the field of education, including the way English learning is conducted (Dr Shaheen Parveen & Shaikh Imran Ramzan, 2024). One of the technological innovations that has gained attention in English language teaching is the use of podcasts as a learning medium, especially for listening activities (Suhara et al., 2023). Podcasts can be defined as internet-based audio programs that can be downloaded and accessed through digital devices, allowing learners to listen to the content anytime and according to their own learning pace (Pratiwi, 2022). Podcasts allow students to access audio-based learning materials flexibly, as the content can be downloaded and played anytime according to learners' needs. This flexibility supports self-directed learning and is especially suitable for students with auditory learning preferences (Nasution, 2022). In addition, podcasts enable learners to replay listening materials as needed, which can help improve comprehension and support continuous listening practice (Suhara et al., 2023). Therefore, podcasts are considered a potential learning tool for developing listening skills, although their effectiveness may vary depending on learners' characteristics and learning conditions.

Several previous studies have shown various positive results related to the use of podcasts in English language learning. According to (Suhara et al., 2023) podcasts improve students' listening comprehension by exposing them to real language use in a range of situations through authentic audio recordings. In line with this finding, (Nawir, 2025) also reported that the use of podcasts had a significant positive effect on students' listening comprehension, as learners who were taught using podcast-based materials showed higher listening achievement compared to those taught through conventional methods. Furthermore, (Siregar et al., 2024) stated that podcasts have also been shown to boost student motivation and engagement because they allow them to access audio materials anytime and anywhere they need to. Other research by (Nasution, 2022) suggested that the use of podcasts encourages students to practice listening independently outside of the classroom, which promotes learner autonomy. Additionally, because students may set their own learning rate and play back the audio as needed, podcasts are seen to be useful for promoting consistent listening practice (Fitria, 2021). Overall, these results show that podcasts provide benefits for listening instruction in English language learning.

Although previous studies have shown positive results related to the use of podcasts in English language learning, many of these studies have tended to focus more on the benefits rather than the challenges students face during listening activities. Problems such as learners' lack of familiarity with podcast-based learning, limited listening strategies, difficulty in understanding spoken content, and technical limitations are often mentioned only briefly and are not explored in depth across previous studies. As a result, information regarding students' challenges using podcasts as a listening learning tool is still lacking in the literature. Therefore, this paper focuses on reviewing previous studies that discuss the challenges of using podcasts to improve listening skills in English language instruction.

METHOD

This paper used a narrative literature review approach to analyze previous studies on the challenges of using podcasts to improve

listening skills in English language instruction. A narrative review was chosen to synthesize and interpret findings from relevant studies by identifying recurring issues and patterns across the literature rather than reviewing each study individually (Bart et al., 2017; Snyder, 2019). This approach was selected in order to review previous research and gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges experienced by students when using podcasts for listening activities.

In total, eight (8) peer-reviewed journal articles were selected and reviewed in this paper. The articles reviewed in this paper were collected through online academic databases, primarily Google Scholar, by using keywords such as *podcasts*, *listening skills*, *English language learning*, and *EFL*. To ensure the relevance and recentness of the findings, only peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025 were included in the selection process. The selected articles were chosen based on their discussion of the challenges faced by students and their focus on podcasts as a learning tool for listening skills.

Based on recurrent challenges identified in the studies, each selected article was carefully reviewed and categorized into thematic groupings. These themes were then synthesized and discussed narratively in the Results and Discussion section. Since this paper is a literature review, published journal articles

were the main source of data for analysis rather than participants or direct data collecting.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the reviewed studies, several challenges were found in using podcasts to help students improve their listening comprehension in learning English. Although podcasts are generally acknowledged as a flexible and accessible learning tool, the results show that students still face various challenges in using podcasts for listening activities across different contexts and student levels. To provide a clearer and more structured discussion, the challenges identified from previous studies are organized into three main themes: (1) difficulties in understanding spoken content, (2) limited vocabulary and listening strategies, (3) technical and motivational issues. These themes show the various aspects that affect how well podcasts work as a listening learning medium and represent recurrent issues that students have reported. The following discussion synthesizes findings from previous studies based on these themes to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges related to the use of podcasts in English listening instruction.

To provide a clearer overview of the studies reviewed, Table 1 presents a summary of the selected articles, including the authors, publication year, research methods, and key findings related to the challenges of using podcasts in English listening instruction.

Table 1. Summary of Reviewed Articles

No.	Author(s) & Year	Title	Research Method	Participants/ Context	Key Findings (challenges)
1.	Suhara et al. (2023)	The Use of Podcasts in Improving Students' Listening Skills	Qualitative	EFL students	Students experienced difficulties due to unfamiliar vocabulary, limited listening strategies, and technical issues when using podcasts.
2.	Nasution (2022)	Podcast-Based Listening Learning in EFL Context	Qualitative	University EFL learners	Limited vocabulary and lack of effective listening strategies hindered students' comprehension of podcast content.
3.	Siregar et al. (2024)	Podcast Integration in English Listening Instruction	Mixed-method	EFL students	Technical problems and low learning motivation reduced students' engagement in podcast-based listening activities.
4.	Selviani & Ardiana (2025)	Podcast Experiences: EFL Students' Challenges and Strategies in Listening to English	Qualitative	University EFL students	Students faced difficulties in understanding podcast content due to fast speech, varied accents, unfamiliar vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions.

5.	Dimasanti & Inayati (2025)	Students' Perceptions of Podcast Use in Listening Class	Qualitative	EFL learners	Authentic audio materials with complex language and rapid speech made podcasts difficult to understand.
6.	Zihori Maulida & Sudiani (2025)	Students' Motivation and Technical Challenges in Using Podcasts	Qualitative	EFL students	Technical accessibility and low motivation affected students' consistency in using podcasts for listening practice.
7.	Luong Thi Lanh & Luu Quy Khuong (2024)	The Improvement in English Listening Comprehension Competence of the Tenth-Grade Students Through using Podcasts: A Case Study	Mixed-method	EFL learners	Technical limitations and low motivation, such as internet issues, device constraints, and lengthy podcast episodes, hinder students' consistent engagement with podcast-based listening activities.
8.	Kennisia Tazkiya Hidayah & Muhammad Handi Gunawan (2025)	Exploring Efl Students' Difficulties In Listening Comprehension: A study on common challenges and strategies	Qualitative	University EFL students	Students faced difficulties in podcast-based listening due to fast speech, limited vocabulary, accent variation, technical issues, and motivational factors.

Difficulty Understanding Spoken Content

Students' inability to understand spoken content from podcasts materials is identified in the reviewed studies, especially when the audio contains various accents, fast speech, and includes complex authentic language. According to (Selviani & Ardiana, 2025), many EFL learners found it challenging to follow and understand spoken English due to the speech speed and variety of accents in podcasts recordings, with unfamiliar vocabularies and idiomatic expressions worsening the comprehension difficulties. These characteristics make students feel difficult to follow the content, especially when they are not exposed to enough natural spoken English. In support of this, (Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025) reported that even while students thought podcasts were a helpful learning tool, many of them had trouble understanding spoken words due to native or fluent speakers' varied accents and rapid speech. Both studies show that although podcast audio's authenticity is good for exposing students to the language in real life, it can also hinder their ability to understand what they are hearing. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges that students face while using podcasts as a listening learning tool is their inability to comprehend spoken content.

Limited Vocabulary and Listening Strategies

In addition to difficulties in understanding spoken content, previous studies have shown

challenges related to students' limited vocabulary and listening strategies when using podcasts for listening activities. According to (Suhara et al., 2023) students had trouble understanding podcast content because of unfamiliar vocabulary, which frequently prompted them to listen to the audio multiple times. This dependency on repeated listening suggests that when lexical knowledge was low, learners had difficulty successfully processing spoken material. Similar to this, (Nasution, 2022) found that even while podcasts encourage independent listening, many students still found it difficult to follow the content in the absence of adequate vocabulary mastery and effective listening strategies. This finding is further supported by (Hidayah, 2025) who reported that limited vocabulary knowledge and a lack of listening strategies caused students to struggle in identifying key information and meaning in podcast-based listening tasks. As a result, learners tended to rely more on repetition rather than applying effective listening strategies, indicating that limited vocabulary and insufficient listening strategies still hinder the effectiveness of podcast-based listening activities.

Technical and Motivational Issues

Previous studies have identified technical and motivational issues as well as language challenges when it comes to using podcasts for listening activities. (Suhara et al., 2023) reported that students frequently had trouble

focusing during podcast-based listening activities due to technical issues such as unstable internet connections, limited access to suitable devices, and poor audio quality. According to (Luong Thi & Luu Quy, 2024) technical limitations and low motivation, such as internet issues, device constraints, and lengthy podcast episodes, hinder students' consistent engagement with podcast-based listening activities. Supporting this finding, (Siregar et al., 2024) pointed out that although podcasts offer flexible learning opportunities, some students had low motivation to consistently interact with podcast content because they lacked self-discipline and direct supervision in independent learning environments. Similarly, (Zihori Maulida & Sudiani, 2025) discovered that technical accessibility, together with the podcast's relevance and attractiveness, affected students' motivation to use it. As a result, students tended to use podcasts inconsistently when technical and motivational issues were present, which limited the effectiveness of podcast-based listening practice. Overall, these results suggest that technical and motivational factors significantly influence students' engagement and learning outcomes in podcast-based listening.

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the results of the reviewed studies show that although podcasts have a lot of potential as a teaching tool for improving listening skills, students still face several challenges when using podcasts for listening activities. Difficulties in understanding spoken content, limited vocabulary and listening strategies, as well as technical and motivational issues were all frequently noted in various studies and learning environments. These challenges highlight that the effectiveness of podcast-based listening activities is influenced not only by the availability of the media, but also by students' linguistic preparedness, strategic listening ability, and learning conditions. Therefore, while podcasts can support the development of listening skills, their use in English language instruction necessitates thorough assessment of students' needs, proper guidance, and supportive learning environments in order to optimize their benefits.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this narrative literature review, it can be concluded that podcasts have strong potential as a learning tool to support the development of students' English listening skills. Previous studies consistently highlight that podcasts offer flexible access to authentic listening materials and encourage independent learning. However, the review also shows that students face several recurring challenges when using podcasts for listening activities, including difficulties in understanding spoken content, limited vocabulary and listening strategies, as well as technical and motivational issues. These challenges indicate that the effectiveness of podcast-based listening instruction is influenced not only by the availability of the media but also by students' linguistic preparedness, strategic learning, and learning environment. Therefore, although podcasts have the potential to support the development of students' listening skills, their use in English language instruction needs to be supported by proper guidance, listening strategy instruction, and a supportive learning environment in order to maximize their benefits. Without adequate support, students may continue to experience difficulties that limit the effectiveness of podcast-based listening activities. For this reason, future studies are encouraged to explore teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches that can help reduce these challenges and optimize the use of podcasts in listening instruction.

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