

# BRITISH COUNCIL PODCAST APPS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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## BRITISH COUNCIL PODCAST APPS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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### ABSTRACT

**1** This study investigated the effectiveness of the British Council Podcast Apps to improve students' listening comprehension of students in senior high school. For that purpose, this study carried out a quasi-experimental design by applying pre-test and post-test. Two classes consisted of 72 students (36 students are in the control group; 36 students are in experimental) of senior high school. This study took place in SMA Negeri 9 Semarang, Indonesia. An adopted listening comprehension test was implemented to collect data in the pre-and post-test. a semi-structured interview was also carried out after the administration of the questionnaire was done. SPSS 23 was then used to analyze the mean, standard deviation, and t-test calculation. The result showed that British Council Podcast Application is an effective medium in improving the students' listening comprehension. This study implies that utilizing technology in listening class is important to support the students in achieving the maximum goal of learning and improve their listening comprehension.

**Keywords:** *British Council Podcast Apps, Listening Comprehension, English Learning.*

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### INTRODUCTION

English has succeeded in dominating the foreign language learning and teaching section. Many things also consider English as an international language in the world (Kushner, 2003). English can guarantee the availability of job opportunities and even better life. In addition, Reddy (2012) clarifies that the importance of English in education can be seen from the fact that many countries have made English a must-mastering language that their countries. Consequently, English has become one of the influencings of the growth of industries worldwide in recent years.

To learn English as a communication tool, students need to master four language skills (Kurniasih, 2017). To add, Aydoğan & Akbarov (2014) state that those language skills are interrelated to one another through two criterions: oral or written communication modes and the communication direction receiving or producing the message.

The fact shows that most students in Asian countries face many barriers in listening and speaking because they are not well prepared with those skills in their

middle school (Sawir, 2005). Students' listening and speaking skills should be given more attention because these skills are used to improve their performance when appearing in public (Hasan & Hoon, 2013).

Listening as a prior skill is a process for a person to perceive other messages through the senses, (especially the aural) organs by giving meaning to messages then understanding them. This is a basic condition that is needed for every individual to communicate in social life (Kutlu & Aslanoğlu, 2009). Listening effectively and sequentially for higher education students aiming for formal and tutorial-based lectures is considered as the basic and crucial skill in English learning (Picard & Velautham, 2016). According to Sypher et al. (1973), listening is a complex process that is an integral part of the communication process. It can be seen from listening stages that were stated by Kozak & Rimmington (1998) such as accepting, attending, understanding, responding, and remembering.

Since listening is a complex process, English teachers need to pay attention to the media that they use in the English classroom. The use of interactive multimedia can be carried out as one of the alternative ways to attract the student's attention on listening class as well as to improve their listening ability. Ampa (2015) states that many types of interactive multimedia can support the teaching and learning process of English listening skills. By using this interactive multimedia as a learning medium, students can be motivated to learn because the material is presented in the form of audio, video, animation, and graphics simultaneously. Learning media like this will not make students bored (Ampa, 2015). The Podcast is a mobile technology, which comes from a combination of two words, namely "Pod" which comes from 'iPod (Apple MP3 Player) "and" "cast" which comes from the word broadcasting (Rajic, 2013). Podcasts offer users to choose what topics they like to play. Widodo & Gunawan (2019) explains that using Podcasts at an early level EFL class can help and assist them in maintaining their listening skills day by day.

Several previous studies were conducted relating to the use of Podcasts. Carvalho et al. (2009) conducted a study that highlighted the use of Podcasts for student improvement in a university. The result showed that most students were excited about using the podcasts in their learning process. In the same line, by using a pre-experimental quantitative research design, Al Qasim & Al Fadda (2013) investigated how Podcasts application develop their listening skills compared to traditional classrooms. Students believed that they can use podcasts in their learning because it was easy to download and use on their smartphones.

Hasan & Hoon (2013) also how learning and understanding language was easier when using Podcasts. This study confirmed the effectiveness of podcasts in enhancing academic performance, increasing motivation, and enhancing learning. In general, the findings showed that language learners were interested and comfortable with learning to use podcasts. Supporting this result, Chung & Kim (2016) examined college students' motivations for using Podcasts. The results of this study indicated that there were six dimensions of motivation that stand out for students to use podcasts; social interaction, entertainment, education, escape, habit, and comfort.

The newest one, Yoestara & Putri (2019) revealed a fact that podcast was an beneficial constructive tool for developing the speaking and listening skills of

Indonesian students because it provided authentic material that supports independent learning, improves English language skills, and creates an active learning system for students. However, to implement the application of podcasts effectively in the English classroom, teachers must consider the Technology Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework and must know what the potential resistances were. It required more research, especially in Indonesia, to see more about the use of podcasts in the English teaching and learning process to improve reading and speaking skills. In addition, it is also important to remember that podcasts are only a supporting media, not to replace the teaching and learning process.

Different from the previous studies, this current study is different from the previous studies. The previous studies mostly focused on the effect of Podcasts on student's listening skills for English improvement at the university level. Meanwhile, this study investigated the effect of British Council Podcast Apps on senior high school students' listening comprehension. This study is trying to fill the existing gaps provided by the previous studies by highlighting the different levels of students as the subject of the investigation.

Regarding the need of investigating the effect of Podcast on students' listening comprehension in a senior high school, this study follows the research questions; (1) to what extent is the student's listening comprehension taught using British Council Podcast Apps?, (2) what extent is the student's listening comprehension taught using conventional media?, and (3) Is there any significant difference between the student's listening skill taught using British Council Podcast Apps and those taught using conventional media?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Podcast**

As stated by, Basaran & Cabaroglu (2014) states that podcast is a compound term that is derived from two words namely "iPod" and "broadcast" which means broadcasting that is carried out over the internet to be played on an iPod. In addition, Rajic (2013) explains Podcasts as audio or visual content that has a free subscription. Podcasts can be distributed individually on the school network and can be accessed with many tools. Currently, it is not only audio but also audio-visual. Cebeci & Tekdal (2006), Podcasts aim to distribute content that their listeners will later use via cell phones and digital audio/video players such as the iPod or MP3 Player.

### **British Council Podcast Apps as Teaching Media**

Amir & Kang (2018) states that the British Council Podcast Application contains topics that are not only about learning English but also include topics on business as well as current issues. The British Council is also considered to be the largest technology-based English language teaching organization in the world (Movahedi & In, 2017). Recently, the use of British Council Podcast Apps has grown significantly in the field of education (Solly, 2013). To add, Jannah (2020) states that this application is an innovation in the world of education that provides English learning activities in an interesting and easy-to-understand manner with the serial series they provide in the application.

1 From beginner, intermediate, to the most advanced, the British Council Podcast provides a variety of themes and topics based on how well students learn English. It has many useful features for students to learn English easily. With the international-based British Council Podcast Apps, students can also encourage their language skills with the best experts in the world (Solly, 2013). Furthermore, research which is conducted by Edirisingha et al. (2007) explained that podcasts support students' preparation in making a presentation. To add, Edirisingha et al. (2007) and Jannah (2020) also proved that by using Podcasts, the student can improve their listening skill quickly.

Besides having advantages, Khechine et al. (2013) state that podcasts also have several disadvantages, namely; absenteeism, lack of interaction, technological limitations, and classroom session. Absenteeism will be one of the things affected by the podcast. With the podcast, students are often absent from class. Then students are also lack interaction with classmates and teachers. Furthermore, podcasts also make some students and teachers have to have the required software or media. Lastly, podcasts also affect classroom sessions because some authors believe that students will pay attention to podcasts for no more than twenty minutes, which means that the podcast duration will greatly affect the effectiveness of student learning.

#### RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied a quasi-experimental research design by involving two classes; a control class and an experimental class. The illustration is presented in the table 1.

**Table 1. Illustration of Pre-Test and Post-Test Design by Creswell (2002)**

Pre-Test	Treatment	Post-Test
O <sub>1</sub>	-	O <sub>2</sub>
O <sub>3</sub>	X	O <sub>4</sub>

According to table 1, this study applied an experiment to an experimental group; using British Council Podcast application in listening class. Meanwhile, the control group was taught using conventional media, which was in this case, using an audio recorder as the media in listening class.

As stated by Sullivan & Knutson (2000) population is an entity or group that reflects all members of a particular group or category of concern. The population of this current study is of 360 students in the eleventh grade in SMA N 9 Semarang that are separated into 7 classes of science and 4 classes of social. In this study, the sample of were 72 students in two classes of the eleventh grade of SMA N 9 Semarang. Each class consists of 36 students.

The instrument used in this study is pre-test and post-test. In this case, pre-test and post-test were listening comprehension test. These listening comprehension tests were adopted from Fitria et al., (2015).

The data collected were analyzed by using SPSS 23 in the form of Mean (M) and Standardized Deviation (SD). Wilcoxon signed-rank test was also applied to check the significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test results of

both groups. Moreover, Mann Whitney was also used to see if there is a significant difference between the control class and the experimental class.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *The student's listening skills taught using British Council Podcast Apps*

The use of British Council Podcast Apps has been investigated to see whether it gives significant effects on the students' listening skills. For that purpose, the researchers implemented British Council Podcast Apps in the English listening section of a class in eleventh grade. In this case, this class is regarded as an experimental class that consists of 36 students. Before the students were taught using British Council Podcast Apps in their English listening section class, they were given a pre-test in terms of the listening test. This pre-test was adopted from Fitria et al. (2015).

The implementation of British Council Podcast Apps was in three months and monitored by the English teacher. After the implementation of British Council Podcast Apps, a post-test was given. This post-test was also adopted from Fitria et al. (2015). The results of the pre-test and post-test were presented in table 2.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistic of Pre-Test and Post-Test in Experimental Class**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Pre-Experimental	36	60.00	64.00	61.2778	1.00317
Post-Experimental	36	80.00	88.00	83.5278	2.38431
Valid N (listwise)	36				

Using British Council Podcast Apps could raise and enhance student's English listening skills significantly. According to table 2, the mean of the pre-test of the experiment class shows 61.278 with SD=1.003. Meanwhile, the mean of the post-test shows 83.528 with SD=2.384. It represents the fact that the post-test score is higher than the pre-test score. It implies that the use of British Council Podcast Apps improves the students' English listening skills.

Al Fadda (2013) mentions that using Podcasts can increase students' listening comprehension better than using conventional media. Supporting the result, Kavaliauskienė & Anusienė (2009) states that an attractive opportunity on the Podcast can be used to expose the advanced language learners to the authentic conversation.

The result also shows that British Council Podcast Apps has a simple tool media that could attract and ease the students to learning the English language, particularly in the listening section. It is the same with what was said by Hasan & Hoon (2013) that students can understand easily and more beneficial by using Podcasts. By using Podcasts, students have opportunities to learn anywhere and anytime with the tool on Podcasts.

Another result shows that the topics are related to the common student's daily life that is spoken by native speakers and it motivates students to improve their listening ability. It is in line with the previous study that was conducted by Yoestara & Putri (2019). The result of this study also shows that Podcasts enabled

students to be introduced to the authentic English language because it covers a wide range of topics that have spoken by native speakers. The other fact, Podcasts can increase the students' confidence because most Indonesian students are lack confidence in listening and speaking English. Moreover, Chung & Kim (2016) indicates that there were six dimensions of motivation that stand out for students when using podcasts; social interaction, entertainment, education, escape, habit, and comfort. Those motivations appeared to be outstanding factors that represent the main function of Podcasts themselves.

*The student's listening skills taught using conventional media*

Different from the experimental class, British Council Podcast Application was not used in the control class. In this control class, the students were taught using an audio recorder. This media is considered the common media used in the English listening section. Before its implementation, the student's English listening comprehension was tested using a pre-test. This pre-test is similar to the pre-test used in the experimental class. After the implementation of the audio recorder as the English listening media of the control class, the students were given the post-test. The results of both pre-test and post-test in the control class are presented in table 3.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistic of Pre-Test and Post-Test in Control Class**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Pre-Control	36	59.00	66.00	61.2222	1.53271
Post-Control	36	60.00	66.00	62.7500	1.55609
Valid N (listwise)	36				

The data shows that students who were taught using conventional media or CD have a lower score than those who were taught using British Council Podcast Apps. It is related to what was concluded in a study by Agarid & Nurzahra (2018) that the use of conventional media is not up-to-date and too hard to be understood by students. Moreover, students are not able to operate or to choose the topic or theme because it is not individual media which means they could only use it while in class.

The other result shows that those who were taught using conventional media or CD have difficulty in the listening section. The material is also unrelated to common student's daily life. Thus, the material seems not attractive and is too stiff. Supporting the result, Mextesol Journal (2003) states that CD is included as authentic media or conventional media that is too stiff and manual. The material of CD is unreal and only related to the book not with common daily student's life. Moreover, the topic is only selected by the teacher. Those facts show that conventional media is no longer suitable for common students. To add, Roy & Roy (2007) conclude that conventional media is not able to offer additional content for those who are advance in English. Moreover, students are not able to share the material each other. This is in contrast to podcasts in which content or material can be shared with other students.

*Significant difference between the student's listening skill taught using British Council Podcast Apps and those who taught using conventional media.*

To see the significant effect of British Council Podcast Apps in experimental class and audio recorder in control class, N-Gain measurement was first used.

**Tabel 4. Enhancement Description of Control Class and Experimental Class**

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
N-Gain Control	35	-2.00	1.00	.2068	.60496
N-Gain Experimental	36	.69	1.00	.8327	.08888
Valid N (listwise)	36				

According to N-Gain measurement, the control class has the enhancement of mean score in the amount of 0,207 with the standard deviation of 0,605, besides the enhancement of mean score in experimental class with the amount of 0,833 with the standard deviation of 0,089. It shows that the students who taught using British Council Podcast Apps has higher mean score than those using audio recording.

After the measurement of N-Gain, the significant difference between pre-test and post-test of both control class and experimental class were tested using *Mann Whitney*.

**Tabel 5. Descriptive Statistics for Significant Difference**

Hypothesis	Measurement	Mean	SD	Value (Z-test)	Significant Value	Result
There is significant difference between conventional media in control class and British Council Podcast Apps in experimental class	Mann Whitney	$\bar{X}$ control = 0,207; $\bar{X}$ experiment = 0,833	Sd control = 0,605; Sd experiment = 0,089	-6,026	0,000	Hypothesis accepted

Based on N-Gain, using Mann Whitney on SPSS shows that Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) score is 0,000 besides based on criteria, 5% significant score shows that the score is less than 5% ( $0,000 < 0,05$ ). Thus,  $H_0$  declined and  $H_1$  accepted so it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between both classes.

The results of this study show that using British Council Podcast Apps is more effective to enhance the student's English listening skills than using conventional media (audio recording). British Council Podcast Apps has used higher technology than audio recording. It is suitable with the characteristic of



current students who enjoy the use of British Council Podcast Apps and could not be separated from mobile apps. Supporting the result, Fatimah & Santiana (2017) state that media technology is a vital point to face and handle the students in this era or we can be called the millennial generation. It is undeniable that the attitude of students in this era is quite different from the previous one. The millennial generation prefers to use technology in everything including their learning process. Thus, that is why the millennial generation interest in the technology of mobile phones because it covers everything.

British Council Podcast Apps has become a common learning media that is suitable to students in this era. The technology of British Council Podcast Apps attracts students to learn English. To add, Sulaiman et al. (2017), learning media should be up-to-date and related to common daily life. Conventional media (audio files or books) are considered as less up-to-date learning media and no longer related to common daily life. This is the opposite of what is needed by common students who prefer more accessible and up-to-date media. As was said by Willett (2007) that learners are recognizing the potential digital learning media. It motivates students to know the main significance of social and cultural aspects in learning.

#### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After getting the result of quantitative analysis of both control and experimental classes, we can conclude that British Council Podcast Application gives more contribution to the students' English Listening skills rather than the conventional media audio recorder. The use of British Council Podcast Apps has motivated and encouraged the students in improving their listening skills. British Council Podcast Apps plays the role very well in presenting technology advancement in the English listening section. The use of technology has been confirmed to be an inseparable part of students today. It is based on the fact that the students are digital natives who always keep an interest in technology.

This study implies that the need for technology advancement in the English listening section is crucial to be considered by the English teachers in senior high school to support their English teaching and learning. Further research is needed to investigate more on how the students respond to the use of British Council Podcast Apps. By using qualitative data such as interviews and open-ended questionnaires, rich data on the effectiveness of British Council Podcast Apps can be gained.

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