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### LEVERAGING SPOTIFY PODCASTS TO BOOST LISTENING SKILLS: INSIGHTS FROM ENGLISH LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVES

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#### Abstract

*This study explores how English language learners use podcasts to improve their listening abilities, with an emphasis on their perceptions, the advantages and disadvantages of podcast usage, and the difficulties they face. Thirty English language learners from Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 8, who are also the institution's teachers, participated in the study. Random sampling was used to choose participants, and Google Forms was used to deliver an online survey that gathered data. The purpose of the open-ended survey was to find out how students felt about podcasts as a tool for increasing their listening comprehension. Thematic analysis was used to examine the data, and the results were displayed as percentages to show important trends and patterns. The results show that learners have a positive perception of podcasts and consider them to be an important tool for improving listening skills. The capacity to rewatch episodes, the variety of content, and the flexibility of use are among the main benefits that have been noted. Students did, however, also point up a number of drawbacks, including the absence of visual aids, lengthy runs, and transcripts. Some students also mentioned having trouble focusing and being bored, which made it difficult for them to properly interact with the material. These findings have important ramifications for teachers and students who want to maximize the use of podcasts in language acquisition.*

**Keywords:** *English Language Learners; Listening Skills; Podcasts*

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#### A. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important language-learning abilities is listening, which is necessary for understanding and efficient communication. In contrast to reading and writing, which learners can complete at their own pace, listening necessitates instantaneous language processing. It is therefore among the most difficult parts of learning a language. Because vocabulary, pronunciation, and spoken language nuances are so complicated, English language learners frequently find it difficult to listen, especially when they are around native speakers or music or the radio[1] claim that listening is one of the hardest skills for pupils to learn and frequently causes anxiety in them. [2] adds that this anxiousness can make it difficult to focus and raise the



possibility of misunderstandings.

[3] contends that those who want to improve their speaking abilities should put a higher priority on understanding spoken language because listening is so important for language learners. In order to communicate effectively with native speakers, one must be able to understand everyday language situations and significant topics in conversations. According to [4], listening competency is essential for effective communication and calls for frequent exposure to a variety of English dialects. Frequent exposure to diverse accents and dialects not only acquaints learners with them, but also improves their comprehension of a variety of speech rates, intonations, and colloquial expressions.

In addition to hearing spoken language, listening is a complex and dynamic process that also include interpreting it and responding to it. It necessitates understanding information and drawing conclusions from it, which is different from just listening. [5] state that listening entails several stages, such as hearing, focusing, assessing, and reacting to spoken language. As cited in [6], Nadig (2013) further deconstructs listening comprehension into discrete processes including voice recognition, word meaning interpretation, and sentence construction. According to theoretical frameworks on hearing, both cognitive and metacognitive processes are necessary for effective listening.

The use of digital tools in language instruction has grown significantly in response to the expanding demand for easily available and diverse listening materials. Podcasts are one of these that have proven to be very beneficial. With a wide range of speech patterns, dialects, and conversational settings, podcasts give students an immersive introduction to real spoken English—a crucial component in building a sophisticated language comprehension. Podcasting, as defined by [6] is a novel form of mobile technology that presents language learners with a flexible and accessible means of accessing digital audio and video broadcasts on their mobile devices through download and playback. [7] also draw attention to the versatility of podcasts, pointing out that younger audiences find them especially appealing because they provide a vast range of content that is accessible at any time and location.



According to [7], a new medium for content or information consumption is the Spotify podcast. Teenagers who have unrestricted access to podcasts will be impacted in social and even educational areas. Teenagers are using podcasts in Spotify extensively, which makes them a novel educational tool. It means that teachers can use these resources to make learning more relevant and approachable by acknowledging the popularity and influence of podcasts among teenagers. This could enhance learning outcomes and increase student engagement.

Podcasts have become increasingly popular in educational settings, especially as a way to expand learning outside of the classroom. According to [8], educational systems that prioritize learning outside of the classroom can benefit greatly from the use of podcasts as instructional tools. Moreover, [9] emphasize the value of podcasts for students studying English as a foreign language (EFL), pointing out that the range of subjects offered encourages students to interact with material that piques their interest, which enhances listening comprehension and language proficiency.

By greatly increasing the accessibility of learning resources, technology plays a critical role in contemporary education. EFL/ESL students can now more easily access a range of simplified or authentic second-language (L2) resources thanks to advancements in internet connectivity. According to [10], Web 2.0 technologies offer a variety of instruments for language learners to practice both productive and receptive language abilities. These include blogs, podcasts, social networking sites, online videos, and microblogs. The utilization of digital resources promotes more efficient language acquisition by offering interactive and adaptable learning experiences.

Podcasts are available on a number of sites, such as YouTube and Spotify. Nonetheless, because Spotify is less expensive than YouTube, the students in this study prefer to use it. In light of this choice, the study's objective is to investigate how students perceive utilizing Spotify podcasts to improve their listening abilities. The study aims to ascertain students' perceptions on the affordability and accessibility of Spotify in connection to the enhancement of their listening skills.

Notwithstanding the possible advantages, little is known about how English language learners—especially those who are also teachers—view and employ podcasts



as a listening comprehension aid. In order to close this gap, this study looks into two main research questions: (1) How do English language learners feel about utilizing English podcasts and the Spotify app to improve their listening skills? and (2) How may listening skills be enhanced through the use of English podcasts on the Spotify application? The study is centered on thirty instructors at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 8 who are also English language learners. Random sampling was used in conjunction with a quantitative descriptive approach to choose the participants. Open-ended surveys that were sent via Google Forms and generated by [11] were used to collect data. The purpose of these questionnaires was to investigate the learners' perceptions of using podcasts to improve listening comprehension as well as the difficulties they encountered in doing so.

By tackling these issues, the research hopes to add to the growing body of knowledge on language acquisition tactics in the digital era and provide useful advice for both teachers and students.

## B. METHOD

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 8 English language learners perceived the use of podcasts on Spotify as a means of improving their listening comprehension abilities. A quantitative descriptive method was used in this investigation. Using basic random sampling, a sample of thirty students was chosen from a population of sixty teachers. Three components of a structured questionnaire were used to collect data: the habit of using Spotify, the effect of Spotify on English listening skills, and academic accomplishment. Ten open-ended questions made up the questionnaire, which was derived from [11]. It was distributed using Google Forms, and replies were gathered using a WhatsApp group. Quantitative analysis was used to examine the data with an emphasis on finding patterns in the participants' experiences and perceptions. The data were processed using percentage computations, which shed light on how well podcasts work as a tool for enhancing listening comprehension and adding important information to the field of language instruction.



### C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the questionnaire responses, the research findings are divided into multiple categories to address the subject of how students feel about using podcasts on Spotify, as described below.

#### 1. Listening Habits and Preferences

*Table 1. Preferred Podcasts Genre*

Podcasts type	Frequency (Number of responses)	Percentage (%)
Motivation	6	20%
Education	13	43%
Story Telling	8	27%
Interview	3	10%

According to the statistics, participants listened to a variety of podcast kinds, but instructional podcasts are the most popular—43% (13 responders) of participants preferred this type. This implies a high preference for information that probably adds to learning or has instructional value. With 27% (8 respondents) selecting storytelling podcasts, it is clear that people enjoy listening to and sharing tales and personal stories as a way to interact with content. Podcasts about motivation are also rather popular; according to 20% of participants (6 responders), they provide content that encourages or promotes personal development. Finally, only 10% (3 respondents) said they preferred podcasts that were interview-based.

*Table 2. Preferred platforms for English podcasts listening*

Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Spotify	14	50%
YouTube	12	43%
Noice	2	7%



According to the data, Spotify is the most popular podcast listening platform, preferred by 50% (14 responses) of participants. This overwhelming preference implies that podcast listeners, especially those in educational settings, favor Spotify due to its easy-to-use design, large podcast catalogue, and accessibility. With 43% (12 respondents) of participants utilizing it to obtain podcasts, YouTube is another well-liked platform. YouTube's high usage is probably due in part to its visual material and the ability to view video podcasts, which offer an interesting substitute for audio-only services. However, just 7% (2 responses) of the participants reported using Noice, suggesting that it is far less widely utilized than YouTube and Spotify. This highlights how popular YouTube and Spotify are among respondents as their go-to sites for listening to podcasts, with Noice and other platforms having less of an impact.

Table 3. Most popular English podcasts

Podcasts Name	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Thirty days of Lunch	5	20.83%
Ted Talks Daily	6	25%
Belajar Bahasa Inggris	3	12.5%
Rich Roll Podcast	2	8.33%
Powerful JRE	1	4.17%
Jay Shetty Podcast	2	8.33%
One Path Podcast	1	4.17%
Self Dev	1	4.17%
BBC Sport	1	4.17%
Edtech	1	4.17%
BBC Radio Education	1	4.17%
English Today	1	4.17%
Podcourse	1	4.17%
With Talks Language	1	4.17%
Listening Time	1	4.17%
American English Podcast	1	4.17%
Maple Podcast	1	4.17%
Annisa Language	1	4.17%
Charlie Baxter History	1	4.17%
Spotlight English	1	4.17%

The information shows that respondents have a wide variety of podcast tastes, with "Ted Talks Daily" being the most popular podcast, listened to by 25% (6 respondents) of the sample. This shows that the information offered by TED Talks,



which frequently covers a wide range of themes and can be an invaluable resource for English language learners, is valued by the respondents as informative and thought-provoking. "Thirty Days of Lunch," which was listened to by 20.83% (5 responses) of the participants, is in close second place. Those who want to advance their careers and personal lives will probably find this podcast's emphasis on productivity and self-improvement appealing.

Three respondents, or 12.5% of the sample, preferred the Indonesian podcast "Belajar Bahasa Inggris," which focuses on teaching English. This suggests that the podcast can be helpful for students who would rather learn English through native language content. A lesser percentage of respondents (varying from 4.17% to 8.33%) listen to each of the remaining podcasts, which include "Rich Roll Podcast," "Powerful JRE," "Jay Shetty Podcast," and several others.

*Table 4. Using transcripts while listening to English podcasts*

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Yes	13	43.33%
No	10	33.33%
Sometimes	7	23.33%

According to the data, 43.33% of the respondents often utilize transcription when listening to English podcasts, indicating that many students believe transcription to be an effective technique for increasing comprehension. Conversely, 33.33% of the participants do not use transcription, suggesting that they are confident in their ability to listen or that they would rather use alternative teaching approaches. Furthermore, 23.33% of learners utilize transcription on occasion, suggesting that some save it for more difficult material or particular requirements.

## 2. Learning experience and perception

*Table 5. Impressions of using Podcasts to improve listening comprehension*

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Really helpful	16	53.33%
Difficult enough	4	13.33%
Fun	6	20.00%

According to the findings, a sizable majority of respondents – 53.33% – think



that podcasts are "Really Helpful" for language learning. This suggests that most language learners view podcasts as a useful tool for improving their listening comprehension and general language proficiency. However, 20% of respondents called the experience "fun," indicating that in addition to being helpful, podcasts are also entertaining and engaging for these language learners, which may serve as a driving force for them as they progress through their language learning process. This is in contrast to the results of [12], who found that while 16 respondents said that listening skills training via podcasts was very helpful in helping them become better listeners, 20 respondents said that learning listening skills through podcasts was enjoyable. Nevertheless, 13.33% of participants said that podcasts were "Difficult Enough," indicating that there may be difficulties for certain learners because of the intricacy of the language, accents, or speech rates in the podcasts they listen to.

*Table 6. Effects of Regular Podcast on Listening Skills*

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Yes	13	43.33%
No	10	33.33%
Sometimes	7	23.33%

The research shows that 56.67% of respondents said that the development of listening skills was the biggest advantage of utilizing podcasts for English language learning. This indicates that the majority of students believe podcasts to be very useful for improving their comprehension of spoken English. Furthermore, according to 23.33% of the respondents, listening to podcasts helps them with pronunciation, which is important for precise and understandable communication. Additionally, twenty percent of the students stated that listening to podcasts helps them develop their vocabulary by exposing them to new words and phrases.

*Table 7. Improvement on listening comprehension skills*

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Better control of vocabulary	5	16.67%
Better in pronunciation	7	23.33%
Easier to understand	4	13.33%





English conversation Facilitate listening lessons	6	20.00%
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According to the findings, students believe that using podcasts to learn English has a variety of advantages. Pronunciation enhancement is the biggest benefit, as reported by 23.33% of respondents, underscoring the importance of audio exposure in honing pronunciation abilities. Furthermore, according to 20.00% of respondents, podcasts help with listening lessons, which suggests that they improve accessibility and engagement in educational sessions. The fact that 16.67% of listeners think podcasts help people better control vocabulary highlights how effective they are in encouraging language use. Furthermore, 13.33% of respondents said that listening to podcasts helps them understand native speakers and grasp English discussions, indicating the value of the real-world language exposure that podcasts offer. Finally, a whopping 3.33% of respondents believe that podcasts have no value, despite the fact that 10.00% of respondents found that they aid in their vocabulary acquisition. This suggests that podcasts are widely regarded as an effective medium for language learning.

### 3. Challenges and Advantages

*Table 8. Obstacle encounter when listening podcasts*

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Less familiar words	8	26.67%
Different accent	7	23.33%
Podcaster speaks too fast	7	23.33%
The sound is not clear	3	10.00%
Nothing	2	6.67%
Long duration	2	6.67%
Unstable network	1	3.33%

According to the study, listeners frequently run into a number of difficulties when utilizing podcasts to improve their English. The most important problem, as mentioned by 26.67% of respondents, is the usage of unfamiliar terminology, which



can hinder learning and make comprehension challenging. Two significant issues that respondents identified were accents and the fast-paced nature of some podcasters. 23.33% of respondents mentioned accents, indicating that a range of speaking speeds and accents can be obstacles to understanding. Furthermore, 10.00% of listeners had difficulty with indistinct audio, which might impede learning even further. A minority of respondents (6.67%) reported no major problems, suggesting that podcasts are reasonably accessible to them. The same proportion (6.67%) also stated that extended periods of time could be problematic because they might impair focus and participation. then, the least mentioned challenge (3.33%) was network problems, indicating that although they do exist, respondents do not generally have problems with technological issues.

*Table 9. Advantages on podcasts compare to other media*

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Flexible	7	23.33%
Fun to use	7	20.00%
Interesting speakers	5	16.67%
Focus on relevant topics	4	13.33%
Lighter content	4	13.33%
Simple	3	10.00%

Students place a high importance on podcasts' flexibility and fun, as evidenced by the statistics, which shows that 23.33% and 20.00% of respondents, respectively, highlighted these features. This implies that the capacity to tailor the listening experience to suit personal tastes and schedules, together with the fact that the process is entertaining, are important contributing reasons to podcasts' success. Furthermore, 16.67% of participants expressed their appreciation for captivating speakers, highlighting the significance of captivating content and delivery in sustaining listeners' engagement. A desire for content that is both relevant and approachable is indicated by the focus on pertinent themes and lighter content, both of which were mentioned by 13.33% of respondents. Finally, 10% of respondents said that simplicity was vital, meaning that flexibility and enjoyment considerations take precedence over ease of use.



Table 10. The limitation of podcasts

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Duration is too long	7	23.33%
Difficult accent	8	26.67%
No visual	5	16.67%
Misunderstanding	8	26.67%
Nothing	2	6.67%

The study highlights a number of significant difficulties that students have when accessing podcasts. The length and accent of the podcasts are the biggest problems, impacting 26.67% of respondents each. A significant percentage of students believe that the podcast is excessively long, which could lower interest and retention. Furthermore, it can be difficult to comprehend people with varied accents, which emphasizes the need for more uniform or clearer pronunciation. The same number of respondents also mentioned that they had misunderstood anything while listening, which makes learning more difficult and emphasizes how crucial it is to increase clarity and comprehension. Moreover, 16.67% of students listed the absence of visual components as a disadvantage, suggesting that the use of multimedia resources could improve the educational process. Lastly, 6.67% of respondents said they had no serious problems, indicating that while many have difficulties, other people find the podcast format to be useful and don't have any serious worries.

The purpose of the study is to find out how students feel about utilizing podcasts to get better at listening. The results of the study show that these skills are positively impacted by podcasts. The results of the questionnaire, which demonstrate that students' listening skills improved, make this clear. They reported increasing their vocabulary, pronouncing words correctly, understanding accents better, finding it easier to follow bilingual lectures, and feeling more confident when speaking English. According to Lee & Chan (2007), podcasts help students develop their creativity, increase the scope of their vocabulary, and learn new things, even ones that are challenging to locate in conventional classroom.

Since learning is essentially a systemic process of communication, the use of media in education is important. As a result, educational media is an essential part of



this system. Research indicates that using media in the classroom – like podcasts – can be quite beneficial to bilingual students. Podcasts are an extra educational resource that helps improve their listening abilities. As [14] in their research reported that Students' interest in listening exercises can be piqued by using the Listening Time podcast on the Spotify app, which can help them become better listeners.

For students, podcasts offer clear advantages, as was previously indicated. They value that podcast provide a plethora of extra information on a variety of themes and subjects, enabling people to choose content that is appropriate for their level of listening comprehension. Moreover, podcasts are especially beneficial for bilingual students since they allow them to use English in addition to their native tongue, which improves their educational experience overall.

Students shared their opinions about using podcasts, both good and bad. Among the unfavorable comments are issues with comprehending and mastering terminology, fast-talking speakers, poor audio, and difficulties recognizing different accents. This is consistent with [15], which found eight distinct difficulties that students encounter when listening to podcasts. Unfamiliar vocabulary, lexical density, differences in speaker pronunciation and accent, length of conversation, disinterest or boredom, loss of concentration, background noise, and equipment problems are some of the challenges that were identified by a triangulation method analysis.

Students had a number of difficulties when listening to podcasts, including vocabulary unfamiliarity (27%), accent problems (23%), and rapid-fire podcasters (23%). These challenges align with the findings of [16], which draw attention to issues with spoken elements in podcasts, such as accents, speech rates, and vocal clarity, which have an impact on learners' word recognition and comprehension. How well students understand the content from podcasts is also influenced by their proficiency levels, which include vocabulary and general English abilities.

Finally, it is noteworthy that although this study particularly selected English language learners at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, earlier research mostly focused on junior high school or university students. Given that these students are English language learners who also teach English, it is especially crucial that they are



already familiar with podcasts. As a result, the researcher set out to investigate how these students felt about English podcasts. Even though this study and earlier ones differ, they nonetheless lend credence to the current investigation. These studies show that teaching students with podcasts improves their listening comprehension. As a result, educators can take advantage of this data to introduce podcast-based strategies into their teaching, resulting in more dynamic, inventive, and modern listening courses.

#### D. CONCLUSION

The study's conclusions demonstrate the important contribution podcasts can make to improving English language learners' listening comprehension. Based on percentage calculations, the results showed that most participants thought podcasts on Spotify were a useful and adaptable language learning tool. This study emphasizes how important it is to incorporate digital audio content into teaching methods, providing a useful method of teaching languages that meets the needs of contemporary students. The knowledge acquired from this study not only supports the use of podcasts in learning environments but also opens up new avenues for future investigation into the long-term effects of podcast-based language learning on a range of language proficiency. Teachers can better fulfil the different requirements of their students and increase the effectiveness and engagement of language learning by utilizing the accessibility and variety of podcasts.

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