Exploring the use of Podcasts in Improving English Listening Comprehension Skills among English-major Students at FPT University, HCM

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Abstract: **FPT University students have been taking online learning for numerous semesters since the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam in 2020. The English language is a discipline that necessitates ongoing training, and distant learning demands effective learning methods as well as student motivation. Listening is an important element of communication in people's daily lives when learning English [1]. Despite widespread agreement that language is best taught in a realistic context, and an increasing focus on the need of using technology to develop listening skills, there has been relatively little research in this area in the Vietnam context. To contribute to this field of inquiry, the researchers conducted research with an experiment to collect data with 12 students of FPT English major and used T-test and descriptive analysis to analyze the data. After performing experiments, collecting data, and analyzing, we have obtained results to explore whether podcasting helps students in the FPT English major to improve their listening comprehension skills, investigate students' attitudes towards using podcasts to improve their English listening comprehension skills and determine if students have any challenges using podcasts. This would be an important study outcome for FPT University teachers and students to better understand and implement podcasts to assist teaching and learning.**

Keywords: **Podcasts, English, Listening Skills, Comprehension, Student, FPT University**

1.   Introduction
Research Background
Podcasts have become more popular in recent years. There were 7 billion total Apple podcast downloads in 2014, 13.7 billion in 2018, and 50 billion total podcast downloads and streams in March of 2018. According to Locker (2018), podcasts are currently available in over 155 countries, with at least 525,000 active podcasts and over 18.5 million episodes [2].

The National Library of Vietnam was also aware of the trend of using Podcasts. In 2016, they published an article entitled "Application of podcasting in university libraries in Vietnam" [3], stating that podcasting is a popular form of information provision for many different fields and industries, but not popular for university libraries in our country. Being well aware of the role and importance of podcasting in library activities will Help University libraries have more options in developing services to provide information to news users. Therefore, improving the quality of information products and services, strengthening the cohesion in the community of users and the connection between this community and the library is essential.

Most Vietnamese universities have not officially adopted podcasts into their curricula. Nonetheless, several universities have conducted scientific research on the subject, including "Application of Podcast in Improving the Listening Skills of First-Year Students at the University of Electricity" in 2019 [4] and "Application of Social Software in the Organization of Communication Services Institute At Universities in Vietnam" in 2018 (which included podcasts) [5].

The training courses of FPT University are based on information technology, digital economic development, and global integration, and it benefits from being a core member of FPT Corporation [6]. FPT University students can take online courses through Coursera, a global online learning platform that allows everyone accesses to online courses and degrees from international universities and companies [7]. However, neither FPT Education in general, nor FPT University HCM in particular, have published a research paper on the application of podcasts to the curriculum, nor have they employed them in their curriculum yet.

2.   Literature Review
2.1   Overview of Podcasts
The Oxford Advanced American Dictionary (Oxford University Press, 2021) describes a podcast as "a broadcast radio recording or audio downloaded from the Internet" [8]. The name "podcasting" is derived from the terms "iPod" (Apple's popular portable music player) and "broadcasting". Podcasting is more than simply providing media that can be downloaded or streamed from a website (playing the media as it downloads) in that it eliminates the "click and wait" situation by having a computer that is always online, allowing bandwidth-intensive information to be "dripped in" and made available when ready [9].

A podcast is a digital audio file (usually in MP3 format) recorded with a voice recorder, a computer, a mobile device, or professional recording equipment in more demanding settings.

This file is then uploaded and hosted on a website or file storage service, where users can download it. Of course, audio recordings have always been available on the internet, either as files in repositories or as posts in audio blogs published by bloggers [10].

2.2   Podcasts as Language Learning Material

According to various studies, many lecturers, experts, and researchers acknowledge the significance of podcasts in school teaching and learning because they perceive the potential for application, particularly in the context of online teaching and learning. Panagiotidis from Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, Greece, conducted a podcasting study on language acquisition and made some accurate predictions of this mode of learning. According to Panagiotidis' research [10], bibliographical research had concentrated on the benefits and drawbacks of podcasts as language learning techniques, as well as student perceptions of them. The state of the podcast market was also reviewed, with implications for podcast usage in language learning in the future indicated. Based on market data and positive research results, the use of podcasts in language teaching and learning appears promising. Podcasting has a bright potential in language learning since it has the capacity to assist both teachers and students. Podcasts are a technological educational tool that enhances students' language talents and proficiency, as well as their ability to feel involved and motivated in today's mobile educational environment [10].

Another article by Palitha Edirisingha of the Gilly Salmon University of Leicester reported on the ongoing work of IMPALA, a UK national study that investigates the impact of podcasting on student learning in higher education [11]. It gives an overview of how the study was carried out, preliminary data from the pilot research, and emerging models for employing podcasts in certain pedagogical situations. According to the findings of the pilot study, podcasts were advantageous to students who did most of their work online. Podcasts improved educational organizational aspects, brought openness and pleasure to formal learning, assisted students in developing e-learning and independent study skills, provided for deep engagement with learning material, and enabled them to learn while on the go. Listening to instructional programs as a podcast is not the same as listening for entertainment; podcasts must be combined with other forms of learning, such as online discussions [11].

2.3   Podcasts and EFL Learning Environments

Podcasts can be used in an EFL classroom in four main ways: ESL, native English, exam preparation (IELTS and TOEFL), and student production. ESL podcasts are audio courses or themes that have been modified to teach English as a second language, such as 'giving instructions' or English idioms. Native English podcasts are not meant to be educational, but they do provide speakers with a natural language instructional setting. Podcasts are used for test preparation by universities that require non-native speakers to pass an English exam, such as the IELTS or TOEFL. Student-created podcasts are distinctive in that they are produced as part of a class assignment (McMinn, 2008) [12].

2.4   Podcasts and Attitude

A group of four Korean and Chinese language studies lecturers from the National University of Singapore's Center for Language Studies assessed students' learning attitudes and learning effectiveness in these two languages. This study looks at two podcast projects created at a Singaporean institution to supplement education hours in Chinese and Korean as a foreign language. It then reports on a poll conducted on these two initiatives in order to address the current lack of scholarly research and gain insights for the future development of language podcasting. Data were collected via questionnaires delivered to 120 Chinese and 61 Korean language students, as well as semi-structured interviews, to assess podcast quality and utility, as well as attitudes toward podcast-based learning [13].

Li's (2010) study of six Hong Kong ESL secondary school students' thoughts on podcasts in the Department of English, Hong Kong Institute of Education, Tai Po, Hong Kong, revealed a positive reaction to podcast consumption [14]. Additionally, the study employed a qualitative approach, necessitating a more in-depth investigation (interviews and questionnaires). Each incident includes a report on the students' perceptions. The questionnaires are compiled and analyzed to produce statistical data.

One participant indicated that his listening and speaking abilities had improved, and he believed that podcasting was an excellent method of language learning. According to Li, all participants loved listening to podcasts, with one student remarking on how accessible they were. The overall tone of this research was helpful, while some learners expressed complaints about the length or style of the podcasts in certain cases [14].

2.5   Using Podcasts for Enhancing Listening Comprehension

Listening is a prominent and vital skill for language learning. It is a complex, continuous system in which the listener must differentiate between sounds and comprehend lexical and grammatical structures [15]. As a result, students may encounter several challenges and roadblocks when learning to listen, as opposed to studying grammar, where there are rules to follow and memorize. Additionally, one of the difficulties kids face is maintaining a steady listening pattern, even if they miss critical information owing to a lack of vocabulary or unexpectedly new knowledge. This is why learners lose interest in language acquisition when they fear they will never be able to absorb and master it. As a result, educators and researchers have attempted to build a method and a model of learning that combine cultural, social, and other variables that can assist students in improving their listening comprehension abilities. That is why audio is gaining popularity as a resource for students to approach and learn. Podcasts have been shown to be an effective learning method; study indicates that listening to podcasts helps people recall knowledge three times better than reading text. Podcasts aid learners since they are spontaneous [16] and maybe utilized for intensive and extended listening exercises [17].

Additionally, the authenticity and range of materials available in this format effectively break down barriers between formal and informal English, making them well-suited for extended listening and promoting students' interest in listening to English both in and out of the classroom. Lu conducted a four-week study in 2007 with a Taiwanese learner who had never seen accurate English determine whether podcasts in both UK and US English may help language learners enhance their listening and speaking abilities in an EFL environment [18]. The participant was needed to transcribe the podcasts, identify contextual vocabulary and grammar, and participate in an English-language discussion on the weekly themes. The study discovered that using podcasts for listening education benefits the subject by increasing his confidence in his ability to comprehend English in general.

In another study, Kavaliuskine and Anuziene (2009) discovered that students have positive attitudes toward podcasts, as demonstrated by their high appreciation for podcasts in the English classroom and extensive use of podcasts in listening practice [19]. Students' enthusiasm for using podcasts as learning aids is also evident in their efforts to download podcasts on a regular basis and listen to them for listening practice and entertainment. Podcasts, according to studies, improve student motivation since they cover a wide range of topics [20, 21, 22]. Podcasts are used in EFL lessons to promote listening comprehension as primary sources and review aides. The podcast has a significant impact on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL sophomore students, according to Ashraf, Naroozi, and Salami [23]. According to Hawks, listening to podcasts has significantly improved the listening skills of science students [24].

3.   Methodology
3.1   Research Questions and Hypothesis
Research Questions
1.   Does podcasting assist FPT English majored students in improving their listening comprehension skills?
2.   What are students' perceptions of the use of podcasts to improve their English listening skills?
3.   What challenges do students have when using Podcasts?

Hypothesis
H1: In terms of scores after the experiment, the experiment group that used Podcasts had more positive improvements than the control group that did not use Podcasts.
H2: The Podcast user group is pleased with and enthusiastic about the use of Podcasts.
H3: During the experiment, students had no difficulty using Podcasts.

3.2   Participant
Twelve students majoring in English Linguistics took part in this study. These students are all from the same class. In the Fall semester of 2021, they both attended an online course in Academic listening. The researchers approached the students through the lecturers who taught the course, and the students agreed to take part in the experiment.

All of the participants would be divided into two groups: the Experiment group and the Control group. They would choose which group to join. Seven students registered to be in the control group, while the remaining five students registered to be in the experiment group.

Based on the average Pre-test scores of the two groups (Table 1), it was clear that the difference in scores between the two groups was small, barely 2.1%. In terms of English listening capacity, it was discovered that there was little difference between the two groups.

Table 1: Mean of the Pre-test Score

TN 1, DC 2	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
1.00	21.8571	7	3.84831
2.00	21.4000	5	3.04959
Total	**21.6667**	**12**	**3.39340**

3.3   Instrument
In this research paper to answer the research questions, the research team used four main tools for the research paper:

The research team employed four key tools in this research paper to address the research questions.

- **Pre-test**
This is a technique used by the research team to assess the research group's capacity to understand English listening abilities. The test assisted the researchers in dividing the group of subjects into two groups with nearly identical skills. The author employed a pre-test consisting of 40 questions from IDP's IELTS test set to ensure the validity and reliability of the research results. To verify correctness, the test was additionally tested by an Academic listening instructor from the English language department.

- **Post-test**

The post-test was utilized to assess the change in the research group during the course of the investigation. The post-test was a 40-question test from the IDP IELTS set that was chosen at random by researchers after two weeks of trial to assure the test's security. The post-test was also routed through the lecturer in charge of teaching Academic listening to ensure that the test's complexity is appropriate for the target group's ability.

- **Gain Score**

Score changes through 2 tests of research subjects.

- **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was developed as a result of Li's research [14]. Initially, the questionnaire contained thirteen statements. After being divided into two portions, the questionnaire was reduced to fifteen items for this study. The first component of the questionnaire included statements 1-9, which aimed to investigate students' attitudes toward podcasts in the context of increasing their listening comprehension skills. The second half covered statements 9-15, with the goal of determining students' additional factors influencing the use of podcasts in improving their listening comprehension skills. The Likert Scale was employed in the questionnaire to assess respondents' level of agreement with statements based on their actions [25]. The Likert Scale, according to Likert (1931), comprised five scale descriptors: "Totally Disagree," "Disagree," "Neutral," "Agree," and "Totally Agree" [25].

- **Data Analysis Tool**

The data was analyzed using the Independent-Sample T-Test and descriptive statistics in IBM SPSS Statistics 26.

3.4   Research Design and Procedure

Participants were divided into two groups, experimental and control. The two groups had never used podcasts before and after they had been grouped, they would complete a pre-test to assess their listening skills. The researchers compared groups of participants while they learned Academic Listening at university and while they trained in the same environment. The experiment lasted 12 days. The length of the experiment was 12 days. In general, the two groups would continue to study in class as they would under the Academic Listening curriculum. Furthermore, the control group would self-study and practice more listening skills at home using their ways, whereas the experiment group was sent Academic Podcasts from the research team to practice more at home outside of class time. Each player withinside the experiment group wrote a precis of the podcast content material they heard and despatched it through email, back to the researchers to ensure that they had tracked the experimental group's progress after listening to the 6-minute podcast. All the episodes of podcasts used in the experiment were from BBC 6 Minute English Podcast.

The Podcast URLs were distributed to the experimental group participants using Zalo Group Chat. Every day (excluding Sunday), participants were required to complete one listening lesson and submit a summary to the researchers by 10 p.m. The control group would be approachable in their learning style and would incorporate classroom learning. Following the end of the study period, both groups would take a post-test, and the research team would do an evaluation of the use of a Podcast.

4.   Data Analysis and Discussion
4.1   Testing Question 1

The Independent-Samples T-Test compared the means of two distinct groups [26]. The variances between two distinct groups must have been examined in the Independent-Samples T-Test. This provided the researchers with information on the degree of dispersion of the observed data [27]. This test was evaluated using the Levene test, and a statistically significant result indicated unequal variance between groups [28].

The hypothesis H1 is accepted if the Levene test result is Significant (2-tailed) and less than 0.05. The hypothesis that the variances of two independent groups are equivalent is rejected. However, if the Significant (2-tailed) in the T-test is more than 0.05, it is possible to conclude that there is no significant difference in mean values between the two groups.

According to Hoang and Chu [29], the null hypothesis is rejected if the value of Significant in Levene's Test is less than 0.05. The result of the Equal variance not assumed will then be used. On the other hand, if the significance in Levene's test is greater than 0.05, the hypothesis that the variance of two independent groups is equal is accepted.

Table 2: Group Statistics

	TN 1, DC 2	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
Gain Score	1.00	7	3.8571	1.77281	.67006
	2.00	5	1.0000	1.22474	.54772

Table 3: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means	
		F	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**
Gain Score	**Equal Variances Assumed**	.769	.401	3.095	10
	Equal Variances Not Assumed			3.301	10.000

		T-test for Equality of Means		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**
Gain Score	**Equal Variances Assumed**	.011	2.85714	.92317
	Equal Variances Not Assumed	.008	2.85714	.86544

Sig. from Table 3 The value of Levene's test is 0.401, which was more than 0.05, indicating that Equal variances were deemed to be valid. Furthermore, the null hypothesis was rejected since the Significant in T-Test (2-tailed) value was 0.011, which was less than 0.05. As a result, there was a mean difference in Gain Score between the Experimental Group and the Control Group.

The study team was compelled to conduct descriptive analysis to evaluate whether there was a difference in the degree of difference in scores using a minimal amount of data to examine the difference between the two groups. As a result, mean would be the major signal to assist us in testing this. Because the study sample was too small, inappropriate for conducting regression, and not very generalizable, the group was unable to employ variance.

Abbreviations
TN: Experimental Group (Encoding: 1)
DC: Control group (Encoding: 2)

Table 4: Mean of Post-test Score

TN 1, DC 2	**Mean**	**N**	**Std. Deviation**
1.00	25.7143	7	3.35233
2.00	22.4000	5	2.88097
Total	**24.3333**	**12**	**3.47284**

Table 5: Mean of Gain Score

TN 1, DC 2	**Mean**	**N**	**Std. Deviation**
1.00	3.8571	7	1.77281
2.00	1.0000	5	1.22474
Total	**2.6667**	**12**	**2.10339**

The mean Post Test and Gain Score scores revealed that the gap between the two groups had grown. Specifically, the group who used Podcasts for the Post-test had a mean score of 25,7143, which was 14.8 % higher than the group that did not use it (22.4 points).

This had an effect on the difference in Gain Score between the two groups as well. The Podcasts group reported that there was no lower Post-test score than Pre-test, and the difference between the two songs was significant, resulting in a Mean for Gain Score of 3.8571. Meanwhile, the group who did not use Podcasts increased their average score after Post-cast by only 1 point, accounting for less than one-third of the experimental group.

This demonstrated that the use of Podcasts had a beneficial effect on the users' scores in this experiment.

4.2   Testing Question 2

According to the survey, the mean score of the seven experimental participants all had a positive attitude (greater than a score of 3.0) about utilizing Podcasts to improve English listening skills. The average score for 9 questions was a range of 3.2857 to 4.4286. This demonstrated that the hypothesis about students' perceptions toward the efficacy of podcasts for improving listening skills was generally acceptable.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistic of Student Attitude

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AT1	7	3.00	5.00	3.8571	.69007
AT2	7	4.00	5.00	4.4286	.53452
AT3	7	4.00	5.00	4.4286	.53452
AT4	7	2.00	4.00	3.2857	.95119
AT5	7	3.00	4.00	3.8571	.37796
AT6	7	4.00	4.00	4.0000	.00000
AT7	7	3.00	5.00	4.0000	.57735
AT8	7	3.00	5.00	4.0000	.81650
AT9	7	4.00	5.00	4.4286	.53452
Valid N (List wise)	7				

4.3   Testing Question 3

In terms of the use of Podcasts and the challenges experienced, a group of seven students actually disagreed with the difficulties given by the researchers. The mean scores ranged from 1.7143 to 3.5714, indicating that students disagreed with the use of Podcasts being challenging. Not only that, but the data revealed that students had no difficulty using Podcasts to improve their English listening skills, which was compatible with hypothesis 03, which the research team initially proposed.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistic of Student Opinion

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
OP1	7	2.00	4.00	3.0000	1.00000
OP2	7	2.00	3.00	2.1429	.37796
OP3	7	2.00	4.00	3.4286	.78680
OP4	7	1.00	2.00	1.7143	.48795
OP5	7	1.00	3.00	2.0000	.57735
OP6	7	3.00	4.00	3.5714	.53452
Valid N (List wise)	7				

5.   Findings and Discussion

After conducting this study and analysing the data, the researchers assess the significance of Podcasts in assisting FPT English primary students in improving their listening comprehension skills.

5.1   Findings

Finding 1: According to the T-Test analysis of this research, Podcast did produce a difference between the two groups. The experimental group's Post-test score increased significantly, however the control group's score did not change significantly. This resulted in the conclusion that podcasts helped FPT English major students enhance their listening comprehension skills.

Finding 2: Among the Mean, students who used Podcast had a good opinion of the influence of Podcast consumption. The majority of students had a positive perception towards the use of Podcasts in improving English listening comprehension skills.

Finding 3: Students believed that using Podcasts is not difficult, both technically and content-wise.

5.2   Discussion

Based on the data analysis, the research team discovered the usefulness of Podcasts in helping to practice listening comprehension skills. The gain score demonstrated the difference between the control and experiment groups after the experiment. Both groups

had an improvement score, but the improvement of the Experiment group was higher than the Control group. This proved the researchers' hypothesis H1 to be correct.

The researchers predicted the problems that might rise up at some point of the experimental tracking and integrated a scoreboard (Table 7) to determine if the experiment group members had any troubles with the Podcast consuming experiment. However, the majority of participants said there was no difficulty in utilizing Podcasts, with a Mean ranging from 1.7143 to 3.5714 (Table 7). The participants found it most difficult to listen to podcasts without a transcript (OP6. Mean = 3.5714) and the next one was when the researchers could not support the experimental group on the internet quality for the experiment, they had to use their own internet. Their internet connection quality had made it difficult for some of them to use Podcasts. However, the researchers found this as an issue that the team has been working on to find better solutions to ensure the quality of the Podcasts is maintained. With the above, the team confirmed that the H3 of the team was accepted.

After the experiment, through a survey on the experiment group, the research team proved the hypothesis H2 to be correct when the participants' attitude towards using podcasts in improving their English listening comprehension skills was very positive with a Mean range of 3.2857 to 4.4286 (Table 6). In particular, the experimental group was interested in using Podcasts and easy-to-use Podcasts and desired Podcasts to be covered as a studying device for English language major students at FPT University. (AT3, AT3, AT9 with Mean = 4.4286)

6. Limitation and Future Research
Despite the fact that this study achieved its objectives, it is critical to highlight its flaws. Recognizing these drawbacks is essential for generating recommendations for future research. In this study, the researchers discovered the utility of using Podcasts and English-majored students' perceptions of Podcasts usage. Nevertheless, the sample size was still small, secondary data and research were limited. Because of the limited time available for research, the proposed model for this study contained only a few variables.

Perhaps there are some more factors influencing university students' consumption of podcasts. As a result, the author may pursue it further in future research. To do this, the questionnaire's distinctions between each item and independent factor should be clearer, simpler to interpret, and more thorough. Furthermore, in order to improve the dependability index, future research should widen the scope of the survey.

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Appendix
Questionnaire Table

SECTION	CODE	QUESTION
ATTITUDE	AT1	Tôi thích sử dụng Podcast/ I like using Podcast.
	AT2	Tôi thấy thích thú khi sử dụng Podcast để cải thiện kỹ năng nghe hiểu tiếng Anh/ I enjoyed using Podcast to improve my English listening comprehension skills.
	AT3	Podcast dễ sử dụng/ Podcast is easy to use.
	AT4	Độ dài của Podcast phù hợp với tôi/ The length of Podcast appreciates me.
	AT5	Nội dung của Podcast phù hợp với tôi/ The content of Podcast is suitable for me.
	AT6	Tôi nghĩ rằng Podcast giúp tôi rất nhiều trong việc cải thiện kỹ năng nghe hiểu tiếng Anh/ I think Podcast helps me a lot on improving the English listening comprehension skill.
	AT7	Podcast đáp ứng được nhu cầu của tôi trong việc cải thiện kỹ năng nghe hiểu tiếng Anh/ Podcast meets my need in improving my English comprehension listening skills.
	AT8	Tôi sẽ tiếp tục sử dụng Podcast/ I will continuous using Podcast.
	AT9	Tôi muốn Podcast được sử dụng như một công cụ trong học tập cho sinh viên ngành Ngôn Ngữ Anh tại FPT HCM/ I want Podcast to be implemented in learning of English Major's students in FPT University HCM.
CHALLENGE	OP1	Tôi nghĩ độ dài của Podcast quá dài/ I think the length of Podcast is too long.
	OP2	Nội dung của Podcast không phù hợp với tôi/ The content of Podcast is not suitable for me.
	OP3	Podcast khó tiếp cận thông qua Internet/ It is hard to get Podcast from internet.
	OP4	Tôi nghĩ Podcast khó sử dụng/ I think Podcast is difficult to use.
	OP5	Tôi không biết sử dụng Podcast/ I do not know how to use Podcast.
	OP6	Tôi thấy sử dụng Podcast không có transcript rất khó khăn/ Listening Podcast without transcript is quiet difficult