

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Listening is one of the essential skills in learning English because the ability to understand spoken language serves as the foundation for effective communication and supports the development of other language skills, such as speaking, reading, and writing. As an input skill, listening exposes learners to pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and meaning in real communication contexts. According to **Saricoban (1999)**, listening is the process of understanding a speaker's utterances, which involves comprehension of accent or pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and meaning simultaneously. Therefore, mastering listening skills is crucial in English language education.

From a theoretical perspective, the use of authentic audio media in listening instruction is considered effective in improving learners' comprehension. Podcasts, as a technology-based learning medium, provide authentic and contextual audio materials. **Khedidja and Mechraoui (2015)** stated that podcasts are important media for enhancing learners' listening skills. Moreover, **Shelly and Frydenberg (2010)** explained that podcasts can be accessed anytime and anywhere through various digital devices, providing learners with high flexibility. Furthermore, **O'Bryan and Hegelheimer (2007)** highlighted that podcasts are widely used in educational contexts to support independent and distance learning. Based on these characteristics, podcast-based learning is theoretically regarded as a promising alternative medium for teaching listening skills in the digital era.

Despite the theoretical benefits, classroom practice often shows a different reality. Students' listening abilities remain relatively low and have not developed optimally. Based on preliminary observations and informal interviews conducted by the researcher, listening instruction is still dominated by conventional methods, such as textbook audio or commonly used YouTube videos. The use of English podcasts in listening activities is still rare, even though podcasts are widely available and easily accessible. This condition indicates a gap between the theoretical emphasis on podcast effectiveness and the actual instructional practice in the classroom.

If this condition continues without investigation, listening instruction may remain stagnant and fail to meet the demands of 21st-century learning. Students may miss opportunities to experience more authentic, engaging, and contextual listening activities. According to **Gönülal (2020)**, listening is an essential skill because humans tend to listen more than they read, speak, or write. Moreover, **Vandergrift and Goh (2012)** emphasized that effective listening instruction should consider the principles of variety, frequency, and repetition, which can be facilitated through podcast use.

In English language education, podcasts also influence students' attitudes and motivation. **Iskandar, Ahmad, and Diana (2017)** stated that using podcasts can positively impact students' attitudes and motivation because it brings them closer to the target language. In addition, **Wei and Ram (2016)** found that podcasts have the potential to enhance learners' language awareness and engagement in the learning process. However, previous studies mostly focused on measuring effectiveness and learning outcomes quantitatively, while qualitative research exploring students' lived experiences remains limited.

Based on this discussion, this study is designed as a qualitative research aimed at exploring students' learning experiences in listening through the use of English podcasts. The findings are expected to contribute to theoretical development, pedagogical practices, and provide references for educators in using learning media that align with learners' needs in the digital era.

1.2 IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

Based on the background described previously, several problems can be identified as follows:

1. The learning resources used in listening instruction are still very limited and English podcasts have not been utilized as an instructional medium.
2. Students' listening proficiency remains low, causing difficulties for them in accurately comprehending spoken English messages.
3. Only a few teachers may know but have not yet adopted podcasts as an alternative digital tool in listening instruction.
4. Students' have never used podcasts as a learning medium for listening.

1.3 PROBLEM DELIMITATIONS

To ensure that this research remains focused and clearly directed, the scope of the study is limited to the following points:

1. The use of English podcast as a learning medium for listening.
2. Students' perceptions and responses only.
3. The limited of meetings.
4. One class at the selected school.

This study does not measure students' listening to improvement or compare podcasts with other learning media.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do students perceive the use of English podcasts as a listening learning medium?
2. What are students' responses toward listening activities using English podcasts?
3. How do students feel about learning listening through podcasts for the first time?

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

1. To describe students' perceptions of using English podcasts as a listening learning medium.
2. To identify students' responses toward the use of podcasts in listening activities.
3. To understand students' initial impressions of learning listening through podcasts.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings derived from this research are anticipated to yield several important benefits:

1. Theoretical Contribution

The outcomes of this study can offer a meaningful contribution to the advancement of digital-based listening pedagogy, specifically regarding the integration and implementation of English podcasts as an instructional medium within EFL listening contexts.

1.6.1 For Teachers/Lecturers

This study can function as a valuable reference for educators in the process of selecting and designing more innovative and appropriate listening learning media that correspond with the specific needs of learners in the digital era.

1.6.2 For Students

This study offers new insights for learners regarding alternative ways to practice listening through English podcasts that are more flexible, authentic, and engaging.

1.6.3 For Educational Institutions

The results of this study may be considered as recommendations for institutions in formulating policies related to digital-based English instruction, particularly in the reinforcement of listening skills.

1.6.4 For Future Researchers

This study may be used as a supporting reference for further qualitative research that explores learning experiences using other forms of digital learning media.

1.7 Urgency of the Study

This research is essential because the integration of digital media specifically English podcasts within listening instruction remains significantly underutilized, despite

the immense potential of this medium to facilitate contextual listening development. In the absence of further investigation, listening pedagogy risks remaining conventional and inadequately synchronized with modern technological advancements. Through a comprehensive exploration of students' learning experiences, this study can provide a solid scientific foundation and robust recommendations to foster the transformation of listening instruction into a more effective, digital-based, and sustainable educational practice for the future.