Exploring University Students' Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Podcast in English Learning

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Abstract

This research aimed to (i) explore English Language Education students' perceptions of podcasts as a tool for enhancing English language learning; (ii) examine the impact of podcasts on students' motivation to learn English; and (iii) identify the challenges faced by students when using podcasts for learning. This qualitative research used a constructivism approach and applied thematic coding in data analysis. The research participants were ten English education students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that most students perceived podcasts as flexible, enjoyable, and useful for improving listening and speaking skills. Podcasts also positively influenced students' motivation and confidence. However, challenges such as fast-paced speech, native accents, lack of interactivity, and technical issues were noted. Overall, podcasts are effective as supplementary tools in language learning, particularly in enhancing listening and speaking competence.

Keywords

English Learning, Motivation, Perception, Podcast, University Students

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INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, the integration of technology in language education has gained increasing attention. One emerging medium is the podcast, which allows learners to engage with authentic spoken English flexibly. Despite its growing popularity, many students still lack motivation in traditional English classes. This research investigates how podcasts influence students' learning experiences, motivation, and attitudes in the context of English language education. The focus is on university students' personal experiences and perceptions of podcasts as tools for learning English, particularly in improving listening, speaking, and vocabulary skills (Insani, 2022; Putra, 2024; Rosell-Aguilar, 2013) A study by (Kasih & Munir, 2023), highlighted motivational strategies employed by students when writing argumentative essays. They found that students utilized strategies such as environmental structuring and emotional control to maintain focus and mood during the writing process. These findings underscore the importance of flexible learning environments a core strength of podcasts, which allow learners to study anytime and anywhere according to their preferences.

Furthermore, , from the same journal, demonstrated that using traditional audio materials (such as audio CDs and videos) effectively enhances students' listening skills, and that proper audio presentation needs to be paired with relevant exercises. This confirms that podcasts as a modern, internet-based audio format have significant potential to motivate and support language development when combined with structured tasks or reflective activities.

Despite these insights, a gap remains in the literature regarding the specific impact of podcasts as distinct from traditional audio tools on learner motivation and skill development in English. While previous research has explored the effectiveness of general audio materials and flexible learning strategies, few studies have examined how podcasts, as a digital and on-demand medium, are perceived by students in terms of both motivational appeal and skill enhancement (particularly listening, speaking, and vocabulary acquisition). Furthermore, there is limited qualitative research exploring students' personal narratives and attitudes toward podcasts in language learning contexts, especially at the university level.

Building on these insights, this study aims to further explore how podcasts as flexible, internet-delivered audio media can affect university students' perceptions, motivation, and learning experiences in using English in everyday contexts. The approach will highlight the innovative aspects of podcasts while addressing a research gap within the related previous studies. To achieve this aim, the study adopts a qualitative approach, allowing for an in-depth exploration of students' personal experiences, reflections, and attitudes toward podcast use in English learning. This methodological choice provides richer insights into how podcasts support language development beyond the traditional classroom setting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The advancement of digital technology has significantly impacted the field of education, especially in second language acquisition (SLA). Digital tools such as podcasts offer learners autonomy, flexibility, and access to authentic language input, enabling them to study beyond the limits of traditional classrooms. These platforms support learner-centered approaches and cater to various learning styles (Șișianu & Pușcașu, 2024).

Podcasts, in particular, align with Krashen's Input Hypothesis by providing comprehensible input that aids in vocabulary development, listening comprehension, and fluency. They also reflect Vygotsky's sociocultural theory by acting as scaffolding that supports learners' development through repeated and meaningful exposure to real-world content. Research by (Rosell-Aguilar, 2013), (Indahsari, 2020), and (Insani, 2022) shows that podcasts can increase students' motivation, boost confidence, reduce learning anxiety, and make the learning process more enjoyable

Despite these benefits, some challenges persist. Students may struggle with fast speech, native accents, or the lack of visual and interactive support (McGarr, 2009; Nozari & Siamian, 2015). Podcasts alone may also be less effective in improving reading and writing skills unless paired with supplementary materials. Nevertheless, students generally perceive podcasts positively, especially when combined with structured tasks or classroom discussions. Their informal tone and real-life language use contribute to a more engaging and motivating learning experience.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using a constructivist approach to explore university students' perceptions and attitudes toward the use of podcasts in English language learning. The participants were ten students from the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. They were selected through purposive sampling, with the main criteria being their familiarity and experience in using podcasts for learning English

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews , which are commonly used in qualitative research to explore participants' personal experiences while allowing flexibility in responses (Pathak & Intratat, 2012), The interviews were conducted individually, either face-to-face or via online platforms such as WhatsApp and Zoom, depending on participants' preferences. Each interview lasted approximately 15–20 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent. The interview questions focused on students' experiences, perceived benefits, motivational effects, and challenges in using podcasts for English learning

The recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. This method was chosen to identify recurring patterns and themes related to students' perceptions, motivations, and obstacles. Manual coding was applied to ensure that the interpretation remained grounded in participants' actual responses

To uphold ethical standards, informed consent was obtained from all participants. They were assured that their participation was voluntary, their identities would remain confidential, and the data collected would be used solely for academic purposes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' Perceptions of Podcast Use in English Learning

There is the table description perceived by the students based on podcast use in learning of English.

Table 1. Students' Perception of Podcast

Category	Subcategory	Examples of Behavior
Flexibility	Multitasking	Listening while commuting or lying down (R1, R5)
Skill development	Listening comprehension	Improved ability to catch native expressions (R3, R6)
	Vocabulary acquisition	Exposure to new vocabulary and natural phrases (R2, R4)
	Speaking confidence	Mimicking pronunciation and expressions from podcasts (R5)

Students reported that podcasts were flexible and effective in enhancing listening and speaking skills. They found that listening to native speakers in casual contexts helped improve their vocabulary and pronunciation. One participant noted, "I usually listen while riding my motorbike or before sleeping it's more relaxing than reading." (R1)

Participants also described how repeated listening helped them become more confident in speaking. "After listening to a lot of podcast episodes, I started recognizing phrases and became more natural when speaking," said R5.

2. Motivational Impact of Podcast Use

This can clearly be seen by the description below on how the podcast use impact the students' motivation

Table 2. Podcast Use Impacted Students' Motivation

Category	Subcategory	Examples of Behavior
Engagement	Enjoyment	Students described podcasts as fun and stress-free (R7, R1)
Motivation	Reduced anxiety	Felt more relaxed

		compared to classroom learning (R6, R3)
Autonomy	Self-initiated learning	Listening without being told; choosing topics of interest

Podcasts were perceived as highly motivating. Students appreciated their informal tone and real-life topics, which made English learning feel less like a chore. As R7 shared, "It doesn't feel like studying. It's fun and I enjoy the topics."

3. Challenges in Using Podcasts

Some challenges encountered when using podcast in learning English, it can be illustrated by the following table.

Table 3. Podcasts Challenges Faced

Category	Subcategory	Examples of Behavior
Comprehension	Native accents	Difficulty understanding British or Australian speakers (R1, R7)
Pace	Fast delivery	Replaying episodes multiple times (R2, R3)
Interactivity	Lack of feedback	Unable to ask questions or clarify meanings (R5)
Skill limitation	Limited reading/writing use	Podcasts not helpful for grammar or writing tasks (R3)

Despite the advantages, several students noted challenges, particularly in understanding fast or accented speech. Some skipped episodes that were too difficult to follow. Others expressed the need for interaction, such as visuals or transcripts. One student commented, "I can't ask the speaker anything. Sometimes I just guess or check the comments." (R1)

Additionally, students recognized that while podcasts are useful for listening and speaking, they offer limited support for reading and writing. "If it's about grammar, I prefer other media like YouTube," noted R3. Overall, the findings highlight that while podcasts serve as effective supplementary tools, their maximum benefit is achieved when combined with structured classroom guidance or follow-up activities. This aligns with previous studies (McGarr, 2009; Rosell-Aguilar, 2013) which stress the need for integrated support when using audio-based media in language learning.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the perceptions and attitudes of English Language Education students toward the use of podcasts in learning English. The findings revealed that students generally perceived podcasts positively due to their flexibility, informal delivery, and relevance to real-life language use. Podcasts were found to support the development of listening and speaking skills, increase learner motivation, and reduce anxiety commonly associated with traditional classroom learning. Despite these benefits, students also reported challenges, particularly in understanding fast-paced speech and unfamiliar accents, as well as the absence of interactive features. Furthermore, while podcasts were useful for enhancing oral skills, they were seen as less effective in supporting reading and writing.

Overall, podcasts were not viewed as a replacement for formal instruction but rather as a valuable supplementary tool. Their effectiveness can be maximized when integrated with structured classroom activities or reflective tasks that encourage deeper engagement. This research supports the potential of podcast-based learning as part of a blended or flexible learning environment in English language education. Future research is recommended to explore how different types of podcast content, learner autonomy, and long-term exposure impact language proficiency. Studies could also examine how podcast use can be integrated more meaningfully into curriculum design to support a wider range of language skills.

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