



TEACHING LISTENING SKILLS FOR ESL LEARNERS THROUGH PODCASTS AND OTHER DIGITAL MEDIA

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Abstract *In recent years, digital media has become an integral part of language learning, offering accessible and interactive platforms that cater to diverse learning needs. This research examines the potential of podcasts as a flexible and engaging tool for improving ESL students' listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation. Additionally, it explores the effectiveness of various other forms of digital media, such as videos, audiobooks, and online lectures, in fostering a comprehensive language learning experience. Through a detailed review of existing literature, as well as the implementation of targeted listening activities, this study evaluates the impact of digital media on students' listening abilities in real-world contexts.*

Key words: *ESL listening, podcasts, Bloom's Taxonomy, language learning, listening comprehension, cognitive skills, authentic materials, learner autonomy.*

Introduction

Listening comprehension is a critical yet often challenging skill for learners of English as a Second Language (ESL). Unlike reading or writing, listening requires the immediate processing of spoken language, which can vary widely in speed, accent, intonation, and complexity. According to Nunan (2003), listening is a process of decoding the sounds that are heard from the phonemes to the text completely. The integration of technology in EFL classroom assists students not only to acquire foreign language but also to increase their motivation and confidence. It means that with help of technology, the student's encouragement will be increased. Furthermore, in the area of language teaching particularly listening, Podcasts for example, provide a unique feature of content choice and repository of

real-life speaking materials which allow students to study at their own time and pace. Therefore, listening is an important aspect in communicating with others. Effective listening allows learners to grasp the true meaning of information, making it a fundamental aspect of language learning.

Besides, listening has a very effective role in the process of learning and language acquisition, "for it is the key to improve speaking, reading and writing; it is used at least three times as much as speaking, and four to five times as much as reading and writing" (Grognet and Duzer, 2002). For young pupils, listening and trying to understand the spoken language is a powerful beginning for language acquisition process. To accelerate this process, pupils need to hear a lot of meaningful language input. In addition, Rost (2011) and Vandergrift (1999) asserted that listening is highly used and integrative language skill, as it is used in conjunction with the other language skills: speaking, reading and writing. It is extremely important in the process of acquiring a second language.

Moreover, Hemmati, Gholamrezapour and Hessamy (2015) added that if a learner can listen effectively, success of the rest of the skills and mastering language learning will follow naturally. In order to comprehend a spoken message, four main types of knowledge may be drawn on: phonological (the sound system); syntactic (how words are put together); semantic (word and propositional knowledge); and pragmatic (the meaning of utterances in particular situations). Pragmatic competence helps students develop 21st-century skills such as the ability to understand the goals, feelings and communication styles of representatives of different cultures and social backgrounds. (Shamsutdinova, 2024). Thus, listening comprehension is a mental process that is very complicated. In which listeners have little chance to read the message or the words again.

Dealing with sound input is totally different from dealing with written language (Liu, 2009). Thus, all language learners face difficulties when listening; as listening comprehension still remains one of the least understood processes. Despite its importance, listening is often seen as one of the most challenging skills to master.

Although listening is considered to be one of the difficult skills to acquire, it can be improved through concise, meaningful data and regular practice as well. Furthermore, Brown states that teaching means to help someone to learn how to do something, to guide someone in the study of something, and also to provide someone with knowledge. It is believed that, via listening, someone can receive new skills, information and education as well.

Apart from those, we should take into consideration that easy listening is a style of music, not communication. Most communication experts such as Saha, Mili & Md. Ali Rezwan Talukda agree that poor listening skills are the biggest contributors to poor communication. Therefore, to tackle this problem we should take into consideration that there are some types of listening and according to them we can implement a particular type to our learners to enhance the efficiency of the lesson.

Table 1. Types of listening

Reactive	Reactive is the kind of listening performance requires little meaningful processing in communication classroom.
Intensive	Intensive is a technique whose only purpose is to focus on components (phonemes, words, intonation, discourse, markers).
Responses	Response is a significant proportion of classroom listening activity consists of stretches of teacher language designed to elicit immediate responses.
Selective	Selective is stretches if discourse such as monologues of a couple a minute on considerably longer. The task of the students are not to process everything that was said, but rather to scan the material selectively for certain information.
Extensive	Extensive performance could range from listening to lengthy lectures, to listening conversation and deriving a comprehensive message or purpose.
Interactive	This listening performance that can include all the five above types as learners actively participate in discussion, debates, conversation, role-plays, and other pair work, and group work.

Familiarity with the aforementioned types of listening skills can help teachers enhance the quality of their lessons and choose one based on the ability of our student.

An innovative approach to teaching listening skills has emerged due to the hi-tech developments. Nowadays, English listening skills can be practiced at any time, in any place, and in various ways. This is largely due to platforms like Spotify, digital music, podcasts, and video streaming services, which offer content from artists worldwide. These platforms offer a wide range of content, providing sample opportunities to practice listening in various contexts. Podcast is a series video and digital audio broadcast that could be downloaded and played on mobile devices. The term “Podcast” was derived from two technologies, “iPod”, and “Broadcast” and It is the same as radio but there is a thin line between radio and Podcast.

Podcast give listeners full access to select their favorite program according to their convenience and listen to it. Furthermore, podcast was first known in 2004, and it is defined as an internet audio blogging or internet audio publishing. The audio recording is designed to be downloaded and listened to on a portable mp3 player or on a computer while podcasts are delivered online automatically via a website, so it is different from other audios. They utilize voice which is the most influential tool that relates to the audience very quickly. Thus, podcast is a series of sound files that consist of educational information in a comprehensive manner to make the user an advanced learner.

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