

Investigating EFL Students' Perspectives of the Influence of Podcasts on Enhancing Listening Proficiency

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Received: November 25, 2023

Accepted: May 7, 2024

Online Published: May 20, 2024

doi:10.5539/jel.v13n3p177

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v13n3p177>

Abstract

Listening is widely regarded as the predominant language proficiency utilized in virtually all forms of communication. However, its intricacies often engender feelings of complexity and, at times, provoke anxiety and frustration among both foreign and second-language learners. The enhancement of successful communication fundamentally hinges upon the precise comprehension of spoken messages. In this quantitative investigation, the present study delves into the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students concerning the utilization of podcasts as a tool to cultivate and bolster their listening proficiency. The study cohort comprised female university students enrolled in a preparatory year program. The examination of attitudes toward podcasts was conducted via a survey questionnaire. The findings unveiled that most participants derived enjoyment from utilizing podcasts, which in turn catalyzed their enthusiasm for English language acquisition. Additionally, they conceded that podcasts held promise in augmenting their linguistic abilities, with a primary focus on listening comprehension. These outcomes posit that podcasting serves as a medium with significant implications for students' learning trajectories, particularly regarding the acquisition of listening proficiencies.

Keywords: EFL, podcasts, listening skills, listening comprehension, students' perceptions

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

Teaching and learning a foreign language present formidable challenges due to the significant disparities between the target language and learners' native tongue, thereby erecting numerous impediments to effective learning. Nonetheless, adept instructors possess the capacity to cultivate a conducive learning milieu and adeptly orchestrate instructional sessions to optimize student educational outcomes. It is worth noting that English instruction is mandatory for Saudi Arabian students across all educational tiers (Mutambik, 2018).

Listening comprehension stands as a cornerstone in the process of acquiring a second or foreign language. As posited by Ranukadevi (2014), listening assumes paramount importance in English language acquisition, being one of the cardinal pillars of linguistic proficiency development. Moreover, listening comprehension constitutes a pivotal component of linguistic input indispensable for mastering a secondary language. Devoid of a conscious recognition of this linguistic input, the commencement of the learning process remains elusive (Nunan, 2002). Listening proficiency empowers language learners to navigate their linguistic milieu effectively, thereby constituting an indispensable facet of proficient communication (Gilakjani et al., 2019).

Listening is a tremendous challenge for learners because they often have difficulties understanding the meaning or purpose of a sound (Goh, 2000). There are several reasons why Saudi students studying English may need help with listening skills. Firstly, English is a foreign language that students rarely use in their daily lives. Listening materials often use different accents, different expressions, and uncommon vocabulary. According to a study conducted by Hamouda (2013), in the university context in Saudi Arabia, many English department students have severe listening comprehension problems. He found that students need to improve in listening courses. They could not comprehend what native speakers said or the spoken material of the course, and they did not pay full attention to the activities.

Another critical factor is that students are used to listening to non-native speakers in class and being forced to

understand a given listening test in their native voice. Furthermore, the length of listening material and lack of concentration affect how students understand and absorb information (Bingol et al., 2014). Currently, English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers have limited themselves to the syllabus's recorded video and audio inputs (Samar & Moradkhani, 2014). However, they should have remembered that these were produced specifically for teaching purposes and the content is often artificial and removed from the actual language output. In short, this solution has played a minimal role in meeting students' need, with technology quickly becoming redundant (Samar & Moradkhani, 2014).

Currently, it is a trend for people to use technology. Many people, especially language learners, have many activities for using technology. Accordingly, choosing the appropriate technology to support language learning is a good decision. An example is podcasting. Podcasting is one of the latest technological innovations language teachers use as part of their pedagogy. Several researchers have discussed how podcasts will serve as a new source of exposure to the target language (Rosell-Aguilar, 2013). Nozari and Siamian (2015) posit that education with podcasts could provide rich resources, as it can be an opportunity to grow in learning, creating a collaborative environment that allows students and teachers to find relevant resources and learn various things. Diem (2005) has also introduced the idea of podcasting and explained its applicability to teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). It is an excellent choice to use podcasts as a supportive process for language learning by improving listening and speaking (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Teachers and students can derive many benefits from these resources to enhance learning, especially listening skills.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

A study by Clark et al. (2009) posits that maximizing the educational benefits of podcasting in higher education necessitates a focus on the instructional design aspect rather than mere replication of lecture content, emphasizing the importance of enabling active student engagement. Consequently, podcasts are most efficacious when integrated as part of a blended approach that encourages student-generated recordings (Edirisingha, Fothergill, & Salmon, 2007; Burston, Song, & Zhang, 2011). However, the existing body of research presents a limited understanding of the effectiveness of podcasts as a tool for language learning to enhance students' listening proficiencies.

Moreover, while numerous studies have documented the utilization of podcasts in language education globally, the dearth of research within the Saudi Arabian context underscores the need for further investigation. This attitudinal inquiry aims to fill this gap by examining the perceptions of Saudi EFL students regarding the integration of podcasts to augment their listening skills in EFL classes.

The decision to approach this research from an attitudinal perspective, rather than an experimental one, is twofold. Firstly, additional exploration of attitudes towards podcasting among students at King Abdulaziz University is imperative to lay the groundwork for subsequent experimental investigations. Secondly, prior studies on the implementation of novel technologies often commence with an examination of perceptions and feedback. Once these technologies are firmly entrenched within the educational landscape, their effects can be subject to further empirical scrutiny. Given that podcasting represents an emerging technology in Saudi Arabia, particularly within the realm of language instruction, this attitudinal inquiry aims to furnish comprehensive insights into Saudi EFL students' perspectives on the utility of podcasts for enhancing their listening proficiency.

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the students' perspectives toward using podcasts to improve their English listening skills?

RQ2: To what extent does the utilization of podcasts enhance learners' motivation to acquire English language proficiency?

RQ3: How user-friendly are podcasts for enhancing students' English listening competencies?

RQ4: What impact does podcast consumption have on learners' English vocabulary acquisition?

2. Literature Review

In this digital era, the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) in language teaching is undeniable. The evolution of technology has influenced and improved every aspect of people's lives (Stolterman & Fors, 2004). Teachers can quickly obtain educational materials from various sources. Recently, several language-learning media have been developed (Shohel & Kirkwood, 2012). The development of this technology is also beneficial for language acquisition in EFL classes (Bamanger & Alhassan, 2015). For example, some teachers have implemented podcasts as a medium for learning English as a foreign language, especially with regard to listening skills. Podcasts provide unique features and a real-life speaking repository that allows

students to learn at their own time and pace (Kavaliauskienė, 2008). Another study by Ahmad (2016) suggests that podcasts help students understand and develop content in language teaching. This study discusses the benefits of podcasts as an educational medium and students' responses to learning using podcasts.

2.1 Input Hypothesis

Krashen (1982) presented and examined five important hypotheses in the field of second language acquisition that influence individual language learning (Ellis, 2015). Significantly, Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis showed that comprehensible input is part of a natural process of learners' level development from their current target language level. Essentially, the input hypothesis asserts that comprehensible input (CI) is necessary to achieve a higher level of acquisition in the first language as well as the second language. Furthermore, the input hypothesis claims that if the input is too easy, then no progress will be made, and if it is too hard, then learning will be blocked.

Based on the input hypothesis, "comprehensible input" is a significant causative factor in second language acquisition. However, the comprehensibility of the teaching materials is key to ameliorating listening skills. The teacher can provide a suitable set of listening materials for the learner in dire need (Wu, 2010). If the material is too easy for the learners to understand, they will gain nothing. On the contrary, they will never improve their skills if the material is too difficult for the learners to understand. Thus, an ideal set of teaching materials must contain suitable comprehensibility, so that teachers can provide learners with comprehensible input – for example, through podcasts (Wu, 2010).

2.2 Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning

Paivio's (1991) dual coding theory, Sweller's (2003) theory of cognitive load (TCL), and Baddeley's (1992) model of working memory lay the foundation for Mayer's (2009) cognitive theory of multimedia learning (CTML). Combining audio and video as visual stimuli can be more effective in processing input information than using a single audio stimulus (Tirtayani, Magta, & Lestari, 2017). The CTML by Mayer and others claims that multimedia aids the way the human brain learns. For example, based on the multimedia principle, learners learn better from expressions and pictures than from words alone.

According to the CTML, multimedia instruction provokes learners to create relevant mental images from the materials and make meaningful connections between words and images (Sorden, 2012). When both words and pictures are shown, learners can build verbal and pictorial mental models and connect them. As active participants, learners understand the material presented and eventually acquire new knowledge. However, when the words alone are presented, learners can build a verbal and mental model but are less likely to create a symbolic mental model and make connections between the verbal and pictorial mental models (Glenberg & Langston, 1992). As with podcasts, some channels provide video clips of some of the topics discussed in the podcast, allowing the learner to absorb some of the vocabulary they see depicted.

2.3 Listening Skills

As an integral part of communication, listening occupies an important place in language and plays a vital role in language acquisition. However, its development was a real test for language teachers. Suryani (2017) argues that the first skill a person acquires to learn a language is listening, meaning that listening is a core language skill. By listening, one can get information, entertainment, and imitation skills; thus, listening is necessary for speaking skills. In addition, Hasan and Hoon (2013) state that listening skills allow the listener to respond to speakers during the learning process. This underscores the meaning of listening, which involves cultivating thinking skills. Therefore, while listening, the listener processes what they hear in their mind, both implicit and written, to make sense of it. Listening involves recognizing and understanding different modes of expression; paying careful attention to a conversation, discussion, or argument; and recognizing the meaning of the expressions.

2.4 Multimedia in Listening

The use of multimedia has proven to be very influential and adequate for the learning process. Technology-based media makes teaching and learning easier for teachers and students in EFL classes, as it is practical, efficient, and more enjoyable to apply than traditional methods that do not use technological media (Abdulrahman et al., 2018). In order to provide comprehensible input, technology has gradually been integrated into EFL education. Consequently, the use of technology has benefited EFL courses and learners over the years. The development of multimedia tools for listening comprehension and improved input methods has prompted some researchers to conduct empirical studies to find out how best to present video material to students.

Li (2013) found positive effects of using advanced regulators for listening comprehension. As a result, audio and video resources are becoming more frequent in teaching EFL, particularly in teaching listening comprehension.

However, the overwhelming evidence for the effectiveness of multimedia technology in improving language listening skills comes from a study by Aldera (2015). In this study, Aldera investigated the effectiveness of multimedia techniques (video mode and test) in improving listening comprehension. The results reveal a substantial effect of the visual stimuli on the auditory situation, thereby enhancing listening comprehension.

In another study, Rahmatian and Armiun (2011) analyzed the effects of audio and visual materials on listening comprehension. The results showed a positive contribution of the video message to improving understanding of the audio message in some cases. Similarly, audio clips were found to help students concentrate on the audio elements. However, even though the videos were found to help increase accuracy, guessing, and anticipation, these videos might sometimes include disturbing elements that distract the learners.

2.5 Podcasts in the Learning Process

One of the newer web-based materials contributing significantly to EFL learning is podcasts (Farangi, Nejadghanbar, Askary, & Ghorbani, 2015). Podcasts are usually downloadable audio or video files that can be played directly without special software or an MP3 player. According to Dennett et al. (2008), audio podcasts are the most popular source because they are accessible and easier to produce than video podcasts.

Using podcasts in tertiary education promotes motivation and engagement, cognition and learning, learner autonomy, and innovative opportunities for teaching and presenting (Salmon & Nie, 2008). It has been suggested by Rosell-Aguilar (2007) that currently available podcast resources for language learning are divided into two broad categories: The first category consists of authentic content provided by native speakers or advanced learners, which are not intended for language teaching, and news, football, and radio programs. The second group includes language courses and instructional content oriented toward language learning. The latter is divided into two subgroups: material designed for a general audience, such as material provided by teachers, institutions, or students themselves for use in classrooms (which may include text recordings, oral exams, oral feedback, and vocabulary) and supporting material provided by independent learners who are not enrolled in a specific course and offered as public podcasts (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007).

Podcasting can be a powerful tool to increase class interaction and foster collaborative learning by developing the skills needed to work towards a shared goal (Phillips, 2017). These podcasts can create the best learning experience for students because if the students feel comfortable learning, the teaching process can sufficiently and positively influence them (Dewi & Ahmad, 2021). Accordingly, podcasts can be a good starting point for learning a new language. Kavaliauskienė and Anusiene (2008) report that in their study, students had positive feedback on podcasts, reflected in the high importance they attached to podcasts in English classrooms and their extensive use of podcasts in listening practice. Furthermore, students are enthusiastic about using podcasts as a learning resource, often downloading and listening to them regularly for practice and entertainment. Some studies have also concluded that podcasts boost students' motivation due to their various exciting topics (Heilesen, 2010; Fernandez et al., 2009; Evans; 2008)

2.6 Podcasts for Listening

Podcasting is beneficial to both students and teachers. The apparent benefit of podcasts for students is that podcasts offer updated content and authentic native voices, which help students practice their listening (Kohler et al., 2010). Furthermore, podcasts are easy to find and download. Students can access podcasts wherever they want. Constantine (2007) shows the importance of podcasts in foreign language learning, from beginner to advanced, meaning that all people can use podcasts. He explains the use of podcasts in EFL classes; even at the beginning levels, all foreign language learners can benefit from podcasts just by listening to them 6 minutes a day. In 2013, Al Qasim and Al Fadda studied the effect of podcasting on the listening comprehension of female Saudi EFL undergraduates. They recruited 46 female undergraduates from a Saudi university in that quantitative study. The samples were divided into two groups: control and experimental groups. The study employed podcasts created by students as instructional material. Data were obtained after 6 weeks of the treatment period. The findings of this study demonstrated that the group that used podcasts as a learning tool performed much better than the group that did not.

In the same vein, Rahman, Haryanto and Kisman (2018) have studied the effect of podcasting on improving the listening comprehension of EFL learners. Using qualitative and quantitative research methods, they found that podcasts significantly improved EFL learners' listening comprehension compared to learners who did not use podcasts. Similarly, they found that most students supported podcasts when teaching listening skills in EFL classes. Improvements in listening comprehension also led to improved pronunciation. Based on previous research studies mentioned before, using podcasts to learn English enables students to improve their comprehension, enhance their proficiency, and improve their listening skills.

2.7 EFL Learners' Perceptions Towards Podcasts

Researchers have stated that many factors influence language learning, and the most significant and facilitating factor is a positive attitude, which motivates learners to learn the language (Nim & Son, 2009). Teachers often find motivating students both inside and outside the classroom challenging (Mygind, Bølling, & Barfod, 2019). The use of podcasts can assist with this aspect. Several studies have been conducted previously on English language students' podcast use and their attitudes and perceptions of the podcasts' design and usefulness. In most cases, students' perceptions of the podcasts were positive. For example, Francom (2009) used a questionnaire to investigate students' perceptions of weekly podcasts. The study's findings suggest that both teachers and students found podcasts to be an effective teaching and learning tool that brought success to students. Similarly, Shahid and Ali (2017) state that both EFL teachers and students in the current high-tech environment feel more motivated towards technology. Nevertheless, it is critical to pay attention to pedagogical design and podcasts to show practitioners their most effective use in higher education. The teacher's role is essential in this design.

Desdous and Boutas (2018) investigated the effect of podcasts on listening skills. The study's findings indicate that the implementation of podcasts in language learning has great potential to improve listening skills. To accommodate teachers and learners, selecting podcasts for teaching should involve considering content criteria, genres, topics, and performance length. The study revealed that students prefer listening to native speakers' podcasts, which are mainly related to art, culture, health, sports, audio, and music content, and these podcasts last from 6 to 10 minutes. Likewise, teachers had the same preference regarding the content, topics, and approximate duration of the podcasts (4–6 minutes) to use in teaching the language to their students. A recent study by Shafiee and Salehi (2019) on the effects of podcasting on listening and speaking skills showed that podcasts directed students' attention to increasing their motivation and developing their comprehension. The results indicate that podcasts are an effective and innovative technological educational tool in the English language classroom, especially in improving listening and speaking skills. As a result, language learners are interested in using podcasts in their language learning processes. The overall results of the study show the positive impact of podcasting on listening and speaking skills in general.

Numerous studies have shown that many EFL learners in higher education have positive attitudes and perceptions toward authentic material in L2 listening practice (e.g., Alijani & Maghsoudi, 2014; Sabet & Mahsefat, 2012). However, a few studies reveal that EFL pupils prefer non-authentic materials in their L2 listening practices (e.g., Boulfefel, 2011; Vaiciuniene & Uzpaliene, 2010), as learners perceive authentic material to be more complex, informative, and challenging to understand.

Perceptions regarding podcasts have been extensively explored, with prevalent documentation of positive sentiments in the literature (Hasan & Hoon, 2012). Respondents in prior investigations have consistently expressed favorable attitudes towards the integration of podcasts in language learning contexts. However, the dissemination of this concept within local settings remains relatively nascent, necessitating further exploration to foster the development of learners' listening proficiencies. Regrettably, scant research has thus far delved into students' perceptions towards podcasts within the Saudi Arabian context, particularly concerning their efficacy in enhancing listening skills. This study endeavors to address this gap by investigating students' attitudes towards utilizing podcasts as a means to augment their listening capabilities.

3. Methods

3.1 Design of the Study

The current inquiry embodies an exploratory survey employing quantitative methodology. This survey aimed to elucidate the perspectives of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students regarding the utilization of podcasts as a tool to enhance and reinforce their listening competencies.

3.2 Research Instruments

To address the research inquiries underpinning this investigation, the researcher adopted a questionnaire as the principal data collection instrument. This questionnaire was adapted from the work of Asyifah and Indriani and was tailored to probe into students' perceptions regarding podcasts. Comprising 10 Likert scale items, the questionnaire was designed to gauge participants' opinions and viewpoints. The Likert scale, as elucidated by Turner (1993), serves as a pragmatic and valuable tool for elucidating attitudes and perceptions. Seven of the aforementioned items were formulated based on pertinent literature exploring learners' attitudes towards podcasting, with certain modifications for clarity (Al-Harbi, 2019). Participants were instructed to indicate their level of agreement by selecting from the response options: "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," or

“strongly disagree.” The remaining items encompassed three open-ended questions focusing on the technical facets of podcasts, namely, sound quality, accessibility, and instructor endorsement (see Appendix A for details).

3.3 Experimental Manipulations or Interventions

Participants enrolled in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses were furnished with weekly English podcasts delivered through the WhatsApp platform. These podcasts comprised a succession of episodes sourced from renowned series such as the Voice of America and British Council website podcast series. Additionally, participants were regularly supplied with Google Forms containing inquiries derived from the podcasts, thus ensuring their sustained involvement and active participation (see Appendix B for details). Subsequently, a questionnaire was disseminated to participants, aiming to elucidate their perceptions regarding the efficacy of podcasts in enhancing their auditory acumen.

3.4 Participant (Subject) Characteristics

The investigation was conducted at the English Language Institute (ELI) within King Abdulaziz University. The study cohort comprised 102 female Saudi students enrolled at King Abdulaziz University, thereby ensuring a homogeneous demographic for research purposes. The selection bias towards female participants was driven by the accessibility afforded by the existence of a female-exclusive campus at King Abdulaziz University, a pragmatic consideration influenced by the gender of the researcher. These participants were selected via random sampling from the ELI Department, ensuring a representative cross-section of the student population. Notably, participants spanned diverse proficiency levels, encompassing beginner, intermediate, and advanced stages of English language proficiency. Their ages ranged between 18 and 23 years, with Arabic serving as their primary language of communication.

The distribution of the questionnaire among university students occurred during their campus residencies. The researcher facilitated the questionnaire completion process, providing linguistic aid when required, as the questions were translated and rephrased in Arabic. Participants were encouraged to furnish sincere responses, avoiding the inclination towards idealized answers. On average, the completion of the questionnaire task required approximately 3 minutes per participant.

3.5 Measures and Covariates (Validity and Reliability)

The validation of content judgment necessitates the implementation of empirical studies followed by expert reviewers' scrutiny of the outcomes (Fink, 2019). The expert judgmental content validity approach encompasses the meticulous assessment and evaluation of the researcher's questionnaire inquiries.

Table 1. Reliability statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.747	10

According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), alpha values affect the number of test items, item interrelatedness, and dimensionality. Different reports about the acceptable alpha values range from 0.70 to 0.95. A low alpha value may be due to a low number of questions, poor correlation between items, or heterogeneous structure. A Cronbach alpha value of 0.747 is generally accepted as a good indicator of reliability (George & Mallery, 2013). Table 1 shows that all 10 items achieved Cronbach alpha values of 0.747, thus indicating good reliability for all the measures.

3.6 Data Analysis

In order to determine students' perceptions, a 10-point Likert scale questionnaire was developed. The quantitative data were analyzed using Excel. For accuracy, the data were calculated using SPSS version 20. The objective test was analyzed using validity, reliability, index of difficulty, and discrimination power to obtain a better result. Descriptive statistics—mean, standard deviation, and percentage—were used to analyze the data.

4. Results

The first section of the questionnaire investigates students' perspectives of using podcasts. The following table shows the findings.

Table 2. Students' rating of their use of podcasts

Likert Scale Statements	Responses									
	<i>SA</i>	%	<i>AG</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>DIS</i>	%	<i>SD</i>	%
I feel that my listening skills improved after listening to the podcast	38	37.3%	33	32.4%	19	18.6%	5	4.9%	5	4.9%
Using podcasts enhanced my motivation to learn English	37	36.3%	37	36.3%	14	13.7%	4	3.9%	9	8.8%
I found it difficult to understand what the speaker said	15	14.7%	28	27.5%	35	34.3%	16	15.7%	6	5.9%
Podcasts offer authentic materials for English listening	31	30.4%	28	27.5%	25	24.5%	11	10.8%	5	4.9%
The task and activities in the podcast are interesting	32	31.4%	33	32.4%	20	19.6%	6	5.9%	9	8.8%
The podcast is very portable and easy to use	45	44.11%	25	24.5%	16	15.7%	6	5.9%	11	10.8%
The podcast is not effective in terms of time	9	8.8%	25	24.5%	26	25.5%	16	15.7%	24	23.5%
The podcast duration is appropriate for us to concentrate on listening	29	28.4%	34	33.3%	26	25.5%	5	4.9%	6	5.9%
My vocabulary was enriched after listening to the podcast	33	32.4%	35	34.3%	21	20.6%	5	4.9%	7	6.9%
I recommend that teachers use podcasts to teach listening	41	40.2%	31	30.4%	17	16.7%	5	4.9%	7	6.9%

An examination of the scores in Table 2 reveals that more than half (69.7%) of the students agreed that podcasts can improve their listening skills, only five participants did not agree, and 18.6% of participants were neutral. Meanwhile, 72.6% of the students (those who chose “strongly agree” and “agree”) believed that podcasts can increase motivation to learn English; some were neutral, whereas 9% strongly disagreed. Yet, there was something that students found the hardest: Most of them agreed that it was difficult to understand what the speaker had said on the podcast.

Nevertheless, 57.9% of the students believed that podcasts are suitable to provide authentic listening material, while some chose “neutral.” In addition, most students agreed that podcasts are interesting and easy-to-use media, while a few disagreed. Furthermore, 34% of the students opined that podcasts could be more effective in terms of time. Most importantly, most of the students agreed that podcasts can enrich their vocabulary and recommended that teachers use them as a language learning tool. Ultimately, only a few students had difficulty understanding what the speaker was saying, and they all positively responded to podcasts as an educational medium.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the respondents' responses to statements (%)

No.	Statements	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	I feel that my listening skills improved after listening to the podcast	2.10	1.139
2	Using podcasts enhanced my motivation in learning English	2.12	1.205
3	I found it difficult to understand what the speaker said	2.72	1.093
4	Podcasts offer authentic materials for English listening	2.31	1.160
5	The task and activities in the podcast are interesting	2.28	1.222
6	The podcast is very portable and easy to use	2.16	1.340
7	The podcast is not effective in terms of time	3.24	1.306
8	The podcast duration is appropriate for us to concentrate on listening	2.26	1.107
9	My vocabulary was enriched after listening to the podcast	2.19	1.150
10	I recommend that teachers use podcasts to teach listening	2.07	1.180
	Total	2.345	1.1902

Statements 1–10 were computed to determine the perceptions of female Saudi EFL students using podcasts. The descriptive statistics from the respondents' responses through SPSS analysis show an average mean score of 2.345 ($SD = 1.1902$). This shows that female Saudi EFL students positively perceive podcasts to improve their listening skills (Table 3).

5. Discussion

The aforementioned findings delineate the discernible impact of podcasts on students' auditory acumen. The aforementioned performance metrics unequivocally substantiate the efficacy of podcasts as a potent instrument for enhancing listening proficiencies. Notably, a notable subset of participants in the present investigation staunchly concurred that podcasts constitute a medium conducive to refining their listening competencies. Moreover, corroborative evidence from extant literature underscores that individuals who engage with podcasts exhibit superior auditory performance vis-à-vis non-users (Rahman, Haryanto, & Kisman, 2018; Qasim & Fadda, 2013). Furthermore, participants attested to the podcasts' efficacy in bolstering their motivation to acquire English proficiency, thus elucidating the capacity of podcasts to engender heightened enthusiasm and dedication among students. This observation resonates with the findings of Kavaliauskienė and Anusienė (2008), who elucidated students' avid embrace of podcasts as an educational resource, attributing this enthusiasm to the medium's diverse and captivating subject matter. Uniquely versatile and captivating, podcasts afford learners the flexibility to engage with content at their convenience, transcending temporal and spatial constraints. The palpable zeal evinced by students during podcast consumption underscores the motivational impetus engendered by this medium, as noted by Morris (2010), who underscores podcasts' role in fostering enhanced listening prowess through the elicitation of imaginative interpretation and description among students.

However, in the questionnaire, students agreed that they needed help understanding what the speaker was talking about. The solution is to train students to listen to material they think is easy to understand, not randomly. This finding confirms the input hypothesis and the concept of "comprehensible input" proposed by Krashen (1985); with the help of equation $i + 1$, he expressed the need to use existing knowledge (i) and add new information ($+1$) to acquire a second language. Thus, students need to listen to suitable podcast material according to their level of understanding. Podcasts provide many materials, even for beginner students who are just learning a foreign language and for those who are already familiar with a foreign language. With podcasts, students can choose which material they are interested in listening to. The most important thing is that all students can use podcasts easily.

Students have the opportunity to augment their lexicon through auditory resources (Putman & Kingsley, 2011). The unanimity among students regarding the efficacy of podcasts in augmenting their lexical repertoire resonates with extant literature advocating for the vocabulary-enhancing potential of this medium. According to Chan, Chi, Chin, and Lin (2018), students can bolster their vocabulary by engaging with podcasts tailored to their individual interests. Furthermore, students exhibit heightened engagement when exposed to diverse subject matter through podcasts, thereby fostering lexical expansion. Indirectly, podcasts may catalyze critical and creative thinking among students. Given the adaptability of podcasts, students can seamlessly integrate them into their learning regimen beyond the confines of the classroom, thereby significantly enhancing accessibility. The utility of podcasts extends beyond student uptake; educators stand to benefit from leveraging podcasts as pedagogical instruments. Podcasts alleviate pedagogical ambiguities by offering a plethora of accessible topics.

Podcasts engender heightened creativity in students, facilitate lexical enrichment, and impart novel pedagogical insights—some of which may be challenging to convey within traditional classroom settings (Lee & Chan, 2007). Survey responses unequivocally affirm the notion that exposure to podcasts contributes to lexical expansion among students. Moreover, there is resounding consensus among students regarding the efficacy of integrating podcasts into educational practice, as it serves to invigorate student engagement through the unique affordances of this medium. In summation, the present inquiry substantiates the notion that podcasts constitute a dependable and pertinent adjunct for educators and learners alike in fostering lexical proficiency within the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction.

6. Conclusion

The current investigation aimed to elucidate further insights into students' perspectives regarding the efficacy of podcasts in enhancing their English listening skills. The findings suggest that Saudi EFL learners harbor positive perceptions towards integrating podcasts into their language learning endeavors. Specifically, they acknowledge podcasts as an efficacious learning tool. The appealing attributes and user-friendly nature of podcasts serve as motivating factors for student engagement and learning.

Furthermore, participants underscored the utility of podcasts in providing authentic listening materials and fostering an enjoyable learning atmosphere within the classroom. Moreover, the utilization of podcasts was perceived to incentivize student engagement with English language learning, facilitating not only listening comprehension but also vocabulary acquisition. Notably, EFL students regard listening to podcasts in English as a significant aspect of their language learning journey. However, the effectiveness of podcasts is contingent upon

instructors' proficiency in leveraging this digital tool and their judicious selection of materials conducive to achieving learning objectives.

7. Limitations

This study has limitations within which findings must be interpreted carefully. First, the number of participants was small and needs to be increased to obtain more accurate results. Second, the study utilized a short questionnaire due to lack of time. Lack of time also caused the researcher not to conduct interviews or experiments. Finally, the questionnaire was distributed during the students' final exams, during which they were busy. This might have affected their responses; some even refused to participate in the study. Based on the mentioned limitations, this study may not be generalizable.

8. Recommendations for Further Research

This preliminary exploratory inquiry holds the potential to serve as a springboard for more expansive investigations. Further scholarly inquiry is warranted to scrutinize facets overlooked in the present study. For instance, subsequent research endeavors delving into podcasting could encompass larger student cohorts, diverse proficiency levels, and a broader array of variables, thereby yielding more profound and precise insights, which would likely enhance reader satisfaction with the findings. Subsequent researchers may opt to employ appropriate qualitative methodologies to refine research findings, thereby facilitating triangulation and bolstering the generalizability of outcomes.

Acknowledgments

Not applicable

Authors' contributions

Not applicable

Funding

Not applicable

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Canadian Center of Science and Education.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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Appendix A

The Questionnaire: strongly agree – agree – disagree – strongly disagree.

1. I feel that my listening skill improve after listening to Podcast.
2. Using podcast enhance my motivation in learning English.
3. I found a difficult to understand what the speaker says.
4. Podcasts offer authentic materials of English listening.
5. The tasks and activities in the podcast are interesting.
6. Podcasts are very portable and easy to use.
7. Podcasts are not effective in terms of time.
8. Podcast duration is appropriate for us to concentrate on listening.
9. My vocabulary is enriched after listening to the podcast.
10. I recommend teachers to use podcasts in teaching listening.

Appendix B

Test your Understanding.

Section 1: What do you know about Tess's weekend?

- a) she stayed in a tent
- b) the weather was good
- c) she went alone
- d) she went to the north-west of England

Section 2: Why does Yasmin like Shakira?

- a) Because her videos are very sexy
- b) Because she writes her songs in English
- c) Because she is a good dancer
- d) Because she has a great voice

Section 3: How many words does Poppy guess correctly on Hot Seat? Choose the correct

number.

- a) Alice
- b) Daniel
- c) Ravi
- d) No one

Section 4: What does Rachel say about the tango?

- a) people dance the tango outside in the streets in Buenos Aires
- b) the name 'tango'; comes from an African language
- c) the dance began sometime around the start of the twentieth century
- d) people of different nationalities learn the tango

Section 5: How many people on You Turn prefer to listen to songs in English? Choose the correct number.

- a) four
- b) two
- c) three
- d) five

Section 6: What do you know about Carolina's bag?

- a) it is black
- b) it has a white handle
- c) it has a white star on it
- d) it has Carolina's name on it

Test your Understanding.

Section 1: What do you know about Ravi?

- a) He is from Manchester.
- b) He likes football.
- c) He likes riding his mountain bike.
- d) He is 23.

Section 2: Why does Zara like Angelina Jolie?

- a) Because she uses her money to help people.
- b) Because she wants to stop poverty.
- c) Because she is a great actress.
- d) Because she looks good on film.

Section 3: Who wins the game?

- a) Alice
- b) Daniel
- c) Ravi
- d) No one

Section 4: What do you know about Central Park?

- a) People do sports there.
- b) A lot of animals and birds live there.
- c) It is more than 100 years old.

d) It was designed as a park for rich people.

Section 5: How many people on Your Turn; think celebrity charity is good?

a) two

b) three

c) four

d) five

Section 6: What do we know about Carolina at the end of this section?

a) She comes from Venezuela.

b) She has been to Britain before.

c) She is going to study in Newcastle.

d) She is going to do a three-year course.

Section 7: Does the chicken read the book from the library?

a) Yes

b) No

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