

The Effect of Using Podcasts on Improving Listening: Iranian Beginner Students

Malek Ahmad Kord Assistant Professor, Resalat University Zahedan (Sistan & Baluchestan) Branch, Iran

Elahe Dehghani B.A. graduate, Resalat University Zahedan (Sistan & Baluchestan) Branch, Iran

Najme Arab B.A. graduate, Resalat University Zahedan (Sistan & Baluchestan) Branch, Iran

DOI: 10.47311/IJOES.2023.6.55

Article Received: 08/05/2023

Article Revised: 06/06/2023

Article Accepted: 07/06/2023

Published Online: 08/06/2023

Abstract

With the rise of technology, everything, including education, has changed. We also know that English is an essential need in today's society. It consists of 4 skills. One of them is listening. There are different methods to improve it. One of these methods is using podcasts as an available technology. In this study, improving listening with podcasts is surveyed. Learners were divided into a control group and an experimental one. The listening level of each group was checked before and after the research as a pre-test and a post-test. The data were analyzed via an SPSS package version 16. According to this study, podcasts can improve listening skills and make them more attractive and practical.

Keywords: podcast, listening, receptive skills, language learning

1. Introduction

Technology has become an essential part of the learning process in and out of class. All language classes typically use some form of technology. It has been used to support and enhance language learning. It is stated that technology is seen as an essential educational tool in language teaching, and teachers express it to be easily accessible, well prepared, and have some freedom in their curriculum. Many teachers see technology as an integral part of high-quality education. According to Bull and Ma(2001), technology provides endless resources for language learners. It is emphasized that teachers should encourage learners to use computer technology to find appropriate activities for successful language learning. Using appropriate technical materials is described as beneficial for learners. It is also said that using computer-based language activities improves learners' collaborative learning. (Ahmadi, 2018)

Furthermore, Tomlison (2009) says that computer-based activities provide learners quick information and relevant materials. They continue that Internet resources motivate learners to learn. Additionally, the view is endorsed that technology provides educational resources and brings learning experiences into the learner's world. Technology can provide learners with more authentic materials and a greater motivation to learn a language.

2. Definition of the terms

2.1.Language

People can communicate with each other and express different emotions. This communication system is called language. The system works by combining words to form sentences. It is a language specializing in human power, consisting of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It also includes vocabulary and grammar as subskills. (Burrige & Stebbins, 2019)

2.2.Listening skill

Language is a complex process combining two main *active(productive)* and *passive(receptive)* skills categories. Active skills are speaking and writing. Moreover, passive ones are reading and listening. Without receptive comprehension, there will be no production. Listening is an important skill widely used in daily life by people.(Sharma & Puri, 2020) Listening helps people understand the information provided by others.

2.3.Technology

It is practical knowledge, especially in a particular area, especially how technical processes, methods, or knowledge are used to solve tasks. Our use of technology includes machines (computer hardware) and equipment and our structured relationships with other people, machines, and environments. (Ahmadi, 2018)

2.4.Podcast

As *Cambridge* (online ed) says, the podcast is a program provided in digital form for download over the Internet. For example, a set of digital audio or video files that users can download to their devices and listen to whenever they want. Streaming applications and podcast services provide a convenient and integrated way to manage personal consumption queues across many podcast sources and playback devices. A podcast search engine also helps users find and share podcast episodes.

3. Research Question

According to all of the things that have been said, the question being searched in this research is:

If podcasts can help improve English listening skills, and the answer is yes, how can they affect this skill?

4. Research Hypothesis

Listening skill is one of the most essential parts of learning a new language. Moreover, podcasts, as the new available technologies, substantially affect it. They are free and readily available. You can use them on different topics wherever and whenever you want. They can improve this critical comprehension skill of language learning.

5. Methodology

5.1.Participants

Seventy intermediate-level EFL students (female) were recruited for this study from two institutes in Yazd that were selected based on an Oxford Placement Test. These participants were divided into two groups: a control group (not using podcast) and an experimental group (using podcast).

5.2.Instruments and materials

Oxford placement test was used to homogenize the participants, a comprehension test including 20 items as the pre-test, a podcast as a treatment for the experimental group, and at the end, a 20-item comprehension test as the post-test were the instruments and materials used in this study.

5.3.Procedure

5.3.1. Data collection process

This study was conducted during the summer holiday, and its process took about two months. For collecting data, online forms were used for the pre-test and post-test, and the podcast was introduced to the target group.

The students in this study were divided into two groups, each of which had 35 students. Every group received an online test as a pre-test, and after answering the pre-test, the experimental group received the podcast and used it for a limited time. Meanwhile, the control group did their regular schedules. At the end of the allotted time, an online test, as a post-test, which they had to answer within a specified time, was delivered to the members of both groups.

5.3.2. Data analysis

This study was a cause-and-effect study to see the effect of podcasts on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening learning. This study was based on a quantitative study. It followed a model as the pre-test, treatment, and post-test design. The data were analyzed via an SPSS package version 16. Descriptive statistics were applied for each group test to check the statistics analysis (mean, std. deviation, min, and max). Paired-sample T-test was applied for the experimental group to see the influence of treatment (using a podcast). Paired-samples T-test for the control group and Independent-samples T-test for both groups' post-test to compare the mean score between the control and experimental groups.

6. Results

The effects of podcasts on EFL Intermediate learners' listening Learning were investigated in this research. It is expected that the EFL learners showed better performances on their post-tests compared to their pre-test performances.

The descriptive statistics related to the pre-test are shown in Table 6.1 below:

Table 6.1

Descriptive Statistics						
		N	Minimu m	Maximu m	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	E.G.	35	10.00	19.00	13.3143	1.87509
	CG	35	10.00	18.00	13.2571	1.96053
Post-test	EG	35	13.00	20.00	17.6286	1.94158
	CG	35	12.00	20.00	16.6571	1.89338
Valid N (listwise)		35				

*C.G.: control group/E.G., the experimental group

This table shows that grades (total and mean) increased in both groups (C.G. and E.G.); the mean in the C.G. increased from 13.25 to 16.65 (+3.4), and in the, E.G., increased from 13.31 to 17.62 (+4.31), which is a significant increase. This table also shows std. Deviation changes decreased by 0.07 (from 1.96 to 1.89) in the C.G. in the, E.G., they increased by 0.07 (from 1.87 to 1.94).

Based on these statistics, both groups observed changes in learners' listening ability, but these changes were more considerable in the E.G., that used podcasts.

Tables below (6.2 & 6.3) are obtained based on a paired-samples T-test for C.G.:

Table 6.2

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
C.G.	Pre-test	13.2571	35	1.96053	.33139
	Post-test	16.6571	35	1.89338	.32004

Table 6.3

		Paired Samples Test					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
C. G.	Pre-test, post-test	-3.40000	1.37627	.23263	-3.87277	-2.92723	-14.615	34	.000

There was a statistical increase in mean of scores and a decrease in S.D. from the pre-test (M = 13.25, SD = 1.96) to the post-test (M = 16.65, SD = 1.89), $t(34) = -14.61$, $p < .05$ (two-tailed). The mean score increase was 3.4, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -3.87 to -2.92. The eta squared statistic indicated a small effect size.

Because the p-value under the Sig. The column in Table 6.3 is lower than the .05 level of significance (.05 > .00); it could be inferred that the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of learners was statistically significant.

Tables below (6.4 & 6.5) are obtained based on a paired-samples T-test, e.g.:

Table 6.4

		Paired Samples Statistics			
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
E.G.	Pre-test	13.3143	35	1.87509	.31695
	Post-test	17.6286	35	1.94158	.32819

Table 6.5

		Paired Samples Test					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
E. G.	Pre-test, post-test	4.31429	1.58618	.26811	-4.85916	-3.76941	-16.091	34	.000

For the experimental group, there was a statistically significant increase in test scores from the pre-test (M = 13.31, SD = 1.87) to the post-test (M = 17.62, SD = 1.94), $t(34) = -16.09$, $p < .05$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in test scores was 4.31, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -4.859 to -3.769. The eta squared statistic indicated a large effect size.

Table 6.5 shows that The Sig. (2-tailed) value represents a p-value lower than the significance level ($.000 < .05$), indicating that the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the learners had been statistically significant. This means that using podcasts significantly improves learners' listening abilities.

Tables 6.6 & 6.7 are obtained after applying an Independent-samples T test for both groups' post-test to observe the difference between the control group and experimental group's mean:

Table 6.6

Group Statistics					
	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	control	35	16.6571	1.89338	.32004
	experimental	35	17.6286	1.94158	.32819

Table 6.7

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Post-test	Equal variances assumed	.271	.604	-2.119	68	.038	-.97143	.45840	-1.88615	-.05670
	Equal variances are not assumed.			-2.119	67.95	.038	-.97143	.45840	-1.88617	-.05669

In Table 6.7, Sig. The value for Levene's test is more significant than .05 (.604). Thus, the first line in the table, which refers to Equal variances assumed, should be used—the value in the Sig. The (2-tailed) column is less than .05 (.038). Therefore, there is a significant difference in the mean scores on the dependent variable for each of the two groups.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the control and experimental groups' test scores. There was a significant difference in scores for CG ($M = 16.65$, $SD = 1.89$) and EG ($M = 17.62$, $SD = 1.94$; $t(68) = -2.119$, $p = .038$, two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = $-.97$, 95% CI: -1.886 to $-.056$) was considerable.

Conclusion

As technology has progressed, learning has become more accessible. There are many apps and ways which can help to learn. Podcasts are one of these ways to improve listening; learner learners can use their free time, such as driving or preparing for work, to listen to podcasts. Based on this study using podcasts influence on learner's consciousness and unconsciousness, learners became more familiar with the language by hearing podcasts, and after listening to podcasts for answering the tests, they could comprehend the subject of podcasts easier and faster. The results of this study show that using podcasts has a positive effect on improving listening ability.

References:

- Ahmadi, D. M. R. (2018). The Use of Technology in English Language Learning: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 3(2), 115–125. <https://doi.org/10.29252/ijree.3.2.115>
- Bull, S., & Ma, Y. (2001). Raising Learner Awareness of Language Learning Strategies in Situations of Limited Resources. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 9(2), 171–200. <https://doi.org/10.1076/ilee.9.2.171.7439>
- Burridge, K., & Stebbins, T. N. (2019). What is language? *For the Love of Language*, 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781107445307.004>
- Eady, M. J., & Lockyer, L. (2013). *Tools for learning: technology and teaching strategies: Learning to teach in the primary school. Queensland University of Technology, Australia. pp. 71–89.*
- Gençler, B. (2015). How does technology affect the language learning process at an early age? *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 199(2015), 311 – 316. [doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.552](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.552)
- Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. L. (2002). *Teaching and researching reading*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching*. England: Pearson. www.worldcat.org/title/practice-of-English-language-teaching/OCLC/14900588
- Sharma, C., & Puri, S. R. (2020). The importance of four skills in English education. *The Genesis*, 7(4), 33–36. <https://doi.org/10.47211/tg.2020.v07i04.007>
- Tomlinson, B. (2009). *Materials development in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.