

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study by explaining the issues that motivated the research and outlining the key components that guide the investigation. It presents the background of the study, research questions, research objectives, hypotheses, significance of the study, scope of the research, definitions of key terms, and the organization of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

The ability to listen is one of the basic skills that is important but often considered difficult by learners, especially among students of English language education programs. Based on the experience of researchers, when studying the course "listening", not only have difficulty in understanding audio content, but also have difficulty in processing oral information critically, finding key concepts, and finding information that is relevant to hearing in a broader context. As a result, students often become passive listeners and are unable to utilize listening activities as a means of developing other language skills.

In the ever-evolving digital era, technology has played an important role in the development of education, including in English language teaching. One form of technology that has begun to be utilized in an educational context is podcasts. Podcasts, as audio-based digital media, have been widely recognized for their flexibility in providing learning materials that can be accessed anytime and anywhere, as stated by de la Peña & Cassany (2024, p. 125), Fachriza et al (2023,

p. 62), Indahsari (2020, p. 104), Nurhidayah (2023, p. 25), and Tymoshchuk (2023, p. 121). According to Mukhtorova & Ilxomov, (2024), by exposing pupils to a range of genuine and authentic content, podcasting offers language learners a cutting-edge platform to enhance their listening comprehension, as well as according to (de la Peña & Cassany, 2024; Gonulal, 2022; Indahsari, 2020). Effective listening practices include variety, frequency, and repetition, which can be done outside the classroom through podcasts. Podcasts (digital audio series that can be played or downloaded online) are one of the many listening resources that can promote these ideas (Harahap, 2020; Sabrila & Apoko, 2022).

In the process of learning to listen, universities generally still use a teacher-centered approach, in which students listen to audio textbooks, watch videos, take notes, and then answer questions posed by the instructor. This has resulted in students' learning autonomy and active engagement being severely limited (Pertiwi et al., 2022; Tang, 2023). The researcher uses podcasts as a learning medium because they offer a student-centered approach that can provide opportunities for students to learn more actively and independently. They can listen to podcasts on topics they want to learn about, or that relate to their lives.

Although the benefits of podcasts had been recognized, there remained a significant gap in research data regarding their practical application in specific educational contexts. In particular, research conducted by Harahap, (2020) highlighted qualitative aspects within the Indonesian context, with a primary focus on students' perceptions and motivations. Meanwhile, other researchers had examined the concrete impact of podcasts; for example, Aybirdi et al., (2024) and

Chaves-Yuste & de-la Peña, (2023) successfully conducted quantitative experimental studies. However, their research was limited to high school students abroad, which naturally involved different cultural backgrounds and teaching methods compared to Indonesia, where such experimental studies were still rare. This empirical gap was significant because the learning context, linguistic background, and study habits of Indonesian students likely influenced their listening outcomes. To address this gap, this study aimed to implement a student-centered learning approach, in which students actively managed and evaluated the effectiveness of their own learning strategies using podcasts to improve their listening skills. Given these specific methodological and demographic gaps, this study was highly warranted and necessary to provide concrete evidence regarding improvements in students' listening skills.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background presented in this study, the research is guided by the following research question: “Is there a significant difference in listening skills between students who are taught using podcasts and those taught using audio textbook materials?”

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study should be in line with the research question: “To find out whether there is any significant difference in listening skills between students taught using podcasts and those taught using audio textbook materials.”

1.4 Variable

This research uses a quantitative quasi-experimental design consisting of two variables:

1. Independent Variable (X): *Podcast-Based Learning* —the listening class's use of podcasts as a teaching tool.
2. Dependent Variable (Y): *Listening Skill* — students' comprehension of spoken English through identifying main ideas, understanding details, interpreting meaning, and recognizing vocabulary after being taught using the treatment.

Thus, the relationship between the two variables can be illustrated as follows:

Podcast-Based Learning (X) → Listening Skill (Y)

1.5 Hypotheses

Because this research compares two groups (experimental and control), the hypotheses are stated as follows:

1. Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference in listening skills between students who are taught using podcasts and those who are taught without podcasts.
2. Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant difference in listening skills between students who are taught using podcasts and those who are taught without podcasts.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study contributes both theoretically and practically to the field of English language education. First, from a theoretical perspective, this study provides concrete and measurable evidence that digital media, such as podcasts, can serve as a highly effective strategy for improving listening skills, particularly among English language education students who are prospective teachers. Second, from a practical perspective, through a student-centered learning approach, this study demonstrates that podcasts help students learn independently and deepen their understanding of spoken English within a flexible learning environment that can be tailored to individual interests. Third, professionally, the findings provide valuable pedagogical insights for English lecturers or teachers to integrate digital media such as podcasts into lesson plans and syllabi, thereby making the teaching and learning process more modern, interactive, and effective.

1.7 Scope of the Study

To ensure the research focus remains sharp and in-depth, the scope of this study is limited to evaluating improvements in listening skills among second-year students in the English Language Education program at a university in Indonesia. Specifically, the investigation examines the use of podcasts as the primary learning medium in listening classes, using a quasi-experimental study design. The study's scope is restricted to comparing the academic achievement of the experimental and control groups using standardized assessments obtained prior to and following the intervention.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

According to Amalia, (2023, p. 27) Podcasts were first created by Ben Hammersley in 2004. Podcasts are digital media that present audio or video recordings online. After the podcast feature was added to iTunes in 2005, its popularity increased. Podcasts can be presented in various formats, such as vodcasts, audio podcasts, and enriched podcasts, covering topics such as education, culture, and science. Podcasts are especially beneficial for those learning English, as they can improve listening and speaking skills through exposure to the language itself (Pertiwi et al., 2022; Setiawan & Wahyuni, 2024).

The student-centered learning approach is a learning model that focuses on how students learn. According to Tang, (2023) This approach positions learners at the center of learning activities, with lecturers serving as facilitators who encourage active participation, collaboration, and independent learning. Meanwhile, Orabah et al., (2022) state that teachers should understand students' needs, interests, and learning styles to tailor their learning strategies. Balla, (2023) argues that this method is effective because it encourages two-way interaction and changes the teacher's role from information provider to thinking process facilitator.

Listening ability, also known as listening skills, is defined as the ability to understand oral messages through understanding important concepts, details, implied meanings, and intonation of the person speaking. Setiawan & Wahyuni, (2024) stated that listening ability is an important part of language teaching

because it is the key to effective communication skills. However, Aisah et al., (2025) state that podcasts can accelerate mastery of this skill by providing continuous exposure to a range of accents, contexts, and speaking styles in English.

1.9 Research Report Organization

This research report is divided into five main chapters, each of which goes into further detail about the main findings of the study:

Chapter I Introduction. This section offers the background of the study, highlighting the significance of listening skills in English language learning and the possibility of using podcasts as a contemporary method to improve listening comprehension. It also explains the research problems, objectives, significance, scope, variables, hypotheses, definition of key terms, and research report organization.

Chapter II Literature Review. This section reviews previous studies and relevant theories on the use of podcasts in listening classes, particularly for improving students' listening skills. It explores theoretical perspectives podcast on digital media in education, listening skills, and student-centered learning.

Chapter III Research Methodology. This section outlines the study's design, participants, tools, methods for gathering data, and data analysis strategies. It gives a precise explanation of how the study will be carried out, guaranteeing the validity and dependability of the findings.

Chapter IV Findings and Discussion. This section offers the study's findings, including data interpretation and analysis. Evidence from the gathered data is used

to support the discussion of how students' motivation and listening abilities were impacted by their use of podcasts.

Chapter V Conclusion and Suggestions. This final section summarizes the study's findings, draws conclusions from the results, and provides recommendations for educators, students, and future researchers on integrating podcasts into the ELT curriculum.

1.10 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this opening chapter establishes the basis of the present research by explaining why podcast-assisted learning deserves further investigation in English listening instruction. It introduces the educational issues that motivated the study, formulates the research questions and objectives, defines the research variables and hypotheses, clarifies the scope and significance of the investigation, and explains the key concepts discussed throughout the thesis. Considering the growing interest in technology-supported language learning and the limited evidence available in Indonesian universities, this study examines whether podcasts can enhance students' listening achievement more effectively than conventional audio materials. The following chapter develops the conceptual and research background that underpins the present investigation.