Arab World English Journal
INTERNATIONAL PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL ISSN: 2229-9327

Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume 17. Number 1, March 2026 Pp. 469-485
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol17no1.28

The Role of Podcasts in Improving Listening Skills for Students Learning English as a Foreign Language

Viktoriia Bielova
Department of Modern European Languages, Faculty of International Trade and Law, State University of Trade and Economics, 19 Kyoto Str., 02156, Kyiv, Ukraine
Corresponding author: viktoriiastuntud@gmail.com

Tetiana Harbuza
Department of Modern European Languages, Faculty of International Trade and Law, State University of Trade and Economics, 19 Kyoto Str., 02156, Kyiv, Ukraine
Email: garbuzatanya@gmail.com

Alla Nypadymka
Department of Modern European Languages, Faculty of International Trade and Law, State University of Trade and Economics, 19 Kyoto Str., 02156, Kyiv, Ukraine
Email: nypadymka47@knute.edu.ua

Yuliia Radchenko
Department of Modern European Languages, Faculty of International Trade and Law, State University of Trade and Economics, 19 Kyoto Str., 02156, Kyiv, Ukraine
Email: radchenkoyuliia@gmail.com

Hanna Starosta
Department of Modern European Languages, Faculty of International Trade and Law, State University of Trade and Economics, 19 Kyoto Str., 02156, Kyiv, Ukraine
Email: starostahanna@knute.edu.ua

Received:12/02/2025 Accepted:02/28/2026 Published: 03/24/2026

Abstract
The study examines the role of English-language podcasts in improving listening skills and motivation in EFL students. It addresses the need to integrate authentic digital audio into university courses to enhance auditory competence and intrinsic motivation. The aim is to evaluate the effectiveness of a systematic podcast-based programme across proficiency levels and to explore the relationship between listening improvement, vocabulary development, and motivation. The study involved 200 university students whose English proficiency ranged from A1 to C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). A year-long pedagogical experiment was implemented, combining pre- and post-tests of listening and lexical competence with motivation questionnaires. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, paired-samples t-tests and Pearson correlation, and were complemented by qualitative analysis of students' open-ended responses. The findings indicate a statistically significant improvement in listening performance at all proficiency levels, with the strongest gains observed among intermediate learners (A2–B1). Students' self-reported motivation also increased, and improvements in listening were strongly and positively correlated with motivational growth. The study concludes that structured, podcast-based listening cycles are an effective way to integrate authentic media into English as a foreign language (EFL) courses, and recommends further research on long-term retention and differentiated podcast strategies for different proficiency levels.

Keywords: authentic materials, authentic resources, auditory competence, autonomy, communicative competence, digital learning technologies, foreign language competence, learning motivation

How to cite: Bielova, V., Harbuza, T., Nypadymka, A., Radchenko, Y., & Starosta, H. (2026). The Role of Podcasts in Improving Listening Skills for Students Learning English as a Foreign Language. *Arab World English Journal, 17*(1): 469-485. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol17no1.28

Introduction

Listening is a key component of communicative competence, reflecting real language proficiency. However, it often remains secondary in teaching, limited to test-based tasks, which highlights the need for more effective methods. Digital technologies have recently transformed language learning through multimedia and online audio-visual resources that enhance authenticity and flexibility. They support both skill development and learner motivation, though, as Gloria and Galvez (2025) note, without clear methodology they may lead to cognitive overload.

In this context, authentic audio materials—such as interviews, video blogs, and podcasts that reproduce natural speech with its intonation and cultural features—have gained particular attention. They help overcome the limitations of traditional recordings and bring learning closer to real communicative situations. Studies show that digital audio resources support both listening development and students' intrinsic motivation to learn a language (Alhaj & Albahiri, 2020; Khan & Khan, 2024).

Podcasts occupy a special place among such resources. They combine accessibility and authenticity, enable students to independently choose the topic, speed of speech, and format of perception. Bozavlı (2024) confirmed in his experiment that systematic listening to English-language podcasts statistically improves the results of listening tests and increases learning motivation. As Bozavlı notes, "according to the results in the table below, intensive listening to podcasts in a foreign language improves high school English students' language comprehension competence" (Bozavlı, 2024, p. 319). Similar findings are presented by Laiya et al. (2022), who found that regular use of podcasts helps reduce anxiety and overcome the psychological barrier of speech perception. At the same time, Khan & Khan (2024) and Phùng (2024) emphasize that the effect of podcasts may be superficial and short-term without methodological support (pre- and post-listening tasks).

Despite the active integration of digital technologies in education, several gaps remain in the literature. There is a lack of comprehensive research that simultaneously examines the cognitive, emotional, motivational, and methodological effects of podcasts on listening development. In particular, the long-term impact of podcasts, their effectiveness across proficiency levels, and their integration into formal educational settings remain insufficiently explored. These gaps define the academic relevance of the present study.

The hypothesis of the study is that the systematic use of English-language podcasts in the educational process will contribute to a statistically significant improvement in students' listening skills and increase their learning motivation, and the degree of this impact will depend on the level of English proficiency.

The aim of the study is to determine the effectiveness of using English-language podcasts in improving the listening skills of students learning English as a foreign language (EFL), and analyse their impact on learning motivation.

1. Implement an author's programme for the systematic use of English-language podcasts in the educational process.

2. Determine the level of students' listening skills before and after the introduction of podcasts and assess the dynamics of changes.

3. Investigate the impact of systematic listening to podcasts on the level of students' learning motivation.

4. Identify students' attitudes towards podcasts as a means of independent and formal

learning of English listening.

Literature Review

The literature review analyzes current studies on using digital technologies, particularly podcasts, to develop listening skills and increase motivation in foreign language learning. In Vietnam, Hoang (2025) conducted a quasi-experiment with 60 students and found that eight weeks of English-language podcasts significantly improved speech comprehension, while the control group showed minimal progress: "the results indicated a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group's performance" (Hoang, 2025, p. 27). Bao & Nguyen (2025) confirm these findings, noting that authentic podcasts improve perception of different accents and rapid speech and increase learner confidence: "the study results show that the experimental group outperformed the control group in listening scores thus demonstrating podcast-based learning enhances listening proficiency" (Bao & Nguyen, 2025, p. 1). Similarly, Şendağ et al. (2018) showed that repetitive listening, listening aids, and podcast length significantly influence EFL learners' listening performance. However, these studies do not address the long-term sustainability of the results.

Romualdez et al. (2025) in the Philippines also confirmed the positive effects of podcasts: students showed significant improvement from pre-test to post-test, particularly in pronunciation and vocabulary, although the study focused on speaking rather than receptive skills as in Hoang (2025). In Indonesia, Samudro et al. (2025) emphasized the gradual adaptation to podcasts, noting that initial difficulties with pace, accents, and vocabulary eventually led to the development of individual listening strategies and greater learner autonomy. Similar positive effects were reported by Suzani (2020) in Iran and Gonulal (2020) in Turkey, while Şendağ et al. (2024) in Saudi Arabia demonstrated that thematic podcasts can enhance both listening comprehension and learning motivation.

The impact of podcasts on student motivation and autonomy is a central theme of current research. Hoang (2025) showed that eight weeks of podcast use increased listening performance, autonomy, and intrinsic motivation, although the duration of the effect is unclear. Phùng (2024) also found positive student attitudes towards podcasts, but noted difficulties related to accents and vocabulary. As Samudro et al. (2025) emphasize, the effectiveness of podcasts depends on pedagogical design – prior instructions, group interaction, and post-listening reflection, without which they remain a passive medium.

Ukrainian research mainly focuses on the practical use of podcasts in education. Naidionova and Ponomarenko (2018) showed that podcasting improves university students' listening skills, though they note limitations in duration and sample size. Three-stage listening models using BBC and German podcasts were proposed by Buranova (2021) and Štefancik & Stradiotová (2020). Overall, scholars highlight the potential of podcasts but emphasize that their effectiveness depends on sound pedagogical design and the integration of communicative and reflective tasks.

Summarizing the Ukrainian experience, we can note common features with international practices. As in the studies of Bozavlı (2024) or Abdulrahman (2018), domestic authors recognize the motivational potential of podcasts, but place greater emphasis on methodological support. They emphasize that effectiveness depends not only on the authenticity of the material, but also on a clear organization of listening, a system of exercises and subsequent discussion. Without a well-thought-out pedagogical design, even high-quality

content does not guarantee the formation of listening skills.

Methods and materials

The study was conducted at the State University of Trade and Economics (Department of Modern European Languages, Faculty of International Trade and Law) from September 2024 to May 2025. Due to martial law, all classes were held online via Google Meet. An annual podcast-based programme (see Appendix A) lasting 36 weeks and including 64 classes was implemented, using a three-stage listening model (pre-, while-, post-listening). Materials were selected from BBC Learning English, 6 Minute English, TED Talks Daily, and Lingthusiasm. All participants provided informed consent, and an anonymous survey was conducted via Google Forms after the experiment.

Research design

The study was conducted during the 2024–2025 academic year at the Department of Modern European Languages of the State University of Trade and Economics. The experimental programme was implemented in the format of practical English lessons for students of the Faculty of International Trade and Law. A total of 64 lessons were held (two per week, lasting 90 minutes).

Classes were conducted by the study's author, while two independent experts from the Department of Modern European Languages evaluated the results to ensure objectivity. They supervised the pre- and post-tests, verified listening and lexical responses, and administered anonymous motivation questionnaires. This separation of teaching and evaluation increased the reliability and validity of the results.

Stage 1. Diagnostic (September 2024)

Objective: Determine the initial level of listening skills, vocabulary, and learning motivation.

Instruments:

- The CEFR Placement Test (British Council) was used at the diagnostic stage to determine participants' English proficiency levels (A1–C1). The test included listening, grammar, vocabulary, and reading sections, and automatically assigned students to CEFR levels. Based on the results, participants were divided into subgroups according to language proficiency to ensure comparability in the analysis.

- Pre-test on listening, which included excerpts from the BBC Learning English podcasts – 6 Minute English ("Are you a good listener?", "Why do we forget things?") and Lingthusiasm ("How words change meaning over time");

- Questionnaire on motivation to learn English, developed on the basis of the Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) scale, adapted for the online format (20 statements on a 5-point Likert scale).

Testing and questionnaires were conducted online via Google Meet and Google Forms. Students listened to the audio files twice, after which they completed the test tasks and filled out the questionnaire. The duration of the stage was 2 classes.

Stage 2. Formative (October 2024 – April 2025)

Objective: implement a programme of systematic podcast listening and identify its impact on listening, vocabulary, and motivation.

Programme: "Podcast-Based Listening Cycle" – a cycle of classes with three listening

stages (pre-, while-, post-listening).

Class format:

1. Conducted online in groups of 15–20 students via Google Meet.

2. Authentic podcasts were used: BBC Learning English – 6 Minute English (topics: culture, technology, environment, health); TED Talks Daily (short educational speeches); Lingthusiasm (linguistic podcasts for intermediate and advanced levels); Big City Small World (serial audio dramas for levels A1–B1).

Each class included:

- Pre-listening – a short introduction, discussion of the topic, explanation of key vocabulary, content prediction (5–10 min).

- While-listening – listening to the podcast twice (3–6 min) with tasks for global and detailed understanding, highlighting keywords, filling in gaps in the transcript (25–30 min).

- Post-listening – reflective discussion in small groups, written summaries, creative tasks (creating your own short podcast, debates, lexical maps) (30–40 min).

Each month had its own thematic focus (detailed in Appendix A). Examples of podcast episodes within the "Podcast-Based Listening Cycle" programme are listed in Appendix B.

In the middle of the semester (January 2025), an intermediate listening test and a short survey were conducted on changes in motivation and attitude towards podcasts.

In the middle of the semester (January 2025), an intermediate listening test and a short survey on changes in motivation and attitude towards podcasts were conducted.

Stage 3. Control and analytical (May 2025)

Purpose: check the results of the experiment and compare the "before" and "after" indicators.

Tools:

- Post-test on listening (new BBC Learning English podcasts and TED Talks with topics similar to the pre-test);

- Post-experimental motivation questionnaire (identical in structure to the initial one to ensure comparability of results);

- Additional questionnaire with open questions, where students described how podcasts affected their confidence, interest and listening strategies.

Testing was conducted online under the supervision of two independent experts who recorded task timing and listening conditions. Afterward, students completed the motivation questionnaire again to assess changes before and after the experiment. Data were stored in Google Sheets and analyzed in SPSS 29.0 using mean values, paired-samples t-tests, and Pearson correlations between listening, vocabulary, and motivation. All participants provided informed consent. Audio and video recordings were used only for educational purposes. Data reliability was ensured through methodological triangulation (testing, questionnaires, expert observation).

Methods

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used:

1. Pedagogical experiment – implementation of the podcast programme in natural learning conditions (online classes) with recording of results before and after the experiment.

2. Testing of listening skills – using adapted authentic BBC Learning English materials corresponding to levels A1–C1. The level of development of listening skills was determined using an author's test based on authentic podcasts (20 tasks × 5 CEFR levels). Each test assessed

understanding of content, details and lexical and grammatical structures.

3. Student survey – combined, with closed and open questions. Closed questions assessed the level of motivation, autonomy and frequency of podcast use (5-point Likert scale). Open questions concerned the perception of podcasts, difficulties and impact on learning. Answers were grouped by thematic analysis.

For example:

- "What aspect of podcasts was most useful to you?"
- "How did podcasts affect your motivation?"
- "What difficulties did you encounter while listening?"

4. Statistical analysis was used to compare the mean scores before and after the experiment. The correlation coefficient r between the increase in listening skills and learning motivation was also calculated. The results were considered statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Sample

The experiment involved 200 students of the Faculty of International Trade and Law of the State University of Trade and Economics, who studied English as a mandatory foreign subject. The sample was formed on the principle of voluntary participation from among 320 students who were previously informed about the purpose of the study through an announcement on the university's educational platform. The students were able to join of their own free will after familiarizing themselves with the terms of participation and providing written (electronic) consent.

The sample consisted of 2nd–3rd year undergraduates (68%) and 1st year graduate students (32%) studying practical English with sufficient motivation to participate. Including graduate students enabled comparison across intermediate and advanced levels. Other cohorts were excluded due to internships and thesis commitments limiting participation. The sample covered economic, legal, and international majors, enhancing diversity and generalizability of the results.

The total number of participants ensured the representativeness of the data with an error of no more than ±5% at a confidence interval of 95%. This sample structure made it possible to investigate the effectiveness of podcasts at different levels of language training — from elementary (A1–A2) to advanced (C1) — and to assess the universality of the author's programme for students with different levels of English proficiency.

Instruments

The following tools were used for data collection, processing, and analysis:

- Google Forms – for questionnaires and obtaining primary data;
- SPSS 29.0 – for statistical analysis (calculation of t, p, r);
- Excel – for graphing (dynamics of motivation, frequency of independent listening);
- CEFR Placement Test (British Council) – for determining levels of language competence;
- Authentic podcasts BBC Learning English, 6 Minute English, TED Talks Daily – as educational material for the experiment.

The statistical significance of the difference between the indicators before and after the experiment was checked through the Student's t-test for dependent samples (paired samples t-test) was used. Calculations were performed in the SPSS 29.0 programme according to the

formula: $t = \bar{D} / (SD / \sqrt{n})$

where:

$\bar{D}$ – arithmetic mean of the differences between the indicators "before" and "after" the experiment;

SD – standard deviation of the differences;

n – number of observations in the sample.

The level of statistical significance was determined by a two-sided criterion at $p < 0.05$ (significance), $p < 0.01$ (high significance).

The relationship between listening and learning motivation was identified by using Pearson linear correlation coefficient:

$$r = \Sigma(x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y}) / \sqrt{[\Sigma(x_i - \bar{x})^2 \Sigma(y_i - \bar{y})^2]}$$

where x_i – changes in listening indicators, y_i – changes in motivation, $\bar{x}$ і $\bar{y}$ – their average values.

So, the applied methodology combined empirical, statistical, and analytical approaches, which allowed for a reasonable assessment of the effectiveness of podcasts in developing listening skills and enhancing student motivation.

Results

The results are presented in Table 1. All groups showed an increase in average listening scores after the program, indicating an overall positive trend.

Table 1. *Dynamics of listening scores of students of different levels of English proficiency (n = 200)*

Listening level	Before the experiment (M±SD)	After the experiment (M±SD)	t(df)	p-value
A1	46.3 ± 8.1	58.7 ± 7.9	4.85 (39)	< 0.01
A2	53.1 ± 9.0	69.4 ± 8.5	6.12 (38)	< 0.001
B1	61.2 ± 8.8	79.5 ± 7.3	6.87 (40)	< 0.001
B2	70.8 ± 7.6	85.2 ± 6.1	5.74 (39)	< 0.001
C1	78.9 ± 6.4	89.0 ± 5.2	4.02 (39)	< 0.01

Source: Developed by the author

A statistically significant improvement in listening performance was observed at all CEFR levels after podcast use (all $p < 0.01$). The highest t-values were recorded at A2 and B1 ($t(38)=6.12$; $t(40)=6.87$), indicating the strongest effect for intermediate learners. Although results at A1 and C1 were also significant ($p < 0.01$), the effect was less pronounced due to beginners' limited vocabulary and the lower growth potential of advanced learners. The increase in t-values from A1 to B1, followed by a decline after B2, suggests an optimal impact zone at intermediate levels (A2–B1). Overall, podcasts demonstrate a consistent positive effect on auditory competence across proficiency levels, although the degree of improvement varies.

Table 2 shows the dynamics of lexico-analytical progress (lexical enrichment and contextual understanding). It illustrates that systematic listening to podcasts contributes to the expansion of vocabulary and the ability to analyse the language context, which is a factor in the development of listening.

Table 2. *Dynamics of lexical-analytical progress*

Lexical level	Vocabulary Pre-test (M±SD)	Vocabulary Post-test (M±SD)	Vocabulary Δ (%)	Analytical Pre-test (M±SD)	Analytical Post-test (M±SD)	Analytical Δ (%)
A1	45.0 ± 9.0	60.0 ± 8.5	33,3 %	40.0 ± 8.0	59.0 ± 7.9	47,5 %
A2	55.0 ± 8.8	71.0 ± 8.0	29,1 %	50.0 ± 9.0	70.0 ± 8.3	40,0 %
B1	60.0 ± 9.5	78.0 ± 7.5	30,0 %	55.0 ± 8.6	78.0 ± 7.4	41,8 %
B2	70.0 ± 7.9	84.0 ± 6.8	20,0 %	68.0 ± 7.7	86.0 ± 6.2	26,5 %
C1	78.0 ± 6.5	88.0 ± 5.7	12,8 %	76.0 ± 6.3	89.0 ± 5.5	17,1 %

Source: Developed by the author

The tables indicate clear improvement in vocabulary and analytical competence after podcast-based learning. The greatest gains were at A1–A2 (vocabulary +29–33%, analytical skills +40–48%), likely due to authentic audio exposure and high motivation. At B1, the most balanced progress was observed (vocabulary +30%, analytical competence +41.8%), suggesting peak effectiveness. At B2–C1, gains remain positive but more moderate (vocabulary +13–20%, analytical competence +17–26%), indicating a saturation effect. Overall, podcasts effectively enhance cognitive and metacognitive listening skills, especially from beginner to intermediate levels.

According to an expert survey, learning motivation (5-point Likert scale) increased significantly in all groups from 54–78% to 62–84%, confirming the effectiveness of the podcast-based programme. These results reflect students' self-assessment of motivation rather than academic performance (Figure 1).

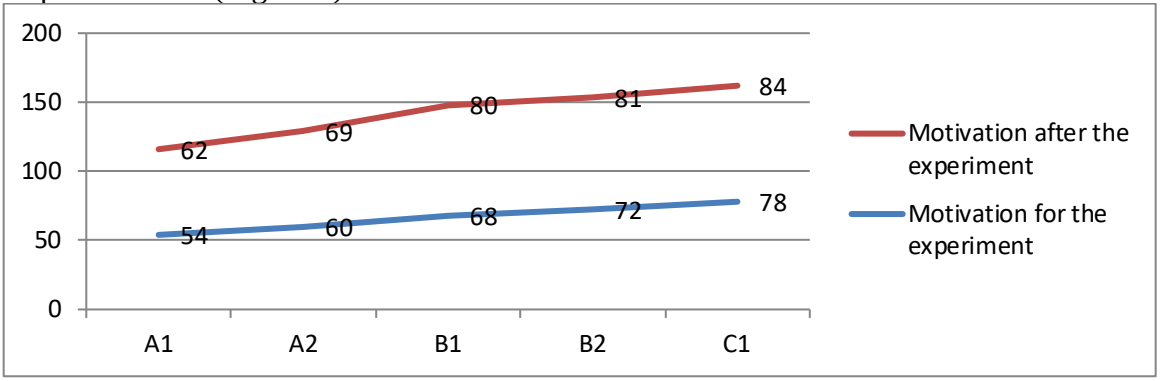


Figure 1. Dynamics of students' learning motivation before and after the experimental programme of using podcasts
Source: Developed by the authors

The nature of the relationship between the cognitive (listening) and affective (motivation) and lexical components was clarified through a comparative analysis of the relative increases of both indicators. This enabled finding out to what extent the increase in understanding of authentic English-language material using podcasts is accompanied by an increase in students' intrinsic motivation (Table 3).

Table 3. *Correlation between the growth of listening, lexical competence, and motivation*

CEFR level	Δ listening, %	Δ motivation, %	Δ vocabulary, %	Interpretation
A1	+12.4	+8.0	+10.2	Beginners demonstrate moderate growth in motivation, listening comprehension,

				and vocabulary thanks to authentic podcasts.
A2	+16.3	+9.0	+13.5	Steady growth in both indicators. Everyday vocabulary is activated.
B1	+18.3	+12.0	+15.0	The highest progress in language perception, motivation, and acquisition of new vocabulary; podcasts increase listeners' confidence and autonomy.
B2	+14.4	+9.0	+11.8	The effect persists, but the rate of growth decreases somewhat; a stable strategy for understanding the context is formed
C1	+10.1	+6.0	+8.5	Less pronounced effect, mainly supportive: students improve accuracy and variability of speech.

Source: Developed by the authors

The results show a positive relationship between improvements in listening skills and learning motivation among students who used English-language podcasts. Positive dynamics were observed at all CEFR levels, with the greatest progress at B1 (listening +18.3%, motivation +12.0%), indicating that intermediate learners benefit most. Moderate growth was recorded at A2 and B2 (+16.3% and +9.0%), while effects were weaker at A1 and C1 due to beginners' limited experience and motivational saturation among advanced learners. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.71$; $p < 0.01$) confirms a strong link between cognitive and affective aspects of language learning, suggesting that podcasts support both listening development and learner motivation.

To further explore students' perceptions, an open-ended questionnaire was conducted. The responses revealed both quantitative trends and qualitative shifts in attitudes toward language learning, autonomy, challenges, and motivation. The summarized results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Students' open answers regarding the impact of podcasts on the process of learning English*

Item No.	Questionnaire items	Students' generalized responses (quotes / thematic groups)	Interpretation of results
1	What aspect of the podcasts did you find most useful?	"Lively sound of the language" (42%), "different accents" (27%), "new words with context" (22%), "convenience of the format – you can listen anywhere" (9%)	Students appreciate the authenticity and mobility of podcasts, which increases motivation to listen.
2	How has your perception of the English language changed since participating in the programme?	"I understand fast speech more easily" (38%), "I am less afraid of listening to native speakers" (31%), "I learned to recognize intonations" (19%), "I started listening to podcasts on my own" (12%)	A decrease in anxiety and the formation of active listening skills have been noted - typical cognitive shifts when working with authentic materials.
3	Have the podcasts influenced your motivation to learn English? How?	"I want to improve my understanding so that I don't have to use subtitles" (29%), "it became interesting to listen to topics that are close to me"	Enhanced motivation is internal — listening to podcasts is associated with the content and autonomy of learning.

		(33%), "I see real progress" (25%), "I now listen to podcasts even outside of class" (13%)	
4	What difficulties did you encounter when working with podcasts?	"Speech too fast" (46%), "unfamiliar words" (28%), "hard to concentrate on long releases" (17%), "technical problems" (9%)	Typical listening barriers have been identified; students need a gradual increase in the complexity of the material and self-regulation strategies (re-listening, notes, etc.).
5	Which podcasts were the most interesting for you?	"BBC Learning English" (41%), "6 Minute English" (24%), "TED Talks Daily" (18%), "Lingthusiasm" (10%), "Other (news, culture, education)" (7%)	There is a clear advantage of educational formats, but interest in popular science and cultural topics is growing - this opens up prospects for expanding the programme.
6	How would you assess your own progress after the course?	"Speech comprehension has improved significantly" (44%), "started to understand jokes/cultural references" (21%), "pronunciation has improved" (19%), "confidence in communication has increased" (16%)	Qualitative results confirm quantitative indicators of increased listening and motivation, also recording the development of language confidence.

Source: Developed by the authors (selection of quotes from open-ended questionnaires)

Students' responses indicate that podcasts have both cognitive (improved language comprehension) and affective (increased interest and autonomy) effects. A key outcome was the shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, reflected in students' independent listening based on personal interest. This confirms the effectiveness of the programme, which relies on the regular use of authentic materials of varying complexity and topics.

Discussion

The results showed a statistically significant improvement in listening: the average comprehension score increased from 67% to 83%. This aligns with the findings of Ali & Khalil (2025), who reported higher scores in the group trained with the HURIER model (12.45/15 vs. 10.02/15; $p < 0.05$). After implementing the podcast-based programme, students demonstrated greater confidence in understanding spoken English, indicating increased motivation. Consistent with Alzamil (2021) and Al-khresheh (2020), listening remains one of the most challenging aspects of language learning due to factors such as rapid speech, pronunciation, anxiety, limited vocabulary, and lack of background knowledge. Our results confirm these barriers but also show that structured listening practice helps students overcome them.

Recent years have seen a surge in interest in innovative methods and digital technologies in listening instruction. Our study is consistent with previous work from 2020–2025: Alzamil (2021) outlined difficulties in language comprehension without suggesting ways to overcome them, while we tested an effective method with measurable progress. Similarly, Bozavlı (2024) found that 12 weeks of podcasting improved listening skills and motivation. The regular use of authentic materials in our study also increased students' confidence and engagement.

Our findings support the effectiveness of video materials for listening development, as shown by Gloria & Galvez (2025), whose survey of 536 Filipino students reported

improvements in vocabulary (4.16/5) and comprehension (4.09/5). However, our results indicate that passive viewing alone is insufficient: sustainable progress occurs when listening is combined with discussion, reflection, and vocabulary work. This partly contrasts with Gloria & Galvez (2025), who consider video content a sufficient stimulus. Furthermore, Thatphaiboon & Sappapan (2022) found that a fully remote flipped-classroom format reduced concentration due to fatigue, whereas in our experiment podcasts combined with short interactive activities helped maintain motivation. Overall, these findings suggest that the effectiveness of digital resources depends primarily on pedagogical design rather than the media format itself.

Our findings are consistent with those of Ali & Khalil (2025), who showed that authentic recordings within the HURIER model significantly improve listening comprehension ($\eta^2 = 0.18$). As they explain, the model includes six processes—hearing, understanding, remembering, interpreting, evaluating, and responding—which form a structured framework for developing listening skills (Ali & Khalil, 2025, p. 312). Similarly, our study used diverse authentic materials that enhanced learning effectiveness in a mixed format. The results also support a metacognitive approach to listening training: strategies such as prediction, self-monitoring, and evaluation helped students develop their own ways of processing audio texts. Comparable findings were reported by Fan and Tangkiengsirisin (2025), whose Thai students showed progress in both listening and metacognitive awareness. As noted by Al-Khresheh & Alruwaili (2023), strategy use and metacognitive awareness significantly influence listening performance. Compared with previous studies, our research addresses several limitations. Earlier work often relied on small samples (87 and 82 participants; Ali & Khalil, 2025; Alzamil, 2021) or mainly on questionnaires without objective performance measures (Alshraideh, 2021; Alzamil, 2021). By contrast, our study involved a larger and more diverse sample and recorded quantitative progress before and after the experiment. While Alutaybi & Alfares (2023) examined only teachers' expectations regarding media use, our results empirically demonstrate that media-based learning can significantly improve oral comprehension.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed numerous challenges to distance learning in listening, both technical and psychological. More than half of students were dissatisfied with online listening lessons (Al-Harbi & Mirza, 2024). We addressed these concerns by using interactive platforms, subtitled videos, and short audio segments. Boltiziar & Munkova (2024) observed that YouTube learning with subtitles helped overcome accents, rapid speech, and unfamiliar vocabulary; we found similar results, with students reporting that subtitles made it easier to understand the speech. Similarly, Alzamil (2022) found that students viewed subtitles as a useful and engaging learning tool. So, combining listening with visual support and discussions compensates for the shortcomings of purely distance or audio-based methods.

The study confirms the importance and complexity of listening training (Jose, 2023; Khan et al., 2024) and demonstrates an effective approach to its improvement. Combining authentic audio, visual support, flipped classroom elements, and strategy training significantly enhances listening comprehension. The findings address a gap by providing empirical evidence from a Ukrainian sample and practical classroom recommendations. Despite limitations in sample and duration, the results show that modern technologies and well-designed pedagogy effectively support listening development and communicative competence (Alhaj & Albahiri, 2025; Fan & Tangkiengsirisin, 2025; Ji & Li, 2022).

Unlike previous studies, this research advances in three key ways. First, it tests a comprehensive 36-week podcast listening programme in Ukraine, integrating authentic BBC,

TED, and Lingthusiasm materials within a pre-while-post listening framework. Second, it provides a robust assessment of listening, motivation, and lexical development with independent expert evaluation, ensuring statistical reliability. Third, it introduces the integrated Podcast-Based Listening Cycle, combining authentic input, reflection, and creative tasks, which can be adapted for external assessments to enhance students' foreign language competence.

Limitations

The results should be interpreted with several limitations. First, the experiment lasted one academic year, which does not allow a full assessment of the long-term impact of podcasts on the retention and automation of listening skills. Second, the sample consisted of students from the State University of Trade and Economics, which limits generalizability to other educational contexts. Third, motivation indicators were based on self-assessment and therefore may contain a degree of subjectivity. However, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods helped reduce these risks and strengthen the reliability of the results.

Recommendations

The study results provide grounds for several methodological recommendations for using podcasts in teaching listening. English-language podcasts should be systematically integrated into the learning process with gradual complexity according to CEFR levels. For beginners (A1–A2), short adapted podcasts with subtitles and clear structure are recommended to reduce anxiety and develop basic listening strategies. For levels B1–C1, authentic materials from real communicative contexts (e.g., BBC Learning English, TED Talks, thematic podcasts) should be used to increase cognitive complexity and promote critical thinking. Podcasts should be combined with a three-stage listening model (pre-, while-, post-listening) involving prediction, analytical comprehension, and reflection, which supports attention, vocabulary development, and intercultural competence. It is also advisable to diversify podcast genres to maintain interest and strengthen intrinsic motivation. Future research should examine the long-term effects of podcast use, optimal frequency in curricula, and differentiated strategies for learners at different proficiency levels.

Conclusion

The study confirmed that the systematic use of English-language podcasts is an effective means of improving listening, motivation, and lexical competence of students learning English as a foreign language. All groups demonstrated a statistically significant increase in the level of oral comprehension ($p < 0.01$), learning motivation, and expansion of active vocabulary. The highest results were observed among students at level B1: the increase in listening was +18.3%, motivation +12.0%, and vocabulary +15.0%. The high correlation coefficient between the development of listening and vocabulary ($r = 0.74$; $p < 0.01$) indicates that regular listening to authentic podcasts stimulates not only receptive, but also analytical processes of linguistic thinking.

Correlation analysis revealed a strong relationship between listening, lexical competence, and motivation: improved understanding of authentic speech is associated with higher motivation and vocabulary growth. Podcasts therefore function not only as listening training tools but also as a means of fostering linguistic autonomy, analytical thinking, and intrinsic interest in language learning. The study's academic contribution lies in its integrated assessment of cognitive, motivational, and lexical-analytical outcomes, while its practical value

is the phased programme Podcast-Based Listening Cycle for university language courses. The findings may inform online course design, curriculum development, and teacher training in the use of authentic media resources. Future research should explore the effects of podcasts on pronunciation, critical thinking, intercultural competence, and the long-term sustainability of learning outcomes.

Funding: This research is not funded.
Acknowledgments: Not applicable.
Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.
Authenticity: This manuscript is an original work
Artificial Intelligence Statement: AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

About the Authors:

Viktoriia Bielova has more than 25 years of teaching experience in the university and is the author of more than 100 scientific works (articles, collective monographs, textbooks etc.). Field of scientific interests: management in education, modern methods of teaching foreign languages, use of advanced technologies in learning foreign languages. She is a participant of the international scientific project SWorld, a member of the organizing committee (International scientific and practical conferences and symposia held within the framework of the scientific project SWorld) and a member of the editorial board of 3 international scientific journals (included in the scientometric databases Index Copernicus, Google Scholar): "Scientific look into the future" (Ukraine); "Modern engineering and innovative technologies" (Germany); "SWorld Journal" (Bulgaria). ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5427-8943.

Tetiana Harbuza has more than 22 years of teaching experience at the university. Her field of specialisation, research interests, publications and presentations cover a wide range of topics related to foreign language education and professional communication. Among these are intercultural communication, the use of modern technologies and teaching methods in foreign language instruction, the integration of IT tools in learning and teaching foreign languages, and distance learning. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000- 0002-2346-5156

Alla Nypadymka has more than 20 years of university teaching experience. Her research expertise encompasses linguopoetics, intercultural communication, and innovative technologies in foreign language education. She is the author of 3 monographs, over 40 articles, and over 20 educational publications. Her key research areas include foreign language communicative competence development, student motivation strategies, IT technologies in English language learning, and contemporary pedagogical approaches in language acquisition. Her work contributes to bridging theory and practice in modern language teaching methodologies. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3267-6323

Yuliia Radchenko is a Senior Lecturer of the Department of Modern European Languages at the State University of Trade and Economics. She has extensive experience in teaching English in higher education institutions. Her research interests focus on modern methods of teaching foreign languages, the use of advanced technologies in language education, distance learning, and intercultural communication. Her professional activities are focused on the integration of

innovative digital tools into the process of teaching English for professional and academic purposes. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6534-4360

Hanna Starosta is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Modern European Languages, SUTE, Kyiv. Hanna Starosta possesses over 20 years of pedagogical experience in higher education. Her scholarly portfolio comprises more than 40 scientific and methodological publications. The scope of her scientific inquiry encompasses gender linguistics, articulatory and auditory phonetics, contemporary translation studies, and the methodology of teaching languages for specific purposes (LSP). ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3746-4648

References

Abdulrahman, T., Basalama, N., & Widodo, M. R. (2018). The impact of podcasts on EFL students' listening comprehension. *International Journal of Language Education, 2*(2), 23–33. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v8n6p122

Alhaj, A., & Albahiri, H. M. (2020). Using Pedagogic Video to Enhance English for Specific Purposes Teaching Program for Saudi University Students: A New Prospective Approach. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL*, (*6*), 302–317. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call6.20

Al-Harbi, N. S., & Mirza, N. A. (2024). Investigating Listening Comprehension Challenges in Online EFL Courses: Perspectives from University Students. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching, 13*(5), 199–218. https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v13n5p199

Ali, L. M., & Khalil, E. R. (2025). HURIER Model and the Listening Comprehension of Iraqi EFL Preparatory School Students. *Arab World English Journal, 16*(1), 309–319. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol16no1.19

Al-Khresheh, M. H. (2020). The Impact of Cultural Background on Listening Comprehension of Saudi EFL Students. *Arab World English Journal, 11*(3), 349–371. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.22

Al-Khresheh, M. H., & Alruwaili, S. F. (2023). Metacognition in Listening Comprehension: Analyzing Strategies and Gender Differences among Saudi EFL University Students. *Cogent Social Sciences, 10*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2291954

Alshraideh, D. S. (2021). EFL Learners' and Teachers' Perception toward the Use of Online Videos in EFL Classes. *Arab World English Journal, 12*(1), 215–228. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no1.15

Alutaybi, M. M., & Alfares, N. S. (2023). A Prospective Study for Exploring Saudi EFL Learners' Strategic Listening Skills through Netflix from Teachers' Perspectives. *Arab World English Journal, 14*(4), 300–311. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol14no4.18

Alzamil, A. (2022). Saudi Students' Attitudes to the Use of Subtitles to Improve Their Listening Skills. *Arab World English Journal, 13*(1), 486–494. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol13no1.32

Alzamil, J. (2021). Listening Skills: Important but Difficult to Learn. *Arab World English Journal, 12*(3), 366–374. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no3.25

Bao, P. T., & Nguyen, B. N. D. T. (2025). The Use of Podcasts in Enhancing Listening Comprehension Among EFL Learners: A Case Study at Dong A Polytechnic College. *MSI Journal of Arts, Law and Justice, 2*(6), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15675264

Boltiziar, J., & Munková, D. (2024). Emergency Remote Teaching of Listening Comprehension Using YouTube Videos with Captions. *Education and Information Technologies, 29*, 11367–11383. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-12282-7

Bozavlı, E. (2024). The effects of intensive English podcast listening on high school students' comprehension skills and impact on learning motivations. *Arab World English Journal, 15*(1), 314–326. https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol15no1.20

Buranova, A. (2021). The use of podcasts in German language classes during listening training. *Current Issues in the Humanities, 38*(1), 134–139. https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4863/38-1-20

Fan, Y., & Tangkiengsirisin, S. (2025). Translanguaging and Metacognitive Instruction: Effects on Listening and Metacognitive Awareness in CFL Learners. *Arab World English Journal, 16*(2), 215–232. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol16no2.13

Gloria, D. S., Galvez, E. P. (2025). The Impact of Watching English Shows on Enhancing English Language Acquisition Among Undergraduate Students. *Arab World English Journal, 16*(3), 407–425. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol16no3.25

Gonulal, T. (2020). Improving Listening Skills with Extensive Listening Using Podcasts and Vodcasts. *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research, 7*(1), 311–320. https://doi.org/10.33200/ijcer.685196

Hoang, N. (2025). The Effectiveness of Using Podcasts to Improve English Listening Skills of First-Year Students. *Journal of Knowledge Learning and Science Technology, 4*(3), 26–41. https://doi.org/10.60087/jklst.vol4.n3.003

Ji, S., Qin, X., & Li, K. (2022). A Systematic Review of Foreign Language Listening Anxiety: Focus on the Theoretical Definitions and Measurements. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.859021

Jose, J. (2023). Bottom-up Processing to Help Learners with Decoding: Planning, Implementing, and Reflecting on a Lesson. *Arab World English Journal, 14*(1), 280–299. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol14no1.18

Khan, M. O., & Khan, S. (2024). Influence of Online versus Traditional Learning on EFL Listening Skills: A Blended Mode Classroom Perspective. *Heliyon, 10*(7). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e28510

Laiya, R. E., Khasanah, U., Sulistiani, I., Sudrajat, D., & Miswan, M. (2022). Podcast-Mediated Students Learning English in the Second Grade of Senior High School. *Qalamuna: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Agama, 14*(2), 1011–1024. https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v14i2.3749

Naidionova, A. S., & Ponomarenko, L. A. (2018). Use of the podcasting technology to develop students' listening skills. *Information Technologies and Learning Tools, 63*(1), 177–185. https://doi.org/10.33407/itlt.v63i1.1962

Phùng, T. N. (2024). Enhancing Listening Comprehension Through Podcasts: Perspectives of English Majors in Vietnam. *International Journal of Science and Management Studies, 7*(3), 330–335. https://doi.org/10.51386/25815946/ijsms-v7i3p125

Romualdez, S. B., Baring, D. M. P., Obediente Alvia, E. T., Talo, A. V., & Maghamil, M. C. (2025). English Podcasts: Their Impact on the Listening Skills of Students. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, 7*(3), 102–113. https://doi.org/10.32996/jeltal.2025.7.3.11

Samudro, J., Miftah, M. Z., & Qamariah, Z. (2025). Exploring the Use of Podcasts as Learning

Media in Enhancing Listening Skills: EFL Students' Perceptions. *Jurnal Riset Rumpun Ilmu Pendidikan, 4*(2), 323–332. https://doi.org/10.55606/jurripen.v4i2.5613

Şendağ, S., Caner, M., Gedik, N., & Toker, S. (2024). Enhancing language proficiency through mobile extensive listening and podcasting: A multifaceted approach to metacognition and critical thinking. *Thinking Skills and Creativity, 54*, 101656. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2024.101656

Şendağ, S., Gedik, N., & Toker, S. (2018). Impact of repetitive listening, listening-aid and podcast length on EFL podcast listening. *Computers & Education, 125*, 273–283. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2018.06.019

Štefancik, R., & Stradiotová, E. (2020). Using web 2.0 tool podcast in teaching foreign languages. *Advanced Education, 14*, 46–55. https://doi.org/10.20535/2410-8286.198209

Suzani, S. M. (2020). Investigating the Effect of Podcasting on Iranian TEFL Students' Listening Comprehension Improvement and Motivation. *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 29*(5), 413–425. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-020-00526-w

Thatphaiboon, R., & Sappapan, P. (2022). The Effects of the Flipped Classroom through Online Video Conferencing on EFL Learners' Listening Skills. *Arab World English Journal, 13*(3), 89–105. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol13no3.6

Appendices

Appendix A: Plan for the experimental programme Podcast-Based Listening Cycle

Month	Week 1–2 (2 sessions)	Week 3–4 (2 sessions)	Main Focus
September	Introduction to podcasts; monologue episodes; vocabulary; basic test	Listening and retelling monologues; self-analysis	Orientation and monologues
October	Interview podcasts; key ideas; notes	Interview role-playing; testing	Interviews
November	Conversational podcasts; two hosts; speaker positions	Pair discussions; preparing questions	Conversational formats
December	Narrative and investigative series; plot prediction	Constructing a chronology; analysing a story	Storytelling
January	Round tables; points of view; arguments	Debate and summarizing; written report	Discussions
February	Theatrical podcasts; characters; plot	Role-playing; dramatic reading	Audiodramas
March	Hybrid episodes; analysis of different segments	Preparing transcripts; mini podcast	Hybrid Formats
April	Planning your own podcast; script	Recording and editing; peer evaluation	Podcast Creation
May	Cross-cultural topics; hearing	Presentations; reflective essays	Intercultural competence

	about different countries		
	Professional podcasts (science, business); glossary	Discussing applications; terminology	Professional vocabulary
	Independent podcast selection; journaling	Online discussion; self-assessment	Autonomy
	Repeating difficult episodes; portfolio	Summary test; future plan	Generalization

Source: Developed by the authors

Appendix B: Examples of podcast episodes within the Podcast-Based Listening Cycle programme

Focus	Examples of English-language podcasts (short title + hyperlink)
orientation and monologues	*Angelina Jolie, New York City and celebrity charity* (British Council) learnenglish.britishcouncil.org
interviews	*Does your CV shine?* – BBC Learning English 6-Minute English bbc.co.uk
conversational formats	*Are you big on small talk?* – BBC 6-Minute English bbc.co.uk – link
discussions and debates	*Debating veganism: How to change someone's opinion* – BBC 6-Minute English bbc.co.uk
audiodramas	*Meeting friends* – Big City Small World learnenglish.britishcouncil.org
hybrid formats	*We have a mission!* – Big City Small World learnenglish.britishcouncil.org
intercultural competence	*Cheer up!* – Big City Small World learnenglish.britishcouncil.org *Episode 12: Good news and bad news* – Big City Small World learnenglish.britishcouncil.org
professional vocabulary	*Conspiracy theories* – BBC 6-Minute English bbc.co.uk *Episode 09: Aaagghhh... my injured leg!* – Big City Small World learnenglish.britishcouncil.org