



P- ISSN: 3007-3650 E- ISSN: 2706-8536

Journal of the College of Basic Education

مجلة كلية التربية الاساسية

كلية التربية الاساسية – الجامعة المستنصرية

Vol.32 (No.137) 2026, pp.1131-1151

Using podcasts to improve fourth-grade English language learners' listening comprehension

Assistant .Lecturer Inas Mahdi Ali

Mustansiriyah University, College of Basic Education,

Department of English Language

Inasmahdi@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq

Abstract

This study addresses the problem of weak listening skills among fourth-year English language learners and explores the effectiveness of podcasts as an educational tool to enhance this skill. The lack of research on using podcasts to improve listening skills in classrooms, particularly among students learning English as a foreign language, indicates a significant gap in this area. The study aims to determine whether using podcasts in English language lessons improves students' listening skills compared to traditional teaching methods.

Students who receive their education through podcasts are believed to outperform their peers who receive traditional education on listening comprehension tests. The study included eighty students divided into two groups: an experimental group using podcasts as a supplementary learning tool, and a control group receiving traditional education. A questionnaire was used to gather students' feedback on podcast use, and pre- and post-tests were administered to assess their improvement.

To enhance engagement and assess comprehension, students were also introduced to audio-visual podcasts. According to the results, the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in listening comprehension, and the students expressed positive opinions about using podcasts in learning.

Key words: podcast, experimental group, Control Group, listening skills, questionnaire, non-English speakers.



1.1. Introduction

Understanding spoken language and listening skills are essential for learning English as a second language. However, many (EFL) learners in Iraq struggle to acquire these skills due to limited access to authentic listening resources and reliance on traditional teaching methods that prioritize memorization over effective communication. The use of technology in language teaching has opened new opportunities to improve language acquisition in recent years. Among these resources, podcasts have gained increasing attention as a useful and flexible tool that enables students to access native spoken language in diverse settings.

(Ramirez, M. G. (2024).

Studies investigating the effectiveness of podcasts in improving listening skills among fourth-year English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Iraq, particularly those in their final year, remain limited, despite the growing interest in using digital media in language teaching.(Shafiee, F., & Salehi, H. (2019). This research gap underscores the need for further studies on the potential benefits of podcasts in enhancing students' listening abilities. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of podcasts in improving listening skills among EFL students in Iraq and to evaluate their impact compared to traditional teaching methods.

1.2. The problem of the research

By studying contemporary audiovisual technologies, this research contributes to the development of teaching methods. It also helps students increase their motivation and understanding, and benefits teachers by providing techniques to improve listening skills.

1.3. The aim of the research

1. To investigate how podcast-based instruction impacts the listening comprehension abilities of fourth-grade English as a Second Language learners, as determined by [insert tool, e.g., pre- and post-intervention assessment scores]
2. To measure students' engagement and attitudes towards learning through podcasts.



2.1. Literature Review

2.1.1. Listening comprehension

The instructional strategy, often referred to as the audio-lingual approach, is based on the idea that learners can improve their ability to understand the target language by listening to it regularly. Consequently, the production skills approach had a significant impact on listening during the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, the definition of listening centered on interpreting the cultural significance of acquired speech behavior. The two main theoretical frameworks for learning and comprehension were the interactionism movement and the sociolinguistic movement. The listening approach emphasized honing listening skills through socially and culturally acceptable responses to spoken material.(Alfian, A., & Lio, A. (2019).

It wasn't until the late 1940s that listening was recognized as a fundamental language skill that fosters the development of reading and writing skills in a new language, and which develops more naturally than speaking. At that time, listening was defined as the effective transmission and reformulation of messages. However, this perspective suffered from the flawed assumption that exposure to language would lead to the acquisition of listening skills. Following the influence of behaviorism on language acquisition in the 1960s, listening was described as the process of analyzing and classifying data in order to effectively retain and retrieve it.

At that time, intonation, pitch, the perception and decoding of phonemes were all fundamental elements of education. Practicing sound discrimination at the word and sentence levels using linear information processing was one of the most important listening exercises. Language learning was thought to be a semi-automatic response to stimuli. Students were believed to have limited capacity to enhance their understanding and memorization skills. While students received formal instruction in speaking, reading, and writing, they were often expected to acquire listening skills independently through natural assimilation.



2.1.2. The use of podcasts in language learning

Using these tools for listening comprehension (pre- test and post – test), Questionnaire which used to measure (students attitudes, motivation, opinions about podcasts') students can acquire diverse English language skills through participation in real-world language activities and individual support. They can also listen to and simulate native language sounds using these resources, which include recordings of native speakers. This enables students to improve their English speaking and listening skills. (Jiang, S., & Chen, Z. (2024).

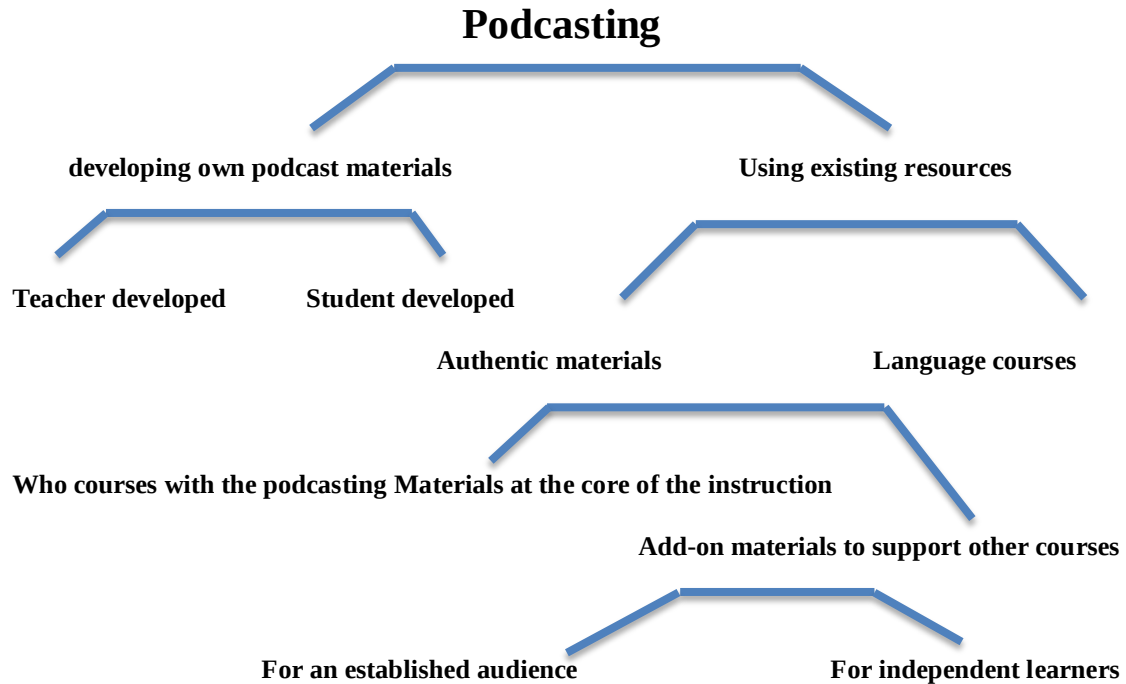
Rosetta and Podiasningroom (2022). Podcasts are an innovative, computer-based learning resource that can enhance students' speaking, listening, and comprehension skills. They provide students with access to authentic information, enabling them to learn from native speakers and gain valuable insights. Furthermore, podcasts offer a wealth of information that can be used to learn the language effectively. Therefore, learning can be engaging and enjoyable, which may contribute to positive perceptions of using podcasts for learning English.

Podcasts are an excellent tool for learning English, as they provide realistic examples of spoken English, which helps improve pronunciation. The ability to pause and resume them as needed is an added advantage (Rosetta and Podiasningroom, 2022).

Figure (1)

Note. From Rosell-Aguilar, 2007, p. 476

Taxonomy of uses of podcasting for language learning





P- ISSN: 3007-3650 E- ISSN: 2706-8536
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كلية التربية الاساسية – الجامعة المستنصرية
Vol.32 (No.137) 2026, pp.1131-1151



Figure 2 numbers of podcasts' for beginner



Figure 3 A series of podcasts episodes featuring educational



2.2. Technology in Language Learning

As technology has become part of everyday life, it is considered critical in all areas of education. Since the 1990s, a variety of computer-based products have been developed for language learning and teaching, and decisions to buy or not to buy have usually been made on economic and technical grounds rather than on grounds of pedagogical quality. A study titled “Toward Integrative CALL: A Progressive Outlook on the History, Trends, and Issues of CALL” attempts to address this gap in the context of computer-assisted language learning (CALL). The paper begins by briefly outlining the background on CALL from historical and pedagogical points of view. It then moves on to the current developments in CALL as one of the applications of technology in the area of language education [5]. Currently, there are many different community language programs using new technology. Satellite technology has been found particularly useful in some remote situations. Television and computer use is becoming common in many schools as computers become cheaper and small enough to fit into the classroom. The Internet and other containerless delivery systems are presenting new opportunities for both teachers and students at all levels. These quick innovations have taken place very quickly, often with little professional development on how to incorporate technology into the classroom. However, as new technology becomes available, teachers and educational policymakers must be prepared to keep the changes from being just faddish. What is needed is knowledge of current trends in technology-assisted language learning (CALL) and



teaching. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to summarize current trends in technology-assisted language learning by looking at the modern landscape of technology integration in language education. Recent developments, innovations, and approaches being adopted worldwide in the field of language learning and teaching with technology will be briefly examined [6]

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Technology has become an integral part of all aspects of education as our reliance on it in our daily lives increases. A range of computer-assisted language teaching and learning tools was developed during the 1990s, and decisions to purchase them were often influenced more by technical and financial factors than by the quality of education. In the context of computer-assisted language teaching, a study titled "Towards Integrated Computer-Assisted Language Teaching: A Progressive Look at the History, Trends, and Issues of Computer-Assisted Language Teaching" aims to bridge this gap.

Many community language programs are now leveraging modern technologies. In some remote areas, satellite technology has proven invaluable. Just as computers are now commonplace in classrooms, televisions and computers have become essential in many schools. Teachers and students at all levels have been given new opportunities thanks to the Internet and other distribution platforms. These rapid developments have occurred in a relatively short period, sometimes without adequate professional training on how to use technology in the classroom. (Saragih, D., Marpaung, A., & Saragih, R. P. (2022).

. However, to prevent these developments from becoming mere short-lived trends, educators and education officials must be prepared for the emergence of new technologies. Understanding the latest developments in technology-assisted language learning (CALL) and teaching is essential for achieving this.

.3.1. Methodology and Findings

3.1.1 Research Design

This research uses a quasi-experimental design, consisting of two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The control group received training using traditional methods, while the experimental group received training using audio files (podcasts)

Before and after training, both groups underwent a pre-test and a post-test to assess their level of auditory comprehension.

1. .Selection of the study sample.
2. .Dividing the students into two groups: an experimental group and a control group.

3. Administering a pre-test to both groups.
4. Using audio files (podcasts) to teach the experimental group.
5. Teaching the control group using the traditional curriculum.
6. Administering a post-test to both groups.
7. Distributing a questionnaire to the experimental group.
8. Statistical evaluation of the data

3.2. Population and Sample

The study sample consists of fourth-year students in the English Department at Al-Mustansiriya University. Two academic groups, each comprising approximately 80 students, were randomly selected:

- 40 students in the experimental group
- 40 students in the control group

Students will evaluate their classroom experiences using 20 items, based on four main questionnaire themes:

The four questionnaire themes are:

- The impact of podcasts on listening comprehension
- The contribution of podcasts to vocabulary and pronunciation development
- Student motivation and participation
- An assessment scale was used to measure students' levels before and after listening to podcasts in order to gauge their opinions on the use of podcasts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) morning and evening classes

3.3. Data Collection

Students were recruited and asked to listen to a data collection podcast between October and December 2025. After obtaining student consent, a questionnaire was distributed containing questions administered before and after listening to assess their level. All responses were kept confidential.

3.4. Data analysis

The SPSS software was used to statistically analyze the data collected for this study. To evaluate the data and test the study hypotheses, the researcher used several statistical methods, such as the mean, standard deviation, independent samples t-test, paired samples t-test, weighted

mean, percentage, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient. To ensure the level of listening and understanding, the questionnaires were coded and compiled based on the axes which were classified to extract the results.

3.5. Results and Discussion

3.5.1 Data Analysis

The results of the survey and achievement test were used to determine the extent to which podcast use contributes to improving the listening skills of fourth-year students in the English as a Foreign Language program. The study hypotheses were tested using statistical data analysis.

First: Pre-test Results

Before the experiment began, this table is essential to determine the equivalence of the two groups

And before the treatment period began both the experimental and control groups underwent a pre-test to determine if their comprehension of spoken texts were comparable.

Table 3.1

The Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and T-value of the Experimental and Control Groups in the Pre-Test

Group	No. of Students	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Calculated T-value	Tabulated T-value	Significance
Experimental Group	40	57.10	6.15	0.25	1.99	Not Significant
Control Group	40	56.75	6.32			

Interpretation

According to Table 3.1, the mean score of the experimental group was 57.10, while the mean score of the control group was 56.75. At a significance level of 0.05, the calculated t-value (0.25) was less than the tabulated t-value (1.99). This indicates that the pre-test did not show a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Therefore, before the start of treatment, the two groups were equal.

Second: Test Results

This table is undoubtedly the most important in the entire study because it presents the Post-Test Results.

To determine the impact of podcast use on students' listening comprehension, a post-test was administered to both groups after the experimental period

Table 3.2

T-values mean scores and standard deviations for the experimental and control groups in the post-test Group

No. of Students	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Calculated T-value	Tabulated T-value	Significance
Experimental Group	40	80.35	5.42	10.84	1.99
Significant Control Group	40	65.90	6.10		

Interpretation

A clear difference was observed between the two groups in the post-test, as shown in Table 3.2. The mean score of the control group was 65.90, while the mean score of the experimental group was 80.35. At a significance level of 0.05, the calculated t-value (10.84) was greater than the tabulated t-value (1.99). This indicates a statistically significant difference between the two groups, in favor of the experimental group. This result suggests that the students in the experimental group significantly improved their listening skills by using podcasts. II. Test Results. This table (3.2) is undoubtedly the most important in the entire study. 3.2 Post-Test Results: To assess the effect of using podcasts on students' listening comprehension, a post-test was administered to both groups after the end of the experimental period.

Third: Comparison of Pre- and Post-Test Results for the Experimental Group

This table illustrates the progress made within the same group and presents the Comparison of Pre- and Post-Test Results for the Experimental Group.

The students' scores on the pre- and post-tests were compared to determine the extent of improvement achieved by the experimental group during the treatment period..

Table 4.3

Mean pre- and post-test scores of the experimental group, standard deviations, and t-value.

Test	No. of Students	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Calculated T-value	Tabulated T-value	Significance
Pre-Test	40	57.10	6.15	18.72	2.02	Significant
Post-Test	40	80.35	5.42			

Interpretation

The mean score of the experimental group increased from 57.10 on the pre-test to 80.35 on the post-test, as shown in Table 4.3. At a significance level of 0.05, the calculated t-value (18.72) was significantly larger than the tabulated t-value (2.02). This indicates a statistically significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test results

This marked improvement demonstrates the effectiveness of the training for the students in the experimental group. The table shows the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre-test and post-test, the standard deviations, and the t-value

Table 4.3

Mean pre- and post-test scores of the control group, standard deviations, and t-value

Test	No. of Students	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Calculated T-value	Tabulated T-value	Significance
Pre-Test	40	56.75	6.32	7.11	2.02	Significant
Post-Test	40	65.90	6.10			

Interpretation

The control group's performance improved in the post-test, as shown in Table 4.4, with their mean score increasing from 56.75 in the pre-test to 65.90 in the post-test. The statistically significant difference is indicated by an estimated t-value of 7.11, which is higher than the reported t-value of 2.02.

However, compared to the experimental group, the control group's improvement was considerably less. This suggests that the podcast-based learning strategy was more successful than the traditional approach, although the latter may have made some progress

3.6. Findings of the Study

Based on above results, the study reached the following conclusions: The mean pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups were not statistically significantly different. This suggests that the two groups were similar in ability before treatment. (Saragih, D., Marpaung, A., & Saragih, R. P. (2022)). The mean post-test scores of the experimental and control groups differed statistically significantly, with the experimental group scoring higher. After receiving training podcasts, the students in the experimental group showed a marked improvement in their listening comprehension skills. In the post-test, the control group showed slight improvement, but not to the same extent as the experimental group.

The survey results showed that students in the experimental group expressed highly positive opinions about using podcasts to improve their listening skills. Podcasts effectively contributed to:

1. Enhancing students' comprehension of what they heard
2. Enriching their vocabulary and improving their pronunciation
3. Increasing student engagement and motivation
4. Instilling a positive attitude towards learning English.

The podcasts had a tangible, practical effect on students' listening skills, as evidenced by the relatively large effect size of this method. In the follow-up test, the control group's performance improved slightly, but not to the same extent as the experimental group's.



4.1 Conclusion

These results indicate that podcasts are an effective teaching tool for improving the listening skills of fourth-year English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The study demonstrated a significant advantage for students taught via podcasts over their peers taught using traditional methods.

Furthermore, the study found that podcasts improved students' vocabulary, pronunciation, motivation, and class participation, in addition to enhancing their listening skills. (Yaman, I. (2016). Students expressed positive opinions about using podcasts, indicating that they found this approach engaging and beneficial to their learning experience.

This suggests that learning English can be made more engaging, enjoyable, and successful through podcast-based training

Therefore, podcasts are a valuable learning tool that should be used in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening lessons.

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استخدام التدوين الصوتي لتحسين مهارات الاستماع لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في المرحلة الرابعة

م.م. ايناس مهدي علي

الجامعة المستنصرية / كلية التربية الاساسية

Inasmahdi@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq

المقدمة:

يُعدّ فهم اللغة المنطوقة ومهارات الاستماع أساسيين لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية. مع ذلك، يواجه العديد من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية في العراق صعوبة في اكتساب هذه المهارات بسبب محدودية الوصول إلى مصادر الاستماع الأصلية والاعتماد على أساليب التدريس التقليدية التي تُعطي الأولوية للحفظ على حساب التواصل الفعال. وقد أتاح استخدام التكنولوجيا في تعليم اللغات فرصاً جديدة لتحسين اكتساب اللغة في السنوات الأخيرة. ومن بين هذه المصادر، حظيت ملفات التدوين الصوتي باهتمام متزايد كأداة مفيدة ومرنة تُمكن الطلاب من الوصول إلى اللغة المنطوقة الأصلية في بيئات متنوعة. لا تزال الدراسات التي تبحث في فعالية التدوين الصوتي في تحسين مهارات الاستماع لدى طلاب السنة الرابعة في برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق، وخاصةً طلاب السنة النهائية، محدودة، على الرغم من الاهتمام المتزايد باستخدام الوسائط الرقمية في تدريس اللغات. وتؤكد هذه الفجوة البحثية على الحاجة إلى مزيد من الدراسات حول الفوائد المحتملة للتدوين الصوتي في تعزيز قدرات الطلاب على الاستماع. لذا،

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى بحث فعالية التدوين الصوتي في تحسين مهارات الاستماع لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق، وتقييم أثرها مقارنةً بأساليب التدريس التقليدية.

المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة مشكلة ضعف مهارات الاستماع لدى طلاب السنة الرابعة في دراسة اللغة الإنجليزية، وتكشف فعالية التدوين الصوتي كأداة تعليمية لتعزيز هذه المهارة. ويشير نقص الأبحاث حول استخدام التدوين الصوتي يحسن مهارات الاستماع في الفصول الدراسية، وخاصةً بين الطلاب الذين يتعلمون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، إلى وجود فجوة كبيرة في هذا المجال. وتهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد ما إذا كان استخدام التدوين الصوتي في دروس اللغة الإنجليزية يُحسن مهارات الاستماع لدى الطلاب مقارنةً بأساليب التدريس التقليدية. يُعتقد أن الطلاب الذين يتلقون تعليمهم عبر التدوين الصوتي يتفوقون على أقرانهم الذين يتلقون التعليم التقليدي في اختبارات فهم الاستماع. شملت الدراسة ثمانين طالباً قُسموا إلى مجموعتين: مجموعة تجريبية تستخدم التدوين الصوتي كأداة تعليمية إضافية، ومجموعة ضابطة تتلقى التعليم التقليدي. استُخدم استبيان لجمع آراء الطلاب حول استخدام التدوين الصوتي وأُجريت اختبارات قبلية وبعدية لتقييم تحسّنهم لتعزيز التفاعل وتقييم الفهم، تم تعريف الطلاب أيضاً بملفات التدوين الصوتي السمعية والبصرية. ووفقاً للنتائج، تفوقت المجموعة التجريبية بشكل ملحوظ على المجموعة الضابطة في فهم الاستماع، وأبدى الطلاب آراءً إيجابية حول استخدام ملفات التدوين الصوتي في التعلم. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** التدوين الصوتي، المجموعة التجريبية، المجموعة الضابطة، مهارات الاستماع، استبانة، المتحدثون بغير اللغة الإنجليزية

Appendix A

Questionnaire Form

Survey on the opinions of fourth-year English as Foreign Language (ESL) students regarding the use of podcasts to improve listening skills. Dear student, please complete the following survey, which is designed for research purposes only. This survey aims to gather your opinions on the use of podcasts to improve listening skills among fourth-year ESL students. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Please mark (✓) the box that best reflects your opinion.

Welcome, student. Please complete the following survey, which is for research purposes only. This survey aims to gather your opinion on the use of podcasts by fourth-year students in the English as a Foreign Language (ESL) program to improve their listening skills. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and used solely for research purposes. Please select the option that most accurately reflects your



viewpoint. Response Number Score on the scale: Strongly Agree 5 2
Agree 4 3 Neutral 3 4 Disagree 2 5 Strongly Disagree 1

Section One

The Effect of Podcasts on Listening Comprehension

No.Item Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

1 Podcasts helped me improve my listening comprehension. ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐

2 Podcasts helped me understand spoken English more easily. ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

3 Podcasts improved my ability to identify the main ideas while listening. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

4 Podcasts helped me recognize English pronunciation better. ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

5 Podcasts made it easier for me to follow spoken English. ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐

Section Two

The Role of Podcasts in Vocabulary and Pronunciation Development

No.Item Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree
Strongly Disagree

6 Podcasts introduced me to new English vocabulary. ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐

7 Podcasts helped me understand words in context. ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐

8 Listening to podcasts improved my pronunciation. ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐

9 Podcasts exposed me to authentic spoken expressions. ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐

10 Podcasts helped me distinguish different English accents. ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐



Section Three

Students' Motivation and Engagement

No.Item Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

11 Podcasts made listening lessons more interesting. ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐

12 Podcasts increased my motivation to learn English. ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐

13 I was more engaged during listening lessons that used podcasts. ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

14 Podcasts made me more willing to participate in classroom activities. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

15 Listening to podcasts improved my concentration during lessons. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Section Four

Students' Attitudes toward the Use of Podcasts in EFL Classrooms

No.Item Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

16 I think podcasts are an effective teaching tool. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐

17 I enjoyed learning through podcasts. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

18 I would like podcasts to be used in future English classes. ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐

19 Podcasts should be integrated into listening courses. ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐

20 Overall, I have a positive attitude toward using podcasts in language learning. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐



Appendix B

Listening Comprehension Test

Answer the following questions briefly.

.16Why are podcasts considered useful for EFL students?

.....

.17How do podcasts help students in listening practice?

.....

.18What makes podcasts different from traditional listening materials?

.....

.19What skills besides listening can podcasts help improve?

.....

.20Do you think podcasts are useful for learning English? Why?

.....