CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Listening plays a crucial role in the learning process, which is integrated with the four competencies of studying English: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to Rost (2011), in his seminal work "Teaching and Researching Listening," listening is not merely a passive skill but an active and constructive process in which learners continuously interpret auditory input by integrating linguistic knowledge and real-world experience. This dynamic process involves the simultaneous bottom-up processing of sounds and words, as well as the top-down application of knowledge based on context, background, and real-world experience to build a meaningful understanding.

Listening skills are essential for comprehension and interaction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Listening skills enable learners not only to understand spoken messages but also to participate actively in various communication situations, both formal and informal. Rost (2011) highlights that practical listening skills support the development of speaking competencies, as good listening helps improve vocabulary mastery, understanding of language structure, and proper intonation. Additionally, this skill plays a crucial role in supporting reading and writing abilities, as the listening process expands linguistic awareness and enhances understanding of

various language styles and structures.

Therefore, the development of meaningful and systematic listening skills must be an integral part of the EFL curriculum to build a solid foundation for overall language competence. Listening skills consist of three essential components that work together. First, at the phonological level, learners must develop sharp sound discrimination skills to recognize English phonemes, stress patterns, and intonation. Second, cognitive processing skills enable learners to extract key information, draw conclusions, and connect ideas in spoken discourse. Third, strategic competence allows listeners to monitor their understanding and use appropriate techniques when encountering difficulties. The significance of listening skills in language development has been widely documented. Research by Jaiyote (2014) from the British Council revealed a positive correlation between listening proficiency and speaking performance among EFL learners. Furthermore, studies on the use of British Council's learning platforms, including podcast apps, have shown that consistent listening practice effectively improves students' listening comprehension and speaking skills, as evidenced by pre-test and post-test results (Ningtias, 2021).

However, despite its importance, listening remains one of the most problematic skills for EFL students in Indonesia, including those in the English Education Department. Many students have difficulty understanding spoken English due to several common problems: the fast speaking speed of native speakers, unfamiliar accents, limited vocabulary, and difficulty grasping the

main ideas of a conversation in real time. These challenges often make students feel less confident when participating in listening activities, such as class discussions or exams. In the context of this study, preliminary observations at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung showed that second-semester students still faced significant difficulties in understanding the listening materials provided in class. Some of them admitted that they could not fully understand the recordings without transcripts, while others reported losing concentration when the speaker used a different accent. These problems indicate that conventional classroom practices alone are insufficient to support students in developing effective listening skills. Therefore, alternative media such as podcasts are needed to provide more authentic, flexible, and motivational input.

The researcher analyzed some general issues among students: they were starting to read fewer books at the library and preferred instant reading, such as reading e-books and websites on gadgets. The problem is related to the rapid technological development of globalization, which enables individuals to access and obtain information swiftly and globally. That is why students prefer and make it a habit to receive things quickly and easily. In response to these issues, some researchers discovered solutions that fulfil the needs of students to improve their listening skills on the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) website, also known as BBC Learning English. This website can be accessed quickly, anywhere, and at any time by various groups, particularly students seeking ways to improve their English, depending on their needs. The platform

BBC Learning English Podcast makes it possible to practice listening and speaking skills outside the classroom.

This research is inspired by the BBC Learning English Podcast, which aims to improve students' listening skills. After reviewing the research by Khashan and AbuSeileek (2023), Azzahra and Fakhrurriana (2024), and Davydenko (2021), it is evident that using the BBC Learning English Podcast as a learning medium can enhance students' listening comprehension through exposure to diverse accents and real communication situations. However, each of these studies employed different approaches to evaluate the effectiveness of podcasts. Therefore, further investigation is needed to understand how EFL students utilize the BBC Learning English Podcast and perceive its effectiveness for their English language learning.

Considering the aforementioned explanation and theories, listening is essential among the four skills offered in EFL lessons. Thus, the BBC Learning English Podcast is one of the teaching strategies that can help students improve their oral English comprehension skills. This research examined students' perceptions of using the BBC Learning English Podcast as a medium for learning English listening skills, with a focus on exploring their experiences, perceived benefits, challenges, and strategies on the effectiveness of these podcasts in aiding their spoken language comprehension, accent recognition, and improvement of listening strategies within the context of English language learning.

B. Research Questions

1. What strategies are used by the students in learning English using BBC Learning English Podcasts to improve their listening skills?

2. What challenges do the students face in learning listening through BBC Learning English Podcasts?

3. What are the students' experiences of learning English using the BBC Learning English Podcast to improve their listening skills?

C. Research Purposes

1. To know the strategies used by the students in learning English using BBC Learning English Podcasts to improve their listening skills.

2. To identify the challenges faced by students in learning listening through BBC Learning English Podcasts.

3. To explore the students' experiences of learning English using the BBC Learning English Podcast to improve their listening skills?

D. Research Significance

The study is expected to help researchers, teachers, and students anticipate the real-world benefits of this research.

1. Teachers

English lecturers who are seeking innovative methods in teaching listening comprehension can benefit from this study. The findings reveal how students perceive the use of podcasts, especially the BBC Learning English Podcast. This research examined students' perceptions as a

supplementary medium to expose them to authentic input, natural speech, and different English accents. Moreover, teachers can utilize insights from students' reported perceptions, strategies, and challenges as a roadmap to design more effective and student-centered listening activities. Ultimately, the study can support lecturers in creating classroom practices that align with learners' needs and perceptions, which may lead to better listening proficiency and communicative competence.

2. Students

Students can develop their listening skills by applying the findings of this study, particularly those related to effective strategies for understanding authentic English input, recognizing different accents, expanding vocabulary, and improving listening speed. Moreover, the study demonstrates how learners perceive and utilize podcasts as a medium to manage authentic input and gradually build confidence in comprehending spoken language. In addition, by considering their peers' strategies and experiences, students can develop more autonomous and flexible listening practices, such as replaying episodes, adjusting playback speed, or focusing on overall meaning rather than individual words. Consequently, these practices not only strengthen their comprehension but also enhance their motivation, engagement, and readiness to participate in both academic listening tasks and real-life communication in English.

3. Other researchers

   This study provides valuable data for researchers interested in further investigating the use of podcasts in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in listening comprehension and digital-based learning strategies. It highlights students' perceptions, strategies, and challenges in using the BBC Learning English Podcast as a learning medium, which can serve as a foundation for further research. Other researchers may replicate this study in different educational contexts, such as at the high school level or with learners of varying proficiency levels, to compare results across groups. Moreover, future studies can expand this line of inquiry by exploring the integration of podcasts into classroom teaching, developing podcast-based instructional models, or conducting comparative research between podcasts and other digital media to improve listening skills. In addition, the study opens pathways for examining the role of digital learning tools in fostering learner autonomy and self-regulated listening development, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of technology-enhanced language learning.

E. Research Scope

   This research explores students' perceptions and experiences with BBC Learning English Podcasts in developing their listening abilities. The study focuses on understanding students' perceptions of how these podcasts

contribute to their listening comprehension. Participants were second-semester students in the English Language Department who had attended a listening course. Data were collected through qualitative methods, including questionnaires and interviews. Interviews were conducted with selected students to gain a deeper understanding of their perception. Additionally, students completed a questionnaire to share their experiences and engagement with podcast-based learning.

F. Conceptual Framework

BBC Learning English Podcast

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Listening Ability Process Using Rost's (2011)

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Student Learning Process

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Listening Ability Development

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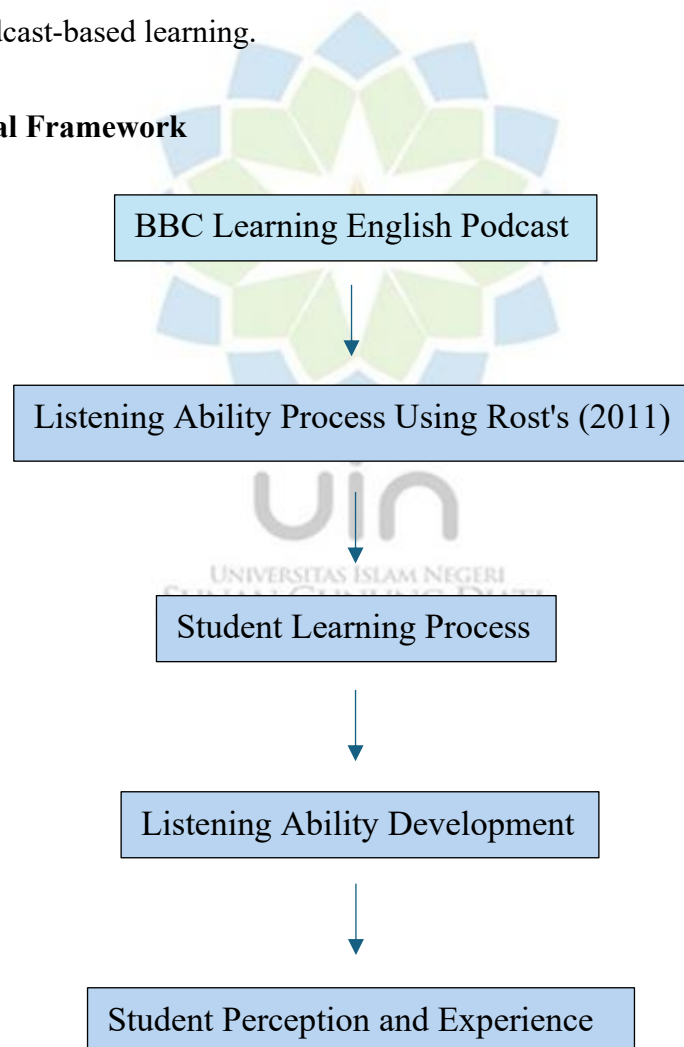Student Perception and Experience

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

Listening is an essential skill in learning a second language. This skill is crucial for comprehension, communication, and overall language proficiency. According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012), listening is an active cognitive process that involves perception, decoding, and utilization of auditory input. During this process, students must interpret spoken language using linguistic knowledge, background information, and contextual cues to create meaning.

This study draws on Rost's (2011) theory of listening as its primary theoretical foundation. According to Rost (2011), listening is an active and constructive process that integrates two main dimensions: the bottom-up process, in which listeners decode sounds, phonemes, words, and grammatical structures; and the top-down method, in which they use prior knowledge, context, and expectations to interpret the meaning of the text.

These skills are critical components in the learning process for mastering pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical structures. As noted by Brown (2007), mastery of phonetics, syntax, and discourse structures is crucial for effective listening comprehension. Nation and Newton (2009) add that improving listening skills enables students to process spoken language fluently and participate in effective communication. However, many learners still face challenges when exposed to authentic spoken English, including difficulty following natural speech, processing unfamiliar accents, keeping up with fast-paced conversations, and responding appropriately in communication situations if their listening skills are not well-developed. With advances in digital

technology, more learners can now access authentic content in English through online platforms.

BBC Learning English podcasts offer structured listening content to teach students various English accents, natural speech patterns, and real-world situations. According to Field (2019), these features aid students in improving their auditory discrimination, comprehension, and overall listening ability. Podcasts enable students to engage in flexible and independent learning by allowing them to replay content, adjust their listening strategies, and incorporate listening exercises into their daily routines. They are easily accessible anywhere.

Davydenko (2021) found that BBC Learning English podcasts significantly contribute to students' listening skills by offering interactive and engaging learning experiences. Similarly, Azzahra and Fakhrurriana (2024) reported that regularly listening to BBC Learning English podcasts improves comprehension and motivation among English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. These findings align with those of Khashan and AbuSeileek (2023), who demonstrated that structured podcast-based learning offers insights into listening proficiency. However, while previous studies confirm the effectiveness of podcasts in improving listening skills, there is a gap in research focusing on students' perceptions of using the BBC Learning English podcast as a learning tool.

This study aims to investigate how students interact with BBC Learning

English podcasts and their perceptions of the effectiveness of these podcasts in developing listening skills. By analyzing students' experiences, learning strategies, and challenges in using podcasts, this study aims to provide insights into the role of digital learning tools in English as a foreign language (EFL) education and their potential impact on students' listening proficiency.

G. Previous Studies

Previous research has highlighted the benefits of podcast-based learning, particularly in improving listening comprehension skills. Other authors have conducted similar studies and found equally interesting results. The authors of this publication have conducted research relevant to previous studies. Among the many previous studies on this topic are:

First, there is a study by Khasan and Seileek (2023) on the effect of using the BBC Learning English app on the listening and speaking skills of 10th-grade students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as well as their attitudes toward using the app. This study used a quantitative approach. The study employed a quasi-experimental design, administering questionnaires to the experimental group and administering pre- and post-tests. The sample consisted of 46 tenth-grade students divided into two groups: one to participate in the experiment and the other as a control group, each comprising 23 students. Students were given listening and speaking tests to determine their abilities

during the pre-test session before the treatment. The next step was to provide them with the BBC Learning English program, which would help them with listening and speaking. The results showed that the pre-test scores of both classes were the same.

Moreover, the majority of students in the experimental group showed a positive attitude toward using the application, with responses of "strongly agree" and "agree." Research conducted by Al-Mashari Secondary School for Boys, under the Directorate of Education of the Northern Valley, on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class 10, showed that BBC Learning English effectively improved students' listening and speaking skills. Despite some challenges, such as limited access to technology and the internet in certain areas, students' limited ability to use technology effectively, and the possibility of low motivation or discipline among students in self-directed learning with digital media, students can still achieve significant learning outcomes. The results indicated a significant improvement in scores between the two groups after the treatment.

Additionally, Azzahra and Fakhrurriana (2024) investigated the use of BBC Learning English podcasts in helping students develop their listening skills. This study employed a qualitative approach using a survey and semi-structured interview methods. The sample consisted of ten 10th-grade students selected through purposive sampling, and data were collected via questionnaires and interviews to understand their experiences and perceptions.

The results showed that the majority of students stated that regularly listening to BBC Learning English could help them understand various accents and improve their listening skills. Students also felt that this medium motivated them to learn English and was easily accessible through YouTube and offline platforms. Despite some challenges, such as difficulty understanding certain accents, the use of this medium was deemed effective and could serve as an alternative in EFL listening instruction.

Finally, Davydenko (2021) investigated the effectiveness of using BBC Learning English podcasts in improving university students' listening skills. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods, including questionnaires, pre-tests, post-tests, and observations. The sample consisted of a group of first-year students over a period of six weeks. The research results showed that activities designed using BBC Learning English podcasts, such as pre-listening, during-listening, and post-listening activities, and a balanced top-down and bottom-up processing strategy improved students' motivation and listening skills. Thus, podcasts with engaging and interest-aligned activities have proven effective in improving students' listening skills. However, there are several challenges, including technical issues, variations in motivation and learning styles, as well as time management and activity organization, that must be addressed to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

Although previous studies have shown that BBC Learning English

Podcasts are effective in improving students' listening skills, most of them focus on learning outcomes or general patterns of podcast use. Therefore, this research aims to explore students' perceptions of using BBC Learning English Podcasts, particularly their learning experiences, listening strategies, and perceived challenges.

Furthermore, unlike previous studies that mainly employed quantitative, mixed-methods, or quasi-experimental designs, this study uses a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of students' perspectives. Data are collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, allowing the researcher to explore students' experiences in detail rather than focusing on statistical measurement of listening achievement.

In addition, this study applies a qualitative case study design to examine how a specific group of students experiences and utilizes BBC Learning English Podcasts in their listening learning process. By focusing on learners' strategies and challenges, this research provides a learner-centered perspective and addresses a gap in previous studies on podcast-based listening in EFL contexts.