

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the research background, outlining the context and rationale for the study. It also outlines the research questions, research purposes, research significance, research scope, conceptual framework, and previous studies relevant to this research.

A. Background of the Study

Listening is a fundamental skill in the language learning process because it enables learners to process and comprehend spoken language input. This skill plays a crucial role in second-language acquisition, as students rely on listening to understand spoken language (Vandergrift, 1999). Through listening activities, learners are exposed to pronunciation, vocabulary, and language structures that arise in real-life interactions. Furthermore, listening is central to language instruction because it provides crucial input for improving other language skills (Vandergrift, 2007). Thus, listening is a vital element in English language learning, particularly for EFL students who have limited opportunities to interact with English outside the classroom setting. Recent studies continue to highlight listening as a fundamental language skill, as it provides the primary source of linguistic input that supports language acquisition and the development of communication skills among EFL learners (Kim & Kim, 2024).

Because of its importance, listening skills are often considered particularly demanding for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), given the complex cognitive processes they require. The listening process is complex because learners must quickly process spoken language while simultaneously recognizing sounds, vocabulary, pronunciation, and meaning (Vandergrift, 2004). Many learners face challenges in listening because spoken language is typically delivered at a fast pace and contains expressions and intonation patterns that they are not yet familiar with (Renandya & Farrell, 2011). Recent evidence indicates that learners frequently experience difficulties with listening comprehension due to rapid speech, unfamiliar

vocabulary, and challenges processing spoken input in real time, as these factors remain among the most common barriers faced by EFL learners during listening activities (Salsabila et al., 2025). These factors highlight the importance of appropriate listening materials to help learners become more accustomed to authentic spoken English.

To address this issue, authentic teaching materials are often used in language learning because they expose students to the language used in everyday communication situations. Authentic materials are resources created for routine purposes, not merely materials designed specifically for language teaching (Gilmore, 2007). In listening activities, authentic materials can help learners become familiar with the pronunciation, vocabulary, and natural expressions used by both native and non-native speakers in daily interactions. Furthermore, authentic listening materials can increase student engagement and motivation by exposing learners to meaningful, realistic language input, thereby supporting the development of listening comprehension among EFL learners (Abebe et al., 2023). Thus, authentic materials are considered highly useful for supporting the development of listening comprehension for EFL learners

One type of authentic material frequently used in listening activities is the podcast. A podcast is digital audio content distributed via the internet and accessible at any time through various platforms. Due to its flexibility, the podcast enables learners to access and replay audio materials both inside and outside the classroom, making it increasingly popular in language learning (Stanley, 2006). Podcasts also provide access to a wide range of listening topics and authentic spoken language. Exposure to podcasts can boost students' listening comprehension skills and familiarize them with spoken English used in everyday communication (Hasan & Hoon, 2013; Sulistina et al., 2025). Furthermore, podcasts are available on various digital platforms, each offering different listening experiences depending on their content, features, and accessibility. Through podcasts, students can hear a variety of speech styles, accents, and everyday expressions, which further support the development of their listening skills in EFL learning.

In the process of learning English listening, one approach that emphasizes meaningful and enjoyable listening experiences is known as extensive listening. Extensive listening encourages learners to absorb large amounts of comprehensible and meaningful input in a relaxed manner (Renandya & Farrell, 2011). The primary focus of this approach lies in grasping general meaning and developing listening fluency, rather than on detailed language analysis. Repeated exposure to audio materials through extensive listening can enhance comprehension skills and cultivate the habit of listening to spoken English (Chang & Millett, 2018). Recently, podcasts have been reported as an effective resource for extensive listening because they support student autonomy and provide continuous exposure to comprehensible spoken English outside the classroom (Rozak & Andini, 2025). Because extensive listening encourages students to listen independently and continuously, authentic materials such as podcasts are considered highly suitable for supporting this type of listening activity.

In extensive listening practice, podcasts are often used as authentic listening materials because they provide flexible access to spoken English on a variety of topics and from a diverse range of speakers. Podcasts can be accessed repeatedly through various digital platforms, allowing students to listen both inside and outside the classroom. The flexibility of podcasts also supports independent listening practice, as students can choose listening materials that align with their interests and learning needs (Istanto, 2011). Although podcasts offer accessibility and flexibility, students may still face challenges with different accents, unfamiliar vocabulary, and varying speaking rates during listening activities (Isaadah & Rizal, 2024). Additionally, students may have different listening experiences depending on the platform they use and on the podcast's topic, speaking style, and audio quality.

This initial observation stems from the researcher's personal experience as a student who took the Extensive Listening course for one semester in the fourth semester of college, in which podcasts were routinely used as listening materials. Throughout that semester, some classmates responded positively to the podcast content, describing it as engaging and easy to understand, while others expressed difficulty following the

material, specifically citing fast speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, and foreign accents as sources of confusion during listening sessions. These informal exchanges with classmates, along with the researcher's own observations during class activities, indicated that students had varied experiences with podcasts as authentic materials, which motivated a more in-depth investigation into how these diverse perspectives were formed.

Students' responses to podcast content may vary depending on their listening experience and the platform used during the activity. Students' attitudes toward learning materials influence their engagement and participation in the language-learning process (Ahmadi, 2016). Previous research indicates a positive perception of podcasts, as students view them as flexible and authentic learning resources that support listening practice and the development of oral comprehension (Phùng Tuyết Nhi, 2024). However, students do not always respond uniformly to all podcast platforms, as each platform offers different features, content types, and listening experiences. Therefore, it is important to investigate students' perspectives on podcasts as authentic materials in extensive listening courses, including the challenges they face when engaging with podcasts on different platforms. This study is expected to provide insights for teachers and students regarding the use of podcasts in listening instruction, particularly in the context of extensive listening.

Various studies have examined the use of podcasts and authentic materials in teaching listening skills. Hoang (2025) investigated the role of podcasts as authentic materials for improving the listening skills of EFL learners and found that they positively contributed to their listening comprehension and motivation to learn. Another study by Gufron and Azmin (2022) examined the use of authentic materials in English instruction and found that such materials increased students' engagement and interest in learning activities. These findings confirm that authentic materials and podcasts play a vital role in teaching listening skills to learners of English as a foreign language (EFL).

Although previous studies have examined podcasts and authentic materials in listening instruction, gaps remain. Most previous research has focused on the effectiveness of podcasts in improving students' listening skills and motivation to learn. Furthermore, there has been little research on students' perspectives regarding the use of podcasts as authentic materials in extensive listening courses. Previous research has also addressed only a few of the listening barriers students face when participating in podcast-based listening activities. Therefore, this study explores EFL students' views on podcasts as authentic materials for extensive listening, as well as the challenges they encounter across different platforms during podcast listening activities.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background of the study and the issues discussed above, this research is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do EFL students perceive podcasts as authentic materials for extensive listening?
2. What aspects of podcasts do EFL students find challenging when engaging with their most- and least-preferred platforms?

C. Research Purposes

Considering the research question, the research objectives are as follows:

1. **To explore how EFL students perceive podcasts as authentic materials for extensive listening.**
2. **To identify aspects of podcasts that EFL students find challenging when engaging with their most- and least-preferred platforms.**

D. Research Significance

This study makes theoretical and practical contributions to English language learning, particularly to listening instruction in EFL classrooms.

Theoretically, this study enriches discussions on the use of authentic materials in extensive listening by providing a deeper understanding of EFL students' perspectives on podcasts as authentic materials, as well as the challenges they encounter across different digital platforms. The study also highlights how various characteristics of podcasts, such as speaking style, content delivery, and platform features, shape students' listening experiences. In this way, the study contributes to existing research on authentic listening materials and extensive listening practices in English language education.

Practically, this study offers actionable input for lecturers and students engaged in podcast-based extensive listening. For lecturers, the findings point to specific areas that warrant instructional attention, particularly the gap between students' positive beliefs about podcasts and their actual enjoyment and independent listening habits, as well as the recurring difficulty with idiomatic expressions, unfamiliar topics, and sustaining attention over long episodes. These findings support the integration of explicit listening-strategy training and level-appropriate, good-quality audio alongside authentic podcast materials, rather than assigning podcasts without guidance. For students, the findings offer a concrete basis for building a more effective independent listening habit: selecting content by topic familiarity before tackling unfamiliar subjects, using replay and transcript strategies in stages (attempting comprehension before turning to translation), and recognizing that platform preference alone does not reduce the linguistic demands of authentic speech.

E. Research Scope

This study focuses on fourth-semester students in the English Education Department who are enrolled in the Extensive Listening course. This study examines EFL students' perspectives on use of podcasts as authentic listening materials, including the aspects they find challenging when engaging with podcast-based listening activities on their most- and least-preferred platforms. In this context, the Extensive Listening course draws on a range of authentic materials, including podcasts. It encourages students to engage in self-directed

extensive listening on digital platforms of their choosing, in line with the course's aim of developing autonomous, technology-supported listening. Podcasts are therefore accessed through the platforms students use and prefer, such as Spotify, YouTube, and other digital podcast platforms, rather than through a fixed set of platforms assigned uniformly to all students. Because extensive listening emphasizes learner autonomy, this study focuses on students' most- and least-preferred platforms to explore their perceptions and listening challenges. This study does not examine the quantitative effectiveness of podcasts in improving students' listening skills or compare students' learning outcomes. Instead, the study focuses on students' experiences, perceptions, and listening difficulties when engaging with podcast materials in extensive listening contexts.

F. Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework presents theoretical concepts related to listening, authentic materials, podcasts, extensive listening, and students' perspectives. These interconnected concepts explain how podcasts are used as authentic materials in extensive listening activities, and how learners' access to them varies across different digital platforms. Additionally, the framework illustrates the relationship between the listening difficulties experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students and the use of podcasts as authentic listening materials in extensive listening contexts. Thus, the framework provides a theoretical basis for examining students' perspectives on and challenges with podcast-based listening activities.

Listening is a fundamental skill in the language-learning process because it enables learners to receive and interpret spoken language. Rost (2011) states that listening involves receiving auditory messages, constructing meaning from what is heard, and responding appropriately to the information received. In line with this, Vandergrift (2007) describes listening as an active activity in which learners utilize linguistic knowledge, background knowledge, and contextual understanding to interpret spoken language. In the context of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), listening plays a crucial role because it provides language input that strengthens communication

skills and the development of other language competencies. Through listening activities, students are exposed to pronunciation, vocabulary, and expressions used in real-life communication situations. Therefore, listening is viewed as a vital component of English language learning.

Although important, listening skills are often viewed as among the most challenging for students of English as a foreign language (EFL). According to Vandergrift (2004), the listening process is complex because students must simultaneously process spoken language in real time and recognize its sounds, vocabulary, pronunciation, and meaning. Renandya and Farrell (2011) also note that students often face obstacles in listening due to fast speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, diverse accents, and different pronunciation patterns. Graham (2006) further states that students may fail to identify words they already know when those words appear in spoken form, due to the differences between spoken and written language. These obstacles can interfere with students' comprehension during listening activities and underscore the need for appropriate listening materials in the teaching of English as a foreign language.

To address challenges in listening, many teachers use authentic materials in language learning, particularly when teaching listening skills. Gilmore (2007) states that authentic materials are resources created for real-life communication purposes, not specifically designed for language instruction. Widdowson (1978) also emphasizes that authenticity relates to the natural use of language to convey meaning in everyday situations. In listening exercises, authentic materials introduce students to pronunciation, vocabulary, expressions, and natural communication styles commonly encountered in real-life communication contexts. With authentic materials, students are expected to become more familiar with the spoken English used in daily interactions. Therefore, authentic materials are considered beneficial for supporting the development of EFL students' listening skills.

Among the various authentic materials used to teach listening skills, podcasts are increasingly used in language learning. Stanley (2006) defines a podcast as digital

audio content distributed via the internet that can be accessed flexibly through various digital platforms. McClung and Johnson (2010) add that podcasts offer the convenience of on-demand listening, allowing students to play the audio material anytime and anywhere. As an authentic source, podcasts introduce students to natural spoken English through a variety of accents, speaking styles, pronunciation patterns, and topics that arise in real-life communication situations. Hasan and Hoon (2013) also note that podcasts can improve students' listening comprehension and increase their motivation during listening activities. Therefore, podcasts are considered appropriate authentic materials for teaching listening skills in the context of EFL learning.

Because podcasts provide flexible access to authentic spoken language, they are often chosen for extensive listening activities. Renandya and Farrell (2011) define extensive listening as an approach that encourages learners to listen to a large amount of meaningful and comprehensible spoken input in a relaxed manner. Similarly, Chang and Millett (2018) state that extensive listening helps learners improve their fluency and listening comprehension through repeated exposure to spoken language. In this context, learners are guided to focus more on general comprehension rather than detailed linguistic analysis. Therefore, podcasts are considered suitable for extensive listening because they offer continuous exposure to natural spoken English through a variety of topics and communication styles.

When engaging in extensive listening activities through podcasts, learners may exhibit a variety of responses and experiences. Wenden (1991) states that learners' perspectives influence how they respond to learning materials and activities. Borg (2001) adds that students' perspectives are crucial because they reflect their beliefs, experiences, and interpretations of classroom practices. In the context of extensive listening, students' views on podcasts can be influenced by several factors, including speaking speed, accent, vocabulary familiarity, audio clarity, topic, and ease of access to the podcast platform. Some students may view podcasts as an engaging and flexible authentic resource, while others may have difficulty listening during such activities. Therefore, examining students' perspectives is essential to understanding how podcasts

from various digital platforms are perceived as authentic materials in the context of extensive listening.

Based on the theories outlined above, this study analyzes EFL students' perspectives on the use of podcasts as authentic materials in extensive listening activities. Listening skills are considered a crucial competency in language learning, yet many EFL learners still struggle to understand spoken English. To address this, authentic materials are typically used to expose students to the natural language used in real-life communication. Among various authentic materials, podcasts are often chosen for extensive listening activities because they offer easy, flexible access to meaningful spoken-language input across digital platforms. Given that students may have diverse listening experiences with podcasts, exploring their perceptions is important for assessing how they view podcasts as authentic materials in the context of extensive listening, as well as the challenges they encounter across their preferred platforms. Additionally, this study also investigates the challenges students face when engaging in listening activities with podcasts.

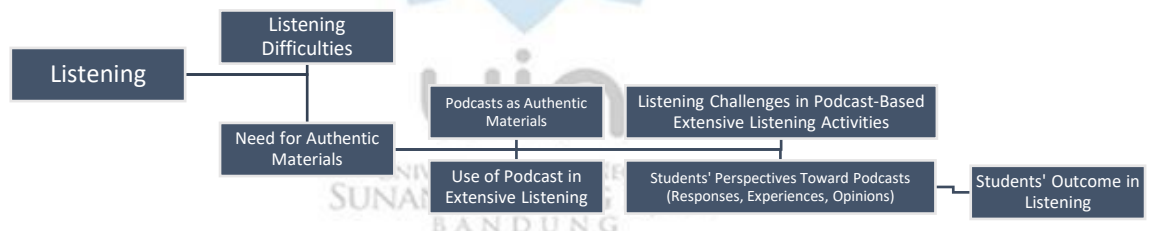


Figure 1. 1 Conceptual Framework

G. Previous Studies

Previous studies have examined the use of podcasts and authentic materials in teaching listening skills. These studies provide important insights into the use of podcasts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening activities, particularly regarding students' perceptions and listening experiences, as well as the role of authentic materials in improving listening comprehension. While previous studies have addressed the use of podcasts in listening instruction, there remains a lack of focus on students' perspectives on podcasts as authentic materials in the context of extensive

listening, as well as the listening difficulties they encounter across different platforms. Therefore, reviewing previous studies is essential for identifying similarities, differences, and research gaps relevant to this study.

First, Cao and Bui (2024) explored the extent to which students consider podcasts as authentic material for independent listening practice. The study employed a qualitative approach to explore students' responses to the use of podcasts and TED Talks in listening activities. The participants in the study were EFL students enrolled in extensive listening classes. The study used questionnaires and interviews to track usefulness, motivation, engagement, and flexibility associated with listening practice. The results of this study show that the majority of students consider podcasts a tool for supporting listening activities outside the classroom. The added value of this study is that it considers podcasts as listening material for students. Unfortunately, this study did not exclusively examine extensive listening courses, nor did it examine how the listening experience might differ when podcasts are accessed across various digital platforms. However, the study primarily focused on students' responses to the materials and did not explore in detail the listening challenges they encountered when engaging with podcast-based materials.

Furthermore, Gunawan et al. (2023) also examined in depth the use of podcasts and TED Talks in extensive English as a foreign language (EFL) listening classes in Indonesia. In this study, the researchers examined how students responded to podcasts and TED Talks in listening practice. The results showed that students responded positively, considering them as sources and tools to support extensive listening. This study also did not attempt to explore in depth the phenomenology of students' listening experiences or the challenges encountered when using podcasts. Nevertheless, the study did not specifically examine the use of podcasts in extensive listening courses or explore how different podcast platforms may influence students' listening experiences.

Lastly, Samudro et al. (2025) examined how students listen and assessed students' perceptions of podcasts as learning tools in the context of EFL in Indonesia. Through questionnaires and interviews, the researchers found that although students found podcasts helpful in listening practice, they still had difficulty understanding some of the content. Although this study addressed listening challenges, it did not specifically focus on

extensive listening courses or examine how different podcast platforms might affect the student experience. Therefore, this study explores EFL students' perspectives and listening challenges when using podcasts from different platforms in extensive listening courses.

Based on these studies, podcasts are often used as authentic materials in listening instruction and are generally perceived positively by students. However, students' perspectives and listening challenges in extensive listening courses, particularly when podcasts are accessed across different digital platforms, have not been adequately addressed. Therefore, this study explores EFL students' perspectives and challenges in using podcasts for extensive listening courses.

