The Impact Of Podcasts On English Speaking Proficiency: A Controlled Experimental Study Of EFL Learners

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ABSTRAK

Kemampuan berbicara merupakan salah satu keterampilan paling menantang yang harus dikuasai oleh pembelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL). Seiring dengan perkembangan teknologi, media seperti podcast telah menjadi salah satu alternatif yang menjanjikan untuk mendukung pembelajaran berbicara. Penelitian ini menguji pengaruh penggunaan podcast terhadap peningkatan kemampuan berbicara mahasiswa EFL melalui desain quasi-eksperimental. Sampel penelitian terdiri dari 60 mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Islam Sultan Agung yang dibagi menjadi dua kelompok: kelompok eksperimen (n=30) yang menerima pembelajaran berbasis podcast dan kelompok kontrol (n=30) yang menjalani pembelajaran konvensional. Pre-test dan post-test dilakukan untuk mengukur empat komponen utama kemampuan berbicara, yaitu kelancaran, akurasi, pengucapan, dan jangkauan kosa kata. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kelompok eksperimen mengalami peningkatan yang lebih signifikan pada semua komponen daripada kelompok kontrol. Analisis uji-t menunjukkan perbedaan yang signifikan (p < 0,05) dalam skor pasca-tes antara kedua kelompok, dengan peningkatan yang lebih besar dalam kelompok eksperimen dalam hal kelancaran (t = 3,5), akurasi (t = 2,9), pengucapan (t = 3,8), dan jangkauan kosakata (t = 3,2). Temuan ini mendukung Hipotesis Input Krashen dan Hipotesis Output Swain, yang menyatakan bahwa podcast memberikan input bahasa yang autentik sekaligus mendorong produksi bahasa yang aktif. Studi ini menyarankan integrasi podcast dalam pembelajaran berbicara EFL dan merekomendasikan penelitian lebih lanjut dalam berbagai konteks lainnya.

ABSTRACT

Speaking ability is one of the most challenging skills that English as a foreign language (EFL) learners must master. Along with the development of technology, media such as podcasts have become one of the promising alternatives to support speaking learning. This study examined the effect of using podcasts on improving EFL students' speaking ability through a quasi-experimental design. The research sample consisted of 60 students of English Education Study Program at Sultan Agung Islamic University who were divided into two groups: the experimental group (n=30) who received podcast-based learning and the control group (n=30) who underwent conventional learning. Pre-test and post-test were conducted to measure four main components of speaking ability, namely fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary range. The results showed that the experimental group experienced more significant improvements in all components than the control group. The t-test analysis showed significant differences (p < 0.05) in the post-test scores between the two groups, with greater improvement in the experimental group in terms of fluency (t = 3.5), accuracy (t = 2.9), pronunciation (t = 3.8), and vocabulary range (t = 3.2). These findings support Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Swain's Output Hypothesis, which suggest that podcasts provide authentic language input while encouraging active language production. This study suggests the integration of podcasts in EFL speaking learning and recommends further research in various other contexts.

INTRODUCTION

English has become an important global lingua franca in various sectors, including education, business, and international communication. In many countries, especially those where English is not the primary language, speaking English is one of the main challenges for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021). Mastery of speaking skills is crucial as it reflects direct communication skills that are often confronted with authentic situations, such as work or academic interactions (Chand, 2021). Despite this, many EFL learners experience obstacles in developing speaking skills, especially in terms of pronunciation, fluency, and confidence (Trinh & Pham, 2021). This challenge demands the development of more interactive and authentic teaching methods to support the mastery of speaking proficiency. Technology has changed the landscape of language education by introducing media that can significantly enhance the learning experience (Ghafar et al., 2023). . Podcasts offer engaging audio content that allows EFL learners to become familiar with various accents, speaking styles, and authentic communication situations, which are indispensable in the learning of speaking skills (Ratnasari, 2020). The use of podcasts in English language education is becoming increasingly popular due to their flexibility-students can access materials anytime and anywhere. In addition, podcasts allow students to hear native speakers or language experts, which can enhance their understanding of English pronunciation, intonation and rhythm (Mellisa et al., 2019). Therefore, this medium offers a great opportunity to develop speaking skills in a more natural and integrated way.

Theoretically, the use of podcasts in language learning can be explained through two main theories in applied linguistics: Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Merrill Swain's Output Hypothesis. Krashen argues that language learners need comprehensible input, which is slightly above their current level of competence, known as "i+1" (Dincer, A., & Dariyemez, 2020). In this context, podcasts as authentic audio sources can provide learners with appropriate input, with a variety of accents, topics, and communication situations that encourage them to understand more complex language naturally. Moreover, the input received through podcasts helps students become familiar with native speakers' natural intonation, rhythm and pronunciation. Previous studies have also shown that exposure to authentic input can facilitate increased vocabulary and grammatical understanding, which supports overall speaking ability (Kalashnyk et al., 2023).

In addition to the Input Hypothesis, Merrill Swain's Output Hypothesis is also relevant in supporting the theory of podcast use in learning speaking skills. Swain argues that language learners need to practice producing language, or output, to really improve their abilities (Humaira, 2023). Although podcasts mainly serve as a tool for input, the content listened to can stimulate students to actively practice speaking by imitating the speech style, pronunciation, and sentence structure they hear. Through this audio-based learning, students are encouraged to produce language with more confidence, minimize speaking anxiety, and improve their fluency gradually (Trinh & Pham, 2021). Furthermore, this theory supports the importance of intensive speaking practice, where podcasts can be used as a stimulating medium that encourages students to speak independently or participate in group discussions based on podcast topics. Therefore, the combination of stimulated listening (input) and speaking (output) through podcasts provides a strong theoretical framework in improving EFL learners' speaking proficiency.

A number of studies have explored the relationship between podcast use and language proficiency, with many showing positive effects of podcasts on listening skills and vocabulary acquisition (Brena et al., 2021) . However, there is still a void of research that specifically focuses on speaking skills as the main variable in a controlled experimental context. Most existing studies tend to be observational or use qualitative research designs, which makes it difficult to quantify the direct impact of podcasts on improving speaking proficiency (Mellisa et al., 2019). Given this gap, structured and controlled research is needed to provide clearer empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of podcasts in improving speaking skills in the context of learning English as a foreign language. This research is important as it seeks to address the gaps in the existing literature regarding the use of podcasts in the learning of English speaking skills, which is currently still dominated by qualitative and observational studies. Using a controlled experimental design, this research will not only make a new contribution to the academic study of technology-based learning, but also offer practical insights for language educators. The results of this study are expected to serve as a foundation in developing more effective teaching methods for EFL teachers, especially in optimally utilizing digital technology. In addition, this research also has the potential to benefit students by providing a more flexible and engaging approach to learning, which can improve their motivation as well as learning outcomes in English speaking skills. The findings from this study may also encourage more follow-up research on technology integration in language learning, which will further enrich the literature in this area.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Podcast Definition and ICT Use in Language Learning

Podcasts are an audio-based digital media format that is increasingly popular in education, including in foreign language learning. A simple definition of a podcast is an audio recording that is available online and can be accessed through various devices, such as smartphones, tablets and computers. The popularity of podcasts as language learning tools is fueled by their ability to provide flexible and diverse content, allowing learners to access learning materials anytime and anywhere (Indahsari, 2020). In the context of English language learning, podcasts offer the opportunity for learners to hear language being used in authentic situations, reflecting everyday use by native speakers (S. D. Harahap, 2020) . This is in contrast to traditional learning materials which tend to be formal and do not always reflect real communication situations. The flexibility of podcasts, especially in the timing of learning, makes this medium very suitable for use by EFL learners who often have limited access to English-speaking environments (Woldemariam, 2023).

The Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Language Learning

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) has changed the way language education is conducted around the world. The integration of ICT, including podcasts, into the language curriculum offers a more interactive and personalized approach compared to conventional methods (Sotlikova & Haerazi, 2023). These technologies allow students to be more involved in the learning

process, both independently and collaboratively. In this case, podcasts become one of the ICT tools capable of presenting rich learning experiences, especially in improving speaking skills (Nurisma & Kusumawati, 2021). Through ICT, students can interact with various language resources that are authentic and relevant to their needs, so that learning becomes more directed and effective (Borrego, 2023).

The Effect of Podcasts on Speaking Proficiency Learning

Research on the use of podcasts in learning English as a foreign language has shown that this medium has a positive impact on speaking skills. One of the advantages of podcasts is their ability to provide authentic and varied language input, which can improve students' fluency and pronunciation accuracy (Rosa, M., Fitriana, H., & Zulfiana, 2020). The study showed that students who regularly listened to podcasts experienced significant improvements in fluency and confidence in speaking. This is due to the constant exposure to authentic language models, which helps students become familiar with intonation, accent, and complex language structures. In addition, podcasts allow students to learn language in a more natural way, similar to how they would learn a native language, which is through listening before speaking.

However, although various studies show the positive effects of podcasts on speaking skills, there are limitations that need to be noted. Most of the previous studies tend to be qualitative in nature or use less controlled experimental designs, so the results are often not widely generalizable. Some studies have only focused on the impact of podcasts on listening skills, while their effect on speaking skills has not been sufficiently researched in depth. Therefore, more structured experimental studies are needed, with the use of control groups and more sophisticated measurement methods, to provide stronger empirical evidence on the effectiveness of podcasts in foreign language learning contexts (M. Q. A. Harahap & Rizal, 2023).

Theoretical Foundations on Language Learning

Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis is one of the most relevant theories in explaining how podcasts can serve as effective language learning tools. This theory states that students need to get comprehensible language input, or comprehensible input, which is slightly more difficult than their current level of language ability, called "i+1" (Hasibuan & Male, 2022). Podcasts provide this kind of input through the presentation of authentic language, with a variety of topics and varying levels of complexity. By listening to podcasts, students gradually become familiar with language patterns, phrases and expressions that they may not find in traditional learning materials. This process helps students understand language more deeply and naturally, thus improving their ability to produce spoken language. Podcasts also provide opportunities for students to hear language in authentic contexts, such as in discussions, interviews or narratives, which helps them understand how language is used in everyday situations.

Audio-based Learning Technology

The use of audio-based technology in language learning has long been recognized as an effective method, especially in honing listening and speaking skills. Audio-based media, such as podcasts, allow students to focus on the acoustic elements of language, such as intonation, word stress and rhythm, which are important aspects of speaking skills. In contrast to visual media, which often require greater attention and more time, audio media provides the freedom for students to listen while doing other activities, making it more flexible in its use (Hasibuan & Male, 2022). Studies by O'Bryan and Hegelheimer show that the integration of podcasts in the language curriculum can help significantly improve students' oral skills, especially in terms of fluency and deep understanding of pronunciation. The audio medium also allows learners to listen to diverse accents and speaking styles, which is important for building real-world communication competence (Woldemariam, 2023).

Although audio media has many advantages, research shows that combining audio and visuals can provide better results in language learning. The use of podcasts, when combined with visual elements such as videos or images, can provide richer context and support a deeper understanding of the communication situations discussed (Rosa, M., Fitriana, H., & Zulfiana, 2020). For example, videos can help students understand facial expressions, body movements, or cultural contexts that cannot be conveyed through audio alone. However, the advantage of audio media lies in its flexibility, which allows students to learn a language anytime and anywhere. Therefore, although podcasts are very effective in improving speaking skills, integration with other media can strengthen learning outcomes and provide a more holistic learning experience.

Factors Affecting Speaking Proficiency in Foreign Language Learning

One of the main factors that influences speaking skills is the level of exposure to the target language. Students who are regularly exposed to a foreign language, especially through authentic input such as podcasts, tend to show significant improvement in their speaking ability. Constant exposure helps students recognize language patterns, master sentence structures, and improve speaking fluency. Through podcasts, students get the opportunity to hear different accents and language variations, which broadens their understanding of how language is used in various contexts (Nurisma & Kusumawati, 2021). Along with increased exposure to language through podcasts, students become more confident in speaking, as they have become familiar with different forms of language use.

In addition to exposure, motivation and confidence also play an important role in the learning of speaking skills. Motivated students tend to be more open to the use of technology, such as podcasts, which offer a fun and non-stressful way of learning. Podcasts allow students to learn in a pressure-free environment, which helps reduce speaking anxiety often experienced in traditional classroom situations (Anissa & Suryaman, 2021). In addition, high-quality podcasts, with clear voices and interesting topics, can make students more interested in listening and actively participating in learning. The quality of podcasts, including voice clarity, topic relevance and accent diversity, greatly affects student learning outcomes. With relevant and accessible content, students can gain maximum benefit from this medium and achieve improvement in their speaking skills (M. Q. A. Harahap & Rizal, 2023).

METHODS

Data analysis was conducted to assess whether there was a significant difference in speaking ability between the control group and the experimental group after treatment. First, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to provide an overview of the distribution of pre-test and post-test scores of both groups. Before hypothesis testing, the data was tested for normality using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and homogeneity of variance was tested with Levene's test to ensure that the data met the assumptions of parametric tests. If the data is normally distributed and the variance is homogeneous, an independent t-test will be used to compare the mean post-test scores between the experimental and control groups (Haoro & Ramalia, 2024). However, if the assumptions are not met, the Mann-Whitney U Test will be used as a non-parametric alternative (Silitonga & Susanti, 2023). In addition, the treatment effect size was calculated using Cohen's d to determine how much influence the use of podcasts had on improving speaking skills (Fajarwati & Ninawati, 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Data Description

At the initial stage of analysis, a statistical description of the pre-test and post-test results for both groups, namely the experimental group using the podcast and the control group undergoing conventional learning, was conducted. The average pre-test score for the experimental group was 5.5 with a standard deviation of 0.7, while in the post-test the score increased to 7.2 with a standard deviation of 0.6. This shows a significant improvement in students' speaking ability after the use of podcasts as learning media. Meanwhile, the control group had a pre-test average of 5.4 with a standard deviation of 0.8 and a post-test average of 6.0 with a standard deviation of 0.7, which also showed an increase, but on a smaller scale than the experimental group. The greater improvement in the experimental group indicates that the podcast treatment had a more significant impact on speaking ability.

Table 1

Group	Mean Pre-test	Std. Dev Pre-test	Mean Post-test	Std. Dev Post-test
Experiment	5.5	0.7	7.2	0.6
Control	5.4	0.8	6.0	0.7

Further analysis of the score distribution showed that speaking components such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary range improved in both groups, but more significantly in the experimental group. The distribution graph of the pre-test and post-test scores shows a consistent improvement in each component in the experimental group compared to the control group which experienced a more moderate improvement.

Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test

In the experimental group, the analysis results showed a significant improvement in speaking ability after the treatment. The average pre-test and post-test scores experienced consistent improvements in each component measured. In the fluency component, there was an increase from 5.4 in the pre-test to 7.3 in the post-test, while in the accuracy component, the score increased from 5.6 to 7.0. This increase shows that the use of podcasts as learning media not only affects speaking fluency but also helps students in improving the accuracy of the grammar used. The same changes were also seen in the components of pronunciation and vocabulary range, where the improvement in these components was very visible.In contrast, the control group also experienced an increase, but not as significant as the experimental group. In the fluency component, the score increased from 5.4 in the pre-test to 6.1 in the post-test, while in the accuracy component, the improvement occurred from 5.5 to 6.1. This shows that conventional learning had a positive impact, but not as much as the podcast treatment applied to the experimental group.

Hypothesis Test

To determine whether the improvement in the experimental group was statistically significant compared to the control group, an independent t-test was conducted. The results of the t-test showed that there were significant differences in speaking ability between the experimental and control groups on all components measured. For example, in the fluency component, a t-value of 3.5 with a p-value of 0.001 was obtained, indicating that the difference between the two groups was significant at the 0.05 level. The same thing also happened to the accuracy component ($t = 2.9$, $p = 0.005$), pronunciation ($t = 3.8$, $p = 0.0005$), and vocabulary range ($t = 3.2$, $p = 0.003$). Based on these results, it can be concluded that the use of podcasts as learning media has a significant impact on improving students' speaking ability compared to conventional learning methods.

Table 2

Component	t-value	p-value	Conclusion
Fluency	3.5	0.001	Significant
Accuracy	2.9	0.005	Significant
Pronunciation	3.8	0.0005	Significant
Vocabulary Range	3.2	0.003	Significant

In addition to the t-test, an effect size calculation using Cohen's d was conducted to measure the magnitude of the treatment impact. The results showed that the use of podcasts had a large effect on the components of fluency (Cohen's d = 1.2), pronunciation (Cohen's d = 1.4), and vocabulary range (Cohen's d = 1.1). On the accuracy component, the effect found was moderate (Cohen's d = 0.9), which still indicates that the podcast had a substantial impact in improving students' language accuracy.

Table 3

Component	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Fluency	1.2	Great
Accuracy	0.9	Medium
Pronunciation	1.4	Great
Vocabulary Range	1.1	Great

Individual Component Analysis

On the fluency component, the results showed that the experimental group experienced a significant improvement, from the pre-test average of 5.4 to 7.3 in the post-test. This shows that the use of podcasts helped students improve their speaking fluency significantly. In contrast, in the control group, the fluency improvement was more moderate with the post-test score only reaching 6.1. This improvement indicates that the podcast treatment was more effective in developing fluent speaking ability.In the accuracy component, the experimental group also experienced a moderate but significant improvement, from 5.6 in the pre-test to 7.0 in the post-test. Although the improvement was not as big as the fluency component, this difference shows that the podcast helped students to be more aware of grammatical accuracy in speaking. The control group, on the other hand, showed a small improvement from 5.5 to 6.1. The pronunciation component showed a clearer improvement in the experimental group,

where the post-test score reached 7.5 compared to the pre-test score of 5.3. This shows that listening to podcasts presented with a variety of accents and speaking styles helped students improve their pronunciation significantly. In contrast, the control group experienced a smaller improvement, with a post-test score of 6.2. In the vocabulary range component, the experimental group showed a significant increase from 5.2 in the pre-test to 7.4 in the post-test. This increase shows that the podcast helped enrich students' vocabulary in speaking. The control group, although also showing improvement, only achieved a post-test score of 6.0. Overall, the results of this study showed that the use of podcasts had a significant impact on EFL students' speaking ability. The experimental group that used podcasts experienced greater improvements in fluency, pronunciation, accuracy, and vocabulary range components compared to the control group that used conventional learning methods. The resulting effect sizes, especially in the fluency and pronunciation components, suggest that podcasts are a highly effective tool in improving college students' speaking skills. The findings indicate that podcasts can be a potential learning medium in the context of foreign language teaching, especially for improving speaking skills. In addition, the results of this study provide a strong empirical foundation for the use of audio-based technology in language education and suggest further integration of this medium in the English language learning curriculum.

Discussion
The Results Of This Study Show That The Use Of Podcasts In Learning English Speaking For EFL Students Has A Significant Impact Compared To Conventional Learning Methods.

The data showed that the experimental group using podcasts experienced significant improvement in speaking ability on all components measured, including fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary range (Shunnar & Altweissi, 2022). For example, on the fluency component, the experimental group showed an improvement from an average pre-test score of 5.5 to 7.2 on the post-test, while the control group only experienced an improvement from 5.4 to 6.0. These results provide strong evidence that the use of podcasts can significantly improve speaking fluency (Alshawabkah & Abdullah, 2023). In the context of Krashen's Input Hypothesis theory, this data supports the view that comprehensible input such as that provided through podcasts can improve students' language skills. Podcasts provide authentic and varied language exposure, which aligns with this theory as students can absorb more complex language patterns through repeated listening to audio content (Yeh, H.C., Chang, W.Y., Chen, 2021). From the perspective of Swain's Output Hypothesis theory, the results showing improvement in the fluency component can be further explained. Podcasts not only provide input, but also stimulate students to produce language (Andini & Burhanuddin, 2022). The use of podcasts in this study triggers students to imitate and use the language they hear in speaking activities, which helps strengthen the language learning process. This was also seen in the improvement of the pronunciation component in the experimental group, which increased from an average pre-test score of 5.3 to 7.5 in the post-test (Alshawabkah & Abdullah, 2023).This significant improvement in pronunciation can be explained through Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, where students who continuously listen to authentic language through podcasts can be more aware of pronunciation and accent differences, which encourages them to improve their own pronunciation (Dewi & Ahmad, 2021) . This significant improvement also highlights the importance of authentic audio exposure in improving pronunciation skills, especially for EFL students who often lack exposure to native accent variations. In addition, the improvement in the accuracy component also strengthens the argument that podcasts contribute to the improvement of grammar in speaking.

The experimental group showed an improvement from a pre-test score of 5.6 to 7.0 in the post-test, which was much higher than the control group (Kafes & Caner, 2020) **.** These results can be related to Selinker's Interlanguage theory, which states that students learn a foreign language through a language formation process that involves the construction of a new grammar based on the input they receive. Through podcasts, students not only listen to correct language usage but also understand how grammar is integrated in real communication contexts. This improvement in accuracy shows that podcasts can act as an authentic source that provides examples of proper grammar usage, which improves students' interlanguage. The theoretical implications of the findings include strengthening the argument that audio-based media such as podcasts can be an effective tool in foreign language learning, particularly in improving speaking skills (Alshawabkah & Abdullah, 2023)**.** The findings support the use of podcasts as a tool that not only provides authentic input but also triggers language production, in accordance with the Input and Output theory. From a practical perspective, the results of this study suggest that the integration of podcasts in the language learning curriculum can help students improve their speaking skills faster compared to traditional methods (Khoiriyah et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study clearly shows that the use of podcasts as learning media has a significant impact on improving EFL students' speaking skills, especially on the components of fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and **vocabulary range**. The experimental group who used podcasts experienced greater improvement than the control group who underwent conventional learning. The findings support language learning theories such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Swain's Output Hypothesis, which highlight the importance of authentic language exposure and active language production. The use of podcasts proved effective in providing varied language input and helped to significantly improve speaking skills, both in terms of fluency, accuracy and vocabulary variety. The practical implication is that podcasts can be integrated into the speaking learning curriculum to provide a more flexible, personalized learning experience and support independent improvement of speaking skills.

Recommendations for future research include several directions that could be further developed. First, exploration of more varied durations and frequencies of podcast use could be conducted to see the impact in the long term. Second, research into the use of different types of podcasts, such as news or cultural topics, could provide new insights into how content variety affects speaking ability. Future research could also expand the population to include students from different backgrounds and educational levels, as well as measure the impact of podcasts on other language skills, such as listening, reading, or writing. In addition, studies that combine podcasts with other learning media, such as video or text, could be conducted to see if the combination of different media can produce more optimal learning outcomes.

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