



Improving Students' Listening Comprehension on English Proficiency Test Through Podcast

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Abstract

The English Proficiency Test is a test that students must take as one of the graduation requirements. With the low scores in the Listening Comprehension section, efforts are needed to improve students' listening skills in taking the English Proficiency Test. The purpose of this study is to improve students' listening skills through podcasts so that they can help students get optimal scores. The method applied in this study is classroom action research, which is one of the problem-solving strategies that utilizes real actions and the process of developing abilities in detecting and solving problems. The participants of this study are 24 EFL students who are in the seventh semester and the duration of conducting the study is 2 months. The results of this study indicate that there is. The increase percentage is 11,39%, which can be seen from Cycle I with the score of 56,67 to 63,125 in Cycle II. It shows that the learning process implemented using podcast media has provided quite significant results in improving students' listening skills. The findings from this research highlight the potential of **podcasts as an effective tool** for enhancing students' listening comprehension, particularly in the context of English proficiency tests.

Keywords: *Classroom Action Research, English Proficiency Test, Listening, Podcast.*

Introduction

The English Proficiency Test (EPT) is a popular tool for assessing the proficiency of language learners. However, each test is different and presents its own set of difficulties. The English Proficiency Test (EPT) is a widely used tool in educational institutions for assessing language proficiency among students. The English Proficiency Test also defines a person's ability to use the English language. In addition, one of the reasons that contributed to the spread of the English language was the modern language (Ariastuti and Wahyudin, 2022). There are 3 components assessed in English Proficiency Test namely listening, structure and

written expression, and reading.

The ability of students to use language in speaking, writing, listening, and reading are referred to as language competency. In this instance, research on listening skills is still limited when compared to other aspects of English language ability, even though listening abilities are crucial for learning and communication (Renandya, Hamid, Nurkamto, 2019). This ability is still the least in demand of all language talents. The cognitive difficulty of listening skills is one of the reasons contributing to this.

However, the students seem to have problems with listening. Many problems, such as the time they spend on studying themselves is too little to improve the skill, the inappropriate strategies of learner, and also the listening material itself (Saraswaty, 2018). This indicates that complete focus is needed for this skill. Furthermore, listeners typically perceive speakers as speaking quickly. Low-proficiency language learners will struggle in the listening section of the English Proficiency Test (EPT) since it demands a lot of concentration, and most struggle in this area more than in other areas (Paulina, et al, 2021). This is one of the reasons why students get lower scores on the listening aspect compared to other aspects.

One strategy being used to help students become better listeners is the use of podcasts. Podcasts are digital audio files that require downloading before they can be listened to. Podcasts differ greatly from radio in that they are non-streaming audio. Accessibility and easily of podcast can be perceived by both teacher and students. Download materials (audio podcasts) from some websites can be done and used easily in classroom as well as conducting activities (Abdulrahman, et al, 2018). The public has made extensive use of podcasts to listen to news and other repeatable information.

Podcasts help improve listening skills by providing **authentic, real-life English** in an **audio-only format**, which trains learners to focus without visual cues. They can be **paused and replayed**, allowing students to learn at their own pace. Unlike scripted textbook audio, podcasts offer **natural conversations, varied accents, and real contexts**, making listening practice more effective and engaging. The realistic listening programs produced by experienced speakers are the reason podcasts are so popular; they help students mimic the speech patterns of native speakers (Lubis, 2022). In addition, the function of podcasts in learning English also help students learn new vocabulary, remember the voice of the speaker, and encourage linguistic competence to become effective listeners (Rahman, Atmowardoyo, Salija, 2018)

As previously explained, the purpose of this study is to determine whether using podcasts can help students become more proficient listeners when taking the English Proficiency Test (EPT). The goal is to assist students in achieving the best possible test scores so they can pass and avoid having to retake it. Specifically, the classroom action research approach will be used as one of the strategies to improve students' listening abilities on the English Proficiency Test

based on how the problem was formulated in the background. The use of podcast media in this classroom action research helps students achieve the best possible scores on the English Proficiency Test. In this instance, it is anticipated that using podcasts as a medium will aid in enhancing students' English listening abilities because they offer students convenient access.

This study includes several previous research articles that are still related to improving listening skills through podcast media on the English Proficiency Test. Ditthawat Thongsook (2018) in his research article entitled "*English Listening Proficiency and Factors Affecting English Listening Skill of First Year Undergraduate Students at That Phanom College, Nakhom Phanom University*". Similar to this study, the latter focuses on listening capacity and students' educational attainment while analyzing the factors that affect listening ability on the English Proficiency Test in first-year students.

The way that pupils are treated in this study is different. In addition, Siget Andri Setiawan (2021) in his research article entitled "*Developing Listening Exercise for English Proficiency Test in the Form of Mobile Application for Eleventh Grade Students of SMA Alizzah Batu*". The objective of the work is to create a smartphone app that will assist students with the listening skills tasks on the English Proficiency Test. The aim of this study is similar in that it aims to assist students in achieving the best possible scores on the English Proficiency Test.

Another distinction between the earlier study and the current one is the type of media that was used. This study employs a podcast medium, whereas Siget uses a smartphone application. Furthermore, **Andi** Ainun, Munir dan Muh. Tahir (2023) in their research article entitled "*The Use of Podcasts in Improving Students Listening Skill at University Level*". The purpose of the study is to ascertain how much students' listening abilities are impacted by using podcasts. The usage of podcasts as a medium and the fact that the research subjects are students are similarities and differences in this study's listening comprehension content. Previous studies primarily looked at general material; this study specifically focuses on the English Proficiency Test. At the last, the research questions that need to be answered are:

1. To what extent does the use of podcasts improve students' listening comprehension for English proficiency tests?
2. How do students perceive the use of podcasts as a tool for preparing for English listening tests?

Method

The Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach was applied in this study. In order to gather data and enhance how the educational environment incorporates teaching and student learning, instructors (or other individuals in the educational setting) conduct this kind of study using a methodical process (Creswell, 2018). The preparation, execution, observation, and reflection phases make up the methodology of this classroom action study.

The research process with the cycle above will be clearly explained in the following explanation:

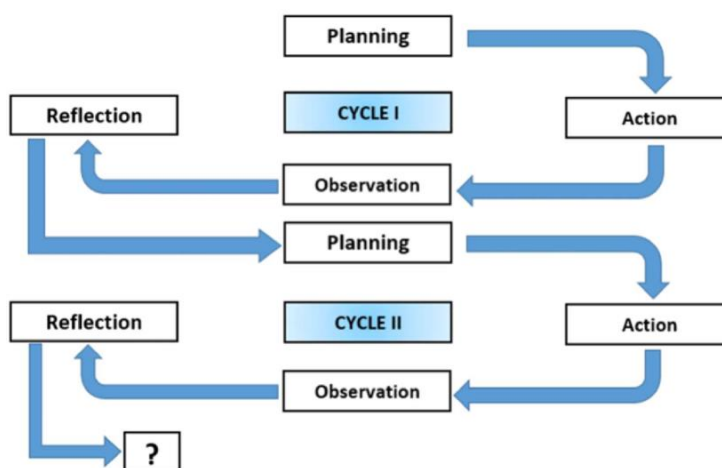


Figure 1. The Design of Classroom Action Research

1. Planning

At this stage, the researcher compiles and plans the actions that will be implemented to improve students' listening skills, including preparing podcast media with various topics related to the English Proficiency Test. The action plan that will be given to students is 2 cycles, where 1 cycle is held 3 meetings. The duration of each cycle is 3 weeks, so it needed 6 weeks in total. The timeline of conducted study is from August to September 2024. In addition, the researcher selected podcasts focused on topics and formats similar to those found in English Proficiency Test, such as academic discussions, lectures, interviews, and casual conversations. This alignment helps students get used to **question types** in the English Proficiency Test, like identifying main ideas, specific details, inference, and speaker attitude.

2. Act

In this step, the researcher used podcast media to perform learning in the language lab. Students were given practice sheets with questions to answer while they listened to the podcast. Three sessions were held during this implementation stage, wherein one section of the English Proficiency Test's

Listening Comprehension was discussed.

At the end of every meeting, the students were asked to answer some questions related to the English Proficiency Test starting from part A (short conversation), part B (long conversation), and part C (lecture)

3. Observation

Observations are made while the implementation is still in progress. The researcher records every event that occurs while carrying out the action stage. The procedure of gathering data involves the use of pre-prepared tests and observation sheets. Student test results and observation sheets are used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.

4. Reflection

This stage attempts to thoroughly review the completed actions and look for any difficulties that students or researchers may have had when carrying out the actions based on the data gathered in the previous phase. Students are expected to take part in conversations about the challenges they face at the end of each cycle. Researchers consider past occurrences during the action process. To enhance the actions done in the following cycle, every component of the data is scrutinized and evaluated.

The participants in this study consisted of **24 undergraduate students** enrolled in the **seventh semester** of an Accounting study program. The group comprised **3 male** and **21 female** students, reflecting a gender imbalance that is not uncommon in language and education programs. The detail of the participants is presented in the table below:

Table 1. Demographic Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	3	12,5
	Female	21	87,5
Semester	Seventh	24	100
Age	21 y.o	14	58,3
	22 y.o	10	41,7
Total		24	100

Following this, the research instruments used are listening test, observation and documentation. The listening test is multiple choice as many as 50 questions and it applied to pre-test and post-test. The validity and reliability of the test are tested by using content validity and KR-21 for the reliability. Furthermore, the

observation sheet is used to help researchers track how actively students participate during the listening activities involving podcast. The last instrument is documentations, it is used to help illustrate the impact of the podcast intervention in a tangible way.

In classroom action research, ethical considerations are especially important because the participants are directly affected by the intervention and are often in a position of limited power compared to the researcher. This study was conducted in adherence to key ethical principles to ensure the rights, dignity, and well-being of all participants were protected throughout the research process. The following measures were taken:

1. Informed Consent

All participants were provided with a clear explanation of the study's objectives, procedures, and expected outcomes. They were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. Written consent was obtained prior to data collection.

2. Anonymity and Confidentiality

Students' identities were protected through the use of coded identifiers rather than names in all documentation and data analysis. Data was stored securely and was only accessible to the researcher. The results are presented in aggregate form to ensure individual participants cannot be identified.

3. Minimizing Harm

The research activities were designed to pose no physical, psychological, or academic risk to participants. The intervention (use of podcasts) aligned with regular instructional content and did not interfere with students' formal assessments or schedules.

4. Respect for Participants

The researcher maintained a respectful and professional relationship with all students. Their perspectives, feedback, and classroom behaviors were documented sensitively, and any critical observations were handled constructively.

5. Approval from Relevant Authorities

Before commencing the study, permission was obtained from the relevant academic coordinator or faculty authority. The study adhered to institutional research policies and standards for educational research.

Result

a. Analysis of Pre-test Listening Section Data on the English Proficiency Test

The initial stage in collecting this data is the implementation of a pre-test to determine students' initial abilities in the Listening Section of the English Proficiency Test. The results of the pre-test that have been implemented can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. English Proficiency Test Listening Section Pre-test Results

STUDENTS		
NO	CODE	SCORE
1	FKI	70
2	RAW	45
3	INH	55
4	W	50
5	MNS	40
6	MJ	60
7	SGF	50
8	HF	30
9	CA	55
10	AVS	40
11	ANA	40
12	CAS	60
13	DIP	70
14	DM	45
15	MKV	55
16	MAS	50
17	NKD	40
18	NAM	65
19	RWP	40
20	RDP	50
21	SDW	60
22	EA	35
23	SDK	55
24	R	50

A pre-test was administered early in the data-gathering process to gauge students' starting proficiency in the English Proficiency Test's Listening Section. This pre-test's primary goal is to get a general idea of how well students comprehend the listening content before additional training or learning interventions are implemented. A total of twenty-four students took this pretest.

Each student's pre-test results for the Listening Section varied, with the best score being 70 and the lowest being 30 based on the findings shown in the table. Four students (17%) out of the twenty-four scored in the 60–70 range, suggesting a mediocre level of listening proficiency. Nine students (38%) received scores between 50 and 55, which is indicative of a low comprehension level. Conversely, 8 students (33%) had a score of less than 50, indicating severe listening comprehension impairments. The data indicates that students' average score was approximately 51.25. This demonstrates that the majority of kids' listening abilities fall short of expectations. With a 40-point gap, there is a large variation analysis between the greatest and lowest scores, the students whose results are less than 50

Overall, this pre-test's results show that most students still need to work on improving their listening abilities. The creation of more focused learning interventions to raise students' performance in the Listening Section is greatly aided by these findings.

b. Analysis of Listening Section Results Data in English Proficiency Test Cycle I

The results of the listening section of the English Proficiency Test in cycle I for 7th semester students at Aisyah University of Pringsewu can be seen in the following table:

Table 2. Results of the Listening Section in the English Proficiency Test Cycle I

STUDENTS'		
NO	CODE	SCORE
1	FKI	80
2	RAW	40
3	INH	55
4	W	60
5	MNS	50
6	MJ	60
7	SGF	50
8	HF	55
9	CA	60
10	AVS	50
11	ANA	50
12	CAS	60
13	DIP	85
14	DM	55
15	MKV	50
16	MAS	50
17	NKD	60

18	NAM	65
19	RWP	40
20	RDP	50
21	SDW	75
22	EA	50
23	SDK	45
24	R	65
MEAN		56,67

Following the administration of the English Proficiency Test's first cycle pre-test to gauge students' progress in the Listening Section. The 7th students of Aisyah University of Pringsewu were retested in this cycle I to gauge the improvement in their skills following the application of learning.

The results for 24 students are shown in the table, with the DIP students achieving the highest score in cycle I with an 85, which is a significant improvement from their pre-test score of only 70. Two kids, RAW and RWP, had the lowest score, which was 40, which stayed at a rather low level. Following the learning intervention, the majority of students who had demonstrated progress exhibited improvement; FKI students increased from 70 to 80, and SDW students increased from 60 to 75.

Three students—FKI (80), DIP (85), and SDW (75)—who demonstrated strong listening abilities had scores above 70, accounting for 12.5% of the total participants. With 15 students (62.5%) falling into this range, the bulk of scores fell between 50 and 65, indicating either inadequate or notable progress in listening abilities. Six individuals, or 25% of the sample, had listening scores below 50 and yet showed deficits or extreme deficiencies in listening abilities.

The average score of the Listening Section in cycle I was 56.67, an increase from the pre-test average of 51.25. This indicates a collective improvement in students' listening skills. In general, most students experienced an increase in their scores, although some students were still in the poor category, such as RAW and RWP who still scored below 50.

The difference between the highest and lowest scores in cycle I was 45 points, slightly higher than the difference in the pre-test (40 points), indicating that some students had achieved significant results after learning, while others had not shown sufficient progress. Students who achieved low scores in cycle I still need support and intensive learning to improve their skills, especially those who did not improve or decline.

Overall, the results of cycle I showed a general improvement in students' listening skills, although there were still some students who needed special attention to improve their skills further. The average results that increased from the pre-test to cycle I indicate that the learning methods applied have begun to have a positive impact. However, further intervention is still needed for students who have not achieved significant improvement.

Furthermore, the frequency distribution of the Listening Section Results in the English Proficiency Test Cycle I can be seen in the following table:

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Listening Section Results in English Proficiency Test Cycle I

NO	CLASSIFICATION	SCORE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Very Good	91-100	0	0%
2	Good	76-90	2	8,3%
3	Sufficient	61-75	3	12,5%
4	Poor	50-60	16	66,7%
5	Very Poor	<50	3	12,5%
Total			24	100%

After analyzing the results of students' scores in the Listening Section in Cycle I, the frequency distribution based on the score classification provides a more detailed picture of the overall performance of students. The table above shows the frequency distribution of the Listening Section results based on the score range. Here is a description of the percentage::

- a. "Very Good" Classification (Score 91-100)
No students achieved the very good category with a score above 90. This shows that no students have very superior listening skills in this cycle I.
- b. "Good" Classification (Score 76-90)
A total of 2 students (8.3%) are included in the good category. Students with good listening skills managed to get a score in the range of 76-90, which reflects a diligent, persistent and trained level of listening comprehension.
- c. "Sufficient" Classification (Score 61-75)
A total of 3 students (12.5%) are in the sufficient category, with scores between 61-75. This shows that although they have not reached a very good level, their abilities are quite adequate and show potential for further improvement.
- d. "Poor" Classification (Score 50-60)
Most students, namely 16 people (66.7%), fall into the poor category. Students with a score of 50-60 show listening skills that are still not optimal and require further improvement. This percentage shows that more than half of the participants are still at the basic level of

ability. This indicates that the majority of students are still at an inadequate level of listening ability and still require intensive learning.

e. "Very Poor" Classification (Score <50)

A total of 3 students (12.5%) are in the very poor category, with a score below 50. This shows that their listening skills are very limited and require special attention for improvement.

The majority of students still have low to sufficient listening skills. The distribution of scores reveals that despite a small percentage of kids performing well, the majority of children (66.7%) still have poor listening skills. Since no student falls into the "very good" group, a more comprehensive learning program is still required to raise students' comprehension levels. Students in the "Very Poor" category require extra attention since they require more specialized and tailored instruction to help them improve their fundamental listening abilities.

To address these challenges, a comprehensive, multi-tiered learning approach should be implemented, including differentiated instruction, ongoing assessments, and targeted interventions to help all student progress in their listening comprehension. Overall, while there are some outliers in the data, the general trend indicates that the majority of students need focused attention and personalized strategies to improve their listening abilities.

On the other hand, student activity in the podcast-based learning process showed quite good results in cycle I, although there were still several indicators that needed to be improved. In general, students began to show interest in the learning methods used, but not all indicators had reached optimal levels.

1. Student enthusiasm for participating in the learning process was quite high because the use of podcast media provided a new atmosphere in the classroom. However, some students still seemed passive in responding to the material.
2. Student activity in discussions began to be seen in several groups, but was not evenly distributed. Only a few students actively expressed their opinions, while others tended to be passive.
3. The ability to collect discussion results still needs to be improved. Some students were able to summarize the results of the discussion well, but there were still some who were not able to convey the core of the discussion coherently.
4. Activeness in asking questions was still low in the first cycle. Students seemed hesitant to ask questions, perhaps because they were not used to using podcast media.
5. Fluency in expressing opinions was also still limited. Some students still

- looked nervous and lacked confidence when speaking in front of their group.
6. Students' focus in listening to the material is quite good, but there are still attention disorders in some students, especially when the podcast duration is quite long.
 7. Answering practice questions based on podcasts shows that understanding still varies. Some students can answer correctly, while others still have difficulty capturing the main information from the audio.

c. Analysis of Listening Section Results Data in English Proficiency Test Cycle II

The results of the listening section of the English Proficiency Test in cycle I for 7th semester students at Aisyah University of Pringsewu can be seen in the following table:

Table 4. Results of Listening Section in English Proficiency Test Cycle II

STUDENTS		
NO	CODE	SCORE
1	FKI	80
2	RAW	60
3	INH	70
4	W	60
5	MNS	65
6	MJ	60
7	SGF	65
8	HF	55
9	CA	60
10	AVS	70
11	ANA	50
12	CAS	60
13	DIP	90
14	DM	60
15	MKV	50
16	MAS	65
17	NKD	60
18	NAM	65
19	RWP	55
20	RDP	50
21	SDW	75
22	EA	65
23	SDK	65
24	R	60
Mean		63,12

After the implementation of cycle I, cycle II was conducted to measure further development of students' abilities in the Listening Section of the English Proficiency Test. The results of cycle II provide a clearer picture of the improvement in the abilities of 7th semester students at Aisyah Pringsewu University after the intervention of further learning.

Based on the data above, there was an increase and decrease in scores, namely the highest score in cycle II was achieved by DIP students, who managed to get a score of 90. This shows a significant increase from cycle I where DIP got a score of 85. The lowest score was achieved by two students, ANA and RDP, with a score of 50. These students showed slow development and still needed special attention. A significant increase in scores was seen in several students, such as RAW who increased from a score of 40 in cycle I to 60 in cycle II, and AVS who increased from 50 to 70.

The distribution of scores obtained in the form of scores above 70 was obtained by 4 students (16.7%), namely FKI (80), INH (70), AVS (70), and DIP (90). This shows that there is a group of students with fairly good listening skills. The majority of students were in the 60-70 range, with 15 (62.5%) scoring in this range, indicating a general improvement in listening skills among students. Only 5 students (20.8%) scored below 60, indicating a decrease in the number of students in the low category compared to cycle I.

The average Listening Section score in cycle II was 63.12, an increase from the average in cycle I of 56.67. This indicates a significant collective improvement in students' listening skills. Students with high scores, such as FKI and DIP, have shown stable listening skills, with consistent scores in both cycles I and II.

The large improvements in students such as RAW and AVS indicate that the learning is undertaken during the cycle I has yielded positive or significant results. Students with low scores, such as ANA and RDP, still require additional learning to achieve significant improvement. Most students have achieved scores above 60, indicating a general improvement in listening skills among test takers.

It can be concluded that cycle II showed a significant increase in listening skills compared to cycle I. This is reflected in the increasing average score and the distribution of scores that are more concentrated in the range of 60-70. Most students have shown progress, although there are still some who need additional support to improve their skills. The learning methods applied during the two cycles have had a positive impact on the majority of students, but further learning is still needed for students who have not achieved optimal results. With an increasing average score and fewer students scoring below 60, the results of cycle II showed improvements in mastery of the Listening Section using podcast media, indicating the success of the learning process that has been carried out. In addition, Podcasts

provide many benefits for students. Podcasts can attract students' interest as a digital tool for language learning because of the various content available (Richards, 2008)

Furthermore, the distribution of the classification of the results of the Listening Section in the English Proficiency Test Cycle II can be seen in the following table:

Table 5. Distribution of Classification of Listening Section Results in English Proficiency Test Cycle II

NO	CLASSIFICATION	SCORE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Very Good	91-100	0	0%
2	Good	76-90	2	8,33%
3	Sufficient	61-75	17	70,83%
4	Poor	50-60	5	20,83%
5	Very Poor	<50	0	0%
Total			24	100

After the implementation of the English Proficiency Test in Cycle II, an analysis of the distribution of value classification was conducted based on the results of the Listening Section. This analysis helps in understanding how good the listening ability of 7th semester students of Aisyah Pringsewu University is overall after the learning process in cycle II. The following are the details of the classification distribution results:

- a. a. "Very Good" Classification (Score 91-100)
No students achieved a very good classification with a score above 90. This shows that there are no students who are truly outstanding in their listening skills in this cycle II.
- b. b. "Good" Classification (Score 76-90)
A total of 2 students (8.33%) are in the good category. Students with good listening skills show significant improvement and can understand listening materials quite well. Students in this category have a deeper level of understanding than the majority of other participants. These results indicate that some students have shown good skills and are ready to face higher listening challenges.
- c. "Sufficient" Classification (Score 61-75)
Most students, namely 17 people (70.83%), are in the enough category. This shows that the majority of test participants have adequate listening skills but can still be improved. They showed quite good results after learning, although they have not reached a very good level. This shows that most students have experienced a significant increase in listening skills after cycle II.
- d. "Poor" Classification (Score 50-60)

A total of 5 students (20.83%) were classified as less, with scores between 50 and 60. Students in this category still showed weaknesses in their listening skills, although there was a slight improvement compared to the previous cycle. They need more practice to reach a higher category. This result indicates that some students need more support and intensive learning to improve their listening skills.

e. "Very Poor" Classification (Score <50)

There are no students in the very poor category. This is a positive result, because no participants scored below 50 in cycle II, unlike the previous cycle where there were still students in this category.

Overall, the distribution of value classifications in cycle II shows progress in students' listening skills through podcast media, although there is still room for improvement, especially for students who are still in the less-than-adequate category.

To continue this case of students progress, students should include personalized attention, more focused listening exercises, and the use of varied listening materials to target specific weaknesses. For students who are performing well, the treatment should involve more advanced listening tasks, such as understanding complex audio materials, faster-paced recordings, and discussions that encourage critical thinking. Furthermore, providing opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, group discussions, and interactive listening activities can help reinforce skills for both groups. Regular feedback, assessments, and progress tracking are also essential to monitor individual growth and adjust instruction as needed. By incorporating these additional strategies, all students can be better supported in advancing their listening skills.

In addition, after improvements and reflections from the first cycle, there was an increase in almost all indicators in cycle II.

1. Student enthusiasm increased, marked by active participation in learning. Students were more interested in participating in learning because the podcast material chosen was following their interests.
2. Activeness in discussions increased, in class discussions, students seemed more confident and complemented each other when discussion.
3. The ability to collect discussion results improved, where students were able to draw conclusions coherently and convey them verbally more clearly.
4. Activeness in asking questions increased, marked by more students raising their hands to clarify parts of the podcast that were not understood.
5. The fluency in expressing opinions also increased, as seen from students who began to get used to speaking and conveying their ideas with more

precise and structured words.

6. Students' focus in listening to the material was better maintained because they were used to actively listening to podcast audio and realized that the material would be tested in practice.
7. The ability to answer podcast-based practice questions also increased, indicated by the increasing number of students who were able to answer correctly and explain their reasons logically.

d. Results of Comparison between Pre-test and Post-Test Score in Cycle I and Cycle II

Here is the comparison graph showing the scores of each participant across the Pre-test, Post Test Cycle 1, and Post Test Cycle II.

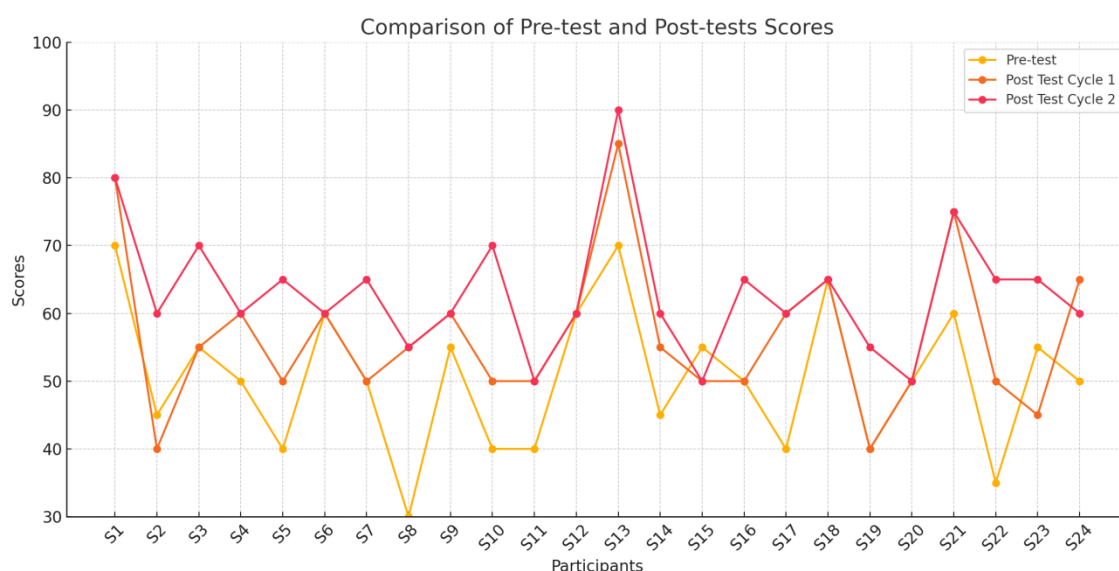


Figure 2. Comparison between pre-test and post-test score in cycle I and cycle II

Most participants showed a clear **increase in scores** from the Pre-test to Post Test Cycle II. This suggests that the intervention positively impacted their listening skills over time. While **Cycle I** already demonstrated some progress compared to the pre-test, **Cycle II** generally had the **highest scores**. This indicates that continued exposure and practice further enhanced comprehension. **Pre-test scores** ranged from **30 to 70**, with more students scoring below 60. **Cycle II scores** showed more consistency, mostly in the **60-90 range**, suggesting that more students reached an acceptable or higher level of proficiency.

e. Results of Improving Listening Section in Students' English Proficiency Test in Cycle I and Cycle II

Based on the results of data analysis in Cycle I and Cycle II, there was a significant increase in the Listening Comprehension ability of 7th semester students of Aisyah Pringsewu University in the English Proficiency Test. This increase illustrates the success of the learning process and interventions applied in each cycle.

Table 6. Average Improvement in Listening Comprehension on Students' English Proficiency Test in Cycle I and Cycle II

NO	CYCLE	MEAN
1	1	56,67
2	2	63,125

Students' average listening comprehension score in Cycle I was 56.67. This result indicates that the candidate's listening comprehension was somewhat lacking when the assessment was conducted. The average score rose to 63.125 in Cycle II. The fact that there has been a 6.455-point rise suggests that students' abilities have improved as a result of employing podcast media in the learning process.

The improvement graph can be seen in the picture below:

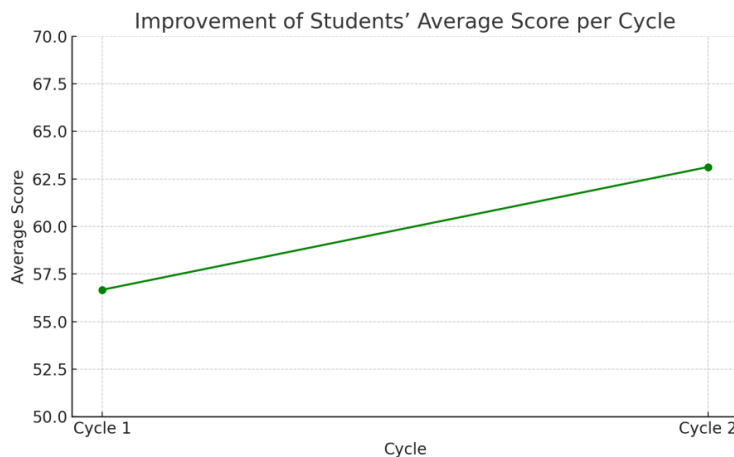


Figure 3. Improvement graph of each cycle

Discussion

According to Saraswaty (2018), Students can move from traditional face-to-face instruction to podcasts while still benefiting from the teaching-based environment system, all while maintaining their contact with their teachers. Furthermore, there has been a notable enhancement in the listening skills of students as seen by the 6.455-point rise between Cycle I and Cycle II. This indicates that the majority of students have benefited from the learning intervention that was implemented in between the two cycles. The talents of the students who had previously fallen into the low score category in Cycle I significantly improved, increasing the average score overall.

The fact that the average has increased suggests that the applied learning approach has been successful in raising students' listening comprehension levels. The performance improvement was attributed to a more focused and organized learning method for pupils getting ready for the English Proficiency Test's hearing part. Even if some still need more support, students who started Cycle I in the "Poor" or "Very Poor" category also started to make notable progress.

The majority of students were originally below the expected norm for listening skills, as evidenced by Cycle I's average of 56.67. Cycle II's average score of 63.125 showed that listening comprehension had improved overall, but additional work was needed to reach more ideal levels. The rise that took place between the two cycles also shows that students are becoming more adept at absorbing the audio content that is offered through podcasts as part of their education.

The increase in the average score from 56.67 in Cycle I to 63.125 in Cycle II shows that the learning process implemented using podcast media has provided quite significant results in improving students' listening skills. This was stated by Abdulrahman, et al (2018) who stated that ethics in conducting listening activities in class, students showed enthusiasm for the use of podcasts as a learning medium. Although there has been a good improvement, it should be noted that there are still students who need additional support to achieve better listening comprehension.

However, these results show positive steps toward improving students' overall abilities in Listening Comprehension through podcast media. In line with this study, Sabrila, et al (2022) stated that the use of podcasts provides benefits for researchers as teachers and also for students. Researchers found it easy to teach listening. This is because podcast audio can be downloaded from various sources on the internet. The audio can also be played via laptop or smartphone depending on the situation during learning. With an increasing average, more intensive and adaptive learning is still needed to achieve optimal results in the next learning cycle.

The findings of this study also align closely with **constructivist learning theory**, particularly **Vygotsky's social constructivism**, which emphasizes the importance of authentic, meaningful input and interaction in language development (Schunk,

2012). Podcasts, by providing real-world, contextualized listening experiences, serve as **authentic materials** that support students in constructing their own understanding of language use. Moreover, this intervention is consistent with **Krashen's Input Hypothesis**, which states that language acquisition occurs most effectively when learners are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current proficiency level (Brown, 2007). The selected podcast materials provided this "stretch" zone of learning, helping students process natural English input that enhanced their comprehension over time.

Limitation Of Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the use of podcasts to improve students' listening comprehension, several limitations should be acknowledged:

1. **Small Sample Size**

The study involved only 24 students from a single class, which limits the generalizability of the findings to wider student populations or different educational contexts.

2. **Short Duration**

The research was conducted over two cycles within a relatively short time frame. A longer intervention period might yield more comprehensive and sustained results.

3. **Limited Scope of Listening Skills**

The focus was primarily on general listening comprehension as measured by EPT-related tasks. Sub-skills such as note-taking, inference-making, or listening for tone and attitude were not separately analyzed.

4. **Potential Influence of External Factors**

Improvements in student performance may have been influenced by other factors such as increased familiarity with the test format, peer collaboration, or personal motivation, not solely by the podcast intervention.

5. **Variation in Student Engagement**

While podcasts were generally well-received, the level of engagement varied among students. Some may have benefited more due to personal interest in the content or prior experience with audio materials.

Conclusion

The usage of podcast media can assist students improve their listening abilities, particularly on the English Proficiency Test, according to the study that has been done, though the rise in listening skills has not been very significant. Students have, at the very least, been introduced to the use of podcasts in listening instruction.

Beyond the immediate findings, this study highlights the broader potential of digital audio media in modern language education. For educators, language teaching must evolve to include technology-enhanced, student-centered resources that reflect how learners engage with language in their daily lives. Podcasts not only build listening skills but also promote independent learning, critical thinking, and media literacy. When integrated thoughtfully, they can support differentiated instruction and cater to various learning styles.

On a broader scale, this study supports the call for curriculum innovation that embraces authentic materials and real-world tasks in language learning. As global communication increasingly relies on oral fluency and comprehension, especially in academic and professional settings, language education must move beyond passive listening and encourage more interactive, reflective, and contextual learning experiences.

This study has shown that podcasts can effectively enhance students' listening comprehension for English Proficiency Tests. However, future research is encouraged to explore several additional areas. Firstly, studies could examine the long-term impact of podcast-based learning to see if improvements are sustained over time. Secondly, researchers may investigate how different types of podcasts (e.g., academic vs. conversational) influence specific listening sub-skills. It is also recommended to apply this approach to diverse proficiency levels and educational settings to determine its broader applicability.

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