

Listening Beyond the Classroom: Indonesian Student's Experience with the LearnEnglish Podcast

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Abstract: In the digital era, listening skills can be acquired by utilizing LearnEnglish Podcast from the British Council, which provides a variety of free and paid online materials and courses for all ages and skill levels: applications, websites, podcasts, videos, and live classes. In this qualitative research with a narrative design, the researcher conducted observations and interviews with one English language education student recruited through purposive sampling. The research objective is to investigate participant's experiences using the LearnEnglish podcast to support listening skills acquisition. The results of the coding-based data analysis revealed four main findings. First, the LearnEnglish Podcast offered meaningful opportunities for listening practice. Second, the participant gained new vocabulary that supported better comprehension of spoken English. Third, the application was perceived as effective due to its comprehensive listening features, ease of use, flexibility, and free access. However, a key limitation concerned the need to download podcast files, which created difficulties related to limited mobile storage and the necessity for frequent deletion and re-downloading. There are two implications for the application and learners. The podcast should be shorter to suit limited storage. Learners should also use the LearnEnglish application flexibly and systematically to maximize its features for effective listening practice.

Keywords: listening skills, student's experience, LearnEnglish Podcast

INTRODUCTION

Technology has significantly transformed English language learning by providing innovative digital tools that enhance listening skills. In the context of English listening instruction, technology plays a crucial role through the integration of digital learning applications that support students' listening development. These applications are accessible via digital devices, such as mobile phones with adequate internet connectivity, enabling students to access learning materials anytime and anywhere. This flexibility promotes

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greater learner engagement and motivation in the learning process. Mamasharifovich (2020) emphasized the importance of allocating additional time for listening practice through the use of appropriate pedagogical approaches and instructional media, including digital technology. Furthermore, Haleem et al. (2022) reported that educational technology facilitates lifelong learning by providing virtual learning environments and allowing learners to access digital knowledge in accordance with their individual learning styles.

Through mobile applications supported by internet access, students can practice listening skills anytime and anywhere, which increases their motivation to participate in learning activities. Demir and Akpınar (2018) stated that mobile learning can promote students' academic achievement and significantly enhance their learning motivation. Similarly, Nafa (2020) demonstrated that the use of mobile learning in language learning provides a flexible learning mode, enabling students to study independently regardless of time and place. Hamid et al. (2024) further noted that mobile learning offers innovative solutions through convenient and flexible access to audio resources, as well as interactive features that enhance students' motivation. Using mobile learning applications significantly enhances listening skills and promotes a more engaging learning environment. In addition, mobile learning is characterized by ease of use, authenticity, usefulness, and enjoyment in the context of English listening instruction. Azizah et al. (2025) reported that mobile learning applications can stimulate students' interest and motivation to improve their listening skills by providing flexible access to learning materials that align with their individual needs. Moreover, mobile learning encourages learner autonomy and the development of adaptive learning strategies to enhance listening proficiency.

Numerous English learning applications support the development of listening skills, both paid and free. One widely used application is the LearnEnglish Podcast developed by the British Council. Faramarzi and Bagheri (2015) reported that podcast represent an advanced form of technology that enables learners to access learning materials in various formats, including video, audio, PDF files, and recordings, through digital devices such as mobile phones, laptops, and notebooks. Moreover, Ramli and Kurniawan (2018) found that podcast-based learning actively engages students in enhancing their English proficiency, particularly listening skills, through meaningful technological interactions. Through podcast, learners are exposed to diverse instructional materials and an engaging learning environment. Podcast also offer a wide range of themes and exercises that contribute to the development of knowledge and listening competence for both teachers and students in educational contexts. In addition, Ramadhani and Noni (2022) reported that podcasting is a creative method of content dissemination via the internet and can be used to automatically deliver digital audio content to mobile devices. Furthermore, Bozavlı (2024) explained that the term podcast is a portmanteau of "*iPod*" and "*broadcast*," referring to recorded audio transmissions that can be accessed at specific times and locations. The term "pod" originates from the iPod, as podcast were initially designed for playback on this device.

The LearnEnglish Podcast developed by the British Council is an audio series designed to enhance English listening skills. Ningtias et al. (2021) observed that the British Council Podcast application significantly improves students' English listening abilities compared to traditional audio media, such as audio recorders. The use of the British Council Podcast application has motivated and supported students in developing their listening skills more effectively. Furthermore, this application reflects the advancement of technology in English listening instruction by integrating accessible and engaging digital audio content.

Generally, the use of podcast to improve listening skills has been investigated by several previous researchers. For instance, Anandari and Isnawati (2023), in their study titled "The Effectiveness of Podcast Media for Teaching Listening Comprehension to Eighth-Grade Secondary School Students," reported that podcast media are effective for teaching listening comprehension to eighth-grade secondary school students. Similarly, Samudro et al. (2025) demonstrated that podcasts serve as a supportive and accessible medium for enhancing students' listening skills. In addition, Mellina et al. (2025), through their quasi-experimental study, tend to podcast media for improving student listening skills. They emphasized the importance of integrating innovative tools such as podcast to make listening practice both enjoyable and effective in contemporary language education. Their findings revealed a significant improvement in students' listening abilities after exposure to an audio podcast, as indicated by increased post-test scores and a higher proportion of students achieving the minimum mastery criterion (KKM) compared to the pre-test results.

Specifically, through qualitative research employing a case study design, Agarid and Nurzahra (2018), in their study, reported that five English major students experienced notable improvement in their listening skills through the use of the LearnEnglish Podcast—Free English Listening Application. Furthermore, Ningtias et al. (2021), in their study about British Council Podcast Apps and Listening Comprehension, found that the British Council Podcast application effectively supported English learning, particularly listening skills. Their study involved nine selected junior high school students who expressed strong interest in the application's learning features and in teachers' instructional approaches using it. As a result, the students demonstrated increased enthusiasm and motivation to learn English.

Furthermore, a study about podcast media for listening skills was also conducted by Saragih et al. (2022). They reported that students showed greater interest and motivation in learning listening skills through podcasts. In addition, Astuti et al. (2024), in their study *Improving Students' Listening Skills through Podcast*, demonstrated that the use of podcast was effective in improving students' listening abilities. Moreover, Putri et al. (2025) conducted a quasi-experimental study about the podcast and listening skills. The findings revealed that podcast provide authentic content that can be accessed repeatedly at students' own learning pace, thereby enhancing their motivation, learner autonomy, and engagement in the learning process. Consequently, podcast can be considered a valuable alternative

medium for improving listening skills in the context of teaching English as a foreign language.

The present study addresses a research focus that differs from previous investigations. Specifically, it addresses students' experiences in using the LearnEnglish *Podcast* application developed by the British Council to enhance their English listening skills. Employing a qualitative narrative research design, this study focuses on students' usage intensity, the development of speaking skills, and their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of the application.

METHOD

A qualitative method was applied to investigate the human's learning experience through the LearnEnglish Podcast application from the British Council (Isik, 2025). Muzari (2022) agreed that the qualitative method used in humanistic studies captures human aspects through the information provided by participants. Further, the emphasis, thoroughness, and significance of qualitative research underscore its importance in analyzing intricate social issues and offering comprehensive, human-focused perspectives (Lim, 2025).

This research design adapts to the research method used, narrative design: exploring the student's narrative of using *the* LearnEnglish Podcast for practicing his listening skills (Clandinin, 2006). The participant's narrative presented a sequence of events in his learning process of listening through the application (Moen, 2006). The research participants are recruited purposefully based on some determined criteria. The research participant is willing to join this research. The participant is an English Education Department student who has been using the LearnEnglish Podcast application. He has been using the application for more than one year, so he already has sufficient knowledge and experience regarding the LearnEnglish Podcast application. As stated by Tajik et al. (2024), purposive sampling means the participant is recruited based on the current criteria.

The research data will be analyzed using the inductive coding technique to explore the participant's experience and to interpret the participant's perception with no theoretical framework (Gioia et al., 2013). The coding process in this research involved identifying and analyzing segments of meaning in the data deeply, determining the current topic based on the selected segments, and labelling the data with a code, such as simple color coding with markers, which may suffice. It tends to Elliott (2018), who explained that through the coding process, the researcher is essentially indexing or mapping data to create an overview of disparate data. It systematically allows the researcher to connect with research questions. In addition, Williams and Mosser (2019) stated that a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. The researcher described the technique of data analysis in the figure below.



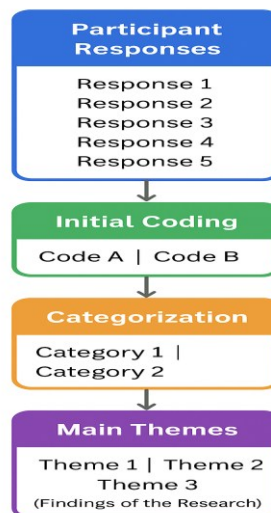


Figure 1: Analyzing data with coding

RESULTS

Based on the learner's experience of using the LearnEnglish Podcast for listening skills, he has found progress in listening after learning from this application. However, he also gets the weaknesses of this application. The three main themes emerging from the interviews were the learner's experience of the LearnEnglish Podcast for listening skills, the learner's listening skills after using the LearnEnglish Podcast, and the strengths and weaknesses of the LearnEnglish Podcast. The researcher then elaborated the result of the analysis into three main points.

The learner's perception of the LearnEnglish Podcast for listening skills

The LearnEnglish Podcast from the British Council is an application that supports students in learning and improving their listening skills. This application provides various podcast episodes on interesting topics to listen to, such as language learning tips, information about the world, jokes, and quizzes, ensuring there is always something for everyone. The episodes are presented in the form of text with audio. This makes it much easier for the learner to review everything they have listened to by using the available text. Additionally, the learner will be able to know his progress in listening as well. In addition, the steps of apply this application are effortless. First is opening the application and selecting the exciting title. I then continue to download the podcast; the next step is listening to it. To complete the learning process of listening, the learner cross-checks the points he has listened to against the available text of the audio. Additionally, according to the student, he found the application in the App Store.

The learner's listening skills after use the LearnEnglish Podcast

According to the student, he actually had no qualified skill in listening at all. The incompetence then had an impact on his communication skills; sometimes he could not catch the point of discussion or explanation shared by the lecturer. He felt unfamiliar with the vocabulary in the material context. Finally, he could not deliver the appropriate response to

the lecturer or his friends as the partner speaking in the class. Therefore, the learner decided to practice his listening skills by listening to the LearnEnglish Podcast. The LearnEnglish Podcast offered an opportunity to the learner to listen to a lot of new vocabulary in the fascinating available episodes and flexible system so the student can listen to it anywhere and anytime. Therefore, the learner is scheduled to listen to the podcast at least two times a day. Finally, he achieved wonderful progress in his listening skills, and he was able to catch the point of conversation or explanation. Moreover, he also responds appropriately to all the given questions or statements. Therefore, he concludes that this application extremely encourages his passion to enhance listening skills.

The strengths and weaknesses of LearnEnglish Podcast

Basically, all learning applications have strengths and weaknesses, with no exception for the LearnEnglish Podcast from the British Council. Here, the user of this application highlighted four main points of the strengths of the LearnEnglish Podcast: it offers quite complete features for listening skills practice, and it is simple, flexible, and free. Concerned with the first strength, this application provides a variety of podcast episodes in the form of audio and text with excellent topics. The episodes greatly stimulate and support the listener to listen. Users can easily check if what they hear matches the text. Talking about simple to use, the LearnEnglish Podcast from the British Council does not require submitting an email for making a user account. As the participant experienced, he just installed the application from the App Store, and he immediately used the application for listening practice. Furthermore, the application of the LearnEnglish podcast is flexible to use. The user is able to listen to the available podcast anywhere and anytime. In addition, the LearnEnglish application is free to use. The user does not need to purchase the available features in the application. All the strengths of the LearnEnglish Podcast have been explained clearly. It is time for the weaknesses of this application. To listen to the podcast, the user must download the podcast, while the storage memory on the cellphone is limited. Therefore, the user cannot download in large quantities. It is quite complicated for the user, because he should frequently delete and download the podcast.

DISCUSSION

The present study narrated the student's learning experience with the LearnEnglish podcast for listening skills. The experience was delivered based on the research questions that elaborated on three main points: the learner's perception of the LearnEnglish Podcast for listening skills, the learner's listening skills after using the LearnEnglish Podcast, and the strengths and weaknesses of the application.

The results of the present study indicated that the LearnEnglish Podcast actually had provided an opportunity for the student to practice his listening skills. The complete features of *the* LearnEnglish Podcast from the British Council—tips, information about the world, jokes, and quizzes—attract the student's interest to listen to the English podcast. In addition, the students found it easy to use the application. He should download only the podcast and listen to it on a phone, laptop, or PC. This description is in line with Ramli & Kurniawan (2018) in their research about the LearnEnglish Podcast as well. His research finding showed

that podcasts contain fantastic topics and programs that enhance tutors' and students' English skills: listening and speaking. All the studies supported my research, specifically about the LearnEnglish Podcast from the British Council for improving listening skills. All the previous research involved multiple participants; however, my research includes only one student as the participant. The researcher focuses on one English skill, namely listening, while he is keen on listening and speaking. Movahedi & In (2017) proved that the LearnEnglish Podcast application could enhance the student's listening skills. Moreover, Kibtiah et al. (2022) also investigated the LearnEnglish Podcast from the British Council for students' listening skills. The result of their research indicated that the podcast supported the improvement of students' listening skills.

The second point of this research is the participant's listening progress after using the LearnEnglish Podcast application. He says that he finds much new vocabulary, which facilitates his understanding of everything he listens to. It is in line with Haneul (2024) that podcast can make the process of vocabulary acquisition. The present research of the LearnEnglish Podcast from the British Council has similarity to the previous research, or the present research of mine is supported by some previous research. All research results indicate that the LearnEnglish Podcast application enriches learners' vocabulary and greatly enhances their English listening skills.

CONCLUSION

The primary focus when integrating technology into listening practice and selecting supporting media must be on the accuracy of the content and the strategies employed to use it. This research presents students' narratives regarding the British Council's LearnEnglish Podcast, exploring how the application assists them in enriching their listening skills, as well as identifying its strengths and weaknesses. The LearnEnglish Podcast application is recommended for learners seeking to enhance their English listening proficiency. Learners can engage with various features, such as episodes covering language learning tips, global news, jokes, and quizzes, all of which are presented as audio with accompanying transcripts. Users can simply select their preferred episode, download it, and engage in the learning process at their own convenience, anywhere and anytime.

The results of this research revealed the impact of the LearnEnglish Podcast application on students' listening skills progress. Additional findings highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the application, all of which are based on the students' learning experiences. There are two primary implications for both the application and the learners. First, regarding podcast design, it is essential to align content with learner needs; specifically, providing shorter podcasts is advisable, as many learners indicated a preference for brief segments due to limited device storage. The second implication concerns the learners themselves; as users of the British Council's LearnEnglish application, it is important for them to utilize the application's flexibility and available features systematically.



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