

Improving Students' English Language Skills Through Listening to English-Language Podcasts

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Abstract: Various dynamic approaches have emerged due to advances in computer technology in supporting language learning skills. One innovative method in English language learning is the use of audio media such as podcasts. Podcasting is one of the latest tools employed by educators to deliver educational content and promote learning beyond the classroom. This study aims to describe the influence of listening to English-language podcasts on improving students' English language skills, particularly in the aspects of listening, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation. The research method employed is a literature review with a descriptive qualitative approach. The findings indicate that podcasts can serve as an effective, flexible learning medium capable of stimulating English language skills holistically. It is hoped that the results of this study can serve as a foundation for the development of digital media-based learning strategies.

Keywords: English Language Skills, Podcast, Audio Media, Innovative Learning, Listening

Abstrak: Beragam pendekatan dinamis telah muncul berkat kemajuan teknologi komputer dalam mendukung keterampilan belajar bahasa. Salah satu metode inovatif dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris adalah penggunaan media audio seperti podcast. Podcasting merupakan salah satu alat terbaru yang digunakan oleh pengajar untuk menyampaikan materi pendidikan dan mendorong pembelajaran di luar kelas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan pengaruh mendengarkan podcast berbahasa Inggris terhadap peningkatan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris siswa, terutama dalam aspek mendengarkan (listening), penguasaan kosakata (vocabulary), serta pelafalan (pronunciation). Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah studi pustaka dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa podcast dapat menjadi media pembelajaran yang efektif, fleksibel, dan mampu menstimulasi keterampilan bahasa Inggris secara holistik. Diharapkan hasil kajian ini dapat menjadi dasar pengembangan strategi pembelajaran berbasis media digital.

Kata kunci: Kemampuan Bahasa Inggris, Podcast, Media Audio, Pembelajaran Inovatif, Listening

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language that is widely used across various fields such as education, economics, technology, and global communication. Mastery of English has become an urgent necessity, especially for students as the next generation who will compete at the international level. Therefore, English language proficiency is one of the essential competencies that must be intensively developed within the education sector. Language proficiency encompasses four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Harmer, 2007). These four skills are interconnected and mutually supportive in the communication process. However, in actual school practice, students often encounter difficulties in developing comprehensive English skills, particularly in listening.

Listening skills play a fundamental role in foreign language learning as they serve as the initial entry point in the language acquisition process (Brown, 2004). Listening is crucial in helping students grasp the meaning of words, sentence structures, and intonation used in everyday conversations. Therefore, developing listening skills becomes a priority

in English language learning. According to Brown (2004), listening is a basic skill critical to the initial stages of language acquisition. Without strong listening skills, students will struggle to understand information conveyed in English, both orally and in writing.

Vandergrift (2007) also emphasizes that listening is not a passive process but an active one, involving contextual understanding, meaning interpretation, and the ability to respond appropriately. Based on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study, Indonesian students' English proficiency remains relatively low compared to other Southeast Asian countries (OECD, 2019). This highlights the urgent need for innovation in English teaching methods to enable students to develop language skills, particularly listening, more effectively.

The rise of digital resources has made English learning more accessible (Anggraini & Faisal, 2024). One innovative alternative for enhancing listening skills is the use of digital media such as podcasts. A podcast is a digital audio recording accessible online, typically containing dialogues, monologues, interviews, or stories delivered in English by native speakers. Podcasts offer authentic material rich in vocabulary and a variety of accents, reflecting real-world language use (Stanley, 2006). The use of podcasts in English language learning has been proven to significantly benefit students' listening skill improvement.

According to Hasan and Hoon (2013), podcasts offer flexibility in terms of time and place for learning and promote self-directed learning. By selecting podcasts that match their interests and proficiency levels, students can engage in more effective and personalized learning experiences. Research conducted by McBride (2007) found that students who regularly listened to podcasts showed significant improvements in listening comprehension, pronunciation, and vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, using podcasts increases learning motivation by providing an engaging and relevant learning experience.

Podcasts enable students to refine their listening skills flexibly, without time or location constraints. This medium also enhances learning motivation by presenting interesting and up-to-date topics. Moreover, students can learn independently at their own pace and according to their individual needs (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). This study aims to explore how English-language podcasts can be effectively utilized as a learning medium to improve students' English proficiency, particularly in listening skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at systematically and thoroughly describing the role of podcast media in enhancing students' English language skills, particularly in listening comprehension. This approach was selected because it aligns with the research objective, which is to explore and understand the phenomenon through analysis of relevant literature sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The descriptive qualitative design allows the researcher to present rich and contextual information, based on an in-depth analysis of textual data and documents, without experimental manipulation (Moleong, 2021).

The study utilizes a library research method. This method involves collecting information and data from various written references, such as books, scholarly journals, research reports, academic articles, and other documents closely related to the topic under study. This approach is used to establish the theoretical foundation regarding English language skills and listening comprehension, to review literature on the use of podcasts in English language learning, and to analyze findings from previous studies to strengthen the theoretical and empirical basis of the research.

According to Zed (2008), library research aims to discover conceptual and theoretical foundations that support the study, as well as to build a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being examined. The data sources in this study are secondary data, namely

various published written documents. The data sources include reference books on language learning, listening skills, instructional media, and educational technology; national and international journal articles discussing the effectiveness of podcasts in English language learning; and previous research reports relevant to the topic. The criteria for selecting data sources in this study are: relevance to the research topic and publication by credible academic institutions or publishers.

Data collection was carried out through documentation methods, which involved reading, recording, and organizing information from various relevant literature and documents. The data collection process comprised several stages: (1) identifying literature sources such as books, journals, and articles related to the research topic; (2) classifying the literature based on specific themes or topics; (3) extracting data by recording key points, quotations, and findings from the reviewed references; and (4) synthesizing the information to construct the research argument framework. Furthermore, data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques, which included in-depth reading of all written data, identifying key themes, interpreting the meaning of the content, and compiling descriptions and relationships among the concepts (Krippendorff, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

After reviewing various sources of literature, several important findings were identified regarding the relationship between the use of podcasts and the improvement of English language skills, particularly in listening comprehension. These findings are categorized into several main themes as follows:

1. Podcasts as Authentic Media for Listening

Podcasts provide authentic materials that resemble real-world English usage. Unlike conventional audio materials that are often structured and simplified for educational purposes, podcasts feature dialogues and monologues from native speakers with variations in intonation, speed, and accent. This is highly beneficial for enhancing the ability to comprehend spoken language more contextually (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007; Stanley, 2006). According to Hasan and Hoon (2013), students who are accustomed to listening to podcasts adapt more quickly to the speaking pace and styles of native speakers, which is one of the main challenges in listening comprehension.

2. Podcasts Enhance Motivation and Independent Learning

Podcasts offer a flexible format, accessible anytime and anywhere, and are available across a variety of engaging topics such as stories, interviews, and cultural discussions. This motivates students as they feel more emotionally and cognitively involved in the learning process. Chan (2012) noted that students' intrinsic motivation increases when learning materials are relevant to their lives and presented through media they enjoy. Furthermore, the use of podcasts promotes autonomous learning. Students can manage their own schedules, choose materials, and set their own learning pace (McBride, 2007; Panagiotidis, 2021). This aligns with the principle of learner-centered learning, which is emphasized in modern language education.

3. Podcasts Facilitate Vocabulary and Pronunciation Improvement

In addition to enhancing listening skills, podcasts support vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation development. A study by O'Bryan and Hegelheimer (2007) and W. M. Chan (2014) showed that students learning English as a foreign language experienced significant vocabulary improvement after several weeks of podcast listening. Consistent exposure to

spoken language allows students to recognize linguistic patterns, idiomatic expressions, and appropriate intonation, which can then be internalized through repeated practice.

4. Podcasts as Learning Tools in the Curriculum

In the classroom context, several studies suggest that podcasts should be incorporated into lesson planning as part of listening activities or homework assignments. Al-Asmahi et al. (2022) noted that using podcasts as part of weekly assignments made learning more interactive and extended beyond the classroom setting. This approach also supports the integration of technology into education (technology-enhanced learning), a key emphasis of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum currently implemented in Indonesia (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

B. Discussion

Based on the literature review findings, it is evident that podcasts play a significant role in developing students' English language skills, particularly in the area of listening. The main advantages of using podcasts as a learning medium include:

1. **Authentic Language Experience**
Podcasts provide listening experiences that closely mimic real-life conditions.
2. **Student Engagement**
Students become more active and motivated as the learning feels more personal and engaging.
3. **Independent Learning**
Students have greater control over their learning process and material selection.
4. **Strengthening Other Skills**
Podcasts also aid in vocabulary development, pronunciation, and even speaking skills through follow-up activities such as discussions or reflection assignments.

However, the effectiveness of podcasts is also influenced by several factors, such as: The students' initial level of language proficiency. The appropriateness of the selected material according to the students' skill level. The availability of necessary devices and internet access. The extent of teacher support in guiding and evaluating the learning process.

In the context of secondary education in Indonesia, the use of podcasts is still relatively new and needs further development to suit students' characteristics and needs. Teacher training and the development of pedagogical guidelines are necessary to ensure that podcasts become an integrated part of structured learning strategies.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a literature review conducted on various academic sources, it can be concluded that podcasts are an effective and relevant learning medium for enhancing students' English language skills, particularly in the area of listening comprehension. Podcasts offer authentic language input, allowing students to listen to natural spoken communication as used by native speakers. Through this exposure, students become familiar with vocabulary, sentence structures, pronunciation, intonation, and expressions used in everyday communication, thereby helping them adapt to a variety of real-world language contexts. Moreover, podcasts significantly enhance students' motivation and independent learning skills. With their flexible nature, students can access learning materials anytime and anywhere, according to their individual needs and preferences. The diversity of topics and engaging presentations make podcasts a medium that stimulates learning enthusiasm and fosters intrinsic motivation. Throughout this process, students actively manage their learning approaches, thus cultivating more independent and responsible learning attitudes.

Repeated exposure to podcast content also strengthens students' ability to enrich their vocabulary and improve their pronunciation. Unconsciously, students imitate the speech patterns and pronunciation styles of native speakers they listen to, leading to simultaneous improvement in vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation skills. Podcasts serve not only as a source of information but also as a medium that reinforces linguistic skills through contextual and natural listening experiences.

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