



# Developing Listening Ability Through Podcast for Secondary Level Students in Pakistan

## Research Article

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## Abstract

Listening comprehension is a fundamental skill in second language acquisition, with learners often revisiting and reflecting upon the content they hear to extract maximum value from it. In this context, it is imperative for educators to possess a comprehensive understanding of media that can enhance and streamline the listening process for students. This research endeavors to introduce the integration of podcasts into the English listening curriculum for grade 8 students at Govt. MC Boys Central Model High School, Millet Colony, Rawalpindi. To achieve this, a mixed-methods approach incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies was employed, with group interviews serving as a key component of the research. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to assess the impact of podcast incorporation on students' listening skills. The findings of this study reveal a significant improvement in students' listening abilities after the implementation of podcasts, underscoring the effectiveness of this innovative pedagogical approach. Additionally, this research sheds light on the advantages and challenges associated with utilizing podcasts in an educational context, offering valuable insights from a pedagogical perspective. The incorporation of podcasts into



the English listening curriculum represents a promising avenue for enhancing language learning and teaching strategies in the contemporary classroom.

**Keywords:** listening comprehension, podcast, teaching, second language acquisition

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## **1. Introduction**

Listening comprehension is a crucial skill in language learning, as it plays a pivotal role in achieving effective communication objectives (Rost, 1994). Listening, often hailed as the gateway to language acquisition, provides learners with essential input and contributes significantly to their language awareness (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). This importance extends to both English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms (Chastain, 1998).

Teaching is a dynamic endeavor aimed at creating an environment that fosters and facilitates learning progress (Willingham, 2017). It is not merely the act of transferring knowledge but a reciprocal process involving both students and instructors. As Amidon (1967) contends, teaching is a dynamic, interactive conversation between teachers and students, guiding them through structured activities. Brown highlights that teaching entails imparting knowledge, providing support, direction, and understanding, ultimately aiding students in developing listening skills. In this context, the fundamental principle in teaching listening is that listening materials should not be visually presented, emphasizing the auditory aspect.

Listening, as Helgsen (2003) suggests, serves the overarching goal of developing proficiency in a language. Harmer (2007) distinguishes two theories of listening: intensive listening, focusing on vocabulary and grammar acquisition, and extensive listening, which is done for enjoyment and leisure.

The role of a teacher in the listening process is multifaceted, as articulated by Machackova (2009). A teacher should provide clear instructions, offer constructive feedback, structure listening lessons and activities, offer valuable advice, and help students navigate issues, especially concerning grammar and vocabulary. Acting as a facilitator and motivator, teachers should guide learners in their tasks, offering indispensable support.

In summary, a well-guided approach from the teacher can empower learners to overcome challenges and enhance their language learning experience.

### **1.1 Podcasts for Developing Listening Skills**

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) represents a modern technological paradigm with significant relevance in language teaching. Computers and mobile phones have become integral tools for learning and communication. With access to reliable Wi-Fi and 4G internet, students can harness the potential of these technologies. Hence, teachers should leverage this digital landscape in their teaching methods.

In this study, podcasts were chosen as a means to develop listening abilities. The versatility of podcast applications, compatible with smartphones and computers, enhances accessibility. For this research,

the podcast application was downloaded in the school's computer lab, enabling students to utilize podcasts for enhancing their listening skills.

Hornby (2010) elucidates that the term "podcast" is a fusion of "pod" from iPod and "cast" from broadcast. Lefferty, Mur and Walch (2006) define podcasts as audio and video recordings shared on the internet, available to the general public through audio syndication feeds.

Constantine (2007) underscores that podcasts are internet-based audio applications, readily accessible on computers, cell phones, and tablets, providing an authentic source of learning. Sloan notes that podcasts represent a modern innovation with myriad applications, particularly in the classroom. Fox (2008) further elaborates on the usefulness of podcasts in English language learning, suggesting steps to maximize their potential:

- Encouraging learners to listen for pleasure.
- Motivating learners and providing clear instructions for using podcasts.
- Recommending short or mini videos for listening.

## **1.2 British Council Podcast Introduction**

The British Council, renowned for its contributions to English language learning, offers various applications, including movies, quizzes, games, and podcasts. The British Council's podcast application, with a notable rating of 4.7, enjoys widespread use. This application can be easily downloaded from the Google Play Store, compatible with both computers and smartphones. Its features cater to various aspects of listening. Podcasts are downloadable, with offline access, enabling listeners to manage storage space effectively. New podcasts are consistently added, ensuring an abundance of listening material. The application covers diverse topics, allowing listeners to choose content according to their interests. Moreover, it features pitch control, enabling listeners to adjust audio speed for better comprehension, and supports background playing, allowing listeners to continue listening even when the screen is turned off.



Image 1

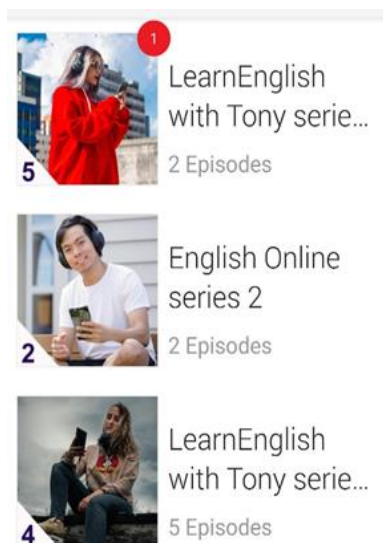


Image 2

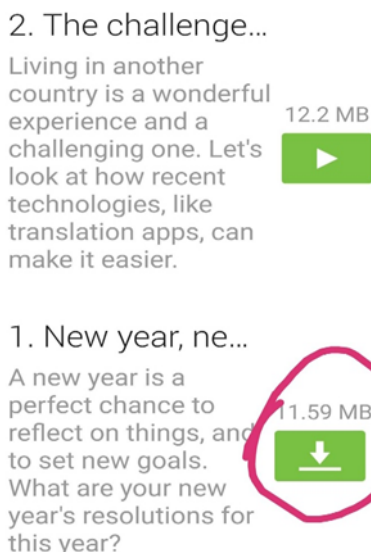


Image 3

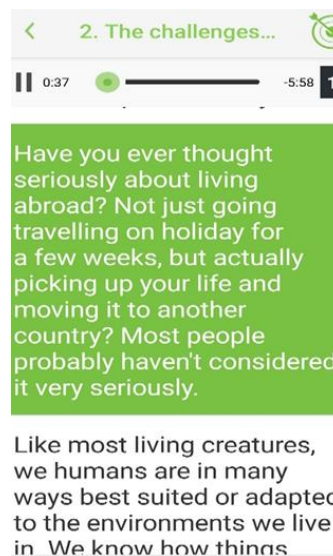


Image 4

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

This study addresses the issue of inadequate English as a Second Language (ESL) listening comprehension skills among secondary school students at Govt. MC Boys Central Model High School, Millet Colony, Rawalpindi. The research aims to investigate the potential benefits of utilizing podcasts to enhance ESL listening comprehension skills among secondary-level learners.

### 1.4 Objectives of the Study

The current study has the following objectives.

- To introduce and evaluate the effectiveness of podcast integration as a pedagogical approach for improving English listening skills among grade 8 students at Govt. MC Boys Central Model High School, Millet Colony, Rawalpindi.
- To assess the impact of using podcasts on students' listening skills through pre-test and post-test measurements, with a focus on understanding the difference in results before and after podcast integration.
- To investigate and highlight the pedagogical benefits and challenges associated with the use of podcasts in the context of teaching English listening skills, providing valuable insights for language educators.
- To explore the role of the teacher as a facilitator and motivator in the implementation of podcasts for developing listening skills and to provide practical recommendations for educators.

### 1.5 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Can podcasts effectively develop listening skills in secondary-level ESL learners?
2. Is the use of podcasts an effective method for improving listening skills in secondary-level students?
3. Are podcasts a viable alternative to traditional listening instruction in the secondary school context?

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study draws from the work of O'Bryan and Hegelheimer (2007), who define podcasts as online "audio or video broadcasts that contain a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed, enabling users to subscribe to the podcast." This definition provides a foundational understanding of podcasts as a medium for delivering audio and visual content over the internet, with the critical feature of RSS feeds facilitating user access and subscription.

Podcasts, within this framework, are recognized as an innovative tool that leverages technology to deliver educational content, making them a relevant and engaging resource for language learning. The integration of podcasts into the educational setting aligns with contemporary trends in CALL and acknowledges their potential to enhance listening skills in language learners. The study explores the theoretical underpinning that podcast-based learning can provide a dynamic and effective approach to language acquisition, supplementing traditional teaching methods and addressing the specific needs and challenges of the learners in question. The theoretical framework informs the research design and assessment of the benefits and challenges associated with podcast integration in an ESL educational context.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed an experimental design to investigate the effectiveness of podcast integration in improving English listening skills. The research design involved both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, making it a mixed-method study.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

#### **3.2.1 Pre-Test and Post-Test**

To assess the impact of podcast integration, the study conducted pre-tests and post-tests. The pre-test was administered at the outset to gauge the initial listening abilities of the participants. Following two weeks of podcast-based practice, a post-test was conducted to measure any improvements in listening skills.

#### **3.2.2 Group Interview**

Subsequently, a group interview was conducted by the researcher to gain insights into the learners' understanding and experiences. This interview helped to delve deeper into the qualitative aspects of the research.

### 3.2.3 Population

The population for this study consisted of middle-level students at Govt. MC Boys Central Model High School, Millet Colony, Rawalpindi.

### 3.2.4 Sample

Data were collected from a sample of 10 grade 8 students at Govt. MC Boys Central Model High School, Millet Colony, Rawalpindi. These students were specifically selected for their identified weaknesses in fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary.

## 3.3 Research Instruments

### 3.3.1 Pre-Test and Post-Test

These assessments were employed to measure the impact of podcast integration on the students' listening skills before and after the intervention.

### 3.3.2 Group Interview

The group interview was used to gather qualitative data, allowing the researcher to explore the experiences and perceptions of the students regarding podcast-based learning.

## 4. Data Analysis

The researcher evaluated the impact of podcast integration in terms of comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. Each aspect of the evaluation was measured on a scale of 100, providing a quantitative assessment of the students' progress. The pre-test and post-test results, as well as the insights gained from the group interview, were utilized to analyze the effectiveness of podcast use in enhancing these three critical components of listening skills.

Table 4.1 Three Aspects of Listening

No.	Evaluated aspects	Elements	Maximum score
1	Comprehension	Understanding the meaning of words and grammar	100
2	Fluency	Speaking fluency	100
3	Vocabulary	Word choice	100

The researcher employed a dual assessment approach, first gauging the learners' abilities before the introduction of podcasts and subsequently after their implementation. The table presented below illustrates the students' pre-podcast evaluation results.

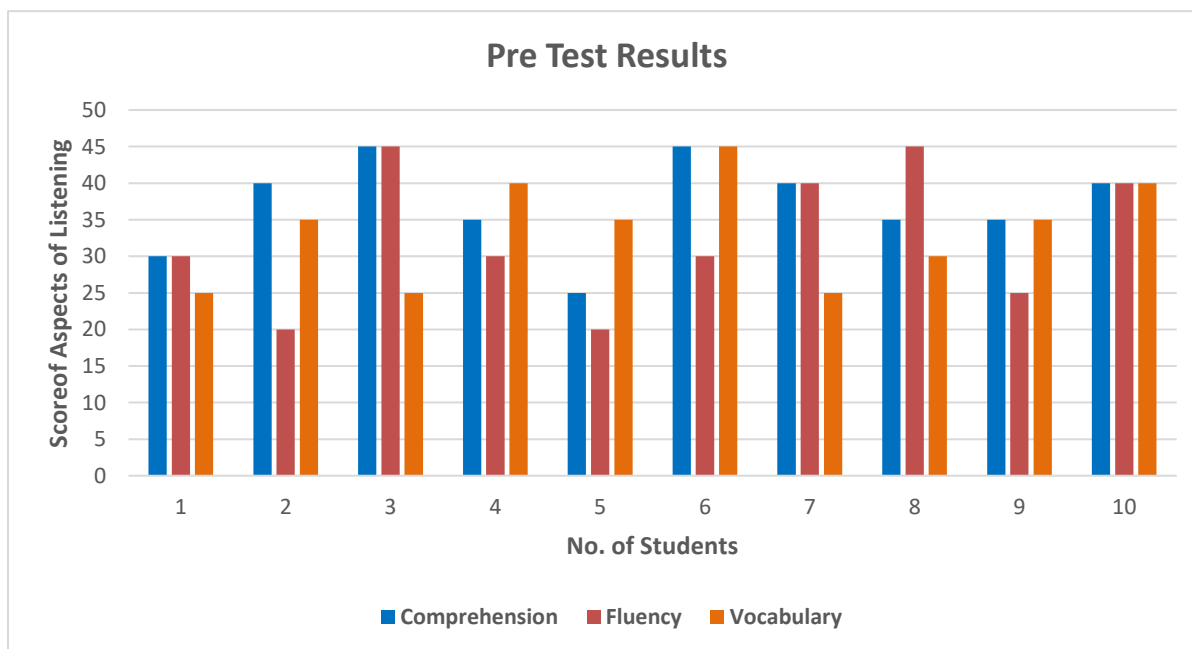
Table 4.2 Pre-test Results

No.	Comprehension	Fluency	Vocabulary
1	30	30	25
2	40	20	35

3	45	45	25
4	35	30	40
5	25	20	35
6	45	30	45
7	40	40	25
8	35	45	30
9	35	25	35
10	40	40	40
<b>Mean score</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>31.5</b>	<b>33.5</b>

The table provides an overview of the pre-test results, where the participants' scores in comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary elements are presented. In comprehension, the scores range from a minimum of 25 to a maximum of 45. For fluency, the least score observed is 20, with the highest score being 40. In the vocabulary element, the participants' scores vary from a minimum of 25 to a maximum of 45. These scores serve as the baseline for assessing the impact of podcast integration on the participants' listening skills.

Graph 4.1 Pre-Test Results of Participants



The pre-test results, as depicted in Graph 1, highlight that conventional listening methods alone may not be sufficient to improve comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary skills in English language learners. The pre-test results suggest that this approach is less effective, leading to relatively lower scores in these critical aspects of listening. Therefore, it can be inferred that traditional listening methods, without the integration of podcasts, yield limited results for English language learners. The study aims to explore the potential benefits of incorporating podcasts into the learning process. Following two weeks of podcast-based practice, the researcher conducted a post-test evaluation, the results of which are presented in Table 3.

Table 4.3 Post-Test Evaluation

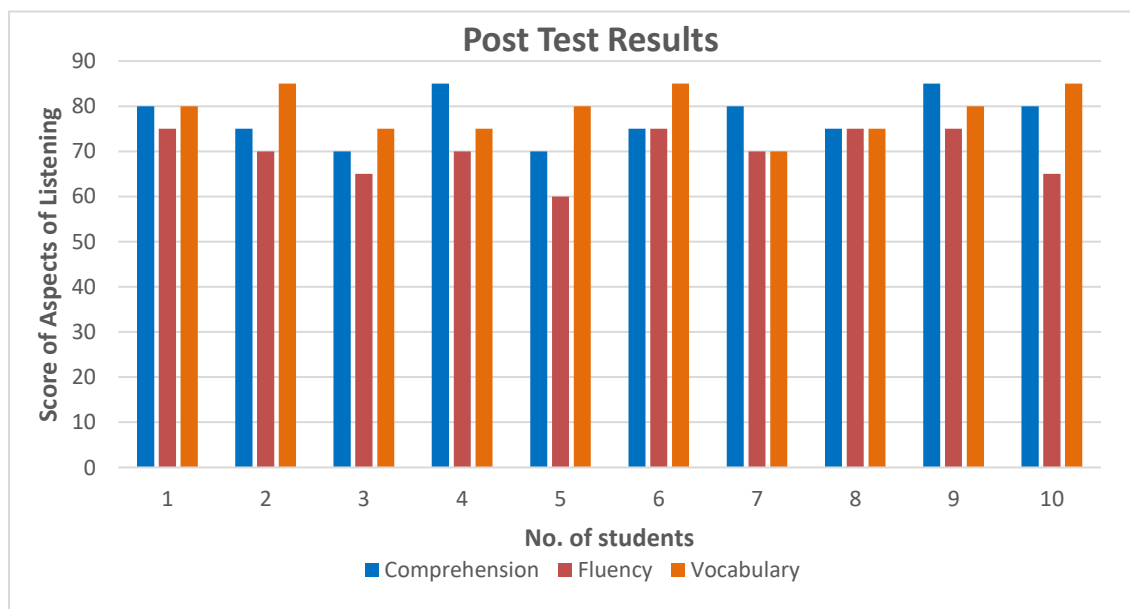
No.	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Fluency
1	80	80	75
2	85	75	70
3	75	70	65
4	75	85	70
5	80	70	60
6	85	75	75
7	70	80	70
8	75	75	75
9	80	85	75
10	85	80	65
<b>Mean scores</b>	<b>77.5</b>	<b>77.5</b>	<b>70</b>

The post-test results demonstrate a significant enhancement in the participants' listening abilities following the incorporation of podcasts into the learning process. The data reveal a substantial increase in comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary skills, showcasing the positive impact of podcast integration.

First of all, comprehension witnessed a notable increase of 40.5 points. Second, fluency showed a substantial improvement of 38.5 points. Last, vocabulary skills exhibited a remarkable enhancement of 43.5 points.

These values represent the average differences between the pre-test and post-test scores, highlighting the effectiveness of utilizing podcasts for enhancing English language learning among the participants.

Graph 4.2 Post-Test Results of Participants



Graph 2 illustrates the outcomes of the post-test assessment, highlighting the remarkable progress in the participants' listening skills. Following the use of podcasts, there was a substantial increase in comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. Specifically, the results show:

- A significant 40.5-point improvement in comprehension.
- A notable increase of 38.5 points in fluency.
- An impressive enhancement of 43.5 points in vocabulary skills.

These findings underscore the efficacy of podcast integration in maximizing the development of listening skills among English language learners.

#### **4.1 Group Interview Analysis**

In the group interview (questions can be found in the appendix), all participants expressed their enthusiasm for the podcast application. They found it engaging and enjoyable, and they asserted that the podcast significantly enhanced their listening skills. Furthermore, the students strongly advocated for the incorporation of podcasts into their regular English learning classes. During the two weeks of podcast practice, they reported substantial improvements in comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency.

It's worth noting that only one out of ten students mentioned facing some difficulties in understanding the podcast speakers. The majority of the students, however, reported no significant challenges during the experimental period. These insights from the group interview align with the quantitative data, reaffirming the positive impact of podcast use on English language learning.

### **5. Findings**

In this study, the researcher employed pre-test and post-test evaluations to assess the impact of podcast integration on students' listening skills. The pre-test data were collected prior to the introduction of podcasts, while the post-test data were gathered after a period of podcast-based learning. The findings of this study reveal the significant utility of podcasts in enhancing students' listening capabilities. The assessment encompassed three critical aspects: fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

In the group interview, students shared their experiences, emphasizing that they did not encounter any significant difficulties while engaging with podcasts. The positive feedback from students further supports the effectiveness of podcasts as a learning medium for developing listening skills.

Podcasts have proven to be a highly effective tool for augmenting the listening proficiency of learners. The evident enjoyment expressed by the students aligns with the notable improvements observed in their listening skills during the evaluation. The use of podcasts in English listening learning has demonstrated particular effectiveness for 8th-grade students at Govt. MC Boys Central Model High School, Millet Colony, Rawalpindi. The substantial average post-test score of 74.83 collectively underscores the success of podcast integration in the classroom. This success rate reinforces the feasibility of podcast utilization in secondary-level education.

These findings demonstrate that podcasts can be applied effectively in secondary-level education, presenting a valuable addition to the pedagogical toolbox for enhancing listening skills in language learners.

## **6. Conclusion**

The findings of this study unequivocally affirm the significant utility and effectiveness of podcasts in developing English listening skills. Learners at Govt. MC Boys Central Model High School, Millet Colony, Rawalpindi, have demonstrated a genuine affinity for using podcasts as a learning tool. This enthusiasm is underpinned by the substantial improvement observed in their listening abilities.

The warm welcome and high receptiveness displayed by the learners toward podcast-based learning are evident, with an average post-test score of 74.83 serving as a testament to its success. The remarkable gains in comprehension (40.5 points), fluency (38.5 points), and vocabulary (43.5 points) further illustrate the substantial impact of podcast integration.

The group interview findings underscore the learners' strong interest in and appreciation for podcasts as a learning medium. The results firmly support the conclusion that podcasts possess excellent capabilities in aiding students to develop their listening skills.

In sum, the use of podcasts represents a promising and highly effective approach to English language learning, particularly for enhancing listening skills among learners at the secondary level.

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### **Bio-note:**

**Nasreen Raza** is a passionate and diligent student pursuing her Master of Science degree in Linguistics at the Foundation University School of Science and Technology (FUSST). Her academic journey is marked by a strong enthusiasm for linguistics and language-related studies. Her research interests encompass the latest trends in linguistics, where she seeks to explore and understand the evolving landscape of this dynamic field. Additionally, she delves into the realm of advanced English studies, where she aims to refine her knowledge and skills in the English language. Another area of academic interest for Nasreen is genre analysis, a field that allows her to dissect and comprehend the structures and characteristics of various textual forms. Her dedication to these research areas highlights her commitment to academic excellence and her desire to contribute to the field of linguistics.

**Salma Ahmad** is a dedicated scholar with a profound passion for the English language and linguistics. She holds a Master of Science degree in English Linguistics and is currently affiliated with the Department of English at the Foundation University School of Science and Technology (FUSST) Rawalpindi campus. Her academic journey has been marked by a keen interest in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), where she explores the intricacies of language, power, and social structures. Her commitment to this area of research is evident in her academic pursuits and scholarly endeavors.

**Hina Manzoor** is an accomplished scholar who has earned an MPhil in Applied Linguistics from the Department of Applied Linguistics at Government College University, Faisalabad. Her academic journey has been marked by a profound dedication to the field of language and communication. Her primary areas of interest encompass English Language Teaching (ELT), where she is keen on enhancing language pedagogy and ensuring effective language learning experiences for students. Her passion for linguistics extends to discourse analysis, a field that allows her to unravel the intricate layers of language in various contexts. Additionally, she explores the nuances of systemic functional grammar, seeking to understand how language functions in communication. Her academic pursuits and commitment to the field of applied linguistics exemplify her dedication to enhancing language understanding and communication. Her scholarly endeavors continue to contribute to the evolution and advancement of the field.

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## **Appendix**

### **Questions of Group Interview**

1. Did you like podcast?
2. Did this podcast enhance your listening skill?
3. Did you think that this podcast should be there in your regular English class?
4. Did you find any difficulty to understand the speakers in this podcast?