

Students' Perception of Using Podcast Toward English Speaking Ability at Students of English Department UINFAS Bengkulu

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Abstrack

This study explores students' perceptions of using podcasts as a tool to enhance English speaking skills among fourth-semester students at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The findings reveal that students have generally positive perceptions of podcasts due to their accessibility, authenticity, and flexibility. Podcasts are perceived to contribute significantly to speaking development, particularly in pronunciation, vocabulary, intonation, and confidence. Many students find podcasts more engaging than traditional materials and appreciate the opportunity to listen to native speakers in natural contexts. However, the study also identifies challenges, including difficulties in understanding accents, lack of visuals, and limited access for some students. Although podcasts are not consistently integrated into formal instruction, students report that regular podcast usage improves their speaking fluency and reduces anxiety. The study concludes that podcasts are effective and enjoyable learning tools, but their implementation should be adapted to individual learning preferences and supported by other resources. The results suggest that podcasts hold great potential in technology-integrated language learning and should be more systematically utilized in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *students' perceptions, podcast, speaking skill, English language learning, technology-based learning*

Introduction

In today's globalized world, English proficiency has become a critical requirement in academic, professional, and interpersonal communication. Speaking, as one of the productive language skills, plays a significant role in enabling learners to express ideas, exchange information, and participate in global discourse (Sari et al., 2024). English is not only a school subject but a tool for accessing international knowledge, conducting research, and building careers abroad (Pinkan Maulida et al., 2024). It also serves multiple roles in industries such as tourism, where it functions as a means of communication, integration, economic interaction, and relationship building (Damayanti et al., 2019). In Indonesia, English is taught from early education levels through university. However, despite years of study, many students struggle with English speaking skills (Lubis et al., 2024). Speaking involves various sub-skills such as fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence. Affective variables like motivation, anxiety, and self-esteem significantly influence the development of these skills (Kiruthiga & Christopher, 2022). Moreover, grammatical pressure and frequent reliance on the first language also contribute to

speaking difficulties (Muamar et al., 2019). Indonesia's position at 80th out of 116 countries in the EF English Proficiency Index 2024, with a score of 468, further highlights the urgency of addressing this issue (EF EPI, 2024).

With the advancement of digital technology, various educational innovations have emerged to help learners overcome such challenges. Technology-supported learning offers not only broader access to resources but also increases motivation and interactivity (Uyunnasirah Hambali et al., 2023). It fosters multiliteracy by integrating traditional language skills with digital competence (Kustini, 2020). Furthermore, digital platforms enhance learner engagement and provide flexible learning experiences (Sholihin, 2024). Among emerging media, podcasts have gained popularity for their accessibility and potential as learning tools. A podcast is a digital audio file distributed online, usually in episodic form, allowing users to stream or download content on various devices (Díez & Richters, 2020). Podcasts offer authentic input, including native speaker models, conversational patterns, and exposure to real-life language use (Abdulrahman et al., 2018). They provide an immersive environment that helps improve students' speaking performance through listening to natural pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary (Alfa, 2020).

The use of podcasts in education is also supported by Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which posits that language is acquired through exposure to comprehensible input in real contexts (Krashen, 1982). Furthermore, podcasts can enhance learning motivation, learner autonomy, and provide innovative teaching opportunities (Phillips, 2017). Their accessibility and flexibility make them suitable for both formal and informal learning settings (Moore, 2024). Podcasting supports mobile and personalized learning, especially at the university level (Pat Ormond, 2008). Several recent studies have shown that using podcasts improves students' English speaking skills, especially in vocabulary retention, pronunciation accuracy, and fluency (Firdausiyah & Rohaniyah, 2024). Podcasts create a relaxed and informal space where learners can practice speaking by mimicking native expressions, which increases their confidence (Perry, 2024). Additionally, podcasts provide realistic examples of communication that are beneficial for enhancing communicative competence (Sansinadi et al., 2020). In distance learning environments, podcasts are also valued as a Web 2.0 tool that supports the development of speaking and listening skills (Sapon et al., 2021).

Despite the positive impact, the actual use of podcasts in formal language instruction remains limited. Research shows that although many students recognize the benefits of podcasts, they do not always understand how to use them effectively (Rahmasai et al., 2021). In online classes, for example, podcasts are often underutilized due to a lack of clear guidance from instructors (Nova, 2022). However, perception studies indicate that students generally view podcasts favorably when used for English language learning (Sotlikova & Haerazi, 2023). Understanding students' perceptions is essential because perception influences how learners interpret, engage with, and benefit from learning tools. Perception is a cognitive process involving the organization and interpretation of sensory stimuli into meaningful understanding (Bartoshuk, 2019). In the context of language learning, a positive perception of digital media such as podcasts can lead to increased motivation and consistent usage.

A preliminary observation conducted among fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at UINFAS Bengkulu found that most of them still experienced difficulties in speaking English. They commonly reported obstacles such as limited vocabulary, low confidence, and anxiety about making pronunciation or grammatical mistakes (Dessy Puspita Sari et al., 2021). Furthermore, the lack of

opportunities for speaking practice, both inside and outside the classroom, contributed to their limited speaking competence (Dalem, 2017). Many students stated that they rarely used English in daily conversations due to feelings of shyness or fear of making mistakes (Pranati Mishra et al., 2020).

Interestingly, some students had started using podcasts independently to improve their listening and speaking skills. They accessed English-language podcasts through platforms like Spotify and YouTube, especially to work on pronunciation and listening comprehension. However, podcast usage was mostly self-initiated and not part of formal classroom instruction. This highlights a disconnect between students' needs and how media like podcasts are integrated into learning (Ramli & Kurniawan, 2018). Given this context, it is crucial to explore how students perceive the use of podcasts as a learning tool for enhancing speaking ability. This study aims to investigate students' perceptions, the factors influencing those perceptions, and the extent to which podcasts are accepted as effective support for speaking practice. The results are expected to contribute to the development of more interactive and technology-driven teaching strategies. Moreover, the findings can offer practical guidance for educators and policymakers on integrating podcasts more effectively into the English language curriculum (Anita et al., 2023).

Method

This research employed a qualitative descriptive method to explore students' perceptions of using podcasts to improve their English-speaking skills. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of individuals' experiences, thoughts, and behaviors in a natural context. It provides a way to explore how students interpret and respond to the use of podcast media in their language learning environment (Abdussamad, 2022). Descriptive research, as a form of qualitative inquiry, focuses on providing accurate and detailed descriptions of phenomena without manipulating variables, which is appropriate for examining students' natural responses and attitudes toward podcasts (Fadli, 2021). The research was conducted at the English Education Study Program of UINFAS Bengkulu and focused on fourth-semester students who had participated in speaking classes. The research took place over the course of one month, from May 23 to June 23, 2025. This institution was selected based on preliminary observations indicating the relevance of podcast media to classroom activities. The primary and secondary data were used in this study. Primary data were obtained through interviews and questionnaires administered to students, while secondary data included documents such as syllabi, podcast materials, and course records that supported the research context (Ajayi, 2017). The subjects of this research were fourth-semester students who were selected using purposive sampling. They were chosen based on their experience with podcast media in speaking classes and their willingness to participate in interviews and complete questionnaires. The object of this study was the students' perception of podcasts as a tool for enhancing speaking ability, focusing on aspects such as fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and intonation. Their responses were essential in understanding the effectiveness of podcasts as supplementary language learning media.

The techniques used for data collection included interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. Interviews were conducted using semi-structured questions developed and validated by experts. These questions explored students' experiences with accessing and using podcasts, their perceived benefits, and any difficulties encountered (Hansen, 2020). The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended items using a 1 to 4 Likert scale to gauge students' agreement levels regarding podcast use. The questionnaire results were then converted to a 0–100 scale for interpretation and analysis (Siti Romdona et al.,

2025). Documentation supported the research by providing evidence of podcast use in class activities, including lesson plans, attendance lists, and other relevant instructional materials (Nilamsari, 2017).

For data analysis, this research followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction phase, raw data from interviews and questionnaires were selected and simplified. The data were then displayed in a thematic format to highlight recurring patterns and perceptions. The final conclusions were drawn based on these themes and validated through triangulation to enhance credibility (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). To ensure data validity, the researcher used triangulation across multiple data collection techniques and consulted with experts for validation. This strategy strengthened the reliability of the findings and minimized potential researcher bias (Saadah et al., 2022).

Results

In general, students' English speaking ability is still varied. Some show confidence and fluency, while others still struggle with pronunciation, vocabulary, and coherence. Factors like nervousness and lack of practice are common challenges. However, most students acknowledge the potential of digital media especially podcasts as a supporting tool in developing speaking skills.

A. Podcast Familiarity and Usage

Most students are already familiar with podcasts through platforms like Spotify and YouTube, either from social media exposure or recommendations from peers and lecturers. While not all of them use podcasts regularly in structured learning, many have used them informally to practice listening and pronunciation. Podcasts are generally perceived as flexible, practical, and helpful in providing real-life English exposure.

B. Interview Findings

Ten informants were selected purposively for in-depth interviews. The findings from these interviews revealed several consistent themes:

1. Understanding of Podcasts

Students perceived podcasts as accessible and flexible audio media that could support listening and speaking skills. They appreciated the real, informal tone of podcast conversations, which helped them better understand English usage in daily contexts.

2. Improvement in Speaking Skills

Many students reported that podcasts helped them improve pronunciation, vocabulary, and speaking fluency. Several informants mentioned practicing shadowing techniques (mimicking podcast speakers) to learn correct intonation and word stress.

3. Ease and Accessibility

Students highlighted the convenience of using podcasts anytime and anywhere. They often listened while doing chores, commuting, or relaxing, making it a non-burdensome way to learn.

4. Motivation and Confidence

The majority of students felt more motivated to learn English through podcasts, as they found the content interesting and less formal. They also reported a decrease in nervousness when speaking English due to frequent exposure to natural speech.

5. Obstacles and Limitations

Some students faced challenges such as fast-paced speech, unfamiliar accents, or the absence of transcripts. Additionally, inconsistent usage and a lack of formal integration into classroom instruction limited the effectiveness for some students.

C. Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire, distributed to a wider group of students, used six indicators related to student perception:

1. Student Understanding of the Use of Podcasts
2. Podcast Accessibility
3. Podcast Impact on Speaking Skills
4. Podcast Compatibility with Learning Styles
5. Motivation in Learning Through Podcasts
6. Challenges or Obstacles

The analysis showed:

1. High perception in terms of motivation, usefulness, and flexibility.
2. Moderate perception in terms of compatibility with learning styles.
3. Some challenges related to accent clarity, pace, and limited classroom use.

Overall, the research findings indicate that students' perception of podcasts is generally positive. Podcasts are considered effective, flexible, and engaging learning tools for improving English speaking ability. However, to maximize their impact, structured integration and consistent use are needed.

Discussion

This chapter presents the results of the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained through interviews and questionnaires regarding students' perceptions of the use of podcasts as a learning medium to improve English speaking skills. Based on the results of interviews and questionnaires that have been distributed, 4th semester students of the English Education Study Program of UINFAS Bengkulu, obtained various perceptions and experiences of students in using podcasts as a learning media to improve English speaking skills. In general, students view podcasts as a flexible, practical and fun learning media. They stated that podcasts provide convenience in accessing authentic English materials, especially because they can be listened to anytime and anywhere, in accordance with their daily activities. Podcasts are also considered less rigid, relaxed, and feel more personalized compared to formal teaching materials.

The findings show that students generally have a positive view of the use of podcasts as learning media. This is reflected in several aspects, particularly the aspects of understanding, motivation and interest, as well as the compatibility of podcasts with their learning styles. From the aspect of understanding, students show that they have recognized podcasts as audio media that have educational potential in English learning. They not only know the definition of a podcast, but also understand its main function in improving listening and speaking ability. The average score of 79.3% from 10 statements shows that students have been able to integrate podcasts into their learning framework consciously. In the interview, MS said that:

"Podcasts are educational audio, accessible online. I often listen to it to practice comprehension and pronunciation." (MS)

This indicates that students recognize the role of podcasts as a source of language input that can be used outside the formal classroom, and are flexible in their use. They also feel that podcasts present a variety of topics that are actual, interesting,

In addition, students' motivation and interest in podcasts is also quite high, with an average score of 68.4% from 9 statements. This finding shows that podcasts are not only recognized as learning media, but also have an emotional appeal that fosters interest in learning. Students stated that the use of podcasts made the learning process more relaxed, enjoyable, and personalized. NY explained in the interview:

"I became diligent in studying because the topics can be adjusted to my interests."(NS)

Such positive affective conditions are very supportive of the language acquisition process because they reduce anxiety and increase student engagement. This is in line with Krashen's theory of the *low affective filter*, where motivation and emotional comfort are important factors in successful language learning. Furthermore, according to (Robbins, 2005), a person's perception of an object or media will shape their attitudes and actions towards that object. When students have a positive perception of podcasts, they tend to accept and use them voluntarily in the learning process. This can be seen from how they not only understand the function of podcasts, but also make them part of a fun, flexible and meaningful learning experience.

However, there are still challenges in the aspect of podcast compatibility with student learning styles, with a score of 37.3% from 5 statements. This shows that not all students feel suitable with the audio format as the main media. Some students stated that they learn more easily through visuals or a combination of audio-visuals. FP said:

"Audio is more practical, I can listen while walking. But sometimes I also need visuals." (FP)

This shows that learning style preference remains a factor to consider in the implementation of learning media such as podcasts. Although many students like podcasts, their effectiveness will still depend heavily on how the media is adapted to each individual's way of learning.

Podcasts as learning media have a significant role in supporting the improvement of English speaking ability, as reflected in the questionnaire results in aspect 3 with an average score of 62.2% from 8 statements. Although not yet classified as very high, this value shows that students are starting to feel concrete benefits from the use of podcasts, especially in terms of pronunciation, fluency, and additional vocabulary and language structures.

Most students stated that they felt their pronunciation had improved after regularly listening to podcasts. This is because the podcasts provide examples of authentic and varied pronunciation from native speakers. Not a few also mentioned that composing sentences when speaking became easier, because they had heard various expressions and sentence structures that are often used in real life. In the interview, AR said:

"I speak more fluently now. For example, during group discussions, I am bolder because I often hear expressions used in podcasts." (AR)

Students also mentioned that they mimicked the speech style and intonation of the podcast speakers, which indirectly improved pronunciation accuracy and speech rhythm. This is a form of imitative learning - a strategy that is widely recommended in the development of speaking skills. IMA explains:

"I often imitate their pronunciation, so I know which part of the word to emphasize. It makes me more confident during speaking tests." (IMA)

Furthermore, podcasts are thought to help students expand their vocabulary and improve their grammar without having to go through explicit grammar exercises. They absorb the sentence structure through the context that is delivered naturally. As HG said:

"During the group discussion, I became more active because I learned a lot of new vocabulary from the podcast." (HG)

This finding shows that podcasts serve as a source of authentic and communicative language input, in accordance (with Krashen, 1982) theory of comprehensible input. When learners are exposed to language in contexts that are meaningful and at their level, language acquisition will take place more effectively. In this case, podcasts provide the type of exposure that allows learners to learn indirectly through repeated and contextualized listening.

In addition to cognitive benefits, the use of podcasts also affects students' confidence in speaking. Some students stated that they felt bolder and more natural when they had to speak in discussion forums or presentation tasks. This indicates that podcasts not only help linguistically, but also affectively, by reducing awkwardness and anxiety when speaking in a foreign language. However, it should be noted that although the contribution is quite visible, not all students use podcasts consistently in speaking practice. Some still consider podcasts as a supplement, not as the main tool. Thus, the positive effects are only felt by those who use them regularly and consciously.

Students' experiences in using podcasts as a medium for learning to speak are very diverse, as reflected in two important aspects, namely aspects of accessibility and aspects of obstacles or challenges. These two aspects provide a real picture of how students live, feel, and assess the use of podcasts in their daily learning practices. On the accessibility aspect, the questionnaire results show an average score of 51.9% from 9 statements. This score indicates that although some students find podcasts easy to access, there are still quite a few who experience problems in terms of technical and usage. Some students mentioned that they can easily access podcasts at any time and through various platforms, but in reality not all students have adequate facilities, devices, or internet connections. As stated by AR:

"Sometimes the internet signal is slow, so the loading takes a long time. But I usually download podcasts first if there is wifi." (AR)

In addition, although podcasts are considered flexible because they can be listened to while doing other activities, such as cooking or cleaning, not all students can maximize this multitasking function as an effective learning tool. NY said:

"I can listen while cooking or cleaning. I don't have to sit formally to learn." (NS)

However, when discussing the aspect of obstacles and challenges, which received an average score of 66.1% from 9 statements, it was seen that many students faced real difficulties in the process of using podcasts. One of the dominant barriers is that the material in the podcasts is sometimes too fast or difficult to understand due to accents or the complexity of the content. RP explained:

"The content is good, but sometimes I have trouble understanding the accent." (RP)

In addition, students also experienced challenges in maintaining focus when listening to long-form podcasts. They felt that the lack of visual elements made them lose concentration quickly, especially when the topic was not very interesting or if they were tired. This was honestly stated by several students, and is evidence that the audio-only format is not always suitable for everyone. This is in line with (Brown, 2007) view that learning effectiveness is strongly influenced by how the media is adapted to students' attention span, learning needs, and learning style preferences. Students who have a visual or kinesthetic learning style may feel less optimal if they only rely on audio media such as podcasts, because their sensory engagement and attention are stronger when learning through images, movement, or direct interaction.

Some students also stated that the use of podcasts has not become a consistent study habit. Despite initial interest and perceived benefits, without external encouragement or integration in formal learning activities, their motivation slowly declined. HG described this in the interview:

"I was more enthusiastic when I first tried it, but because it hasn't become a habit, it's a bit slack." (HG)

However, some students still appreciate podcasts as a medium that provides a space to learn in a relaxed and pressure-free manner. They feel that podcasts can be a non-intimidating learning companion, different from learning situations in class or during formal presentations. MS said:

"I feel like I'm used to hearing and speaking in English, so it's more relaxed." (MS)

In general, students' experiences in using podcasts are at the point of positive perceptions that have not been fully realized in consistent practice. Students have seen the potential of podcasts, but their application and utilization still depend on the readiness of the device, network conditions, appropriate content, and habituation.

Thus, students' experiences show that podcasts are a learning medium that is technically accessible but not yet fully functionally optimal. Podcasts provide freedom and flexibility, but still require assistance, appropriate content selection, and structured integration in learning so that they can be used more consistently and provide maximum results in improving English speaking ability.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of questionnaire and interview data with fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, it can be concluded that students generally have a positive perception of using podcasts as a medium for learning English speaking. They recognize podcasts as authentic sources of input that present native English conversations in a flexible, practical, enjoyable, and easily accessible format. Most students stated that podcasts help them better understand English usage in real and contextual situations. Moreover, podcasts were found to significantly contribute to the development of speaking skills, particularly in improving pronunciation, vocabulary, intonation, and self-confidence. Although not all students use podcasts regularly, those who do reported noticeable improvements in fluency and comfort when speaking English. However, despite their many advantages, the use of podcasts still poses certain challenges, such as difficulties in understanding fast native accents, lack of visuals, or limited access. Thus, while podcasts are considered effective and engaging, their integration should be adapted to students' diverse learning preferences and ideally complemented by other media to maximize learning outcomes.

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