

Using Podcast Application as a Tool to Develop Listening Skills in Foreign Language Classroom

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the potential of podcasting technology in promoting extensive listening and improving overall L2 listening skills. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of using podcasting technology on listening comprehension skills among English as Foreign Language (EFL) students.

In this interventional study, 80 second-stage EFL students at the College of Basic Education Mustansiriya University were randomly allocated into two groups. The first group (n=40) received a traditional English language teaching approach for 12 weeks and served as a control group. The second group (n=40) used podcast application to enhance listening skills for the same period and served as the interventional group. Both groups were subjected to validated pre- and post-tests (out of 25 points) and scores were compared among groups. And based on the tests given the result showed the positive impact of using podcasts in improving listening comprehension.

Keywords: Podcast, listening skill, Tool.

أستخدام تطبيق البودكاست كوسيلة لتنمية مهارة الاستماع في فصول اللغة الانكليزية

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المخلص

بحثت الدراسة الحالية في إمكانية استخدام تقنية البث الصوتي في تعزيز الاستماع المكثف وتحسين مهارات الاستماع للغة الاجنبية بشكل عام. كان الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو تقييم

أثر استخدام تكنولوجيا البث الصوتي على مهارات الفهم المسموع لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

في هذه الدراسة التداخلية، تم تقسيم ٨٠ طالبًا من طلاب المرحلة الثانية من اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في كلية التربية الأساسية الجامعة المستنصرية/قسم اللغة الانكليزية بشكل عشوائي إلى مجموعتين. تلقت المجموعة الأولى (العدد = ٤٠) منهجًا تقليديًا لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لمدة (١٢) أسبوعًا وكانت بمثابة مجموعة ضابطة. استخدمت المجموعة الثانية (العدد = ٤٠) تطبيق البودكاست لتعزيز مهارات الاستماع لنفس الفترة وعملت كمجموعة تدخلية. تم إخضاع كلا المجموعتين لاختبارات قبلية وبعدية تم التحقق منها (من أصل ٢٥ نقطة) وتمت مقارنة النتائج بين المجموعات. وبناءً على الاختبارات، أظهرت النتيجة التأثير الإيجابي لاستخدام البودكاست في تحسين الاستيعاب الاستماعي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: البودكاست، مهارة الاستماع، أداة.

Section One: The Problem and its Significance

According to Graham (2006: 69), acquiring listening skills in a second language is challenging for learners because there are no clear rules like in grammar. With plenty of practice, listening skills can be developed over time. Second or foreign-language listening has been overlooked for many years in listening comprehension, and within the field of linguistics, it is now getting more attention. While still somewhat disregarded in second language acquisition research, listening now holds a more central role in language teaching. Jafari et al. (2012:270) Stated that listening provides the listeners the information that is essential for students to expand their knowledge. As students develop their knowledge, they will start to communicate verbally, so listening plays a crucial role. Brown (2010:161) claims that a person's ability to produce oral language effectively hinges on their listening comprehension. Moreover, a significant portion of successful language acquisition is attributed to input in the auditory-oral mode. Therefore, it's important to closely consider listening as a mode of performance for classroom assessment. In today's communication-driven world, it is crucial to teach students effective and critical listening alongside

speaking. Fitch et al. (2007:81) highlighted that weak listening comprehension lead to misunderstandings which can impact speaking skills .

According to (Kululska–Hulm and Morgana, 2021: 18), many educational institutions have adopted technology to facilitate learning and create connections between school and home life. (Fatihah et al., 2023: 87) also agree, stating that technology plays a crucial role in supporting the learning process. Podcasts, in particular, have become widely utilized in language learning due to their versatility in providing learning materials. (Hoon and Hasan, 2011: 128) conducted a study on the impact of podcasts on language learning, focusing on students' language skills and their attitudes toward this technology. The research revealed that podcasts offer more benefits compared to traditional teaching methods. Furthermore, integrating podcasts into learning can improve academic performance, boost motivation, and accelerate language acquisition across various language areas. Students in this case have the chance to learn different language expressions from online videos. They are also exposed to a range of spoken language expressions found in online videos, including speeches, songs, and other audiovisual teaching resources that help create enjoyable classroom environments. This way, they can choose from a variety of English language teaching materials that match the students' English proficiency, create enjoyable learning environments, and provide effective teaching resource. (Vo., 2013:29) Asmawati (2017:206) Using podcasts for listening exercises in the classroom can be beneficial. A podcast, which is an audio recording available online, is considered a valuable learning tool. It is seen as an innovative tool for improving students' speaking and listening skills. The content of a podcast can vary, including audio, video, and visual media. Integration of podcasts in learning also helps reduce student anxiety and

fosters a sense of belonging to a learning community (Lee and Chan.2007:85

1.2 Aim

The purpose of this study was to determine how using podcasts could improve the listening comprehension skills of Iraqi EFL students.

1.3 Hypothesis

The mean scores of the students who learn a foreign language through podcast technology and those who learn it through traditional methods do not statistically differ significantly.

1.4 Limits

During the academic year (2023–2024) this study was limited to second stage EFL students in the English department at Al Mustansiriyah University's College of Basic Education.

1.5 Value

This study has the ability to support TEFL in Iraq by offering solutions to issues related to listening comprehension for both teachers and students.

1.6 Basic Terms

1.6.1 Podcast

According to (Tidal, 2021:18), a podcast is an audio file available for downloading from the internet either manually or through automated subscription. (Rosell,2007:471) explains that podcasts are audio and video files on the internet typically uploaded regularly. The term "podcast" is a blend of the words "iPod" and "broadcast."

1.6.2 Listening

Walker (2014:175) asserts that hearing is the first step in learning a language and that it occurs before speaking. Naturalistic language acquisition places a strong emphasis on listening when learning a second language. One category of receptive competence is listening.

1.6.3 Tool

Milazzo (2022:8) According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a tool is an instrument or device, particularly one that is held in the hand, that is used to accomplish a certain task or as a tool to assist in carrying out a task. A tool is an object that is in use and serves a specific function.

Section Two: Theoretical Background

2-1 Teaching listening

The conventional way of thinking about listening is listening as comprehension. Most methodology guides consider listening and listening comprehension to be the same. This view of listening is rooted in the belief that the primary purpose of listening in second language acquisition is to aid in the comprehension of spoken language. (Richard, 2008:3).

Previous studies on the process of listening by V. M. Rivers (1992:18) indicate that "listening involves active cognitive processing – the construction of a message from phonic material. Three stages in the reception of a message through hearing are identified:

1–listeners need to recognize sound patterns in bounded segments related to phrase structure. At this point, students rely on fleeting echoic memory.

2–Listeners must promptly start processing identifying the detected groupings based on the content of our central information system.

3–Listeners retain the material they have arranged in short-term memory, resulting in the development of an auditory memory that aids in retaining the information being processed. One significant aspect of the process of listening is that a considerable amount of information processing occurs during breaks in speech. Pauses in regular speech provide students with time to process the information. In addition, a substantial part of comprehension involves making logical deductions.

Per V. Cook (1996:69), challenges in comprehending L2 speech can be attributed to both language difficulties and memory constraints. The ability to understand speech in any language relies on the mind's information storage and processing. Interestingly, the human mind is less adept at processing information in a second language, indicating that "L2 learners encounter cognitive challenges in listening not due to language proficiency but due to difficulties in processing information in the second language.

2.2 Listening Strategies

Buck (2001:104) categorizes strategies for listening into two types:

- 1– Cognitive strategies pertain to mental processes involved in understanding and retaining information.
- 2–Monitoring is a strategy used to assess the advancement during the process of learning or performing a learning activity.

2-3 Basic Types of Listening

Brown.2010:162)(

- 1– Extensive listening aims to develop a comprehensive, top-down understanding of spoken language.
- .2–Responsive listening refers to understanding a relatively short piece of language, such as a greeting, question, command, or comprehension check, and responding briefly.
- 3–Selective listening entails processing segments of discourse, like short monologues, for several minutes to locate specific information.
4. Intensive listening involves perceiving the components (phonemes, words, intonation, discourse markers, etc.) within a longer segment of language.

2-4 Components of Listening

The concept of 'hearing' is often mistaken for 'listening', despite the fact that hearing may occur without conscious awareness. Listening begins with attentive listening, which is a crucial stage in the process of

listening. Because hearing is complex, it requires various elements for comprehension. According to Goh (2000:55) these components are as follows:

- a- Evaluate the language used.
- b- Recognize different sounds.
- c- Identify grammatical word groups.
- d- Recognize the "pragmatic unit".
- e- Connect linguistic signals with paralinguistic signals (intonation and stress) and non-linguistic signals (signals and objects relevant to the situation) to create meaning.
- f- Utilize knowledge of background and context to anticipate and confirm meaning. Recollect important words and concepts.

2-5 podcast

Podcasting is the distribution of audio and video content online in the form of a sequence of episodes centered around a common topic. These episodes come with a file known as a feed, which enables listeners to sign up for the series and receive new episodes automatically. Some individuals use the term "podcast" to describe any sharing of audio/video content online, but technically, it is the feed and subscription model of file delivery that distinguishes podcasting from merely posting files on the internet (Ashely, 2007:3).

The term podcasting comes from combining the words (Apple's) iPod and broadcasting. The term iPod represents any portable mp3 player. You don't necessarily need an iPod to listen to podcasts; you can also listen to them on your computer. Alternatively, for greater mobility, you can use an MP3 player or another mobile audio device. (Thillmann.2009:6)

A podcast is a type of digital media file that is audio-only and is often called a "vodcast". It is usually accessible through a website and has the option to be downloaded or opened. You can play the file on a computer

or on a small portable player with sound and/or video by downloading it from a website (Salmon, et al. 2008: 1)

2-6 The purpose of Podcast

Online podcasts have provided the language instructor with a wide array of resources for teaching listening abilities. P. Constantine (2007) explores the topic of podcasts from various perspectives, addressing the benefits of podcasts, the process of selecting the most advantageous ones, and strategies for optimizing learning from them. The benefits of podcasts include:

1-Learners can gain from practicing global listening, even if they dedicate only three to five minutes each day to this activity.

2-Learners will encounter the new language.

3-Intermediate learners require real texts and exposure to diverse voices.

P. Constantine (2007) suggests a creative use of podcasts: students can listen to a podcast while reading its transcript, then record the material on a cassette tape and submit it along with a written journal. The teacher can then provide feedback after listening to the student's recording. This activity helps students improve their reading fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and listening skills. Podcasting is particularly beneficial for English learners as it allows them to access authentic listening sources on various topics. Teachers can utilize podcasts for listening comprehension exercises, generating class discussions based on students' reactions to podcasts, and providing diverse listening materials.

3-6Types of Podcasts

Podcasts fall into three categories: enhanced, video, and audio. The kind of media file that is included in the podcast is indicated by these categories.

-Audio podcasts solely feature audio.

- Video podcasts provide audio together with visuals, including both still and moving images.
- Enhanced podcasts are expanded audio podcasts with the ability to show more content including chapter markers, online links, and still photos. (Salmon et al, 2008:3)

Advantage of podcast

A variety of educational resources have been made possible by the podcast format (Qasim & Fadda, 2013:30). Teachers can foster self-confidence in their pupils and create an engaging learning atmosphere by using podcasts. Students may feel more secure as a result of frequent listening as they can understand the discourse surrounding a particular problem (Hasan M, 2013:128). A podcast, in the opinion of (Priyatmojo et al., 2022:255), improves the relationship between educators and students. In this instance, podcast-based teaching tactics help teachers alter their classes and foster a feeling of community among their students. Podcasts are now widely acknowledged as a great tool for assisting with language learning (Mutia et al., 2019, Pratiwi et al., 2020:10). Podcasts are online-released audio or video files that can be downloaded to computers, MP3 players, and mobile phones. In a number of countries, they have been utilized to convey information. Podcasts have their roots not only in radio history but also in the use of audio in education (Rachmaniputri et al., 2021, Sengang et al., 2017). (Bustari et al., 2017:97) highlighted the potential of numerous podcasts using a conversational framework. Podcasts can be used as a medium for online lectures, feedback assignments, additional learning opportunities, the supply of auxiliary resources, and the development of creative learning activities. As a result, employing podcasts in the classroom could be a choice that provides tools for language learning and raises student engagement. According to (Sansinadi et al., 2020:13) claim that podcasts allow students to transition away from traditional in-

person instruction without sacrificing the opportunity for student–teacher connection. They grant them permission to use their teach–based environment system for learning objectives. Using podcasts has a number of advantages, according to Ramli (2018:189), including the following: It can be used to support students, teach students of different skill levels, help professors manage huge classes, and aid in helping students stay focused while studying. Podcasts are great for students because they provide up–to–date information and real voices for practice listening comprehension. Additionally, podcasts are widely available to students due to their ease of search and download (Kohler et al., 2010: 649).

Section Three:Methodology

Eighty second–stage EFL students from Mustansiriyha University's College of Basic Education represented the study's sample. These subjects were divided into two groups, the experimental group and the control group, with 40 individuals in each group, at random. This chapter's goal is to provide an overview of the technique and procedures that the researcher used in the experiment that was conducted in order to achieve the study's objective and validate its hypothesis.

3–1 Experimental Design

In order attain the study's goal and investigate how applying the podcast technique can improve listening comprehension the design of pre–posttest non–equivalent groups is applied. See Table (3.1)

Groups	The Test	Independent Variable	The Test
EG	Pretest	Podcast technique	Post–test
CG	Pretest	Traditional method	Post–test

Table (3.1)

Two groups were chosen at random for the current investigation. For the pre–posttest, both groups are seated. While the control group studied

foreign languages using the conventional methods, the experimental group used the podcast technique as a pre-listening strategy. To determine whether there is a significant difference between the two groups, the post-test results of each were compared.

3.2 Sample of the Study.

A representative sample is selected for the from Mustansiriyah University's English Department of the College of Basic Education. Eighty pupils in total, from the evening study, are split into two parts, (A) and (B). The (40)-student control group is shown in Section (A). The (40) students in Section (B) are the experimental group. There are eighty pupils between the two groups.

Groups	Type of treatment	No. of Students
CG	With Traditional Method	40
EG	With Podcast technique	40
Total		80

Table (3.2)

3.3 Equivalence of Groups

After choosing the two groups, the research made equivalence between them depending on the information taken from the students themselves this was done according to three variables as follows:

1. The Age of Subjects.
2. The Academic level of Father's Education.
3. The Academic level of Mother's Education.

3.3.1 The Age of Subjects (measured in months):

The t-test for two independent samples was employed by the researcher to determine the significance of differences between the two groups. The age variable, for which (Table 3.3) displays the computed t-value (1.184) was less than the tabulated t-value (1.990) at the (0.05) level of significance and degrees of freedom, revealed no statistically significant differences between the two groups.

Table (3.3) the mean, standard deviation and t-value of the students 'age

Group	No.	\bar{x}	S	df.	t-value		Level of significance
					Computed	Table	
Exp.	40	19.83	0.93	78	10184	1.990	0.05
Con.	40	19.49	0.59				

3.3.2 The Academic Level of Father's Education

To determine whether or whether there is a statistically significant difference in the frequencies of the experimental and control groups, a chi-square test was employed. The outcome revealed that, at the (0.05) level of significance, the father's education's computed chi-square value is (3.257) with a degree of freedom of (3) see (table 3.4). At the academic level, it was discovered that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Table (3.4): Comparison of the levels of fathers' Education of the Subjects of both groups

Group	No.	primary Read & write And primary	Secondary	University	Higher studies M.A. & Ph.D	df.	x ² value		Level of significance
							computed	Table	
Exp.	40	3	16	18	3	3	3.257	7.815	0.05
Con	40	2	19	12	7				

3.3.3 The Academic Level of Mother' Education

In this variable, the two groups are equal. Table (3-5) demonstrates that the computed chi-square value is (3.506) which is smaller than the table value (7.815). This indicates that the mothers' educational levels of the two groups do not significantly differ from one another.

Table (3–5) Comparison of the levels of Mothers' Education of the Subjects of both groups

Gro up	NO.	primary and Read & write	Secondary	University	M.A. & Ph.D Higher studies	df.	x ² value		Level of signifi cance
							comput ed	table d	
Exp .	40	8	16	14	2	3	3.506	7.81 5	0.05
Con .	40	9	13	11	7				

3.3.4 The Subjects' Achievement on the Pre-Test

To compare the experimental and control groups' pre-test mean scores, as indicated in table (3–6). The experimental group's mean score is (14.600) whereas the control group's mean score is (14.500). With a degree of freedom of (78) and a significance level of (0.05), the computed t-value of (0.126) was less than the tabulated t-value of (1.990), indicating that there no statistically significant difference between the two groups' pre-test scores.

Table (3–6): Independent sample t-test statistics for the subjects' scores

Group	No.	\bar{x}	S	df.	t-value		Level of significance
					Computed	Tabled	
Experimental	40	14.600	3.579	78	0.126	1.990	0.05
Control	40	14.500	3.508				

in the pretest P value = 0.90

*There is no significant difference between groups (p value > 0.005)

Section Four:

Results, Conclusion, and Recommendation

This section is going to explain the presentation and discussion of the results obtained according to the aim and the hypothesis of the current

study is to investigate "Using Podcast Application as a Tool to Develop Listening Skills in Foreign language Classroom"

4.1 Results

The current study's hypothesis is that "there is no statistically significant difference between the mean score of the performance in listening comprehension of the students in both groups (EG and CG)" in order to achieve its goal of "using podcast application as a tool to develop listening skills in foreign language classrooms. "To validate the aforementioned hypothesis, the mean scores and standard deviations for the two groups were computed and are displayed in Table (3.7) below.

4.2 The Subjects' Achievement on the post-Test

The computed t-value (8.614) is greater than the tabulated t-value (1.990) at (78) degrees of freedom and (0.05) level of significance, according to the t-test formula for two independent samples. This indicates that the experimental group, which received instruction via podcast, had a statistically significant advantage in terms of mean scores. The null hypothesis, which claims that there is a statistically significant difference in the listening comprehension skills of the experimental and control groups, has therefore been accepted.

Table (3.7): Independent samples t-test statistics for the total posttest scores of the two groups

Group	No.	\bar{x}	S	df.	t-value		Level of significance
					Computed	Tabled	
Experimental	40	20.050	2.448	78	8.614	1.990	0.05
Control	40	14.350	3.393				

P value less than 0.001

***There is significant difference between groups (p value <0.005)**

4.3 Interpretation of the Results

The results of the study show that the subjects' mean scores on the pretest and posttest differed in a statistically significant way. Compared to the pretest, the people's performance on the posttest is higher.

4.4Conclusions

In the light of the obtained results, it is concluded that Using Podcast is an effective technique, and it improved the student's in Reading skill in various ways:

- 1– Using podcast technique proves to be an effective instructional technique in improving listening skill.
- 2– It saves more time and effort to develop students' abilities compared with traditional techniques.
- 3– Develops understanding of particular concepts.
- 4– Give the students the opportunity to develop their listening performance.
- 5– Has great effect in developing the listening abilities of the students.

4.5Recommendations

Students should focus more on their listening skills and be encouraged to use various strategies to improve their listening comprehension. These are the recommendations that are made.

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