



The Impact of Using Podcast Episodic Series of Spoken-Word Digital Audio on Improving Imam University EFL Beginners Listening Skills

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Abstract:

This study aimed to investigate the role of podcasts on language development as an indirect educational approach to language in general and listening in particular among Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMISIU) EFL beginners. Thus, the purpose of this study lies in its potential effect on students of English by improving the process of introducing them to podcasts as a new input tool. Additionally, it examined how students perceived the use of audio-podcasts outside the classroom. Three questions were addressed in this study via a quantitative approach, a quasi-experimental pre/post-test method. These questions were: 1) What is the effect of using the Podcast Episodic Series of Spoken Word Digital Audio on developing the listening skills of Saudi undergraduate students? 2) How may the podcast facilitate the development of listening comprehension of Saudi undergraduate students? 3) What are Saudi university students' attitudes towards integrating audio podcasts as a new input tool in the EFL classroom? Study participants in both experimental and control groups were 20 female students studying level two at the College of Languages and Translation (CLT), IMISIU in Saudi Arabia. The findings of the paired sample t-test method showed that there is a relationship between achieving high scores in the listening tests and implementing audio-podcasts as an indirect educational approach. A 10-item questionnaire was used to explore students' attitudes toward the use of audio-podcasts by using the 5-point Likert scale. The findings showed that respondents have a positive attitude towards integrating audio podcasts as a new language input tool in the EFL classroom. The results also emphasize how imperative it is to incorporate podcasting into the process of developing listening skills to reduce anxiety among EFL learners, familiarize students with how to use the language in real-life situations, and learn the language from its native speakers.

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the role of podcasts on language development as an indirect educational approach to language in general and listening in particular among Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMISIU) EFL beginners. Thus, the purpose of this study lies in its potential effect on students of English by improving the process of introducing them to podcasts as a new input tool. Additionally, it examined how students perceived the use of audio-podcasts outside the classroom. Three questions were addressed in this study via a quantitative approach, a quasi-experimental pre/post-test method. These questions were: 1) What is the effect of using the Podcast Episodic Series of Spoken Word Digital Audio on developing the listening skills of Saudi undergraduate students? 2) How may the podcast facilitate the development of listening comprehension of Saudi undergraduate students? 3) What are Saudi university students' attitudes towards integrating audio podcasts as a new input tool in the EFL classroom? Study participants in both experimental and control groups were 20 female students studying level two at the College of Languages and Translation (CLT), IMISIU in Saudi Arabia. The findings of the paired sample t-test method showed that there is a relationship between achieving high scores in the listening tests and implementing audio-podcasts as an indirect educational approach. A 10-item questionnaire was used to explore students' attitudes toward the use of audio-podcasts by using the 5-point Likert scale. The findings showed that respondents have a positive attitude towards integrating audio podcasts as a new language input tool in the EFL classroom. The results also emphasize how imperative it is to incorporate podcasting into the process of developing listening skills to reduce anxiety among EFL learners, familiarize students with how to use the language in real-life situations, and learn the language from its native speakers.

ملخص الدراسة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف مدى تأثير الوسائط الصوتية، كوسيلة تعليمية غير مباشرة، في تطوير اللغة بشكل عام ومهارة الاستماع بشكل خاص على طالبات المستويات الأولى في جامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية. لذا، فإن الغرض من هذه الدراسة يكمن في التأثير المحتمل للوسائط الصوتية من خلال تقديمها كأداة تعليمية جديدة على الاستيعاب السمعي لدى طالبات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. كما تسعى الدراسة للتعرف على موقف الطلاب تجاه استخدام الوسائط الصوتية خارج الصف وفي أي مكان. وقد قام الباحث بإجراء دراسة تجريبية كمية تتضمن اختباراً قبلياً وبعدياً للإجابة على أسئلة الدراسة، وهي: (1) ما تأثير استخدام الوسائط الصوتية على تطوير مهارة الاستماع لدى طلاب الجامعات السعودية؟ (2) كيف يمكن للوسائط الصوتية أن تساهم في تنمية مهارات الاستيعاب السمعي لدى طلاب الجامعات السعودية؟ (3) ما هو موقف طلاب الجامعات السعودية تجاه توظيف الوسائط الصوتية كأداة مدخلات لغوية جديدة في الفصول الدراسية؟ وقد بلغ عدد المشاركين في الدراسة للمجموعتين الضابطة والتجريبية 20 طالبة يدرسن في المستوى الثاني في كلية اللغات والترجمة في جامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية. وأظهرت النتائج عند استخدام اختبار العينة المزدوجة أن هناك علاقة طردية بين الاستماع للوسائط الصوتية وتحقيق درجات عالية في اختبار استيعاب السمعي البعدي. بينما وظفت استبانة مكونة من 10 فقرات للتعرف على موقف الطالبات تجاه استخدام الوسائط الصوتية، وتم استخدام مقياس ليكرت الخماسي لقياس ذلك. وأظهرت النتائج أن لدى الطالبات موقف إيجابي تجاه توظيف الوسائط الصوتية كوسيلة تعليمية تكميلية في فصول تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وتؤكد النتيجة النهائية للدراسة على مدى أهمية استخدام الوسائط الصوتية في عملية تطوير مهارات الاستماع لما لها من أثر في تقليل حدة التوتر بين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وتدريب الطلاب وتعريفهم على كيفية استخدام اللغة في مواقف الحياة الواقعية، والاستماع إلى اللغة مباشرةً من الناطقين بها.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

English is widely regarded as a foreign language and is a compulsory subject in developing countries (Kachru, 1992). Thus, English is not normally used outside of the classroom, and students have limited exposure to the language as they have only used it in formal settings. Therefore, the students' English performance still need to be improved (Mulyadi, 2011). In line with the previous study by Sawir (2005), it seems that most international students from Asia have difficulty listening and speaking as a result of not being well prepared with those skills during their studies. As a matter of fact, to improve students' speaking skills, teachers should emphasize improving their students' listening skills. Other researchers have also recognized the benefits of advanced listening skills. To give an example, learners acquire listening skills before even learning to read, as Trinkle (2008) noted. Stephen Krashen (1982) described second language acquisition research indicating the important role of input gained through listening in language acquisition. Thus, the development of effective listening strategies can have a significant impact not only on oracy but also in the acquiring of language. Teachers are challenged with teaching the skill of listening because mastering listening skills can only be achieved with practice over a long time (Rivers, 1992).

Since the Traditional classrooms do not pay much attention to listening activities (Lee & Chan, 2007), teachers and instructors must consider employing technologies to enhance the process of teaching and overcome this issue. In recent years, the use of podcast, which is a

series of audio and video programs on the internet that they updated regularly and downloaded automatically to computers or smartphones (Evans, 2008), has been advocated as an efficient and effective way to expose language learners to the target language without time or space restrictions (Abdous et al., 2012; Fitria et al., 2015). EFL podcasts are often produced by language teachers or native English speakers who are interested in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Transcripts are often included to help students follow along with audio podcasts (Almaqrn & Alshabeb, 2017).

There have been many studies that indicate the benefits of podcasting for EFL students. Essentially, they are a way of practicing listening skills outside the classroom. Thorne and Payne (2005) were among the first to mention the possibility of providing podcasts to language learners, stating: “Students are able to listen to podcasts in another language, thus creating their own mobile immersion environments”. Moreover, the accessibility of podcasts and their easy application for use in listening practice as it mentioned by Godwin-Jones (2005). As indicated by Constantine (2007), the most apparent application of podcasting in a language module is for listening comprehension, with podcasting functioning as an extraordinary asset for worldwide listening, since the content is significant and authentic.

Many studies have investigated the role of podcasting and its effect on listening skill such as (Gonulal, 2020 & Rafique, 2019). However, there is not much attention on studying its impact on undergraduate students and its actual use in pedagogy. Therefore, the focus of this quantitative study will be on tracking and measuring undergraduate students’ performance in listening comprehension. Moreover, it will aim to explore students’ preferences regarding employing the podcast as a main tool in their curriculum. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to propose a research study in the field of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In specific, proposing a study entitled quantitative design about “The Impact of Using Podcast

Episodic Series of Spoken-Word Digital Audio to Improve Imam University EFL Beginners Listening Skill”.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In my experience as a former undergraduate student of English as a foreign language, I have observed that Saudi students often struggle with listening comprehension. This is due to the fact that EFL learners in Saudi Arabia face a number of significant obstacles.

One of the main difficulties is that EFL classroom is the only opportunity for EFL learners to practice and be exposed to the target language. Hamouda (2013) discovered significant listening comprehension issues faced by EFL Saudi learners in terms of native accent, pronunciation, speech speed, lack of concentration and anxiety. Podcasts have shown to be quite useful in this context for providing learners with readily accessible audio resources. It also decreases anxiety among EFL learners and generates a sense of belonging to a learning environment (Chan & Lee, 2005). Although, it might be challenging to encourage learners outside the classroom at times, but the usage of podcasts can help with this (O-Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007). However, such interventions are uncommon in Saudi educational environments. Although numerous researchers have explored the potential educational benefits of podcasting, they have not yet been implemented in the local contexts in terms of developing learners' listening skill. Unfortunately, until now there is little research conducted to investigate the use of podcasts as an authentic and supportive material in teaching EFL learners in Saudi Arabia. In light of the fact that there are few micro-studies on this aspect, the findings of this study will help to introduce pedagogical changes to benefit the students community at large and meet their needs in a more effective way.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims at investigating the role of the podcast on language development as an indirect educational approach in the language in general and listening in particular among Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMISIU) EFL beginners. Thus, the purpose of this study lies in its potential effect on students of English by improving the process of introducing them to podcasts as a new input tool. This study focuses as well on showing how important it is to incorporate podcasting in the process of developing listening skill to reduce anxiety among EFL learners, familiarize the students with how to use the language in real-life situations, and learn the language from its native speakers.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The current study is intended to highlight the concept of using podcasts in education among academics, language instructors, and students. Accordingly, the result of this study is expected to be beneficial to the specialists who oversee the curriculums in the ministry of education and the universities. They will benefit from this study by enhancing the content of curriculums and implementing the podcasts in the content of the courses since podcasts can be beneficial to:

1. The students and anyone who wants to learn a foreign language, but he/she faces some difficulties in learning it.
2. To enable the students to use the language in real-life situations not just for academic purposes.
3. To make the students interact like native speakers
4. To make the students get correct pronunciation from the native speakers themselves.
5. To reduce anxiety among EFL learners

1.5 Research Questions

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is the effect of using Podcast Episodic Series of Spoken-Word Digital Audio on developing listening ability of Saudi university students?
2. How might the podcast facilitates the development of listening comprehension of Saudi undergraduate students?
3. What are Saudi university students' attitudes towards integrating audio podcasts as a new language input tool in the EFL classroom?

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The present study cannot be generalized because it was limited to the following. The study was conducted on female students at IMISIU rather than on female and male students since they are on separate campuses. Furthermore, there was a limitation on the number of participants as the study examined only 20 female participants, from level 2 due to the limited time span of the study which is one semester.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter provides definitions of the main terms and previous studies that have been conducted about the field of using Podcast Episodic Series to Improve Listening skill and its significant findings.

2.1 Definitions of Terms:

2.1.1 Podcast:

The New Oxford American Dictionary (Oxford University Press, 2005) defines podcast as: “a multimedia digital file made available on the internet for downloading to a portable media player, computer, etc.”. The term "Podcast" comes from the combination of iPod and broadcast (Notess, 2005). According to Campbell (2005), podcasting has gained popularity for five reasons:

- 1) The use of the Internet is widespread across all time zones and regions of the world.
- 2) Internet speeds have increased dramatically, allowing for large downloads within seconds.
- 3) A computer has evolved not just into a device for handling personal information, but also become a multimedia tool.
- 4) Downloading and streaming are merging, and soon they will be virtually identical.
- 5) The use of MP3 players and iPods is becoming more prevalent.

2.1.2 Digital Audio (DA): “is a representation of sound recorded in, or converted into, digital form. In digital audio, the sound wave of the audio signal is typically encoded as numerical samples in a continuous sequence” (“Digital Audio,” 2021)

2.1.3 Episodic: The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.) defines episodic as: “a made up of separate especially loosely connected episodes. Thus, it is having the form of an episode that is limited in duration or significance to a particular episode”.

2.2 The Importance of Listening Skill

Listening skill is a complex process that allows language learners to understand what is being said. Developing this skill is crucial to learning a second language (Rost, 1994). Listening skill is one of the most critical aspects of language learning and teaching. In the language learning process, it is a precondition for speaking skill. Due to this, listening skill can be considered as a significant actor in oral production, since it lays the foundation for communication (Yavuz, & Celik, 2017). A number of studies have demonstrated the importance of listening comprehension in learning. In spite of its importance, teachers and researchers have neglected listening skill in teaching second languages (Ahmadi, 2016). According to Ahmadi (2016), listening skill has an invaluable role in language learning since it provides input for learners and contributes to their language learning (Rost, 1994). As a complex mental process, listening requires attention, perception, language use, memory, problem-solving, creativity, and thinking. It is common for EFL learners to have difficulty understanding what they are hearing. It is therefore important for teachers to analyze their learners' problems critically and work toward developing effective listening strategies to help them overcome these obstacles if they wish to improve their learners' listening abilities (Hamouda, 2013).

2.3 Listening and Other Language Skills

Among the four main skills of language learning, listening is regarded as one of the most important. It is widely accepted by applied linguists that listening represents a major mechanism by which second language learners acquire information (Rost, 2001). According to Linebarger (2001), the interpretation of experiences and perception of the world is mediated by listening. Studies have shown that improvements in listening skills enhance other language abilities. In Bergman's (1999) study, learners who listen and read stories simultaneously learn more effectively. Morris and Leavey's (2006) study of pre-schoolers' phonological development also revealed that listening skills instruction improved pre-schoolers' perception of phonology. When it comes to developing language and communication, listening plays an important role. Based on a systematic statistical analysis, listening takes up approximately 45-50% of communication time; speaking, approximately 25-30%; reading, approximately 11-16%; and writing, approximately 9% (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). In addition, listening plays a fundamental role in the academic progress of students at all levels (Coakley & Wolvin, 1997). In other studies, listening was cited as a more important skill than reading as it is a determinant of academic success (Coakley & Wolvin, 1997).

2.4 The Teaching of Listening Skill

Listening is one of the best ways to improve one's listening skills. Extensive listening (EL) is listening to large amounts of understandable input (Rost, 2006; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012, pp.). A teacher or student can initiate EL practices, and they can take place outside the classroom as well. EL involves learners performing a variety of meaningful listening activities. As learners are exposed to a wide range of audio input, they begin to process the data automatically and develop a reasonable level of comprehension. Such a process is referred to as listening fluency (Chang, Millet, 2014). In an L2 context, developing listening fluency

requires much practice and a great deal of exposure to the spoken language (Rost, 2006). EL practice must adhere to three key principles: variety, frequency, and repetition, according to Vandergrift and Goh (2012). Learning English as a second language requires that learners listen to audiobooks on various topics and themes so they can become familiar with the structure of different listening texts. It is possible to support these three principles of EL through technology, which can provide the rich and sustained aural input essential for EL (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

2.5 Social Media for Education

Education and learning have been impacted by the use of social media. In addition, it has affected the way people share information, materials, and news, as well as how they cooperate and/or collaborate. There has been an explosion of research on social media use in education over the past ten years (Chu & Meulemans, 2008), and social media are now being used both formally and informally to enhance learning. Social media is already well understood by young people for its educational possibilities. However, some teachers are reluctant to use social media. This may be because they have technophobia, are concerned about the implications of using technology, or just don't want to learn (Tadros, 2011). Despite this, students are already integrating social media into their daily lives. As a result, the educational theory of connectivism has emerged. *Social Networking for Language Education* by Lamy and Zourou (2013) is widely regarded as the most extensive book on social media learning related to language teaching. Their book examined how social media can be used to teach language, providing a theoretical framework and testing it empirically. As well as examining the benefits of social media, they also considered its limitations. Moreover, in a study conducted by Alshabeb and Almaqrn (2018) at a university in Riyadh, 102 Saudi Arabian university students showed positive attitudes toward the use of social media apps on mobile devices in English

classes. Furthermore, the results suggested that the use of social media in English classes affects learners' attitudes since most students are open to using mobile devices inside and outside of the classroom.

2.6 Second Language Acquisition and Podcasting Pedagogy

The use of podcasting does not prescribe any specific approach or method for language learning. Instead, it serves as a tool for integrating theories and practices of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). A constructivist approach to learning emphasized that knowledge is constructed by individuals via observation, interpretation, and investigation (Cooper, 1993). Podcast, according to Rosell-Aguilar (2007), is highly associated with constructivist views to learning, in which a person develops knowledge via "active exploration, observation, and interpretation". Attewell (2005) stated that Students are more motivated when they receive podcasts as they have control over how and when they receive the information. Using podcasts as an intervention, Abdulrahman et al. (2018) studied the differences in the level of listening comprehension in high school Indonesian EFL learners and found that they were significant. Furthermore, they found in an additional survey that learners were generally favorable to podcasts being used in the classroom due to the fact that they felt the content was authentic, interesting, and relevant to their needs.

As a general rule, O'Brien and Hegelheimer (2007) believed that blending CALL into the classroom meant using CALL activities to enrich instruction or to prepare supplementary practice. In their opinion, podcasting has the potential to transform language lessons by providing rich input and instruction for students. In their paper, the authors showed how podcasts can be incorporated into academic English as a Second Language (ESL) courses covering listening strategies.

2.7 Listening Improvement and Podcasting

Podcasts in ESL courses have also been considered beneficial by students and teachers. Hasan and Hoon (2012) evaluated how ESL students understood and viewed podcasts as a way to grow their listening competence through a survey questionnaire. Based on participant responses, it was revealed that listeners like podcasts, which stimulated their interest in learning English. Furthermore, they saw podcasts as a useful tool for improving their listening skills. In addition, a study conducted by Ahmed (2016) examined how children's Arabic classes could benefit from listening to podcasts. The study involved 19 fourth- and fifth-grade students at a private school who participated in different activities for 13 weeks. According to the results, the listening comprehension test scores of the experimental group were higher than those of the control group, indicating podcasts can be used in Arabic classrooms as a tool for developing listening comprehension.

It remains the case that little research has been conducted on the influence of podcasts on the development of learners' listening abilities in foreign language classes, particularly among Saudi learners, and further research is still needed on the topic. While podcasts for language instruction can have considerable benefits, one of the major drawbacks is the ambiguity as to how they should be used pedagogically, especially for developing listening skill. Hence, the aim of this study is to investigate whether incorporating podcasts into English language classes can help students improve their listening skills.

Chapter Three

Research and Methodology

This chapter presents the experimental part of the study. It provides description of the design, the sample, the procedures, and tools of the study

3.1 Research Design

The present study aimed to investigate the role of the podcast on language development as an indirect educational approach in the language in general and listening in particular among Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMISIU) EFL beginners. Therefore, in order to have valid and objective results, a pre-test and post-test design (experimental research design) used to measure the degree of change in the participants' English listening skill as a result of listening to podcasts.

3.2 Participants

In this study, 20 female students who study at the College of Languages and Translation (CLT), IMISIU, Saudi Arabia, were involved. All the participants enrolled in level 2 at the college. In order to have valid and objective results, they divided into two groups. 10 students were assigned to the controlled group who took the pre-test and post-test without exposure to the independent variable. The other 10 students were assigned to the experimental group who listened to podcasts for 5 times in five days. The reason for choosing this group is due to the appropriateness of their academic level. More clearly, they are neither beginners in the sense that they may underestimate the importance of listening yet nor advanced enough to not need to improve their listening skill.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

- **Pre-test and post-test**

Students' listening comprehension was assessed via a pre-test and post-test. It consisted of three parts. The first part included 10 multiple-choice questions, and the second part was a grouping question which included 8 items. Both parts were focusing on listening comprehension. The last part was a matching question focusing on vocabulary.

The students were giving a placement test to measure their overall level in English. Therefore, the Intermediate B1 test (see Appendix A) was applied to measure the two groups' performance before and after the treatment. The test was checked by six instructors giving various courses in the department of English Language and Literature at IMISIU To evaluate the validity of the items.

- **Podcasts**

After the pre-test, the experimental group was required to listen to 5 podcasts in a week. The podcasts' length was around 5 to 6 minutes, and the topics were chosen in line with the materials which were taught in the listening course. The topics were about new inventions, jobs, and sports.

- **Questionnaire**

After the treatment, a 10- item questionnaire (see Appendix B) was used to explore students' attitude toward the use of audio-podcast by using the 5-point Likert scale (1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree and 5 strongly Agree). The questionnaire was adopted from Tryanti's (2018) 10- item questionnaire on the learners' perception on the use of podcast

instruction in teaching listening. The questionnaire was evaluated along with the test by the same six instructors to obtain face validity.

3.4 Procedures for Data Collection

After taking the pre-test, the experimental group were assigned to listen to 5 chosen podcasts. One week later, the two groups conducted the same exam to measure the change in their performance.

This study was conducted for two weeks. In the first week of the study, a pre-test was administered by the participants to get information about students' level of listening comprehension. The pre-test exam was carried out for a day. During the pre-test, 20 students was examined.

During the study, the controlled group completed their lectures as usual for one week. On the other hand, the experimental group were required to listen to 5 chosen podcasts about different topics. At the end of the study, a post-test (the same exam) was administered by the two groups to get data about to what extent listening to podcasts affects the EFL students' performance in their listening skill. Then, 10-item of survey questionnaire was used to gather students' perception toward the use of podcasts in English teaching subject.

The researcher took the consent of the study form the Deanship of Scientific Research and from the students themselves. She had given them sufficient details about the study.

3.5 Data Analysis

The researcher in this experiment was interested in comparing students' achievement levels based on the independent variable, which is the use of podcasts. Statistical Packages in Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27 was used to analyze quantitatively the data obtained from this study. As a way of assessing the effect of exposure to podcasts on the development of

student listening skill, a paired sample t-test method was used to compare data gathered from pre-test and post-test. Moreover, the survey questionnaire was analyzed by Likert scale.

3.6 Ethical Issues

Participants were informed that participation in this study was voluntary. All participants had the right to accept or reject participation without being forced to do so. Prior to conducting the study, complete consent was obtained from the participants (see Appendix F). Private information, including names, was kept confidential. Throughout the study, the researcher demonstrated independence and impartiality. Moreover, she was objective in communicating with the participants and in presenting the findings.

Chapter Four

Results and Discussion

This section provides an overview of the results of the analysis, including answers to the research questions/hypotheses outlined previously. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to describe pre and post-test scores, and an independent sample t-test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference in pre-test scores between the control and experiment groups. This was done to confirm that the sample was drawn from a homogeneous population.

A paired sample t-test was also used to determine if using Podcast Episodic Series of Spoken-Word Digital Audio has a statistically significant effect on improving the listening skill of Saudi university students in the Experimental group through the results of the pre- and post-tests.

Descriptive statistics (frequency and per cent, graphs, mean and standard deviation) were also used to report the respondents' responses to the attitude questionnaire, by so doing providing an answer to the research question 3 - What are Saudi university students' attitudes towards integrating audio podcasts as a new language input tool in the EFL classroom?

4.1 Results of the Data Analysis

Table 1

Descriptive statistics summary for pre-test and post test scores across the Control and Experimental Groups

Control			Experimental Group		
Student No	Pre-Test Score	Post Test Score	Student No	Pre-Test Score	Post Test Score
1	14	18	1	12	26
2	14	16	2	17	26

3	16	16	3	14	26
4	15	11	4	16	26
5	15	14	5	17	24
6	12	15	6	10	25
7	17	12	7	14	25
8	11	15	8	16	22
9	15	17	9	11	23
10	14	18	10	15	22
Mean	14.3	15.2		14.2	24.5
Std. Dev	1.77	2.35		2.49	1.65

Maximum possible score is 26

As shown in the table above, the student's performance in the assessment has been recorded. Also, we proceed to calculate descriptive statistics (Mean, and Standard Deviation) for all the control and experimental groups.

For the control group, the descriptive results show that the average score from the students for the pre-test assessment is 14.3 (SD = 1.77 points) out of a total of 26 points, while for the post-test assessment, an average of 15.2 (SD = 2.35 points) out of a total of 26 points was recorded.

We see an improvement in the scores; pre-test (14.3) vs post-test (15.2) but we cannot determine yet if this result is a significant improvement.

For the experimental group, the average score for the pre-test was 14.2 (SD = 2.49 points) out of a total of 26 points, while for the post-test assessment, an average score of 24.5 points was recorded out of a total of 26 points. This is a significant improvement after listening to the Podcast Episodic Series of Spoken-Word Digital Audio.

In the remainder of this chapter, we will investigate whether listening to audio podcasts has any significant impact on students' performance on assessment tests.

Table 2

Descriptive summary table for Pre-test scores compared for control and experimental groups

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Control	10	14.3	1.77
Pre-test Experimental	10	14.2	2.49

Table 3

t-test results for pre-test performance for control and experimental groups

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	S.E. Diff	95% C.I. Diff	
									Lower	Upper
Test	Equal variances assumed	1.646	.216	.104	18	.919	.100	.9644	-1.9261	2.1261
score	Equal variances not assumed			.104	16.246	.919	.100	.9644	-1.9419	2.1419

Values are average scores

An independent sample t-test was used to assess if the control and experimental groups were homogeneous before starting the treatment.

The result shows that there is no significant difference in the pre-test scores between the control (M=14.3, SD=1.77 points) and Experimental group scores (M=14.2, SD=2.49 points), $t(18)=.919$ $p>.05$.

To summarize, both the control and experimental groups have similar pre-test scores, indicating a homogeneous population. This allows us to proceed with the test as there is no evidence of sampling bias.

4.1.1 Research Question 1: What is the effect of using Podcast Episodic Series of Spoken-Word Digital Audio on developing listening ability of Saudi university students?

Table 4

Descriptive statistics summary table for pre-test and post-test performance for experimental groups

Experimental Group	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre test score	14.2	10	2.49	.7860
Post test Score	24.5	10	1.65	.5218

Table 5

Paired t-test results comparing pre-test and post-test performance for experimental group to confirm significant differences

Paired Samples Test								
Experimental	Paired Differences					t	df	P-Value
	Mean Diff.	S.D.	S.E. Mean	95% C.I.				
				Lower	Upper			
Pre-test – Post-test Score	-10.30	3.0569	.9667	-12.4868	-8.1133	-10.655	9	.000

A paired sample t-test was used to assess if there is a significant difference in the pre and post average test scores for the experimental group. A significant difference was found, $t(9) = -10.655$, $p < .05$. Average Post-test score ($M=24.5$, $SD=1.65$ points) was significantly higher than the average pre-test score ($M=14.2$, $SD=2.49$ points).

We thereby concluded that there is a relationship between achieving high scores in listening test and using Podcast Episodic Series of Spoken-Word Digital Audio as seen from the study.

After listening to podcasts, the students' listening test scores improved by 10.3 points (SD=3.06 points) over their pre-test score (before exposure to the independent variable).

Table 6

Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation) for the 10-items survey questions.

Question	Response	Frequency	Percent	Overall
I feel that my listening skill improve after listening to Podcasts	Neutral	2	20	M = 4.10 SD = .738
	Agree	5	50	
	Strongly Agree	3	30	
Using podcast enhance my motivation in learning English	Neutral	1	10	M = 4.40 SD = .699
	Agree	4	40	
	Strongly Agree	5	50	
I find a difficulty to understand what the speaker says.	Strongly Disagree	3	30	M = 1.90 SD = .876
	Disagree	6	60	
	Agree	1	10	
Podcast offers authentic materials of English listening	Agree	2	20	M = 4.80 SD = .422
	Strongly Agree	8	80	
The tasks and activities after podcasts are interesting	Neutral	1	10	M = 4.60 SD = .699
	Agree	2	20	
	Strongly Agree	7	70	
Podcasts is portable and easy to use	Disagree	1	10	M = 4.00 SD = .943
	Neutral	1	10	
	Agree	5	50	
	Strongly Agree	3	30	
Podcasts is not effective in terms of time	Strongly Disagree	6	60	M = 1.50 SD = .707
	Disagree	3	30	
	Neutral	1	10	
	Neutral	1	10	M = 4.50

Podcasts duration is appropriate for us to concentrate on listening	Agree	3	30	SD = .707
	Strongly Agree	6	60	
My vocabulary is enriched after listening to podcasts	Neutral	1	10	M = 4.60 SD = .699
	Agree	2	20	
	Strongly Agree	7	70	
I recommend teachers to use podcasts in teaching listening	Neutral	2	20	M = 4.50 SD = .850
	Agree	1	10	
	Strongly Agree	7	70	

The majority of the respondents confirmed that they feel their listening skill improved after listening to Podcasts with 30% Strongly Agreeing, 50% Agreeing, and only 20% feeling indifferent (Neutral). 10% of the respondents agreed that they find it difficult to comprehend what the speaker is saying, while 60% disagreed and 30% strongly disagreed.

All the respondents at least agreed that podcasts offer authentic materials for English listening, with 80% strongly agreeing and 20% agreeing. 90% of respondents believed the tasks and activities after podcasts were interesting, with only 10% feeling indifferent.

It appears that respondents have a variety of opinions about whether podcasts are portable and easy to use (10% disagree, 10% feel indifferent, 50% agree, and 30% Strongly Agree). Overall, the majority (80%) are in support of this claim.

It is clear that 90% of respondents found podcasts valuable as they disagreed with the claim that the podcast is not effective in terms of time, meaning they found the podcast effective in terms of time. This, therefore, explains why 90% of respondents agreed that podcasts' duration is appropriate for us to focus on listening.

In the survey, 90% of respondents felt their vocabulary was enriched after listening to podcasts. In addition, 80% of respondents were willing to recommend teachers use podcasts to teach listening. However, 20% felt indifferent.

4.1.2 Research Question 2: *How might the podcast facilitate the development of listening comprehension of Saudi undergraduate students?*

Based on the results from the survey, we identify that the podcast could facilitate the development of listening comprehension of Saudi undergraduate students by the following:

1. Students will be more motivated to learn English (Survey Q2)
2. As authentic material that can be used for both teaching English and exposing students to the language since teachers are often non-native English speakers, and such technology facilitates the incorporation of regional dialects in addition to standard dialects. (Survey Q4)

4.1.3 Research Question 3: *To answer the Research Question 3: What are Saudi university students' attitudes towards integrating audio podcasts as a new language input tool in the EFL classroom?*

Based on the results of the analysis from the Survey, we have seen that there is a positive attitude among the students to integrating audio podcasts as a new language input tool in the EFL classroom. To further ascertain, a One-Sample t-test was conducted and the results are shown below.

Table 7

Descriptive statistics table of Mean and Standard Deviation for the responses to the survey question on recommending teachers to use podcasts in teaching listening

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I recommend teachers to use podcasts in teaching listening	10	4.5	.850

Table 8

One sample t-test results comparing overall attitude ratings of the respondents for a significant test.

One-Sample Test						
Test Value = 3						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
Average survey rating	5.582	9	.000	-1.5	.8921	2.1079

The one-sample test was applied to determine the validity of the conclusion that survey respondents generally showed a strong and positive response to the questions. This was done by comparing the average response to 3 (no opinion), with a positive result if the average was above 3.0 and a negative result if below.

Below is the rationale behind this comparison:

Table 9

Table showing how the survey response was scored for the calculation

Response	Score	Group
Strongly Agree	5	<i>Positive</i>
Agree	4	
Neutral	3	
Disagree	2	<i>Negative</i>
Strongly Disagree	1	

An average score of less than 2 or approximately 2 is interpreted as a negative *attitude* response. Alternatively, a score greater than 4 or approximately 4 is interpreted as a positive attitude response.

The survey's average score, which addressed Research question 3 - "What are Saudi university students' attitudes towards integrating audio podcasts as a new language input tool in the EFL classroom?", produced a significant result ($M=4.5$, $SD=.850$, $t(9) = 5.582$, $p<.01$).

Based on the results of the survey, we conclude that respondents have a positive attitude towards integrating audio podcasts as a supplementary language input tool in the EFL classroom.

4.2 Discussion of the Results

As shown above, podcasts were associated with significant improvements in listening comprehension among students. After receiving supplementary audio-podcasts, the students in the experimental group significantly improved their post-test scores in comparison to the control group, which used a traditional method of learning listening comprehension without using any audio-podcasts. As a result, podcasts have proven to be a very effective tool for teaching listening to students. Thus, the results of the current study were partially in agreement with several studies by Al Qasim and Al Fadda (2013), Kavaliauskienė (2008) and Ahmed (2016) that demonstrated a higher level of listening comprehension for students who were taught by podcasts.

Several explanations can be provided for the findings of this study, including the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1988), which maintains that people acquire languages either by understanding speech or by receiving comprehensible input. The Input Hypothesis suggests

that second-language learners need comprehensible input to progress from one level of language acquisition to the next. Due to this, the acquisition of a second language is facilitated by sufficient exposure to comprehensible language. Chomsky (1965) describes this as "spoon-feeding" the second language learners' head, or LAD (language acquisition device), with extra input through intermittent podcasts sessions.

As a result of the benefits provided by podcasts, students in the experimental group were highly motivated to study English by listening to podcasts. In particular, podcasts enable students to enthusiastically interact with teachers, thereby accelerating their learning. This finding confirms Morri's (2010) study in which students can use their imagination to build mental images of what and who they are listening to playing a podcast. As a consequence of podcasts being incorporated into English classes, students will be able to improve their listening skill and their proficiency in English as well.

Concerning the results of the questionnaire, it is clear that podcasts are appreciated by students for their meaningful and appropriate content, portability, and benefits. With podcasts, students are exposed to a wide variety of vocabulary and content knowledge. Therefore, students felt that their listening comprehension and vocabulary had improved. Similar results found that listening materials provided students with opportunities to learn new vocabulary and content knowledge (Putman, 2012). This result supported the idea that language skills could be taught by integrating listening and vocabulary along with speaking skill (Hamouda, 2013). Furthermore, students perceived that podcast content was highly engaging and related to real-life situations, which is why they were able to use their critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem-solving skills. Because podcasts are portable and easy to use, students felt the use of podcasts both in and out of the classroom was effective for listening exercises.

With regard to using podcasts in EFL classrooms, Szendeffy (2005) argues that podcasts provide better access to and integration of resources than tape recorders or video cassettes. In this study, both teachers and students were able to perceive that podcasts are easily accessible and easy to use. Many websites offer audio podcasts that can be downloaded easily and used in the classroom. Additionally, podcasts were perceived as effective in terms of timing and duration by students. As part of treatment, students were presented with audio listening material for 3 to 5 minutes, during which they can listen to any topic they like. Several studies have shown that listening to podcasts every day for 3-5 minutes is beneficial to students, such as Constantine (2007).

Though students recommend that teachers use podcasts in teaching listening, it is important for teachers to select podcasts that match the lessons' topics. In addition, they must plan ahead and manage the frequency and time of using podcasts. Furthermore, the findings indicated that teachers need to provide appropriate instruction in order to maximize students' learning. A positive result was found in regard to the effectiveness of podcasts in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. However, podcasting's success depends on teachers' competence with such e-tools and the selection of materials in a way that guides students to fulfil the learning objectives. Podcasts, in a nutshell, is a valuable teaching and learning tool. The results established the main hypothesis, which is that podcasts in EFL classes would improve students' listening comprehension skills. This led to the conclusion that it is a reliable and relevant tool for improving EFL learners' listening skills and vocabulary. However, it is important to take into consideration the following recommendations when incorporating podcasts into EFL classroom teaching: time allocation, availability of electronic tools, and technological proficiency of teachers.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Suggestions

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study, implications for teachers and administrators, and recommendations for further research.

5.1 Summary of the study

The main purpose of this study lies in its potential effect on students of English by improving the process of introducing them to podcasts as a new input tool. More specifically, the study focused on showing how important it is to incorporate podcasting in the process of developing listening skills to reduce anxiety among EFL learners, familiarize the students with how to use the language in real-life situations, and learn the language from its native speakers.

The 20 participants in the study were divided into two groups: 10 students as the experimental group, and 10 students as the control group. Quantitative instruments were employed to answer the research questions.

It is clear that the result of using podcasts as a powerful technological tool and useful supplementary means of teaching and learning English as a foreign language has a great positive effect on Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMISIU) EFL beginners. It proved its efficacy on Saudi undergraduate students in English language proficiency in general and listening comprehension in particular.

Furthermore, the data in this study showed that the students' perception towards the use of podcasts in the classroom was generally positive. Podcasts were believed to provide authentic materials for listening practice and create a fun learning environment in the classroom. Since the topics were adjusted with the materials in university courses, students

claimed that it helped them to engage and integrate the lesson they learn in the classroom. Besides, the implementation of podcasts in the classroom was also believed to motivate students to learn English because podcasts not only help students with listening, but also help them with vocabulary, pronunciation, and English accent recognition.

5.2 Recommendations and implications

The findings of the study revealed that the performance of the students who received the treatment was affected positively and the significance of listening to podcasts was shown in their performance in the post-test. Therefore, according to the results, the researcher recommends that: stakeholders, who are the specialists who oversee the curriculums in the ministry of education and the universities and language instructors, should incorporate this valuable learning tool into the curricula as a supplementary tool.

In light of the study's findings that audio-podcasts can improve listening comprehension, it is recommended to consider using this tool as a complementary learning aid, especially since it is convenient for students to learn from anywhere and at any time.

Podcasts' roles for pedagogical use, especially for learning English, can be maximized. There is no doubt that this study is relevant not only to university students but also to teachers and university administration. Learners' attitudes towards new CALL technologies such as podcasting have been shown to be generally positive. Furthermore, language educators need to keep up with different CALL innovations. This is because today's students are demanding the use of technological applications in the classroom, and if educators fail to provide them, they will lose out on the most effective education opportunities. Considering that Saudi EFL teachers are often non-native English speakers, podcasting enables teachers to incorporate dialects both regional and standard into the classroom.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

This experimental study could open the doors to more comprehensive studies as part of further research. A similar experimental study with a larger number of participants may produce more generalizable results. Including more students, and more levels in further studies of podcasting should result in clearer and more reliable results. Moreover, future studies should examine the impact of using audio- podcasts on students over a longer period of time, perhaps one term or more.

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Appendices

Appendix A

The Pre/Post-test

Listen only ONCE to the teacher giving students advice for exams and answer the following questions:

Part 1: Choose the best option to complete these sentences:

1. The teacher wants the students to ...

- a. take notes after she has finished speaking.
- b. take notes while she is speaking.
- c. forget about taking notes.

2. The teacher suggests eating ...

- a. sugary snacks.
- b. only apples.
- c. fruit and cereals.

3. The teacher suggests finding a study place with a lot of ...

- a. light.
- b. space.
- c. books.

4. If students feel stressed they should ...

- a. go to bed.
- b. go out for a walk.
- c. drink some water.

5. Students are advised to ...

- a. select the important things to learn.
- b. read through everything once.
- c. make notes about every topic.

6. The teacher understands that repeating things can be ...

- a. difficult.
- b. uninteresting.
- c. tiring.

7. Students can do past exam papers ...

- a. in the library only.
- b. at home if they take photocopies.
- c. in the after-school study group.

8. The teacher recommends a break of five minutes every ...

- a. hour.
- b. two hours.
- c. thirty minutes.

9. It's important to ...

- a. eat regularly.
- b. sleep when you feel tired.
- c. keep hydrated.

10. The teacher is sure that the students will ...

- a. pass their exams.
- b. fail their exams.
- c. do their best.

Part 2: Write the advice in the correct group:

a. Read your notes again and again.	b. Get very comfortable.
c. Take regular breaks.	d. Try to learn everything.
e. Start by choosing the important things to study.	f. Eat sugary food while you are studying.
g. Photocopy past exam papers.	h. Focus on the details.

Do	Don't
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Part 3: Match the vocabulary with the correct definition

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1..... advice | a. nervous and worried |
| 2..... last but not least | b. to be strongly attracted to doing something |
| 3..... to be tempted | c. a good or full amount |
| 4..... Anxious | d. the act of doing something again |
| 5..... Plenty | e. a recommendation about what someone should do |
| 6..... Repetition | f. a short walk around your local area |
| 7..... a stroll around the block | g. to put something over something so that you can't see it |
| 8..... to cover something up | h. an expression used before the last thing in a list, to say that it is equally as important |

Appendix B

Audio Transcription of the Pre/Post test

Advice for exams:

Morning, everyone. Quiet, please. Right, OK. So, today I'm going to give you some advice to help you prepare for the exams next week. So, make some notes as I'm talking, please. Everybody ready?

Now, while you're studying, eat food that gives you energy. Don't be tempted to eat sweets or drink cola. Sugar won't help you study but fruit and cereals will. Apples, actually, are especially good.

Find a comfortable place with plenty of light when you study. But not 'too' comfortable or you'll fall asleep!

Try and keep a positive mind. It is easier to study when you are positive and relaxed. Now, if you start feeling anxious, have a little break. Go out for a stroll around the block.

Don't try to learn everything. There isn't time. Just choose the 'important' things, the things that'll get you the most points in an exam. And if you aren't sure about this, ask me.

First, learn the main ideas and don't worry too much about the details. If you have time, you can come back later and read the details.

Make notes of these key points and read them, then cover them up and try to remember all the points. Now, it might be boring, but repetition helps you to remember.

Use past exam papers to study. They will help you understand what kind of questions come up. There are plenty of past exam papers in the library. You can photocopy them and take them home.

Take regular breaks while you're studying. A five-minute break every half hour is usually enough. Get some fresh air and stretch your arms and legs. Drink a glass of water too. It's important to keep hydrated.

And, last but not least, good luck! I'm sure you'll all do your best.

Appendix C

Students' Questionnaire

No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I feel that my listening skill improve after listening to Podcasts.					
2	Using podcast enhance my motivation in learning English					
3	I find a difficulty to understand what the speaker says.					
4	Podcast offers authentic materials of English listening					
5	The tasks and activities after podcasts are interesting					
6	Podcasts is portable and easy to use					
7	Podcasts is not effective in terms of time					
8	Podcasts duration is appropriate for us to concentrate on listening					
9	My vocabulary is enriched after listening to podcasts					
10	I recommend teachers to use podcasts in teaching listening					

Appendix D**The Instructors Who Evaluated the Questionnaire and the Pre/Post-Test**

Name	Designation	Institute
Dr. Awad Alshehri	Associate Professor	IMSIU
Dr. Tahani Alshahrani	Assistant Professor	IMSIU
Dr. Hanan Alharbi	Assistant Professor	IMSIU
Dr. Amal Alothman	Assistant Professor	IMSIU
Dr. Lubna Alnaeem	Assistant Professor	IMSIU
Dr. Nouf AlQahtani	Assistant Professor	IMSIU

Appendix E

Approval Letter to Facilitate the Task of the Researcher

	جَامِعَةُ الإمام محمد سعود بن عبدالعزيز
داخلي: 42188	
تاريخ الإنشاء: 1444/06/18	
تاريخ الإرسال: 1444/06/18	
المرفقات: بدون	
رمز الجهة: 033	
	

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

رؤية 2030
المملكة العربية السعودية
KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

الملك عبدالعزيز بن سعود آل سعود
وزارة التعليم
جامعة الإمام محمد سعود بن عبدالعزيز
عمادة البحث العلمي

حفظه الله

سعادة عميد كلية اللغات والترجمة

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته، وبعد:

فأشير إلى رغبة الدارسة/ نوره بنت خالد بن محمد المهوس، إحدى طالبات الدراسات العليا بقسم اللغة الانجليزية، بكلية اللغات والترجمة بجامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية في إجراء بحث بعنوان: " **The Impact of Using Podcast Episodic Series of Spoken-Word Digital Audio to Improve Imam University "EFL Beginners Listening Skills**

ونظراً لأن موضوع البحث يتطلب إجراء دراسة ميدانية والحصول على بيانات علمية وإحصائية. لذا نأمل من سعادتكم التكرم بالتعاون معها في مهمتها لتطبيق أداة الدراسة وتزويدها بالبيانات اللازمة.

وتقبلوا تحياتي وتقديري، والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

عميد البحث العلمي



د. سالم بن علي اليامي

عبدالعزیز دخیل قریضه الجهني

Appendix F

Informed Consent Agreement for Participation in The Research Study

The Impact of Using Podcast to Improve Imam University EFL Beginners Listening Skills- مدى تأثير استخدام الوسائط الصوتية في تحسين مهارة الاستماع لدى طالبات المستويات الأولى في جامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية

عزيزتي المشاركة،،

أنت مدعوة للمشاركة في مشروع بحثي يهدف لقياس مدى تأثير استخدام الوسائط الصوتية في تحسين مهارة الاستماع لدى طالبات المستويات الأولى في جامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية.

علماً أن المشاركة في هذه الدراسة تطوعية ولن تؤثر المشاركة أو عدم المشاركة على الأداء الأكاديمي. كما أن جميع البيانات ستستخدم لأغراض البحث العلمي فقط وستحظى بسرية تامة. كما أنه سيتم تفسير هذه المقدمة على أنها موافقتك الخطية على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

في حال وجود المزيد من الاستفسارات حول الدراسة، يرجى التواصل مع الباحثة عبر البريد الإلكتروني.

نوره المهوس

Nourhalmohawes@gmail.com