



**Thesis: A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF PODCAST ON LEARNER'S
LISTENING PROFICIENCY**



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Declaration

I certify that all the content in this thesis paper is my original work to the best of my knowledge and hard-work. Any external source used for reference in the paper has been cited and acknowledged. I, hereby, declare that the present paper has not been submitted to any other institution previously.

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Abstract

Grasping the skills of speaking and listening are an essential part of English learning. Through the years, new learning methods have been introduced to the learning world. Amid all the tools and based on personal experience, learning English through podcast seems to be an option that might prove to be effective. The present paper is designed as an experiment to seek insights into how listening to English podcast helps learners at the Neili High School, Taoyuan, Taiwan enhance their listening proficiency. The research involved the cooperation of 52 first-year, non-English majors at the aforementioned school. Students received pre-test (given at the initial stage), and a post-test (at the end of the course) as part of the study. They were divided into two groups, one being the controlled group that received regular training from class, while the experimental group received podcast lessons including conversational dialogues, podcast dialogue analysis, PDF extra notes, and review lessons. The podcast dialogue analysis was the main part of a podcast lesson. Every audio helps learners to listen and comprehend the content of the dialogue in depth with abundant examples of vocabulary and more listening input. After the experimental period of six consecutive weeks, all learners from the two groups sat for a post-test to assess the effectiveness of podcast learning. Results from the experiment suggested that learners who were exposed to podcast lessons better performed at English listening skills.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Motivation

Many dynamic approaches have emerged due to computer technology in facilitating language learning skills. Podcast is one the newly appeared tool being exploited by teachers to deliver educational content and to encourage learning outside the classroom. Research on podcasting pedagogy suggests that podcast learning greatly helps learners develop various skills of English language.

Podcast is a combination of the terms pod (i.e., from the Apple iPod) and broadcast (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2007). Podcasts are series of digital audio and video recordings uploaded on the web with the aid of Rapid Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds (Lafferty & Walch, 2006). RSS feeds allow listeners to download their favourite podcasts using podcatcher software like iTunes. Listeners do not need to visit every website frequently for new podcast episodes; they can now find a huge collection of podcasts on iTunes store. Many types of podcasts are found on the Internet such as television podcasts, radio podcasts, classroom podcasts, and individual or group podcasts.

As a former learner of English, the researcher also tried out many methods for learning this particular language, like listening to VOA American news, "English Pictionary", or English videos on YouTube. However, none of them really worked out well until the application of a Podcast series called "EnglishPod" particularly devoted to teaching English. Magically, the new learning method inspired learning and each day of learning was a new experience. After roughly 3 months of continuous listening to EnglishPod, I felt more confident in communicating for my vocabulary and listening had improved considerably. Having Podcast makes me feel that learning a language is so much easier than from a textbook. Therefore, I wanted to prove that it is really effective. I started to subscribe for a ChinesePod site and after half a year I am speaking fluent Chinese. Still not convinced, I tried subscribing to the JapanesePod101 site, and within the same six-month period of time, I am speaking fluent Japanese. To this point, I am persuaded that Podcast is really an innovative language learning tool that might be able to help thousands, if not millions of learners in my country specifically.

1.2. Objectives and research questions

1.2.1. Objectives

As globalization has started to develop in recent decades, the demand for learning English has grown faster than ever before. However, though schools and students realize the importance of developing English proficiency, numerous are still struggling to find appropriate ways to master this language. Motivated from this constraint, I decided to conduct this study aiming to evaluate how English podcast helps learners, particularly first-year non-English major students at Neili High School enhance their English listening proficiency. Further, the study also wishes to investigate how English podcast motivate learners in studying and overcoming the fear of communication through listening and exposure to native-like situations. It is highly likely that using English learning podcast lessons help students excel at their English listening proficiency.

1.2.2. Research questions

Based on what I found from the review of literature and the objectives of the study, I seek answers to the two following questions.

1. How podcast lessons help learners at Neili High School enhance their English listening skills?
2. What are learners' perception of podcast usage in English learning?

1.3. Organization of the paper

Chapter one of the paper will introduce the researcher's motivation for conducting this research, as well as the objective and research questions of the paper.

Chapter two will discuss the ongoing trend occurring within the scope of this study and previous studies that were done in regard to podcast learning.

Chapter three will provide the method which the study is designed to follow, including participants, duration, instrument, and the procedure.