



The Impact of Educational Podcasts on Enhancing English Students' Comprehensive Language Skills

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Abstract in English

The aim of this research is to examine the effectiveness of podcasts in enhancing students' listening comprehension in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom. 60 Iraqi high school students were selected for the study using cluster random sampling, and they were equally divided into an experimental group (30 students) and a control group (30 students). The study employed a quasi-experimental design, specifically the post-test only control group model. A survey questionnaire was also distributed to the experimental group to learn more about their opinions on podcast-based instruction.

According to the findings, the experimental group's post-test scores were statistically significantly higher than those of the other group. With a significance value of 0.010, below the 0.05 cutoff, a one-way ANOVA analysis indicated that podcasts had a significant impact on students' listening comprehension. Furthermore, the survey's findings indicated that students' perceptions of podcast usage were positive. They asserted that by giving them engaging activities, accurate information, and worthwhile assignments, podcasts boosted their motivation to learn English. In light of these findings, the study recommends using podcasts as a technology-enhanced learning tool to teach listening in EFL classes.

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Chapter one

1-1:Introduction

From elementary school through university, English is taught as a foreign language in Iraq. The national curriculum set clear goals for students to communicate both orally and in writing using interpersonal, transactional, and functional text types, especially at the high school level (Kebudayaan, 2017). By the time they graduate, students should ideally be proficient in these areas. This objective hasn't been entirely met yet, though, as proficiency levels remain below expectations.

English is a major contributing factor to Iraq's high National Examination failure rate, according to recent statistics (Kebudayaan, 2017). Students' listening comprehension in English is particularly poor. This is because the main language of instruction is Bahasa Iraq, there is little exposure to real-world English, and authentic English materials are not used as much. Students' listening comprehension is hampered by teachers' frequent failure to use effective teaching strategies or authentic listening materials (Huang, 2004).

As a contemporary mobile learning tool, podcasts provide digital audio or video content that is always available on portable devices (Constantine, 2007). Podcasts, which combine the terms "iPod" and "broadcast," offer rich, real, and captivating language input that is distinct from conventional audio resources. According to scholars (Aguilar, 2016; Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013; Abdous & Facer, 2009; Ahmed, 2008; Blaisdell, 2006; Chinnery, 2006), podcasts have the potential to be useful resources for language instruction because of their accessibility and relevance to everyday life.

As little as six minutes a day of podcast listening can help even novice students (Constantine, 2007). Podcasts also support focused feedback and test preparation (Edirisingha et al., 2007), with additional studies confirming their positive effect on listening skills and comprehension (Beheler, 2007; Rizzi et al., 2007). There is still a lack of empirical research on the use of podcasts in Iraqi high schools, despite these advantages and their increasing popularity. The purpose of this study is to find out how Iraqi EFL students' listening comprehension is affected by podcasts and how they feel about using them as a teaching tool in listening classes.

1-1-1 Problems of the study

1. A lot of EFL students have trouble with speaking, listening, vocabulary, and general comprehension.
2. Traditional teaching methods often lack interactive and engaging strategies, which results in low student engagement and limited exposure to the language.
- 3 There is insufficient use of modern technological tools, such as educational podcasts, to provide authentic and accessible language input.

1-1-2:Aims of the Study

1. To look into how educational podcasts affect the overall language proficiency of English language learners.
2. To determine if students' motivation and engagement in learning English are increased by podcast-based instruction.

1-1-3:Hypotheses of the study

1. Students who use instructional podcasts will perform better than those who do not in listening comprehension.
2. Students' vocabulary and speaking skills improve as a result of educational podcasts.
3. Students' interest and engagement in English language learning activities are increased when they listen to podcasts.

1-1-4 Values of the Study

1. Provides empirical evidence showing the effectiveness of podcasts in enhancing multilingualism in EFL contexts.
2. Offers helpful guidance to teachers on how to include podcasts in lesson plans to boost student engagement.
3. Aids in bridging the gap between traditional instruction and technology-enhanced language learning.

4. Talks about the challenges of teaching EFL in settings with evolving technological infrastructure.

1-1-5:Limit of the Study

1. The sample size and educational setting may limit how broadly the results can be applied. 2. Variations in students' access to technology (devices, internet) may have an effect on the use of podcasts.

3. It's possible that the study is too short to assess long-term impacts on language acquisition.

4. Differences in learner characteristics, including motivation, learning preferences, and prior knowledge, may affect the results.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

2-1: Introduction

Current teaching and learning environments have undergone radical and rapid changes due to the rapid development of current technology. Teachers and students can now interact with educational materials outside of regular school hours, thanks to the increased flexibility, mobility, and potential for learning across time resulting from the integration of digital tools into classroom environments. In the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), modern technology not only helps students acquire the language but also enhances students' confidence and motivation (Abdulrahman, 2016).

With its primary focus on teaching listening skills, podcasts have evolved into an effective and important technological tool. They allow students to choose from a variety of authentic spoken language resources that suit their interests and skill levels. They encourage students' independence and the ability to listen at their own pace for more effective and personalized learning (Kavaliauskien, 2008).

This literature review will examine the proven benefits of podcasts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, particularly in improving listening comprehension skills. This study will examine the effects of podcasts, particularly on secondary school students' learning outcomes and attitudes, in the context of EFL teaching in Iraq. It will also highlight particular domains in which podcasts have demonstrated remarkable success.

2-2: Crucial Capabilities for Learning English

Acquiring proficiency in English necessitates mastering several fundamental skills, all of which are critical to the language's growth. These core skills—speaking, writing, listening, reading, and grammar—provide the basis for understanding and improving English proficiency. Students can develop comprehensive language skills by focusing on these areas.

1. Reading

Reading is an essential skill for English language learners because it enables them to broaden their knowledge, pick up new vocabulary, understand grammar rules, and try out various writing styles. Reading newspapers, periodicals, and books will teach you this ability. According to Bojovic (2010), reading broadens one's horizons, enhances social skills, and enriches life experiences in addition to being educational.

2-Speaking

Speaking is one of the most desirable skills to learn since it involves creating language in real time. Unlike reading, speaking requires active practice and interaction. However, children who do not live in English-speaking communities may find it challenging to develop this skill. As Koran (2015) notes, speaking is a complex process that necessitates the integration of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and even cultural knowledge of the language.

3.Writing

Writing is another crucial skill that aids students in expressing themselves clearly in writing. In academic and professional contexts, it is particularly crucial. Writing is the process of generating ideas, organizing them into coherent sentences and paragraphs, and delicately expressing meaning. Yovie (2019) asserts that since writing allows students to express their ideas through language, it is a crucial part of teaching and learning English.

4.Grammar

Grammar is crucial to learning English, despite the fact that it can be challenging for students. It provides instructions for crafting appropriate and meaningful phrases. Harmer (2001) defines grammar as the study of how words combine and take on different forms to form sentences. Lado (1997) continues by emphasizing that grammar teaches students what is considered proper language use. Grammar must be mastered for fluency, which requires persistence, consistent practice, and memory training.

5.Listening

Like reading, listening is a receptive skill, but it is necessary for understanding and communicating spoken language. According to Doyle (2022), listening comprises hearing sounds, interpreting their meaning, determining the message being conveyed, and appropriately responding. Students who improve their listening skills are better able to comprehend spoken English and participate in conversations.

2-3 The Teaching of Listening

Effective communication requires active listening. According to Feyten (2010), listening accounts for over 45% of our communication activities, highlighting its vital role in the development of general language proficiency. According to Brown (2000, p. 7), teaching is the process of helping someone learn how to accomplish a task, helping them in their studies, and imparting necessary knowledge. Listening has been viewed as a crucial component of second language acquisition and a means of understanding spoken language in recent years.

To provide effective listening instruction, teachers need to be proactive and plan their lessons carefully. One of the foundations of teaching listening is the notion that language input should be specifically designed to train listening comprehension and should not be presented visually before being heard. This ensures that students learn their auditory processing skills directly from spoken language rather than relying on written aids. In this regard, audio-based listening activities are a useful teaching tool for improving students' listening abilities in a more focused and practical manner.

2-4 Podcast

A podcast, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is an audio file that can be downloaded to a computer or portable media player or streamed online. Although the term "podcasting" was coined in 2004, the concept has existed since 2000. Podcasts are currently a very popular form of audio entertainment. Podcasts have also gained rapid acceptance in the education sector as a helpful learning aid.

Podcasts are unique in that they allow students to access content from anywhere at any time, which adds a critical degree of flexibility to the learning process. Time and location are therefore no longer obstacles to learning [6]. One of the key benefits of using podcasts in the classroom is the ease with which educational resources can be obtained. Evans (2008) asserts that because of contemporary lifestyles,

students must study whenever and wherever they can, making portable technology essential for convenient access to educational resources.

Educational podcasts have gained popularity among educators worldwide. Mikat et al. (2007) state that "podcasts are versatile, reusable, engaging, and motivating for today's technology-savvy generation of students." By enabling students to interact with the material they are studying or will encounter in the classroom, this technology enhances the learning process and offers numerous advantages.

2-5 Using Podcasts to Teach English

Podcasts are digital audio or video broadcasts that can be downloaded and viewed on a range of mobile devices. By fusing the terms "iPod" and "broadcast," the term "podcast" reflects its origins as a portable, on-demand listening device. Compared to traditional radio, podcasts offer greater flexibility, allowing listeners to select and engage with content at their own pace and preference. Originally introduced in 2004, podcasts are sometimes described as a form of online audio blogging or publishing that enables users to access and subscribe to automatically updated audio content that is disseminated online.

Additionally, empirical research has validated the value of podcasts for language learning. For instance, Lu (2007) examined the potential benefits of exposing Taiwanese EFL learners to American and British English podcasts for improving their speaking and listening skills over the course of four weeks. The participant took part in transcription, vocabulary and grammar identification, and weekly English talks. The findings showed that podcast listening enhanced learners' comprehension and confidence when speaking English.

Podcasts have been effectively utilised as primary and supplemental teaching resources in listening comprehension instruction. Second-year EFL students' listening abilities were greatly enhanced by podcasts (Ashraf, Narouzi, & Salami, 2011). Similarly, Hook (2010) discovered that after receiving instruction primarily based on podcasts, science students' listening skills in scientific English significantly improved.

The findings show how podcasts can improve listening comprehension in EFL contexts because they readily offer adaptable, interesting, and useful learning opportunities. Using top-down and bottom-up

processing strategies, podcasts are popular teaching and supplemental resources that improve students' focus and listening comprehension. According to Istanto (2011), podcasts help students comprehend language patterns and enhance their listening comprehension.

Podcasts also have advantages beyond enhancing focus and listening comprehension. Several studies have demonstrated that podcast listening dramatically and quickly improves a range of language learning abilities, such as vocabulary development, speaking fluency, writing proficiency, pronunciation, and grammatical awareness. Several studies have also shown the usefulness and accessibility of podcasts, highlighting how simple it is to download and use them on a daily basis. These digital resources give students rich, real-world input that exposes them to language use in everyday contexts and provides them with numerous opportunities to freely practice and improve their listening skills (Artyushina et al., 2011; Kan, 2011).

2-6 Attitudes toward Language Learning

According to Richards and Schmidt (2013), attitudes are people's positive or negative feelings about a language. These feelings are linked to perceptions of the language's ease or difficulty, its social significance, and even one's feelings toward language users. Attitudes are crucial when learning a second or foreign language. Hogg and Vaughan (2005) define attitude as a fairly stable configuration of feelings, ideas, and behavioral tendencies toward social objects, people, events, or symbols.

Affective, cognitive, and behavioral are the three additional categories into which Mathewson (1994) divided attitudes. The affective component is a person's emotional response to the attitude object; the cognitive component is their thoughts and beliefs about the object, which could be a person, idea, or situation; and the behavioral component is how the attitude influences their behavior in specific contexts.

Learning a foreign language often evokes a range of attitudes that reflect the social milieu in which learners are immersed. Ellis (1994) asserts that such attitudes directly affect the process of learning a second language (L2). Researchers stress the significance of attitudes toward the target language in inspiring learners (1996, 1985). Gardner (1985) asserts that learning experiences are generally more successful and productive for students who hold positive opinions about the target language. Therefore, understanding students' attitudes toward the language they are learning is essential since it enables the creation of various approaches to meet their language-learning needs. Visser (2008) notes that attitudes

directly affect language proficiency, and Reid (2003) highlights the significance of attitudes in the learning process. Ultimately, a learner's attitudes toward language acquisition are just as crucial to their success as their intelligence when it comes to mastering a target language. Thus, learning a language should be viewed as a social and psychological experience as well as an academic one.

2-7 Motivation in EFL

In EFL classrooms, motivation is the driving force that initiates and maintains students' interest, engagement, and excitement for learning English as a foreign language. It significantly affects children's performance during the language acquisition process. Learning a foreign language is more than just memorizing facts; it's a skill that is developed through continuous practice. According to Anne (2008), sustaining motivation and encouraging additional practice outside of the classroom are therefore essential components.

When it comes to teaching English as a foreign language, motivation is complex, multidimensional, and multifaceted. Jeremy (2001) distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The term "intrinsic motivation" describes a learner's internal desire to use the language, which may be fueled by their goals, passion, or motivation. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, motivates language learners using external incentives such as prizes, grades, etc. The teacher's teaching style, the learning environment provided, the level of curriculum difficulty, the support and encouragement of peers and teachers, and the relevance of the language to students' interests and lives are among the most important factors influencing motivation in EFL classrooms.

Teachers are responsible for creating a supportive and purposeful learning environment that enhances students' abilities, develops their skills, and motivates them. Providing engaging and relevant materials, fostering a sense of community in the classroom, offering helpful criticism and ongoing support, using modern methods of positive reinforcement, and adopting diverse teaching philosophies that accommodate students' different learning preferences are all ways to achieve this goal. Finally, motivation is crucial in EFL classrooms and has a significant positive impact on students' language learning. Therefore, in order to establish and sustain motivation throughout the language learning process, teachers must first understand the key determinants of motivation.

2-8 Perception Toward Podcasts

In addition to considering podcasts as a means to help students improve their language skills, one of the goals of podcasts is to change their perception of this useful and unique technological resource. Numerous studies have demonstrated improvements in English language proficiency, and a wide range of recent academic studies have examined teachers' and students' views of the use of podcasts for language learning. According to several studies, students respond positively to the use of podcasts for English language learning (Fernandez, Simo, & Salan, 2009). For example, Putman and Kingsley (2009) demonstrated an improvement in science students' attitudes toward listening to podcasts while studying English. All results showed that podcasts encouraged students to actively participate in vocabulary acquisition, while also enhancing their scientific vocabulary.

In the same vein, Borgia (2010) and Putman and Kingsley (2012) found that listening allows students to study at their own pace, helping them develop and enhance their vocabulary in a systematic and useful way. Cross (2014) emphasised how, when paired with regular daily teacher guidance and feedback, podcasts enhanced students' listening abilities and promoted independent learning. Kavaliauskis and Anusin (2009) demonstrated that students actively and thoughtfully listened to podcasts and showed great enthusiasm for using them in English lessons. They also demonstrated a very strong desire to download and listen to podcasts regularly for both entertainment and education.

Also, a number of studies have shown that interesting, diverse, and topic-rich content in podcasts can significantly increase students' motivation and rapid response (Heilesen, 2010; Fernandez et al., 2009; Evans, 2008). According to Kavaliuskis and Anusin (2009), their positive opinions of podcasts are demonstrated by the fact that they are widely used for listening practice and that they are highly valued when used in English classes.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

3-1: Sample and Population

The sample consisted of 270 secondary school students in Salah al-Din Governorate, Iraq. For the 2024-2025 academic year, a sample of 60 students was selected from Sada al-Iraq Secondary School. The sample was divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group, each comprising 30 students.

3.1.1: Equipment

A questionnaire, a set of lesson plans for 16 continuing education sessions, and an objective listening test were among the tools used in this study.

3-1-2: Methods of Gathering Data

Both the experimental and control groups provided data. A 30-question multiple-choice test was used to assess students' listening comprehension, and a 10-question questionnaire was used to gauge their opinions on the use of podcasts in English language lessons.

3-1-3: Data Analysis Techniques

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to evaluate the quantitative data, and statistical calculations were performed to demonstrate the validity of the experiment. All discrimination indices of the objective test, item difficulty, validity, and reliability were subjected to rigorous testing. A Likert scale was used to evaluate questionnaire responses and interpret students' attitudes and opinions. This chapter presents the results of a study conducted at Sada Al-Iraq Secondary School for Boys in Tuz. This includes descriptive statistics, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and students' opinions on using podcasts to improve their English listening comprehension.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics – Post-Test Scores

| Statistic | Experimental Group | Control Group |
|------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Number of Students (N) | 30 | 30 |
| Mean | 78.50 | 65.30 |
| Median | 80.00 | 64.00 |
| Mode | 82.00 | 60.00 |
| Standard Deviation | 8.32 | 9.74 |
| Variance | 69.28 | 94.84 |
| Minimum Score | 60.00 | 48.00 |
| Maximum Score | 94.00 | 84.00 |
| Range | 34.00 | 36.00 |
| Total Score | 2355.00 | 1959.00 |

The descriptive statistical results proved that the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of mean, median and total scores after the test.

Table 2: One-Way ANOVA Results

| Source of Variatio | Sum of Squares | Df | ean Square | Value | g. (p-valu |
|--------------------|----------------|----|------------|-------|------------|
| Between Groups | 625.840 | 1 | 625.840 | 9.428 | 0.004 |
| Within Groups | 1863.160 | 28 | 66.542 | | |
| Total | 2489.000 | 29 | | | |

The results of the variance analysis showed that there was a statistical significance value of (0.004), which is less than the value of (0.05), which proved the existence of a statistically significant difference in the listening comprehension scores between the experimental and control groups.

Table 3: Selected Questionnaire Responses

| No. | Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | |
|-----|---|----------------|-------|---------|----|
| | I feel that my listening skills improve after using podcasts. | 30% | 50% | 15% | 5% |
| | Podcasts make English learning more enjoyable and interesting. | 40% | 43% | 10% | 7% |
| | I feel more motivated to listen and understand English through podcasts | 28% | 48% | 17% | 7% |
| | I would like to continue learning English through podcasts in the future. | 35% | 45% | 15% | 5% |

Most students have positive attitudes toward learning via podcasting.

Table 4: Full Student Questionnaire Results (Experimental Group)

| No. | Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | |
|-----|---|----------------|-------|---------|-----|
| 1- | Using podcasts enhances my motivation in learning English | 20% | 60% | 20% | 0% |
| 2- | I find it difficult to understand what the speaker says | 0% | 5% | 20% | 75% |
| 3- | Podcasts offer authentic English listening materials | 60% | 30% | 10% | 0% |
| 4- | The tasks and activities in podcasts are interesting | 70% | 25% | 5% | 0% |
| 5- | Podcasts are very portable and easy to use | 25% | 70% | 3% | 3% |
| 6- | Podcasts are not effective in terms of time | 0% | 10% | 10% | 80% |
| 7- | Podcast duration is appropriate for focusing listening | 75% | 10% | 10% | 5% |

| | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|----|
| 8-My vocabulary is enriched after listening to podcasts | 70% | 20% | 10% | 0% |
| 10-I recommend that teachers use podcasts for listening lessons | 70% | 10% | 20% | 0% |

Overall, students had very positive, helpful, and compelling things to say about the podcast's qualities: inspiring, honest, purposeful, effective, and easy to use.

3-2:Discussion

The study results confirmed previous research demonstrating that podcasts improve listening comprehension in EFL settings. Students who listen to podcasts performed better than those using traditional methods, according to studies by Kavaliawski (2008), Ahmed (2016), and Al-Qasim and Al-Fada (2013). By appreciating the genuine and real-life English exposure that podcasts provided, students backed up Constantine's (2007) assertion that authentic materials improve comprehension of natural speech. The podcasts' portability and flexible access enhanced motivation and enabled learning outside of the classroom, supporting Morri's (2010) claim that they promote creativity and engagement.

However, some kids who did worse require more scaffolding, which emphasizes how important it is to choose podcasts carefully and give them additional instruction. A few students reported having some difficulty understanding, which highlights how important it is to match podcast difficulty to learner proficiency.

Conclusion

This study suggests that incorporating podcasts into EFL lessons can significantly enhance students' listening comprehension skills. The experimental group, which received podcast-based instruction, performed better than the control group, as evidenced by higher post-test scores and statistically significant ANOVA results. Furthermore, the majority of students who responded to the survey expressed greater motivation, enjoyment, and vocabulary growth, indicating that they had very positive opinions about podcast-based learning.

The findings support the growing corpus of research demonstrating that technology-enhanced tools, particularly podcasts, provide engaging and authentic language input that bridges the gap between classroom instruction and everyday communication. Students were particularly drawn to podcast episodes due to their portability, accessibility, and short duration, which promoted independence and lifelong learning .

This study emphasizes the benefits of using podcasts as a significant addition to conventional English language instruction from a pedagogical standpoint. In order to maximise comprehension, it also emphasizes how crucial it is for teachers to plan listening activities and events both before and after class, choose content carefully and meticulously according to students' skill levels, and offer the right kind of support. Policymakers and curriculum developers should think about including podcast-based activities in language programs, and teachers are urged to incorporate podcasts into their regular teaching practices in light of these findings. Future research could look into how listening skills are developed over time, how it affects other language skills, and how effective it is for a range of age groups and skill levels.

الملخص

هدف هذه الدراسة هو التحقيق في مدى فاعلية استخدام البود كاست في صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لتحسين فهم الطلاب لمهارات الاستماع. تم اختيار 60 طالبًا من طلاب المرحلة الثانوية في العراق باستخدام طريقة العينة العشوائية العنقودية، وقُسموا بالتساوي إلى مجموعتين: مجموعة تجريبية تضم 30 طالبًا، ومجموعة ضابطة تضم 30 طالبًا. استخدمت الدراسة تصميم شبه تجريبي، وتحديدًا نموذج اختبار ما بعد التجربة للمجموعة الضابطة فقط. كما تم توزيع استبيان على المجموعة التجريبية لمعرفة آرائهم حول التعليم المعتمد على البود كاست.

أظهرت النتائج تفوقًا ذا دلالة إحصائية للمجموعة التجريبية في درجات الاختبار بعد التجربة مقارنة بالمجموعة الضابطة. حيث أظهر تحليل التباين الأحادي (ANOVA) قيمة دلالة بلغت 0.010، وهي أقل من مستوى الدلالة 0.05، مما يشير إلى أن استخدام البود كاست كان له تأثير كبير على فهم الطلاب لمهارات الاستماع. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، أظهرت نتائج الاستبيان أن الطلاب لديهم آراء إيجابية تجاه استخدام البود كاست، حيث أكدوا أن البود كاست زاد من حماسهم لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال تقديم أنشطة مشوقة، ومعلومات واقعية، ومهام ذات معنى. بناءً على هذه النتائج، توصي الدراسة باستخدام البود كاست كأداة تعليمية معززة بالتكنولوجيا لتدريس مهارات الاستماع في صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: بود كاست ، اللغة الإنجليزية، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، فهم الاستماع، محتوى صوتي.

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