

INTEGRATING ENGLISH PODCASTS TO FOSTER INTRINSIC MOTIVATION: A PRELIMINARY STUDY FOR A MOTIVATION-BASED LEARNING MODEL

Muhamad Rifqi Bakhtiar¹), Hendi Pratama²), Seful Bahri³)

English Education Department
Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang
Semarang, Indonesia
muhamadrifqib@students.unnes.ac.id

Abstract

This study explores students' perceptions of English-language podcasts as a medium to enhance listening skills in EFL settings. The objectives were to identify which aspects of listening students feel most supported by podcasts, to surface the enablers and barriers that shape those perceptions, and to derive design implications for podcast-based listening activities. Adopting a qualitative, descriptive–interpretive approach, data were gathered through an online questionnaire combining short prompts and open-ended responses, then analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Findings indicate that students regard podcasts as authentic input that fosters vocabulary growth and prosodic awareness (pronunciation/intonation) when certain conditions are met. The most significant enablers include: (a) topic relevance and intentional curation aligned with learners' interests and needs; (b) availability of transcripts or concise glossaries to ease comprehension; and (c) playback-speed control that helps manage processing load. Reported barriers relate to occasional lexical density and speech rate that outpace current proficiency. Overall, podcasts are perceived as motivating and flexible, especially when embedded in tasks that make goals explicit (e.g., guided vocabulary work, brief oral summaries, or targeted shadowing for prosody). The study shifts the focus from whether podcasts are effective to under what teaching conditions they are, and shows how curation, scaffolding, and learner agency can make podcast-based listening engaging and instructionally valuable.

Keywords – listening; student perceptions; EFL; qualitative; learner agency.

Introduction

For millions of English language learners, podcasts have evolved from earphones that slipped through the daily grind to a new "listening space" that is adaptable, on-demand, genuine, and often overlooked, very personal. The practice of listening to audio content at any time and from any location creates pedagogical opportunities that are not possible with traditional textbooks or language lab recordings in the context of an increasingly mobile learning ecosystem. (Rosell-Aguilar, 2013). When compared to traditional methods, recent research indicates that mobile device-based listening tasks, such as podcasts, significantly improve oral skills performance, especially listening (Burston & Giannakou, 2022).

Students find it challenging to deal with a variety of accents, speech rates, and real-world terminology since authentic sources are rarely systematically incorporated, and listening materials are still viewed "passively" in many EFL learning environments. According to field research conducted in Indonesia, for instance, using podcasts as authentic materials might improve word memory, pronunciation, and motivation (Abdulrahman et al., 2018). However, it also reveals difficulties with information processing, student proficiency, and technical aspects of the classroom. However, producing and utilising podcasts within a cooperative learning framework enhanced students' linguistic competence, especially in speaking and listening skills, according to

a quasi-experimental study conducted in Spain (Abdulrahman et al., 2018). This suggests that podcasts are useful as both input material and a task product that stimulates cognitive engagement. Podcasts have long been notable for their ability to empower learners and be authentic.

According to a comprehensive survey of iTunes users, students use podcasts to increase their exposure to native languages at their own pace, which provides a solid basis for independent learning. (Rosell-Aguilar, 2013). Students' perceptions of language activities in the classroom improve when they are involved as both listeners and creators; motivation, confidence, and teamwork all rise, although technical help is still essential. The current issue creates a "triple gap" that is pertinent to both science and practice. First, there is a disconnect between educational listening techniques used in the classroom and the extensive audio consumption that occurs outside of it. The ability to listen at the level of natural speech (real-time speech), which is exactly the most difficult for learners, is separated from the availability of readily accessible authentic materials. (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Third, there is a discrepancy between task designs that fully utilise the advantages of mobile technology (asynchronous, personalised, interest-based) and the effectiveness of mobile technology as demonstrated by research (mid to large effect sizes for listening) (Chang et al., 2017).

At least two factors make this study even more urgent. First, new research demonstrates that the inclusion of podcasts, whether as a production assignment or as mobile-assisted prolonged listening, has a favourable effect on language accomplishment and learning affect, even for low-skilled learners. (Wang, 2013). This identifies the podcast as a "low-cost, high-impact" intervention that is pertinent to secondary

schools and higher education in EFL regions. Second, the post-pandemic learning environment is focused on flexibility and self-directed learning; as such, mapping student perceptions is a crucial starting point for creating meaningful listening activities that go beyond simply "playing audio," allowing students to choose their own topics, pace, and level of exploration. According to data from perception tests conducted in Indonesia, students find podcasts to be inspiring and interesting, but to maintain a reasonable cognitive load, they need content curation and strategic help. (Dahal & Manandhar, 2024).

To address the following questions, this article, "Students' Perceptions on the Use of English-Language Podcasts to Enhance Listening Skills," centres the analysis around student perceptions: how do students understand podcasts as a way to improve listening skills, what factors help or hinder this, and what are the implications for effective instructional design? We begin by providing a concise overview of the literature on podcasts in language learning, covering everything from empirical data from classroom trials and MALL-based meta-analyses to theoretical considerations about authenticity and learner agency. Second, we describe the student perception study's methodological framework, which includes the study's participants, tools, setting, and analytical techniques. Third, we provide examples of real-world problems (topic selection, speech rate, audio quality, and listening strategy assistance) as well as the key conclusions of perceptual dimensions (usefulness, ease of use, motivation, and learning control). Fourth, we talked about the operational educational implications, which, in line with research showing that active involvement improves results, include incorporating podcast-based prolonged listening with guided activities, pre-listening scaffolds, and student-as-creator

choices. We wrap up by offering suggestions for creating achievement-based assessment rubrics and contextual listening activities that teachers can use.

This research attempts to close the triple gap described above and provide a workable road map for turning listening from input into an independent, genuine, and influential learning experience by integrating student voices (perceptions) and native speaker voices (podcasts) within a single learning design.

Literature Review

Theoretical Basis: Listening as an Extensive Practice and Metacognitive Process

According to the literature, listening skills are an active process that necessitates the coordination of attention, inference, and self-monitoring (Phillips, 2017). This means that rather than just "playing audio" in the classroom, listening instruction must activate metacognitive strategies (planning, monitoring, and evaluation). The metacognition-based listening learning approach Vandergrift (2012) Views students as process managers and promotes the use of real texts, pre-, during-, and post-listening exercises, as well as explicit strategy reflection. This structure can be tailored to fit the strategic objectives of students and applies to asynchronous podcasts. Furthermore, intensive listening and frequent exposure to substantial volumes of real input, with the learner choosing the content, is thought to foster processing confidence and fluency.

Podcasts have emerged as the main medium for in-depth listening outside of the classroom in the setting of mobile technologies. The results of a year-long study on EFL students revealed that they spent around an hour each week listening to podcasts and vodcasts, and that they preferred podcasts to vodcasts. (Gönülal,

2020). A research review that emphasises the persistence of comprehension hurdles (speech rate, accent, vocabulary, and real-time processing) as a result of the curriculum's absence of explicit listening instruction further supports the pedagogical importance of emphasising hearing. (Shunnar & Altweissi, 2022). Through the prism of student perceptions, this problem framework explains why interventions that offer control over pace, repetition, and topic choice, like podcasts, are pertinent to the test.

Podcasts for language learning: from genuine access to student autonomy

At the ecosystem level, language learners use podcasts on their own, think they help them study, and give the content high ratings, according to a comprehensive poll of iTunes U users. Additionally, the student profile is more varied, which validates podcasts' potential as a genuine cross-context input source. (Rosell-Aguilar, 2013). Students' perceptions and practices regarding podcasts being created outside of the classroom and requiring a reevaluation when incorporated into official tasks are based on this research. In addition to emphasising the necessity for technological support and clear task design (roles, audience, criteria), perception studies demonstrate greater motivation, a sense of belonging, and teamwork when students take on the role of producers (student-produced podcasts). This implies that when podcasts are presented as a task product rather than merely listening material, students' perceptual dimensions may change in a good way. (Rachmaniputri et al., 2021)

Empirical evidence: MALL meta-analyses and classroom experiments

Chaves-Yuste & de-la Peña (2023) Conducted a quasi-experimental intervention on high school students in Madrid at the classroom level. The experimental group used and produced

podcasts about social inequality as part of the Cooperative Language Learning framework, while the control group completed standard CLT tasks. The findings demonstrated that the podcast group's linguistic proficiency, especially speaking and listening, had improved, offering proof that combining social issue-based and product-oriented podcasts improves engagement and performance. According to this research, podcasts' advantages come from both exposure and the creation of activities that foster social worth and agency. SpringerLink The MALL 1994–2019 meta-analysis, which examined a substantial number of mobile device studies, indicated that learning results were typically good at the evidence synthesis level. However, it cautioned about significant heterogeneity and limitations in research design, which call for careful generalisation. This presents podcasts as one of the most promising MALL affordances for podcast studies, but it requires more specific information regarding the design parameters (length, task type, strategic support) that result in the best perceptions and outcomes. (Burston & Giannakou, 2022).

Student perceptions of podcasts: findings in the Indonesian EFL setting and the region.

According to a number of perception studies conducted in Indonesia, students have positive opinions about using podcasts in listening classes. They suggest that they increase students' interest, motivation, and confidence, but they also point out problems with topic selection, speech rate, technical accessibility, and the requirement for scaffolding techniques (such as pre-listening glossaries, transcripts, and speed control) (Gonz, 2023; Joquino et al., 2024; Uzun, 2023). The results verify that usefulness, usability, and cognitive load factors significantly impacted by content curation and activity design are included in the

perceived dimension. The practice of extended listening through podcasts shows consistent usage preferences and reported benefits for vocabulary growth, pronunciation, and comprehension fluency at the college and high school levels in various locations. The assumption that learning designs that incorporate learner choice and targeted tactics are more likely to be well-received by students is supported by longitudinal evidence that indicates the frequency of structured out-of-class exposure correlates with enhanced listening results. (Dindar et al., 2021)

Research Gaps and Critical Synthesis

The landscape above highlights several important points and unmet research needs:

1. Limited design translation, solid theoretical foundation. Although the ideas of extended listening and metacognitive listening theory are well-established, many classroom studies do not describe how metacognitive methods are operationalised when using podcasts (e.g., scaffolding sequences, use of transcripts/adaptive speed, or reflection rubrics). While the effectiveness of podcasts is the main focus of the research, less attention is paid to why and under what circumstances students' perceptions improve (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).
2. High heterogeneity and positive evidence. A meta-analysis of MALL reveals variation in design and methodological quality while confirming an overall favourable effect. This means that in the context of podcasts, it is necessary to link design factors (length, learner control, topic, input vs. product mode) that haven't always been thoroughly examined to generalise the impact on listener perception or outcomes (Hamid & Forsia, 2024)
3. Global practice, local perception. Positive attitudes as well as technical

limitations and cognitive load are reported in studies on Indonesian/regional perceptions; nevertheless, the majority rely on descriptive approaches and small sample sizes. The characteristics of podcasts that most influence perceived utility (e.g., genre, episode length, visual support/transcripts, replay features) and support methods (e.g., pre-teaching vocabulary) that lessen cognitive burden for EFL listeners require more investigation (Harahap & Rizal, 2023)

4. Production versus input. Affective and collaborative benefits have been demonstrated in studies involving student-produced podcasts; however, evidence about how the combination of extensive listening (input) and student-as-creator (output) shapes perceptions of usefulness and learning control is still rarely reported in an integrated manner.

The research "Students' Perceptions on the Use of English-Language Podcasts to Enhance Listening Skills" fills these gaps by using students' perceptions as a crucial variable to: (a) map the dimensions of usefulness, ease of use, motivation, and learning control; (b) assess the applicability of design features (topic, duration, transcripts/speed control features, task format: input vs. production); and (c) develop contextual pedagogical implications for podcast-based listening instruction. Therefore, rather than merely stating that "podcasts are effective," this review lays the conceptual groundwork for understanding why and how podcasts are thought to improve EFL students' listening skills, which is a prerequisite for more targeted and repeatable intervention approaches.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative method with a descriptive-interpretive design and a reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) framework to explore in depth how students interpret the use of English

podcasts in improving their listening skills. The qualitative approach was considered most appropriate because the study's goal was to understand students' perceptions, experiences, and judgmental logic dimensions that require context-rich data, rather than quantitative causal hypothesis testing. (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017) RTA was chosen because it provides a systematic yet flexible procedure for the researcher to iteratively and reflectively develop themes for the findings, in line with the multi-layered nature of perceptual data. Participants were 21 EFL learners who had been using English podcasts in their learning activities (independent or integrated with the classroom) in the past few weeks. Recruitment was conducted purposively (criterion-based). The main criteria were (a) having listened to/completed an English podcast episode, and (b) being willing to reflect on their experience using it for listening development. A variety of backgrounds (education level, podcast experience, genre preferences) was attempted to ensure a variety of experiences emerged in the data. Participant identities were anonymised using codes. Data were sourced from qualitative responses to open-ended questions in the questionnaire, which covered topics such as: reasons for using podcasts, perceived usefulness for listening (vocabulary, speech rate, accent), forms of support needed (transcripts, speed control), and barriers experienced. Data collection was conducted online via the questionnaire link; before completing the questionnaire, participants read the research information sheet and provided informed consent. No sensitive identity data was required. The identity column is optional, and any mention of names/institutions is removed during data cleaning. Open-ended questions in the questionnaire allow for a broader and more diverse range of participants, while maintaining narrative depth. (Jansen, 2010). Compared to resource-intensive

individual interviews, this approach is efficient for gathering a spectrum of experiences relevant to the purpose of the perception study, which are then subjected to reflexive thematic analysis.

Data Procedures and Management

1. Cleaning & Anonymisation. Responses are compiled into a spreadsheet, checked for completeness, and clearly irrelevant/duplicate data is removed. Direct identifiers (names, emails) are removed.

2. Initial theme construction. Interrelated codes were combined into candidate themes (e.g., “pedagogical usefulness of podcasts,” “real-time processing challenges,” “role of scaffolding,” “agency & motivation in learning”).

3. Theme review and refinement. Themes were reevaluated against the raw data to ensure internal coherence and distinction between themes; overlapping themes were restructured or merged.

4. Theme naming and definition. Each theme was given an operational definition and scope, and relationships between themes were formulated (e.g., a thematic map between “strategic support” and “cognitive load reduction”).

5. Reporting. The narrative of findings was supplemented with representative quotes from participants (with participant codes) to demonstrate traceability of interpretation.

The entire process was conducted using spreadsheets (for cleaning/organisation).

The Role of Researcher Reflexivity

In line with RTA, the researcher maintained reflexivity through memos recording initial assumptions (e.g., “podcasts should be helpful for all students”), the researcher’s position on

audio media, and analytical decisions throughout the process. Reflexivity was not used to “eliminate subjectivity,” but rather to provide a source of rigour in linking data to interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The study adhered to the ethical principles of social research: informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Data are stored securely, and quotes are reported using participant codes (e.g., S4). If required by the institution, this process is subject to local ethics committee approval. Thus, this method provides a strong conceptual-empirical foundation for answering the research questions while closing a gap in the literature that has focused more on “are podcasts effective” rather than “how students perceive them and what design prerequisites are.”

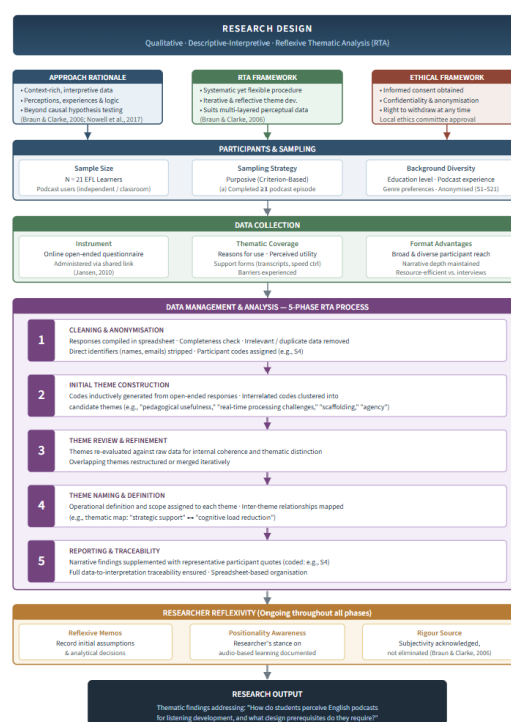


Figure 1. Research methodology flowchart illustrating design rationale, participant selection, data collection, five-phase RTA process, reflexivity, and output.

Finding and Discussion

Results Using a reflexive thematic analysis of the narrative responses, we identified a coherent set of themes that either enable or hinder students’ experiences with English-language podcasts for listening

development. Keyword heuristics were employed only as sensitising devices; final themes were constructed interpretively through repeated reading, coding, and constant comparison.

Motivation and Interest

Students consistently framed podcasts as motivating when the content aligned with their interests. Sustained engagement was tied to perceived relevance rather than to the medium itself. As one student put it, *“Choose engaging themes so listeners don’t get bored”* (S1, translated). This underscores interest-driven engagement as a precondition for persistence in extensive listening.

Topic Relevance and Channel Curation

Closely related was the call for intentional curation selecting channels and episodes that match learners’ goals, proficiency, and topical needs. *“Find a podcast channel that suits our needs... varied content keeps us from getting bored”* (S2, translated). Here, students framed curation as an instructional responsibility as well as a learner strategy, positioning it as a mechanism to sustain listening beyond the classroom.

Lexical Enrichment

Students perceived podcasts as an authentic source of new vocabulary encountered in meaningful contexts: *“Build up vocabulary and listen to podcasts more often”* (S3, translated). This view reflects a belief that repeated exposure to natural speech supports lexical uptake and collocational awareness, especially when episodes revolve around familiar or goal-relevant topics.

Need for Transcripts / Supporting Text

Requests for transcripts or concise glossaries emerged as a recurrent enabling condition: *“Subtitles are needed so*

listeners can understand what the speaker is saying” (S4, translated). Students framed such supports as scaffolds that reduce processing demands when speech is dense or unfamiliar, rather than as substitutes for listening.

Speech-Rate Control

Learners also pointed to the usefulness of playback-speed control to manage real-time comprehension: *“Use a moderate speed and choose appropriate topics to make comprehension comfortable”* (S5, translated). Adjustable speed was seen as a graduated aid that could be phased out as proficiency improves.

Handling Difficult Vocabulary

Finally, several responses proposed explicit vocabulary supports for example, a small “difficult words” box accompanying episodes to maintain momentum when comprehension stalls: *“Add a box containing difficult vocabulary”* (S6, translated). Such micro-supports were framed as lightweight aids that preserve flow without interrupting listening.

Interpretive summary. Across themes, students foregrounded two interlocking preconditions for effectiveness: (1) purposeful content curation closely aligned with interest and need, and (2) comprehension scaffolds (transcripts/glossaries and speed control). Together, these conditions were described as lowering cognitive load while preserving engagement, allowing the perceived benefits for vocabulary and prosody to surface in routine listening.

Integration of Findings

Convergence with descriptive indicators. The qualitative accounts complement the descriptive patterns observed in the structured items: students repeatedly associated podcasts with gains in lexical growth and prosodic awareness

(pronunciation/intonation), attributing these gains to exposure to authentic speech and repeated listening opportunities.

Pedagogical preconditions. Requests for transcripts, glossaries, and speed control coalesced as enabling conditions, especially salient for learners who self-identify at an intermediate level. In interpretive terms, students asked not merely for “more input,” but for design features that transform authentic input into workable input, input they can process and learn from without undue effort.

Role of curation and learner agency. The combined emphasis on topic relevance and channel selection suggests that effectiveness is mediated by learner agency exercised within a curated space. When learners can select from well-matched options, they are more likely to sustain the extensive listening needed for noticeable development. Taken together, the qualitative analysis moves the conversation beyond the question of *whether* podcasts help toward a clearer specification of the conditions under which learners experience them as helpful. This provides a practical bridge to the Discussion section, where these learner-articulated conditions can be operationalised into design principles for podcast-based listening in EFL contexts.

The reflexive thematic analysis of students' open-ended responses yielded six interrelated themes that collectively illuminate the perceived affordances of and design prerequisites for English podcast-based listening. Table 2 presents each theme alongside the student count, a representative participant quote, and its interpretive significance within the dataset.

Table 2. Summary of Thematic Findings: Students' Perceptions of English Podcasts for Listening Development

Theme	n	Representative Quote	Interpretive Significance
A. Enabling Conditions — Affective & Motivational			
1. Motivation & Interest-Driven Engagement	21	"Choose engaging themes so listeners don't get bored." (S1)	Interest alignment is a precondition for persistence in extensive listening, not a peripheral concern.
2. Topic Relevance & Channel Curation	21	"Find a podcast channel that suits our needs... varied content keeps us from getting bored." (S2)	Curation is both an instructional responsibility and a learner strategy that sustains out-of-class listening.
B. Perceived Linguistic Affordances			
3. Lexical Enrichment through Authentic Exposure	21	"Build up vocabulary and listen to podcasts more often." (S3)	Repeated exposure to natural speech is perceived to support lexical uptake and collocational awareness.
C. Comprehension Scaffolding Needs — Design Prerequisites			
4. Need for Transcripts / Supporting Text	21	"Subtitles are needed so listeners can understand what the speaker is saying." (S4)	Transcripts function as processing scaffolds that reduce cognitive load without substituting for listening.
5. Speech-Rate Control	21	"Use a moderate speed and choose appropriate topics to make comprehension comfortable." (S5)	Adjustable playback speed is a graduated aid perceived as phaseable as proficiency grows.
6. Explicit Vocabulary Support (Micro-Glossaries)	21	"Add a box containing difficult vocabulary." (S6)	Lightweight lexical aids preserve listening flow and prevent comprehension breakdown at unfamiliar items.

Note. n = total participants (N = 21 EFL learners); all quotes translated from Indonesian. Participant codes (S1–S21) correspond to anonymised respondents. Themes were derived inductively via Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006); keyword frequencies served as sensitising devices only.

DISCUSSION

The qualitative accounts converge on a clear proposition: podcasts are perceived as useful when they are intentionally designed into the listening experience rather than merely appended as an extra resource. Students repeatedly linked positive experiences to interest-aligned topics and purposeful channel/episode curation, describing motivation as a function of relevance more than novelty of the medium. This pattern suggests that the podcast's instructional value is not inherent; it is activated by alignment with learners' goals and identities as listeners. In parallel, students emphasised lightweight scaffolds—transcripts or concise glossaries and playback-speed control, pragmatic ways to turn authentic speech into workable input that can be processed without undue effort. Read

together, these themes point to a two-part ecology for effective podcast-based listening: curation to sustain engagement, and scaffolding to regulate cognitive load. This ecology explains why learners credited podcasts with aiding both vocabulary noticing and prosodic awareness (rhythm, stress, and intonation) in day-to-day listening.

Positioning the findings within theory and prior evidence

The emphasis on scaffolding resonates with the metacognitive model of L2 listening, which advocates explicit support across the before–during–after cycle (planning, monitoring, evaluating) and treats transcripts and other supports as tools for calibrating attention and reducing processing demands. Students’ calls for toggleable transcripts, brief glossaries, and speed control map neatly onto this model’s rationale for strategic regulation of comprehension, suggesting that what learners asked for are precisely the mechanisms theorised to make authentic input learnable. Students’ focus on interest and choice also aligns with the extensive listening tradition and with evidence from mobile-assisted contexts showing that out-of-class, self-paced listening fosters sustained exposure and perceived gains, especially when learners exercise agency over content selection. Our respondents’ framing of podcasts as flexible, repeatable, and personally meaningful mirrors these conditions and helps to explain why podcasts are often preferred to more bandwidth-heavy formats. At the ecosystem level, large-scale survey work on language podcast users highlights that podcast engagement often happens outside formal courses, with learners curating resources that fit their interests and routines. This helps contextualise why our participants placed such weight on topical relevance and channel choice: learner practice already gravitates toward interest-driven curation, and classroom designs

that acknowledge this practice are more likely to sustain listening over time. Finally, classroom-based studies that integrate podcasts report affective and interactional benefits when students are positioned not only as receivers of audio but also as producers of short podcast artefacts. Although production was not the focus of our dataset, students’ emphasis on interest, agency, and audience awareness suggests that limited student-as-creator tasks could amplify the motivational mechanisms they already value.

What this study adds: from “whether” to “under what conditions”

Prior syntheses in MALL argue that mobile-mediated interventions often show positive effects, while also cautioning about design heterogeneity. Our qualitative analysis nuances this picture by specifying learner-articulated conditions under which podcasts become effective: when content is curated to purpose and when minimal, reversible supports convert authenticity into tractability. Put differently, students did not ask for less authenticity; they asked for tunable authenticity—authentic speech that they can slow down, replay, and annotate with just-in-time textual aids. This reframing advances the discussion from “Do podcasts help?” to “Which design features enable learners to experience podcasts as helpful?”, offering an explanatory bridge between theory-driven models of listening and day-to-day learner practice.

Implications

Pedagogical practice

Instructors designing podcast-based listening can operationalise these insights by (a) curating interest-aligned episode menus tied to explicit listening goals (e.g., episodes rich in conversational rhythm for prosody work; episodes on familiar topics for lexis noticing), and (b) providing minimal-viable scaffold toggleable

transcripts, concise pre-listening glossaries, and recommended starting speeds, then tapering supports as learners gain fluency. Such moves embody metacognitive pedagogy while honouring learner agency, thereby making extensive listening sustainable in and beyond the classroom.

Technology and platform design

Platforms serving language podcasts should treat transcripts, speed control, and segment markers as first-class features, ideally integrated with lightweight vocabulary tools. These affordances dovetail with how learners described their needs and are consistent with design principles that transform authentic audio into learnable episodes without diluting realism.

Social and access considerations

Because podcasts are portable and data-light, they can extend listening practice into daily routines and broaden access for learners with constrained connectivity. When paired with accessible transcripts, they also support diverse learners, including those who benefit from multimodal input or who are re-entering language study after long pauses. Learners' voices here align with broader observations that podcast ecosystems already support self-directed, interest-driven learning assets that formal programs can leverage rather than replace.

Trustworthiness and limitations

Our interpretation follows a reflexive thematic stance, where themes are constructed through iterative engagement with the data and situated within an auditable trail of coding and memoing. This stance emphasises coherence and transparency over claims of neutrality, and it is well-suited to studies that seek to theorise conditions of effectiveness from learners' perspectives. Limitations include

the modest corpus and reliance on written responses rather than interview-based probing; future work could combine our learner-articulated levers (curation, scaffolding, agency) with classroom trials that document how different configurations of supports mediate perceived and observed listening development.

Conclusions

Drawing on a qualitative reading of students' accounts, this article affirms that English-language podcasts are perceived to support listening development through two primary pathways: lexical enrichment and prosodic awareness (rhythm, stress, and intonation). For learners, the value of podcasts lies in their authenticity, flexibility, and repeatability, which together allow exposure to real-world speech to be managed and rehearsed in ways that suit individual needs. Crucially, the benefits do not stem from the audio medium alone but from how the listening experience is deliberately engineered around it. The findings highlight several preconditions for effectiveness in EFL contexts. First, the alignment of topics, channels, and difficulty with learners' interests and goals acts as the spark for sustained engagement. Second, lightweight comprehension supports toggleable transcripts or concise glossaries and playback-speed control function as buffers to cognitive load, helping authentic input become tractable input. Third, learners the opportunity to choose episodes and negotiate ways of workingbinds these elements into durable listening habits beyond the classroom. In combination, curation, scaffolding, and agency transform podcasts from an add-on resource into a purposeful learning experience with genuine instructional value.

As a qualitative study, this work is limited by a modest corpus, uneven completion across prompts, and reliance on self-reported perceptions rather than objective

pre- post post-measures. Future research should incorporate interviews or focus group discussions to probe when and how particular supports help (or distract), conduct classroom trials to map effective configurations of curation and scaffolding across proficiency levels, and compare episode genres to target distinct learning goals. In sum, the qualitative takeaway is clear: podcasts are perceived as effective when the listening experience is consciously designed goal-aligned, curated, and supported with proportionate scaffolding so that anticipated lexical and prosodic gains can emerge consistently in learners' real-world practice

References

- Abdulrahman, T., Basalama, N., & Widodo, M. R. (2018). The impact of podcasts on EFL students' listening comprehension. *International Journal of Language Education*, 2(2), 23–33.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1245044.pdf>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Burston, J., & Giannakou, K. (2022). MALL language learning outcomes: A comprehensive meta-analysis 1994–2019. *ReCALL*, 34(2), 147–168.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344021000240>
- Chang, D. F., Huang, Y. L., & Wu, B. (2017). Analysing the functions and benefits of using mobile Facebook as a supplemental LMS in higher education. *Journal of Advanced Computational Intelligence and Intelligent Informatics*, 21(6), 971–979.
<https://doi.org/10.20965/jaciii.2017.p0971>
- Chaves-Yuste, B., & de la Peña, C. (2023). Podcasts' effects on the EFL classroom: A socially relevant intervention. *Smart Learning Environments*, 10.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-023-00241-1>
- Dahal, N., & Manandhar, N. K. (2024). The reality of e-Learning: Success and failure of learning management systems. *Advances in Mobile Learning Educational Research*, 4(1), 903–910.
<https://doi.org/10.25082/amler.2024.01.001>
- Dindar, M., Suorsa, A., Hermes, J., Karppinen, P., & Näykki, P. (2021). Comparing technology acceptance of K-12 teachers with and without prior experience of learning management systems: A Covid-19 pandemic study. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 37(6), 1553–1565.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.12552>
- Gilakjani, A. P., & Sabouri, N. B. (2016). Learners' listening comprehension difficulties in English language learning: A literature review. *English Language Teaching*, 9(6), 123–133.
<https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n6p123>
- Gönülal, T. (2020). Improving listening skills with extensive listening using podcasts and vodcasts. *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, 7(1), 311–320.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1262212.pdf>
- Gonz, I. (2023). *Education Sciences: Enhancing Collaborative Learning in Higher Education through Podcast Production : An Experiential Approach with Anthropology and Tourism Students*.
- Hamid, S. F., & Forsia, L. (2024). *Beyond the classroom : Fostering English communication skills in vocational education through podcasting and radio broadcasting*. 5(225), 317–330.
<https://doi.org/10.33474/jp2m.v5i2.21688>
- Harahap, M. Q. A., & Rizal, D. (2023). *PROMOTING EFL LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH PODCAST : TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES*. 7(2), 458–468.
<https://doi.org/10.30743/ll.v7i2.8251>
- Jansen, H. (2010). The logic of qualitative survey research and its position in the field of social research methods. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 11(2).
<https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1450/2946>
- Joquino, C. H., Esguerra, S. M., Helera, A. I.,

- Malibiran, N. S., Joyce, J., Sombillo, C., & Sabado, R. D. (2024). *Podcasts as supplementary tools in enhancing teaching-learning in the 21st-century literature from the Philippines and the world*. 0–4.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Phillips, B. (2017). Student-produced podcasts in language learning – Exploring student perceptions of podcast activities. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 5(3), 157–171. <https://doi.org/10.22492/ije.5.3.08>
- Rachmaniputri, F. I., Purnawarman, P., & Gunawan, M. H. (2021). *Students' Perceptions Towards the Use of Podcasts in Listening Class BT - Proceedings of the Thirteenth Conference on Applied Linguistics (CONAPLIN 2020)*. 179–187. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210427.028>
- Rosell-Aguilar, F. (2013). Podcasting for language learning through iTunes U: The learner's view. *Language Learning & Technology*, 17(3), 74–93. <https://doi.org/10.10125/44340>
- Shunnar, W. A., & Altweissi, A. I. (2022). The Effect of Using Podcasts and Vodcasts on Developing Ninth Graders' Speaking Skills in the English Language. *Britain International of Linguistics Arts and Education (BIO LAE) Journal*, 4(3), 242–257. <https://doi.org/10.33258/biolae.v4i3.784>
- Uzun, L. (2023). *Original Paper: Enhancing Foreign Language Learners' Listening Skills through Technology : A Sample Lesson*. 11(2), 23–35. <https://doi.org/10.22158/selt.v11n2p23>
- Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. C. M. (2012). *Teaching and Learning Second Language Listening: Metacognition in Action*. Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mo-no/10.4324/9780429287749/teaching-learning-second-language-listening-christine-goh-larry-vandergrift>
- Wang, X. (2013). The construction of researcher–researched relationships in school ethnography: Doing research, participating in the field and reflecting on ethical dilemmas. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26(7), 763–779. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2012.666287>