



EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENT PODCASTS ON STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILLS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MOTIVATION, MEMORY, AND SELF-CONFIDENCE IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study examines the use of podcasts while learning English for students in Pakistan. Specifically, the study looks at how learning aided by podcasts impacts students' motivation, memory, and self-confidence with respect to listening and speaking. With the increasing presence of technology in learning, podcasts have become an easily integrable authentic learning resource that gives students the opportunity to engage with real world examples of the English language, its pronunciation, vocabulary, and dialog. The study employs a qualitative methodology using a phenomenological approach in order to understand and explain students' perceptions and experiences of learning through podcasts. The sample consisted of students enrolled in English language courses at a chosen set of universities in Pakistan, and data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was performed to identify important themes in relation to listening, motivation, cognitive processes, and affect. The results showed that the use of podcasts assiduously improved students' listening, independent learning, and concentration, and increased their self-confidence with respect to communication. The study advocates for the use of podcasts in Pakistan to develop interactive, learner-centered, and technology-based language learning systems in academic environments.

Keywords: *Podcast-Assisted Learning, Listening Skills, English Language Learning, Motivation Memory Retention, Self-Confidence, Technology-Assisted Learning.*

Introduction

In recent years, technology has significantly transformed educational practices across the world, including in Pakistan (Ali et al., 2024; Ayesha, 2022). The use of digital learning technology in the form of videos, mobile applications, online platforms, and podcasts has become more common in the language learning environment (Ali et al., 2025). One of the tools that has received a lot of attention because it is available, flexible and can be used to provide authentic listening materials for students is the podcast. Students' use of authentic listening materials can be acquired by using podcast as tools, it has received much attention because podcasts are available, flexible, and can be used for students to acquire authentic listening materials (Indahsari, 2020; Chaves-Yuste & Peña, 2023). Podcasts are digital audio programs that learners can play at any time and place on their smartphones, laptops, or other digital devices (Bueno-Alastuey & Nemeth, 2020). As they become increasingly ubiquitous, these have led to an emerging platform for increasing students' ability to listen, especially in the context of English language learning (EFL) (Syifa et al., 2024).

One of the key roles of listening is in the process of communication, understanding and learning of language, which is why listening is regarded as one of the most indispensable skills of language (Mukhtorova & Ilxomov, 2024). Nevertheless, there are students in Pakistan who are unable to develop effective listening skills because of the lack of authentic English conversations for their learning, traditional teaching methods, not using technology in the classrooms and not creating enough space for interactive learning (Ayesha, 2022). Listening activities are neglected in many classrooms, whereas reading and writing skills are given more importance, which in turn is a negative effect on the students' language proficiency and their confidence in communication (Manzoor et al., 2024).

There are several points to be gained from the use of podcasts in language education that can help overcome the problems faced (Nernere & Budiraharjo, 2025). Podcasts can introduce learners to real-life pronunciation, vocabulary, accents, and conversation styles to enhance their listening comprehension and language understanding (Aziz et al., 2025). Moreover, podcasts enable students to learn at their own speed by replaying the audio content multiple times, which can help students to memorize and understand the content (Elekaei et al., 2020). Podcasts are especially valuable for students who learn in different ways and who have varying language proficiency (Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025).

Podcasts can also include elements of psychology and cognition like motivation, memory, self-confidence, and others, which are also important and may be impacted. If learners appreciate and relate to the podcast content, they will likely be motivated to engage more actively in language learning tasks (Khotimah et al., 2022). Similarly, listening exercises done repeatedly can enhance language learners' memory and help them retain information auditory (Elekaei et al., 2020). In addition, since learning is low pressure, listening to authentic materials is likely to increase students' confidence in understanding and engaging with spoken English in real-life communication (Akyulduz, 2024).

Although digital learning tools have become increasingly popular across the globe, studies related to the use of podcasts as a learning tool in Pakistan's education system are still in their early stages, particularly when studied from a qualitative perspective (Ali et al., 2025). Previous studies mainly present quantitative data on academic achievement, and there are fewer studies that show students' personal experiences, perceptions and feelings about the use of podcasts in learners' language learning (Hendrawan et al., 2025). Thus, it is important to explore the students' experience of podcast-assisted learning and its impact on their listening skills, motivation, memory, and self-confidence.

This study aims to explore the impact of different podcasts on improving students' listening skills in the context of Pakistan. The study adopts a qualitative approach to get insight into students' experiences and perceptions of using podcast-based learning and its contribution to the improvement of students' motivation, memory and self-confidence in English language learning (Yang, 2025; Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025).

Problem Statement

Many students continue to face difficulties in learning English, especially listening skills in Pakistan (Ayesha, 2022; Manzoor et al., 2024). Listening is a basic part of language learning and communication, however, it has not been given enough attention in the conventional classroom-based activities (Mukhtorova & Ilxomov, 2024). Teacher-centred teaching, text book-based teaching, and examination-oriented teaching are some of the teaching methods that are still being used by many educational institutions, which offer an inadequate chance for students to listen to

real authentic materials (Ali et al., 2025). Consequently, students often have problems comprehending spoken English, understanding various accents, retaining information from audio materials and speaking with self-confidence in academic and social settings.

Podcasts are a new educational media that can be used for language learning purposes because of the development of technology (Indahsari, 2020; Chaves-Yuste & Peña, 2023). The use of podcasts offers authentic and flexible listening experiences, which can support students to enhance their listening comprehension, vocabulary, pronunciation, and overall language proficiency (Aziz et al., 2025; Syifa et al., 2024). In addition, under certain circumstances, podcasts can have a positive effect on the motivation, memory and confidence of the learners as they can listen to stimulating learning content in a relaxed time frame and at their own speed (Bao & Thanh, 2025; Akyıldız, 2024). Despite the above mentioned possibilities, the use of podcasts in English language teaching-learning context in Pakistan is still restricted (Ali et al., 2024).

In addition, the current studies on the use of podcasts in L2 learning have been mostly quantitative studies that aimed to measure language learners' performance in terms of test scores and learning achievements. Despite the potential of podcasts in enhancing listening skills, few studies have examined the personal experiences, perceptions, and emotional reactions that occur when students use podcasts in the context of education in Pakistan (Hendrawan et al., 2025; Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025). The lack of qualitative research creates a gap in understanding how students perceive podcast-assisted learning and how factors such as motivation, memory, and self-confidence are influenced through this learning approach.

For this reason, the present study aims to investigate the effects of the selected podcasts on the listening skills of the students in terms of their experiences, perceptions and views on the motivational, memory and self-confidence of English language learning in Pakistan. The purpose of the study is to gain deeper understanding of the educational value of podcasts and how they could be used to improve language learning practices in Pakistani institutions (Yang, 2025; Chaves-Yuste & Peña, 2023).

Research Objectives

The study is designed to explore the role of podcasts in improving students' listening skills in the context of Pakistan. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore the impact of different podcasts on students' listening skills in English language learning.
2. To examine students' perceptions regarding the role of podcasts in increasing their motivation toward listening activities.
3. To investigate how podcast-based learning influences students' memory retention and understanding of listening content.
4. To explore the effect of podcasts on students' self-confidence in listening and communication.
5. To understand students' experiences and attitudes toward the use of podcasts as a language learning tool in Pakistani educational institutions.

The present study is important because it has highlighted the educational value of podcasts in enhancing the listening skills of students in the context of Pakistan (Ali et al., 2024). Listening is one of the key abilities in the process of language learning but is hardly emphasized in the traditional teaching and learning setting (Mukhtorova & Ilxomov, 2024; Akhter et al., 2026). This study adds to the existing literature on the use of digital learning tools in English language

teaching and learning, and will provide insights into the potential of podcasts to enhance students' listening skills in ELT through motivation, memory, and self-confidence (Yang, 2025; Akyıldız, 2024).

The study is useful for the students as it provides them an alternative and flexible learning method which could support to enhance their listening comprehension and communication skills (Indahsari, 2020). The study may motivate the students to make use of digital audio materials in independent language learning (Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025) through learning context analysis using podcasts based on students' perception. The results also can be used to build students' confidence and motivation in learning English in authentic listening (Khotimah et al., 2022).

The research is important for educators, especially language educators. It may offer insights on ways that podcasts can be used as an additional classroom tool for improving students' listening skills (Chaves-Yuste & Peña, 2023). Podcast-based learning can help educators, in conjunction with the research balance the inclusion of stimulating learning environments that are geared toward students' interests (Hasibuan & Male, 2022).

More importantly, the study can give some guidelines to curriculum planners, educational policymakers and academic institutions regarding the promotion of language learning with technology. The results of this study can be used to enhance the role of podcasts and other multimedia materials in English language programs in educational institutions across Pakistan, as digital learning is an emerging trend in today's educational landscape (Manzoor et al., 2024).

Regarding academic contribution, this study enhances qualitative research on the role of podcasts in learning, an emerging field in Pakistan (Ali et al., 2025). It goes beyond earlier studies that focused on L2 learning with a quantitative approach by examining students' experiences, perceptions and emotions (Hendrawan et al., 2025). Therefore, the study will provide a starting point for future researchers in developing listening skills in technology-assisted language learning and qualitative educational research.

Literature Review

The integration of technology into language education has transformed traditional teaching and learning practices across the world (Ali et al., 2024). Mobile applications, online learning platforms, videos and podcasts have been increasingly adopted as digital tools for English language learning (ELT) in recent years (Ali et al., 2025; Shahid et al., 2024). One of these technologies which has proven to be effective and flexible learning media, to improve the listening skills of students, is podcasts (Indahsari, 2020; Akhter et al., 2026). Podcasts offer learners the opportunity to listen to authentic recordings, which can be played again and again based on individual learning needs and preferences (Bueno-Alastuey & Nemeth, 2020). Therefore, numerous studies on the use of podcasts in language learning setting have been conducted.

Listening is considered to be one of the most crucial abilities in language learning as it helps learners to understand spoken language, enhance their pronunciation skills, and enhance their communication skills (Rahman et al., 2018; Waterfield et al., 2026). But, there are many students who learn English as a second language who face problems in listening skills because they have low exposure to real English conversations and low listening practice in the classroom (Hasibuan & Male, 2022). Traditional teaching methods and examination-driven education generally give fewer opportunities for students to listen actively in an interactive and technology-assisted way in the context of Pakistan (Ayesha, 2022; Zhiyin & Said, 2024). Thus, the use of innovative teaching aids like podcasts might be useful in improving students' listening skills.

Past research has indicated that podcasts can positively impact language learning by enhancing learner engagement, pronunciation, vocabulary building, and listening comprehension (Aziz et al., 2025; Syifa et al., 2024). Furthermore, researchers have pointed out that podcasts could be used to enhance students' learning motivation and encourage self-study due to students' freedom to learn whenever and wherever (Yang, 2025). Moreover, learners are likely to have better memory retention and understanding of spoken information if they are exposed to the podcast materials repeatedly (Elekaei et al., 2020). In the same way, when the students listen to true materials in a relaxed learning atmosphere, it can improve students' self-confidence in listening and communication skills (Akyıldız, 2024).

Although podcast-assisted learning (PAL) has gained international traction, there is limited qualitative research available that explores students' experiences and perceptions of podcast use, especially in Pakistan (Ali et al., 2025). Most of the existing studies emphasized quantitative data, namely academic performance and achievement scores, and fewer studies have examined the personal experiences of students in learning by listening to podcasts and how it affects student motivation, memory and confidence (Hendrawan et al., 2025; Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025). Hence it is a very important to read the existing literature to develop an understanding of the educational significance of podcasts and to find the gap in the previous research in order to come up with the research aim and objectives of the present study.

This literature review addresses to the previous research concerning podcasts and listening skill development, motivation and student engagement with podcasts, memory and podcasts, and self-confidence in language learning and podcasts. It also identifies theoretical and contextual bases that are relevant to the current study.

Podcasts and Listening Skill Development

The importance of listening skill in second and foreign language learning lies in the fact that it allows one to comprehend the speech of other people, grasp the meaning of what they say and react to it accordingly in the learning process (Mukhtorova & Ilxomov, 2024). Language learning researchers argue that listening is not a passive process, but rather an active process in which listeners interpret sounds, the words, pronunciation and the meaning of the text in context (Hasibuan & Male, 2022). But, there are still a number of students who have English as a foreign language and have problems in listening because of less exposure to the real spoken English and less listening practice in the classroom (Selviani & Ardiana, 2025).

Podcasts have emerged as a popular means of enhancing listening skills (Saleem et al., 2025; Chaves-Yuste & Peña, 2023) with the development of educational technology. Podcasts are digital audio recordings where learners can access them using their smartphones, computers, and online platforms (Bueno-Alastuey & Nemeth, 2020). They provide students with authentic language input and connect students with natural pronunciation, accents, vocabulary usage, and natural conversation (Aziz et al. 2025). Podcasts can be used by the students to pause, replay, and revisit as many times as needed, depending on what they want to learn from the listening session (Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025).

The positive effect of podcasts on listening comprehension has been registered in several studies which are Syifa et al., (2024) and Saleem et al., (2025). Students who participate frequently in podcast learning activities have improved listening skills, understanding of spoken English, and interpretation of information from the audio (Putri et al., 2025). Podcasts can make learners familiar with the real communication style, which can enhance their listening skills and language competence (Anggraini, 2025).

Besides, podcasts can stimulate the students' self-directed and independent learning (Bao & Thanh, 2025). Students have the choice of listening to a podcast on a topic that they are interested in and depending on their skill level, they can listen to it more than once. Educational podcasts may contain stories, interviews, dialogue and dialogue-based language practice to introduce learners to various situations of communication. It can help students grasp various speech styles, accents, and intonation patterns (Nurmukhamedov & Sharakhimov, 2021).

In the context of Pakistan, the use of podcasts may be particularly beneficial because many students have limited opportunities to interact with authentic English-speaking environments (Ali et al., 2025). In many schools, listening continues to be one of the least emphasized skills in traditional teaching, in comparison to grammar, reading and preparing for exams (Manzoor et al., 2024). Consequently, students might experience difficulties in comprehending spoken English in a confident manner in educational or social environment. Podcasts are one possible avenue to remedy this by offering engaging and authentic listening experiences outside of the classroom.

Furthermore, students have been found to gradually develop their pronunciation awareness, vocabulary recognition and comprehension skills after repeated exposure to audio content through podcasts (Elekaei et al., 2020). Learners have the opportunity to hear podcasts more than once, which will help them, remember more of the information and they will slowly be able to build up their listening competence. As a result, podcasts are becoming a very powerful technological tool to support the learning of listening skills in English as a foreign language (Chaves-Yuste & Peña, 2023).

Podcasts and Students' Motivation

According to Yang (2025), motivation is regarded as one of the most significant factors affecting language learning success. Motivated learners are more likely to be actively involved in the learning activities, are interested in learning tasks, and are more committed to enhancing their language skills. Motivation is an important factor to be considered in English language learning especially when students are learning listening skills, listening activities are usually demanding and require concentration, patience, and continuous practice (Khotimah et al., 2022). They have stressed that learners' motivation and willingness to engage in language learning processes can be raised by using language learning tools that are engaging and interactive.

Podcasts have been acknowledged as motivational learning tools due to their ability to offer learners engaging, flexible, and real-world learning experiences (Budinčić & Ćuk, 2025). Podcasts enable students to listen to a variety of topics beyond the education and culture fields, including entertainment, science/technology and life conversations. This variety could stimulate learners' curiosity and interest, making listening activities fun and meaningful.

Students' motivation in learning English has been shown to be higher when using podcasts due to the flexibility of selecting material based on their interest in the material and their language proficiency (Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025). Podcasts can also be accessed via mobile devices and the Internet, enabling students to access educational materials outside of the classroom (Indahsari, 2020). The flexibility can encourage students to learn autonomously and foster positive attitudes on language learning. Furthermore, it was suggested that pupils who have shown an interest in listening activities tend to listen regularly, and this can lead to an ongoing improvement of their listening skills (Anggraini, 2025).

The other motivating factor that relates with learner control is that learner control is a factor that affects learner motivation. Podcasts enable students to listen to the audio content multiple times, at their own speed (Bueno-Alastuey & Nemeth, 2020). This is a self-paced learning environment

which may alleviate anxiety and frustration that can occur in more challenging listening situations. If students can feel comfortable and at ease, and feel they can understand the sounds they hear while listening, their motivation to learn could be even more greatly boosted.

Limited motivation of students in English language learning classrooms is also observed in the context of Pakistan which is a result of traditional learning paradigms, lack of technology in the classrooms, and examination-oriented learning system (Ayesha, 2022). Usually, listening activities are confined to listening to skill exercises in the textbook and to formal instruction in the classroom, which may not motivate learners' interest. Podcasts can, thus, be used as innovative tools that can enhance the learning process into more interactive and student-centred learning process (Ali et al., 2025). Podcasts can include authentic and relatable material that can stimulate the students' interest and involvement in listening practices in Pakistan.

In addition, it has been suggested that motivated learners are more apt to persevere in coping with language learning obstacles. Podcasts are a blend of entertainment and education so they can help alleviate boredom and provide fun learning opportunities that will make learners more eager to listen (Akhter et al., 2026). As a result, podcasts can have positive effects on students' intrinsic motivation and long-term language learning development.

Podcasts and Memory Retention

Memory is very crucial in language learning because learners need to remember the words, pronunciation patterns, meanings and the context in order to be able to communicate effectively (Elekaei et al., 2020). Students in listening activities must listen quickly and remember key information to understand and respond to the information. Nevertheless, there are several challenges that ELLs encounter when trying to remember information they hear in listening activities: unfamiliar vocabulary, fast rate of speech, and difficulty concentrating, and less access to authentic, natural language input (Hasibuan & Male, 2022).

Ali et al. (2024) proposed that technology-assisted learning tools can aid in memory retention by offering repeated and meaningful exposure to learning materials. Of these, podcasts have proven to be increasingly useful for learners since they can listen to them several times to meet the learning needs of each learner (Bueno-Alastuey & Nemeth, 2020). The frequent exposure to this listening may enhance learners' comprehension and effectively store and recall information.

A number of studies indicate that podcasts can enhance memory retention for language learning (Elekaei et al., 2020). Given that podcasts provide contextualized language examples, language learners can develop a vocabulary that aids in auditory text retention (Aziz et al., 2025). Moving information from short-term memory to long-term memory is essential for language acquisition. In that regard, podcasts facilitate language retention as users are exposed to auditory text at regular intervals.

Besides, podcasts can also incorporate conversational language, storytelling, and concrete contexts to improve students' learning and recall of the language (Anggraini, 2025). It has been suggested that learning content which is captivating and related to the real life experiences will be remembered by the learners. Podcasts can then help to increase cognitive engagement by requiring students to listen actively to tasks and to make sense of the information they are hearing in meaningful contexts.

One other benefit of podcasts is learner independence. The students are able to stop, play and return to portions of the audio materials that were challenging, which they can do whenever they need (Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025). This may help to avoid cognitive overload and enhance understanding, as the learner can absorb information at their own speed. Frequent listening can

also enhance learners' concentration and attention, which are both vital in maintaining their listening memory.

Meanwhile, in Pakistan, students have been found to depend on memorization-based learning methods in the traditional school environment (Selviani & Ardiana, 2025). However, this can not always facilitate meaningful listening comprehension or the retention of spoken information over a longer period. Podcasts might offer a more engaging and interactive option that allow your students to experience authentic language that will foster active understanding rather than rote learning.

In addition, it has been noted that the learner's interest and emotional involvement in learning materials improves memory retention (Bao & Thanh, 2025). Podcasts often discuss topics that are interesting and relevant to students, so they may be more attentive and mentally engaged while listening. This interaction may aid retention of information and comprehension of listening over time. Therefore, podcasts may serve as effective educational tools for strengthening memory-related aspects of language learning (Chaves-Yuste & Peña, 2023).

Podcasts and Students' Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is one of the psychological elements of learning a language. Self-confidence affects the willingness of the learners to be involved in the communication process, verbalize their thoughts, and participate in class activities (Akyıldız, 2024; Zhiyin and Said, 2024). Students with greater self-confidence utilize a second language with more ease and practice listening and speaking with less apprehension. Oppositely, learners with less self-confidence often manifest anxiety, hesitations, and difficulties in comprehension of, or responses to, the spoken language.

Among various activities in learning a new language, listening is the most challenging for an English language learner as it requires the learner to not only comprehend spoken language, but also process the information almost immediately and accurately (Rahman et al., 2018). Most of the learners get demotivated when they encounter unfamiliar vocabulary, strange accents, or different styles and rates of speech. If one considers the more formal and traditional classroom settings, fear of negative responses or marks and assessments results in an even lower self-confidence in listening and communication tasks (Hasibuan & Male, 2022). It is important to have a positive and adaptable learning environment to help the learners realize their dream of learning a language.

Many researchers indicate that the incorporation of podcasts into the learning environment is a self-confidence booster for the students, as they offer listening opportunities with less pressure and more learner-oriented listening activities (Nasution and Saragih, 2025). In contrast with the formal activities in the classroom, once learners know the podcast they can listen to it in the privacy of their own space and time. They can listen repeatedly, and as time goes on, they can improve their understanding of the listening at a more unhurried pace (Bueno-Alastuey and Nemeth, 2020). They adapt with the Spoken English, and, even without realizing, they start feeling self-confident in the process.

Research conducted by Akyıldız in 2024 indicated that students who engage with podcasts exhibit improvement in both their listening and communication skills confidence. Aziz in 2025 suggested that learners may benefit from being exposed to differing speech styles, driven by the need to adapt to everyday situations in English. The degree to which students' listening skills progress ultimately determines their engagement level in other areas of the curriculum and contributes positively to their confidence in routine communication.

Another positive effect that podcasts may have in language learning, Budinčić and Čuk in (2025) indicate, is their capacity to reduce anxiety. They help to facilitate learning by making the process enjoyable and less stressful. The narrative, interview, and conversational styles that educational podcasts use help learners to assimilate and retain the information. When students listen to activities that provide them with the potential for incremental improvement, they begin to foster positive attitudes toward the English language and instill confidence in their abilities.

In Pakistan, Ayesha in 2022 argues that many students lack confidence in English communication skills due to inadequate exposure to authentic English, combined with traditional teacher-centered classes. Students fear negative peer evaluation in listening and speaking classes. The authors, Ali et al. in 2025, argue that with the use of podcasts, students can practice and improve their listening skills independently, in unstructured settings.

In addition, self-assurance has a direct link to both motivation and learning outcomes. Confident learners are said to take more risks and practice and participate more in language learning (Yang, 2025). Because students can actively listen to and learn from podcasts, doing so over a prolonged period may begin to build their confidence in their English language abilities. Based on this concept, podcasts are believed to provide learners an outlet where they can safely learn on their own, which reduces their anxiety and strengthens their learning (Akhter et al., 2026).

Theoretical Framework

This study examines the use of podcasts in listening skills development, theories of self-regulation, motivation, retention, scaffolding, and self-confidence in language learning are employed (Ali et al., 2024). To consider the multifaceted nature of the theories, relevant concepts of Constructivist Learning Theory and Krashen's Input Hypothesis are employed (Saha & Hossain, 2025). These theories explain the impact of podcasting on students' listening skills, motivation, retention, and self-confidence.

Piaget and Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory explains that students construct knowledge through their own experiences and interpretation of different stimuli (Nurhasnah et al., 2024). The theory emphasizes that active learning greatly aids students in the learning process. This can be illustrated through the development of listening skills in the context of podcasting. Students interpret, assign meaning, and relate the information from the podcasts through the incorporation of their knowledge and experiences. Podcasts also allow students to develop skills independently, and through multiple exposures, students eventually develop their listening skills to comprehend language (Indahsari, 2020).

The study also employs Krashen's Input Hypothesis. The theory explains that in order to reach higher levels of listening and language skills, students need exposure to authentic materials that are linguistically and cognitively engaging (Luo, 2024). Podcasts contain examples of authentic language in use, illustrating context, pronunciation, and vocabulary (Aziz et al., 2025). Frequent podcasts allow students to develop their language and listening skills.

Analyzing how podcasting and the motivation-anxiety relationship encourages listening in a second language helps us understand language acquisition and pedagogical theory. Krashen advocated the importance of motivation when addressing the anxiety attributed to traditional learning environments. Podcasts provide the learner with audio materials which can be accessed in a manner most comfortable and most convenient to the individual, allowing them to control their learning environment (Yang, 2025). The removal of the previously mentioned anxiety-inducing elements can help bolster a learner's confidence and subsequently inspire them to participate more in listening activities.

Cognitive learning and memory theories suggest that meaningful exposure and repetition can help an individual retain information. Being that podcasts cater to repeated listening and sustained exposure, learners can better process, record, and even recall information with a listening task (Elekaei et al., 2020). The nature of learning through podcasts can help meet the variety of individual learning needs within the classroom as it breeds self-regulated learning (Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025).

The analysis framework suggests that podcasts can help improve listening skills through the provision of language input, containment of positive and self-confident anxious elements, and the bolstering of confidence, motivation, and self-regulated learning in a classroom. (Chaves-Yuste & Peña, 2023; Akyıldız, 2024) The theories hold the basis for the study of students' experiences and perceptions of Podcast Learning within a Pakistan context.

Research Gap

Existing research shows that podcasts help develop listening skills and aid language learning (Syifa et al., 2024). Many international studies show how podcasts help with listening comprehension, vocabulary, pronunciation, and learner participation (Aziz et al., 2025; Elekaei et al., 2020). Other studies show how podcasts help increase motivation and self-directed learning and improve communication skills of English language learners (Yang, 2025; Akyıldız, 2024).

Although many studies discuss learning through podcasts, there are still many gaps in literature. Many of these studies employ a quantitative approach and focus on measuring academic scores, achievements, and outputs. These studies contribute valuable findings, but a major drawback is their inability to capture the learners' experiences, emotions, and attitudes about learning languages with the help of podcasts (Hendrawan et al., 2025). Because of this, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions of learning through podcasts in various real-life educational contexts.

Third, there are studies that focus on the relationship between podcasts and listening comprehension. However, there are fewer studies that focus on the influence of podcasts on motivation and memory retention, and especially the influence of podcasts on confidence. These psychological and cognitive aspects affect how learners perceive their own language learning journeys and their ability to engage in listening activities. The influence podcasts have on learning in other contexts is important to improve cognitive and psychological aspects of learning language through podcasts (Nasution & Saragih, 2025).

Building on this, most research has been conducted within developed countries, and technologically advanced educational settings. Research on podcast-based learning in Pakistan is scarce. This is pertinent as there may be differences in educational systems, classroom practices, technology accessibility, and language learning issues. For example, Pakistani English language pedagogy may rely on more traditional classroom teaching (Ali et al., 2025) and leniency may be afforded to listening activities (Ayesha, 2022). Thus, podcasting use in language learning warrants investigation in the Pakistani context.

Additionally, the number of podcasting-based listening activities within the literature is limited. Of the existing studies, the focus is primarily on lesson learning outcomes and not on the emotional and cognitive outcomes of the students. A qualitative study on these outcomes may provide information on the podcast medium and the learning outcomes behavior on the part of the learner on the continuum of engagement and the confidence communicative (Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025).

The objective of this study is to fill in the aforementioned gaps and conduct a qualitative study on the effects of a variety of podcasts on the listening and learning, and confidence, of students in the Pakistani education system. The main focus of this study is the students' perceptions and listening of podcasts to provide in-depth, contextual insights, and contribute to technology focused language learning pedagogy (Ali et al., 2024; Chaves-Yuste & Peña, 2023).

Methodology

The present study used a qualitative research design to investigate students' experiences and perceptions about using podcasts to enhance listening skills. The study employed a phenomenological approach since it aimed to explore the lived experience of the participants in relation to podcast-based learning, motivation, memory, and self-confidence.

The sample for the study consisted of the students of English language courses of selected universities in Pakistan, studying at undergraduate level. The participants were chosen for their experience with podcasts for listening activities and in the context of English language learning. Purposive sampling technique was employed for the selection of the participants in this study as they are familiar with podcast based learning. By using this sampling technique the researcher could select the subjects which could give detailed and relevant information on the topic of the study.

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. The interviews enabled participants to express their experience, opinion and perception about the positive role of podcast in enhancing listening, motivation, memory and self-confidence. Open-ended questions were used to allow for the inclusion of extended answers and discussion.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data. The researcher analyzed the responses from the interviews, coded and looked for significant patterns and meanings, and synthesized the data into themes and subthemes to reflect students' experiences in podcast-assisted learning.

Ethical principles were adhered to during the research. The participants were briefed on the study and informed about the study before conducting interviews. To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants and to protect their information, it was collected and employed solely for academic purposes.

Findings and Discussion

The study findings were developed from the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted among undergraduate students who were experienced podcasters in English language learning (Hendrawan et al., 2025). The interview data were transcribed and examined through careful analysis and reading. Repeated readings were undertaken, followed by coding, categorization and the development of themes. During the first stages of analysis, the researchers grouped the words and expressions of the participants who described those that were similar to one another. The participants' descriptions, which were grouped by similarity, had listening comprehension, learner motivation, memory retention and self-confidence. The study found that participants viewed podcasts as improving the listening skills and the language learning experience of the students.

Improvement of listening comprehension through exposure to authentic language was one of the most prominent themes that emerged from the analysis of data (Aziz et al., 2025). The majority of participants stated that the Podcasts were the first source of real spoken English that they had been exposed to outside of the classroom. Classroom listening exercises were seen as load and dreary. Most were designed to serve the purpose of exam preparation and used fake recordings from the books. In contrast, podcasts provided real spoken English containing pronunciation,

English with different accents and different contexts. Fake recordings were gradually improving the participants' understanding of spoken English and of real English. The participants noted that this exposure gave them the confidence to understand authentic spoken English.

Several respondents stated that the ability to listen to the same material multiple times was one of the main reasons why podcasts helped to improve their listening comprehension (Bueno-Alastuey & Nemeth, 2020). During analysis, responses about the ability to replay audio, go back to sections that were difficult to understand, and the ability to control the speed of the listening activity were categorized as a subtheme of listening flexibility and comprehension support. One participant explained, "In class, when the teacher played audio, I missed many words because it was too fast, but podcasts allowed me to pause and listen again." Another participant stated, "Repeated listening helped me understand pronunciation and sentence structure better because I could focus on difficult parts." These responses show that podcasts provided students with the ability to create personal and custom listening experiences to process verbal information at their own pace and matching their own level of language proficiency.

The findings also showed that compared to regular listening activities, podcasts were perceived to be more appealing. In describing podcasts, students used terms, such as, "real," "interactive," and "interesting" to name a few. In comparison to real listening, lots of students thought that normal listening exercises were mainly mechanical and primarily about answering comprehension questions as opposed to real comprehension. Podcasts exposed the learners to discussions, stories, and interviews, and other uses of verbal communication. One participant noted, "Podcasts felt more natural because people were speaking like real conversations, not like textbook recordings." These responses indicate that real-life communication environments heightened students' focus and listening participation.

An additional prominent theme from the analysis was focused on the role podcasts played in augmenting learner motivation (Yang, 2025; Akhter et al., 2026). During coding, responses describing enjoyment, interest, learner choice, accessibility, and self-directed learning experiences were clustered together under motivational experiences. The majority of participants asserted that podcasts made listening exercises a more pleasurable endeavor due to the freedom afforded to learners to choose topics that suited their individual preferences. Participants expressed interest in podcasts associated with educational topics, technology, entertainment, personal growth, and socio-political issues. One participant explained, "I enjoyed listening because I could choose topics I liked, so learning English did not feel like a burden." Another participant stated, "Podcasts were different from classroom tasks because I listened willingly during my free time."

Other results showed that students' motivation was mainly sustained due to how flexible and accessible the podcast was. (Indahsari, 2020) Most participants acknowledged that podcasts were easily accessible through mobile gadgets like phones, laptops, and online applications. Many students said they listened to podcasts while commuting, relaxing, working out, or doing chores. That level of flexibility motivates students to practice English listening outside of class exercises. One participant remarked, "I listened to podcasts while travelling to university, which improved my English without extra pressure." These responses indicate that podcasts facilitated uninterrupted and self-motivated learning through the incorporation of educational activities in students' everyday schedules.

Learner autonomy, highlighted in the data, was reported as another key motivating factor (Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025). It was repeatedly mentioned by the participants that podcasts

provided them with the opportunity to regulate their own learning. Unlike classroom activities that are regulated by teachers, podcasts provided learners the autonomy to decide what to learn, when to learn, and how to learn. As a result of thematic categorization, learners' autonomy to determine their own learning at their preferred pace, select the topics to learn, and practice activities independently emerged from various interviews. One participant explained, "I felt more responsible for my learning because I could choose podcasts according to my level." Another response highlighted the impact of podcasts in lessening reliance on teachers and in prompting learners to engage in frequent self-practice. These discoveries point to the potential of developing self-directed learning, a skill critical to the sustained progress of learners in language acquisition.

The study also noted a positive influence of podcasts on memory retention. Many respondents stated that practice in listening numerous times on various occasions improved their ability to memorize vocabulary, pronunciations, phrases, and key details. Responses based on repetition, recall, concentration, and comprehension were categorized together in the coding process and were later interpreted as cognitive reinforcement triggered by the podcasts. Students commented that listening to the same dialogues multiple times helped them to remember the different language patterns and their contextual meanings

One participant stated, "When I listened to the same episode several times, I remembered vocabulary naturally without memorizing." Another participant explained that podcasts improved concentration because learners became mentally engaged with conversational content rather than simply memorizing isolated textbook words. Some participants also described how contextual learning supported memory retention. According to one student, "When vocabulary was used in real conversation, it became easier to understand and remember." The study indicates that podcasts promote memory enrichment by supplementing narrow language context exposure and repetition. As a result, the study participants were able to engage in deeper cognitive processing.

The study discovered that podcasts enhanced students' listening and speaking self-confidence (Akyıldız, 2024). During thematic analysis, participants expressed a reduction in feelings of fear, anxiety, and shame related to passive listening in classroom activities, which was often perceived as failure. Respondents expressed that they were not familiar with natural pronunciation, and the speaking and listening tasks were not delivered in the format of classroom activities. Immediate question-answering, brief, passive listening tasks were all perceived as failure. Nonetheless, the study participants communicated that listening to podcasts in a more relaxed and slightly isolated classroom setting reduced listening anxiety. This was largely due to the removed fear of failure and the comprehension grade (Nasution & Saragih, 2025). One participant stated, "I was afraid of making mistakes in class, but podcasts allowed me to practice alone without pressure." Another participant explained, "After regularly listening to podcasts, I became more confident in understanding English movies and conversations." These responses suggest that podcasts offered emotional support because they allowed learners to practice multiple times without the fear of an embarrassing blunder or without the fear of being judged by their classmates.

Some participants also stated that their listening comprehension boosted their confidence to communicate in the classroom. As a result of listening to podcasts, students asserted that their ability to participate in classroom discussions, presentations, and or classroom conversations improved. One participant remarked, "Before using podcasts, I avoided speaking because I could not understand others properly, but now I feel more confident in discussions." This finding

suggests that listening improvement and confidence development were closely interconnected within students' language learning experiences.

Another identifiable theme from the data was the decrease in listening anxiety through self-directed learning (Bueno-Alastuey & Németh, 2020). The majority of participants spoke about the absence of pressure typically found in classroom listening activities, since they were able to control the learning process. Some participants articulated that the ability to revise activities at their own pace resulted in advancement and allowed them to avoid the negative elements attributed to evaluative processes in learning. The data indicate that through the use of podcasts, the learners were able to create differentiated/self-directed learning processes and were able to move beyond their comfort zone and tackle challenging listening materials.

It was evident that podcasts were not just tools for listening in the sample. The thematic analysis substantiated that podcasts developed the students' cognitive participation, linguistic progression, and emotional confidence, and motivated them to participate actively and engage in learning. These elements seemed to be bound to the commitment of the learners to the podcasts and to the creation of a learning environment that was safe and secure.

Podcasts seem to address the gaps in listening instruction in the Pakistani context, where English instruction is still dominated by traditional teacher-centric and examination-oriented pedagogy (Ayesha, 2022; Ali et. al, 2025). The use of authentic audio, the opportunity for multiple listening, and self-directed learning seem to have contributed to the positive language outcomes of the participants. The data emphasize the power of podcasts in developing language skills in a more appealing and interactive way in the context of English language teaching in Pakistan.

Conclusion

The present study focused on the role of podcasts in the students' listening skills in the light of Pakistan with special emphasis on motivation, memory retention and self-confidence. The results indicated that podcasts were effective learning materials that helped in both language and psychological learning of English. Thematic analysis of the experiences revealed that listening comprehension was enhanced when students listened to podcasts regularly because they exposed students to the use of authentic pronunciation, conversational vocabulary, and natural speaking styles. Students felt that podcasts were more flexible and meaningful than the listening activities in the class as they could be listened to many times and could be listened to at their own pace.

The study also proved that podcasts had a positive impact on students' motivation to learn English. The participants found the podcast assisted learning interesting, accessible and less stress than traditional listening exercises. Learner autonomy was encouraged and the participation in independent listening practice was enhanced through the chance to choose topics based on learner's interests. Results also showed that exposure to podcasts led to better memory retention, as the learners' memory for the vocabulary, concepts, and pronunciation had improved due to the use of contextualized learning experiences.

Another significant finding of the study was the positive impact of podcasts on students' self-confidence. The participants reported decreased fear and anxiety for the independent listening practice, which is often encountered in listening activities in the classroom. Students' listening comprehension gradually improved, and they were more confident in listening to spoken English when talking with each other in the classroom and in their studies and social interactions.

Overall, the study concludes that podcasts are valuable pedagogical resources for enhancing listening skills and promoting learner engagement in English language education. The result indicated the need to incorporate digital audio technologies in language teaching in educational

institutions of Pakistan, where listening instruction is restricted to traditional way of teaching. Based on the study, this suggests that podcast-assisted teaching and learning can be an important way to create more learner-centered, interactive, and confidence-boosting language learning environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations may be proposed for improving English language learning through podcast-assisted instruction in Pakistan. English classrooms in educational institutions should make use of podcasts to give students more opportunities to listen to natural sources and natural conversations. The use of podcast activities along with the conventional teaching strategies can make learning more interactive and learner-centered to the benefit of the teacher.

Language teachers should also recommend podcasts to the students based on their proficiency level and academic demands. Motivation was found to be enhanced by learner interest and accessibility, so teachers could consider recommending educational podcasts on a variety of topics that are both interesting and accessible for students to listen to outside of the classroom. Institutions can also run training courses for teachers and students to facilitate their effective use of digital audio materials for language learning.

The study also suggests the use of approaches to technology-assisted learning in English language education be encouraged by curriculum developers and policy makers. The use of listening activities through podcasts in language courses can enhance teaching of listening skills, a skill that is not always emphasized in the teaching of language. Educational institutions will also need to enhance technological access and digital learning facilities to better enable students to interact with the digital learning resources.

Moreover, future studies with larger numbers of participants and various learning levels could be conducted to investigate the overall effect of podcasts on the language learning outcomes. A comparison and contrast between the gender, institutional difference or different podcast formats could also help to understand podcast-assisted learning in the context of education in Pakistan.

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