

IMPROVING LISTENING SKILL THROUGH PODCAST

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to discover the use of podcasts in improving students' listening skills. The quantitative technique was used in this research. Podcasting is one such novel tool being exploited by teachers to enhance language skills and to encourage learning outside the classroom. Research on podcasting pedagogy suggests that podcasting helps learners boost their English language skills and support areas such as grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. Overall, this study suggests that developing English listening skills can be boosted with Podcasts.*

Keywords: *listening skills, technology in education, podcast*

Introduction. Listening, as a skill, is often undermined in second or foreign language classrooms, and therefore, remains unnoticed by language teachers. Listening is a complex interactive process of which the learners interpret what they know and what they hear and then apply linguistic knowledge in the understanding of the message. Listening is the language modality that is used most frequently. Listening becomes the main activity in learning a language because most of the time in language class is used for listening to teacher and friends. It looks like simply but, there are many processes interacting with the actually sounds received by a listener. Understanding these different processes of attaching meaning to sound can be a helpful starting point for a teacher to understand how to teach listening to students. However, some students may get difficulty in listening; therefore, they are bored and not interested in the subject. Podcasting is one of the powerful, emergent technological tools that have been used in education for many years. Podcasting has been used in a variety of ways in higher

education. G. Stanley claims that podcasting can empower students by giving them opportunities to create and publish for a real audience and facilitate recording and distributing news broadcasts, developing brochures, creating or listening to teachers' notes, recording lectures distributed directly to students' MP3 players, recording meeting and conference notes, supporting student projects and interviews, and providing oral history archiving and on-demand distribution [1]. More specific to language learning, podcasting has several theoretical underpinnings in second language acquisition research. N.V. Grytsyk describes the didactic potential of the technology of podcast in foreign language teaching for professional purpose. The researcher claims that the use of podcasts for teaching students a foreign language for specific (professional) purposes allows to improve the teaching content, methods and organizational forms of educational process, to ensure a high scientific and methodological level of teaching, individual approach to learning and improve the effectiveness of supply of a new material [2].

Listening skills. Listening is key to all effective communication. Without the ability to listen effectively, messages are easily misunderstood. As a result, communication breaks down and the sender of the message can easily become frustrated or irritated. Listening is a skill where you receive and understand a piece of information before you respond. People with good listening skills can effectively comprehend a message and offer the appropriate response. Listening is key to all effective communication. Without the ability to listen effectively, messages are easily misunderstood. As a result, communication breaks down and the sender of the message can easily become frustrated or irritated.

There are four important skills learned: speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Supported by Aydogan ,these four language skills are sometimes called the "macro-skills". It is often in contrast to the "micro-skills", which are grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling. Mode of communication is divided into oral and written forms, and direct communication to receive and produce the message. Listening is the receptive skill within the oral mode while reading is the

receptive skill in the written mode. On the other hand, writing and speaking are productive skills. Writing is producing in written mode while speaking is producing in oral mode. Listening is thought to be fancily regarded as a complex, interactive process during which listeners are involved in an exceedingly dynamic construction of meaning. It has to be mastered by foreign language learners because they tend to alter words into thought to make meaning from the passage. Rost describes listening as a process of hearing what the speaker says (receptive orientation); constructing and reflecting meaning (constructive orientation); negotiating meaning with the speaker and reacting (collaborative orientation); and generating meaning through interaction, creativity, and empathy (transformative orientation). Successful listening can also be checked out in terms of the strategies the listener uses when listening. Strategies can be taught because of the ways during which learner approaches and manages a task, and listeners will be taught effective ways of approaching and managing their listening. These activities involve the listeners to be active in the process of listening [3].

Technology in education. Today, digital technology is preferred by many as the first go-to source of a dynamic hub of knowledge and learning. In light of this trend, language learning has, to some extent, transmuted into a more flexible and cost-effective format without being limited to a physical space or time. Indeed, recent mobile technologies (e.g., smartphones, tablets) and widespread availability of L2 materials on the Internet can greatly benefit L2 learners. From this perspective, one particular method that can both embrace mobile technology, and combine flexible and extensive learning is the implementation of podcasting and vodcasting technology.

Technology has a huge potential to change the present teaching methods. It does not include only machines (computer hardware) and instruments, but it also involves structured relations with other humans, devices, and the environment. When learners learn with technology, it helps them improve their cognitive skills of higher intelligence. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson supported the view that technology offers teaching tools and provides a learning experience

to the world of learners. Through using technology, many authentic materials can be delivered to learners, and they can be motivated to learn the language. Learners realize the subject with enthusiasm and develop their knowledge, providing unlimited resources to language learners. Learners can learn when technology is employed within the process of learning through using an application. The technology-enhanced teaching environment is more practical than a lecture-based class. It can be concluded that using technology in teaching is incredibly essential in drawing learners' attention towards English language learning [4].

Overall, the literature suggests that the use of technology, particularly multimedia resources and software tools, can have a positive impact on language learning outcomes, particularly in the area of listening skills. YouTube and software tools such as Audacity and Flipgrid offer a range of benefits for language teachers, allowing them to create custom materials that are tailored to the needs and interests of their learners. Technology tools can be highly effective in improving listening skills for foreign language learners. Audio recording software, podcasts, video conferencing software, language learning apps, speech recognition software, audiobooks, language exchange apps, online lectures and webinars, and YouTube are some of the technology artifacts that can be used for this purpose. These tools can help learners practice comprehension, engage in discussion, improve vocabulary, and connect with native speakers. By utilizing these resources, language teachers can create custom materials that are tailored to the needs and interests of their learners, and enhance the overall language learning experience.

The use of technology in listening classes can greatly enhance the learning experience for foreign language learners. However, it is important to consider certain principles and strategies in order to ensure that technology is being used effectively to improve listening skills. The following principles should be considered when preparing efficient listening activities and lessons:

- Warm-up activity: Before listening to any audio or video content, learners should participate in a warm-up activity to activate their prior knowledge

and vocabulary related to the topic of the content. This can include a short discussion, brainstorming, or a vocabulary matching game.

- Pre-listening activity: A pre-listening activity should be provided to help learners focus on the key vocabulary and grammar structures that they will encounter in the content. This may include a vocabulary list, a fill-in-the-blank exercise, or a sentence completion activity.

- Interactive listening comprehension tasks: The content should be divided into shorter segments, and after each segment, learners should complete an interactive listening comprehension task. These tasks may include multiple-choice questions, matching exercises, or gap-fill activities.

- Post-listening activity: After listening to the entire content, learners should participate in a post-listening activity that will focus on developing their speaking and writing skills. This may include a discussion or debate on the topic of the content, or a writing task such as a summary or a reflection on what they learned from the content.

- Feedback and reflection: Finally, learners should receive feedback on their performance and should be encouraged to reflect on their listening and language learning strategies. This can include a peer review, self-evaluation, or a teacher-led discussion on effective listening strategies. In addition to these principles, the following strategies can be implemented to effectively integrate technology in listening classes:

- Multimedia resources: Teachers can utilize multimedia resources, such as videos, podcasts, and audiobooks, to engage learners and provide them with authentic listening materials.

- Custom materials: Teachers can use software tools, such as Audacity and Flipgrid, to create custom materials that are tailored to the needs and interests of their learners.
- Language learning apps: Apps like Duolingo, Babbel, or Rosetta Stone can help learners improve their listening skills in a foreign language. These apps often have listening exercises and activities that help learners practice comprehension. By considering these principles and strategies, teachers can

effectively integrate technology in listening classes and help their learners improve their listening skills in a foreign language [5].

Podcast. Podcasts are the audio files that are distributed over the Internet through subscription. Podcasts are usually in the format of an MP3 and can be played on any digital device, such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones. Podcasts are automatically delivered to subscribed users and they can listen to them whenever and wherever they want. A podcast is an audio file that is possible to download from the internet. The podcast was first known in 2004. It is defined as online audio blogging or internet audio publishing. The term "podcasting" is a blend of the words "iPod" and "broadcasting". This term is no longer related only to iPod but refers to any software and hardware combination that allows automatic downloading of audio files for listening at the user's convenience. Thus, the audio recording is intended to be downloaded and listened to a portable mp3 (Moving Picture Expert Group Layer-3) player or on a computer. Podcasts are delivered online automatically via a website, so it is different from other audios. Podcasts utilize voice, which is the most influential tool that relates to the audience very quickly. It revolutionizes the English learning process, which provides students flexibility when and where to learn at their desired learning pace and path. Thus, the podcast is a series of sound files that consist of educational information in a comprehensive manner to make the user an advanced learner [6].

Podcasting can support principles advocated by several theories of learning, such as the use of authentic materials, informal and lifelong learning, the use of learning objects for the provision of learning materials and just in time teaching . Podcasting has the potential to support and promote a wide range of alternative teaching and learning approaches across all stages of the curriculum in a wide range of contexts and in different locations. According to G. Stewart, teachers might use podcasting to: – promote personalised and independent learning; – engage and motivate pupils; – promote creativity in the classroom; – create differentiated materials that can be matched to the abilities, needs and

motivation of different pupils . A closer look at podcasting as an ESL learning tool reveals the following benefits:

1. Most podcasts are free.
2. Transcripts are available for some podcasts.
3. There are thousands of podcasts to choose from on a wide range of topics.
4. User-friendly podcast aggregators are widely available.
5. Podcasts can be automatically downloaded for routine listening.
6. Podcasts present authentic topics at natural speed.
7. Plenty of podcasts are designed for English language learners.
8. Students can build up their own library and share their favourite podcasts with others.
9. Listening to podcasts promotes self-instruction.
10. The technology tunes into where today’s generation of learners are [7].

English language podcasts cover a wide range of subject matter. In her study, O. Widiastuti reveals a number of content types of podcasts that provide conventional listening comprehension practice (summarised in Table bellow).

type	example
Comprehensive	http://www.englishteacherjohn.com/podcast/
Whole lessons	http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/
Vocabulary, idioms, etc.	http://englishteacherjohn.com/
Conversations with script	http://www.e-poche.net/
Jokes	http://www.manythings.org/jokes/
Songs	http://englishpodsong.blogspot.com/
Phonetics, pronunciation	http://phoneticpodcast.com/
Stories	http://www.englishthroughstories.com/

Listening comprehension	http://mylcpodcasts.blogspot.com/
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Since listening is the most important component in the overall English competence and the most widely used language skill, it deserves particular attention. Listening is always used in conjunction with the other skills of speaking, reading and writing. Podcasts can be effectively used for the purpose of motivating student interest in listening to English, and providing them with exposure to native speakers’ speech in authentic contexts.

Conclusion. Apart from the readily available podcasts, student-created podcasts along with teacher podcasts can be equally beneficial for the learners to improve their overall listening comprehension skills. Moreover, since evaluating receptive skills is quite challenging, self-evaluation, self-instruction, etc. on the part of the students can bring light to themselves regarding their listening comprehension ability. Further, in accordance with the relevant research into the field, it can be speculated that learners will gain significant benefits from listening to podcasts series as these are authentic texts and will give them exposure to the actual or „real-life“ listening inside the classroom. Also, it will improve their knowledge of the expressions as well as their usages in different contexts. Considering that, podcasting and vodcasting technology not only bring freedom to obtain exposure to the target language anywhere, anytime, but they also provide examples of real-life English use on various topics. By hearing the authentic language use in podcasts and vodcasts, learners can improve their overall listening comprehension and pronunciation skills. The promising results of the current study regarding the effectiveness of podcasts and vodcasts in developing listening skills would be an encouraging starting point for language teachers and learners to further explore these digital tools.

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