

Podcast-based instruction and listening development in A2 English as a Foreign Language high school learners: A pre-experimental study

Instrucción basada en podcasts y desarrollo de la comprensión auditiva en aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel A2 en educación secundaria: Un estudio preexperimental

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Abstract

This study explored the use of podcast-based instruction to improve the listening comprehension skills of a group of high school EFL students. The study used one group pre-test post-test design with survey data. Twenty-three students from technical high schools at A2-level took part. The listening evaluation, adapted from Rahmi et al. (2025), measured prediction, gist understanding, and the retrieval of specific information and inferences. The self-evaluation survey was modified from Kavaliauskienė (2008) to evaluate students' views on involvement, motivation and listening development. The intervention incorporated short educational podcasts between 1 to 6 minutes in ELLLO platform for A2 learners, with pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening tasks. Results indicated an overall improvement in listening development following the instructional sequence. A major limitation of the study is the lack of a control group. Hence, results should be interpreted as an observed improvement of the instructional sequence rather than evidence of causality. The survey responses suggested generally positive sentiments concerning the use of podcasts in educational contexts. The results indicate that podcast-based activities can be a valuable adjunct to listening instruction if they are adequately scaffolded and adapted to the learners' level of competence. These findings contribute to the understanding of how structured podcast-based instruction can support both cognitive and affective dimensions of listening development in secondary EFL contexts.

Keywords: Communication Skills; Listening; Multimedia Instruction; Secondary Education; Learning Methods.

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Resumen

Este estudio exploró el uso de la instrucción basada en podcasts para mejorar la comprensión auditiva en estudiantes de secundaria de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). Se empleó un diseño pretest-postest de un solo grupo junto con datos de encuesta. Participaron veintitrés estudiantes de bachillerato técnico con nivel A2. La evaluación de la comprensión auditiva, adaptada de Rahmi et al. (2025), midió la predicción, la comprensión global y la identificación de información específica e inferencias. Asimismo, se utilizó una encuesta de autoevaluación, basada en Kavaliauskienė (2008), para analizar las percepciones de los estudiantes respecto a su participación, motivación y desarrollo de habilidades auditivas. La intervención incorporó podcasts educativos breves (1–6 minutos) de la plataforma ELLLO, acompañados de actividades de preescucha, escucha y postescucha. Los resultados mostraron una mejora general en el rendimiento auditivo tras la intervención. Una limitación importante del estudio es la ausencia de un grupo de control; por lo tanto, los resultados deben interpretarse como una mejora observada y no como evidencia de causalidad. Las respuestas de la encuesta reflejaron percepciones mayoritariamente positivas sobre el uso de podcasts en contextos educativos. En conjunto, los resultados sugieren que las actividades basadas en podcasts pueden ser un recurso complementario eficaz para la enseñanza de la comprensión auditiva, siempre que estén adecuadamente estructuradas. Estos hallazgos contribuyen a comprender cómo la instrucción basada en podcasts puede apoyar el desarrollo tanto cognitivo como afectivo en contextos EFL de educación secundaria.

Palabras clave: Técnicas de Comunicación; Escucha; Enseñanza Multimedia; Enseñanza Secundaria; Métodos de Aprendizaje.

Introduction

Listening development plays an essential role in second language learning since it enables learners to understand the spoken language and engage in real communication. Listening is one of the more difficult abilities of language for EFL learners (Gonulal, 2020) yet it is very crucial. This has been established in the secondary school environment as stated in previous research. Limited exposure to natural spoken English and the continuous use of scripted educational materials limit opportunities for listening practice (Chaves & De-La Peña, 2023).

Language learning in theory happens when learners are exposed to meaningful and intelligible input. Input is vital for language acquisition (Krashen, 1985). Learners' motivation, anxiety and other affective characteristics influence the way they can efficiently process the language. Successful students tend to be less anxious and more motivated.

Recent advancements in educational technology have created novel opportunities for language acquisition. According to Rahmi et al. (2025) and Bozavli (2024), podcasts are genuine audio recordings that allow flexible access to authentic language and recurrent exposure to oral input. For instance, podcasts as a teaching medium have been shown to increase listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition and student engagement (Abdulrahman et al., 2018; Saeedakhtar et al., 2021). These previous studies suggest the usefulness of podcasts leading to increase the use of them for educative purposes in the EFL. Additionally, the effectiveness of podcast-based training is highly dependent on the adoption of structured instructional methodologies and specified learning objectives (Chaves & De-La Peña, 2023; Bozavli, 2024). Nevertheless, there is a lack of synthesis on how podcasts influence listening subskills and students' motivation in secondary

education settings despite the growing amount of data. As Merrill Swain (1985), says, input is not enough, interaction and deep processing are also essential.

Although research on the use of podcasts for instruction is on the rise, little study has been done on the simultaneous development of listening subskills and learner perceptions at the A2-level in secondary EFL situations. Several prior research has treated listening comprehension as a generic capacity, whilst some others have looked at motivational or affective aspects independently. For this reason, there is still little evidence on the relationship of structured activities using podcasts with cognitive aspects of listening development and students' views of engagement and motivation in lower proficiency learners. This gap is especially pertinent to secondary education, where opportunities for actual listening practice are typically few.

Considering this aspect, this study investigated the changes in listening comprehension after a podcast-based instructional intervention with A2 level EFL high school students. The research also investigated students' opinions of using podcasts in relation to engagement and motivation. The study was guided by the following research questions: (1) What changes are observed in students' listening development scores after podcast-based instruction? (2) How do students perceive podcast-based instruction in terms of usefulness, engagement, and motivation?

Listening Comprehension in EFL Contexts

Listening comprehension is an important and complex skill in second language acquisition (SLA) as it involves decoding auditory signals, analyzing linguistic input and drawing meaning from previous knowledge (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). In the context of EFL, learners usually face problems due to the limited exposure to authentic spoken input and limited opportunities for authentic communicative interactions (Graham et al., 2010; Gonulal, 2020).

Theoretically, the enhancement of listening abilities can be explained by Stephen Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, which states that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input that is somewhat above their current language proficiency level ($i+1$). The Affective Filter Hypothesis states that emotional variables such as motivation, anxiety, and confidence affect language learning. Some students have minimal anxiety and high motivation, and they are more likely to be able to process information.

According to Merrill Swain (1985), output and opportunities for involvement are necessary for language development. This notion underlines the function of listening tasks in tasks that are designed to promote active participation and cognitive engagement.

Podcast-based instruction in EFL

Language learning technology should be good pedagogically and should meet the needs of the learners. According to Gonulal (2020) and Chaves and De-La Peña (2023), podcasts are con-

sidered as effective ways to deliver real input and to improve listening abilities in formal learning activities. Recent study in this regard indicates that the potential application of Podcast-based Instruction is based on the deployment of suitable scaffolding with explicit learning objectives (Bozavli, 2024).

Podcasts have been widely talked about as excellent tools for listening comprehension improvement because of its accessibility, authenticity and flexibility (Gonulal, 2020). They are a good source of exposure to authentic speech, to a variety of accents and situations of real communication. This helps learners to develop their listening skills in more realistic contexts. Empirical research stated by Abdulrahman et al. (2018) and Partiwi (2022), suggest that podcast-based instruction had demonstrated progress in listening comprehension with the implementation of structured podcast activities. Collectively, these data suggest that podcast-based instruction could provide useful opportunities for listening practice when activities are scaffolded by systematic pedagogical support. The experiments were performed in different educational environments, but most authors mentioned positive trends in listening comprehension, student involvement and exposure to authentic spoken language. However, the extent of improvement seems to depend not only on the use of podcasts per se, but also on the educational tactics used to support learners in the listening tasks.

Previous studies on listening subskills and learner engagement

Listening comprehension involves subskills such as prediction of content, identification of important ideas, comprehension of details and making inferences (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). These subskills are important for real speech comprehension and are often underdeveloped in a traditional classroom context.

Research demonstrates that training with podcasts helps to enhance these subskills. According to Rahmi et al. (2025), organized podcast activities greatly boosted prediction, gist knowledge, and inference of students. A significant listening habit also improves language acquisition and auditory comprehension (Saeedakhtar et al., 2021). Likewise, these cognitive benefits, podcasts may also enhance affective characteristics like motivation, confidence and engagement. Podcasts are also viewed as stimulating and encouraging learning materials by students as found by Asyifah and Indriani (2021), Harahap (2020), and Hasibuan and Male (2022). Increased motivation leads to better learning outcomes and is related to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis

On the above, Samudro et al. (2023) and Sotlikova and Haerazi (2023), state that activities based on podcasts promote student autonomy and improve positive attitudes toward language learning. However, there are still certain obstacles, especially with the speed of speaking, odd dialects and idioms which may hinder understanding (Bozavli, 2024).

These results fit with the wider empirical literature in secondary school showing a relationship between structured podcast activities and enhanced listening comprehension and student en-

gement. Podcasts have increased listening comprehension and motivated the students to be more interested in the learning activities (Puteri and Ni'mah, 2025; Putri et al., 2025). Similarly, Molina and Arteaga (2024), found measurable increase in learners' listening skills. These findings suggest the potential of podcasts as useful tools for the development of listening skills in secondary education contexts.

Similar results have been confirmed by recent studies performed in the context of secondary school. Saragih et al. (2022) and Sabrila and Apoko (2022), suggest that the use of podcasts can increase the listening comprehension of high school students. At the same time, Bozavli (2024) claims that podcasts as an instructional tool can lead to improved listening skills and a higher level of student engagement through systematic teaching methods. To conclude, the prior study tends to suggest that podcasts may have a role in the cognitive and affective dimensions of listening development in EFL contexts. Some research focused on the improvements of the listening subskills, while others stressed the increased student motivation, participation and engagement. The results show that podcast-based activities may be more effective when embedded in structured sequences of classroom activities that include authentic input and guided instructional support.

Methodology

Research Design

This study was conducted using a mixed-methods strategy that integrates quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative part of the study was designed as a one group pretest-post-test pre-experimental design. The listening performance of students was tested before and after the instructional intervention. This strategy was chosen because of practical limitations in the educational environment in which random assignment and control groups were not viable. This strategy could be used to identify changes over time, but the lack of a comparison group restricts the ability to ascribe these changes to the intervention alone. The findings should therefore be seen as suggestive of trends in learning development rather than causal correlations. In this study, the independent variable was podcast-based instruction and was operationalized via structured listening sessions with pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening exercises with brief educational podcasts. The dependent variable was listening to development, measured by students' performance in listening subskills such as identifying core concepts, understanding detailed details and making conclusions. Furthermore, student views of motivation and engagement were studied as complimentary qualitative outcomes using the self-evaluation survey.

Participants

Twenty-three A2-level technical high school students participated in the study. The group included 13 female and 10 male students enrolled in an EFL course, the subjects were chosen by convenience sampling, as they belonged to the researcher's educational context and were available

during the implementation period. This sampling decision is acknowledged as a methodological limitation because the results cannot be generalized to all EFL learners. This study is considered suitable due to its restricted exposure to genuine listening materials and their necessity to enhance listening comprehension abilities (Guest et al., 2006).

Instruments

Data was collected using two instruments adapted from previous research. A listening comprehension test, based on Rahmi et al. (2025), was administered as both a pre-test and post-test to assess students' performance in key listening subskills, including prediction, identification of main ideas, comprehension of specific details, and inference-making. The test consisted of structured items designed to measure both global and detailed understanding of spoken texts. Likewise, a self-evaluation questionnaire adapted from Kavaliauskienė (2008), was used to examine students' perceptions of podcast-based instruction. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items addressing motivation, engagement, and perceived improvement in listening abilities. Together, these instruments allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of both the cognitive and affective outcomes associated with the instructional intervention.

Procedure

The technique was set up as a continuous educational sequence. At the beginning of the study, students took the listening pre-test to measure their proficiency on the target subskills. The intervention through the podcast was carried out after this diagnostic step throughout nine weeks with two weekly sessions. The activities in each session were comparable activities, which took about 45 minutes, pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities.

The podcast materials were selected from ELLLO as this platform provides the free listening content which is suitable for A2 learners. The selected podcasts were more instructional than entertainment-based and were short audio recordings spanning around one to six minutes. Daily routines, weekend activities, favorite TV programs, future plans, telling the time, and other everyday situations which enable students to practice with different intonation styles and different speakers making this activity meaningful.

In the pre-listening phase students discussed the topic, anticipated vocabulary and activated their prior knowledge. They then were directed through comprehension exercises on the platform while listening, such as multiple-choice questions on gist, particular information and inference. Such activities provided rapid feedback for students to check their answers and to detect errors. After listening, the students checked their responses, discussed important ideas, clarified difficult words or idioms using the audio script, and briefly reflected on the listening exercise. The intervention thus integrated exposure to spoken English with assisted comprehension and classroom involvement. At the end of the intervention, students completed the post-test in conditions com-

parable to the pre-test. The self-evaluation survey was completed to measure listening results, as well as impressions of usefulness, engagement and motivation of the podcast.

Data Analysis

Students' responses from the self-evaluation survey were examined following procedures proposed by Strauss and Corbin (2008). At the beginning, responses were reviewed several times to identify recurring ideas. During open coding, comments related to motivation, engagement, and listening difficulties were identified. Afterwards, axial coding was used to establish relationships among categories. Finally, broader topics were generated to interpret students' perceptions regarding podcast use.

Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were evaluated using descriptive statistics such as mean scores, standard deviations, percentages and individual gains. A paired-samples t-test was also employed for comparing pre-test and post-test scores within the same group. The statistical comparison was taken with caution as indication of change over time, rather than causative proof, as no control group was included. Response summaries were generated by determining the percentage of agreement, neutrality and disagreement for each statement. Open comments and qualitative observations were coded using open coding and then classified into larger topics including involvement, perceived usefulness, motivation, and obstacles with listening. The categories were contrasted with the quantitative findings for a more thorough evaluation of the intervention.

Validity and Reliability

The listening test (Rahmi et al., 2025) and self-evaluation survey (Kavaliauskienė, 2008) were adopted to deal with instrument validity. The customized items were reviewed by two EFL instructors who have experience in teaching listening at the secondary level. They reviewed for clarity of item, level appropriateness, instructions, and alignment of the test items and the listening sub-skills. After this review, some phrasing modifications were made. The instruments were developed based on prior studies and were reviewed by peer reviewers. Because of the small sample size, better reliability procedures were not possible. Thus, this can be considered a drawback.

Results

Pre-test and post-test score overview

Scores were based on a six-point rubric in which each correct response represented one point. A total of $N = 23$ A2-level EFL high school students participated in a listening pre-test and post-test. Scores were evaluated on a scale from 0 to 6 (0 representing the lowest performance and 6 the highest performance).

Changes in listening development from pre-test to post-test

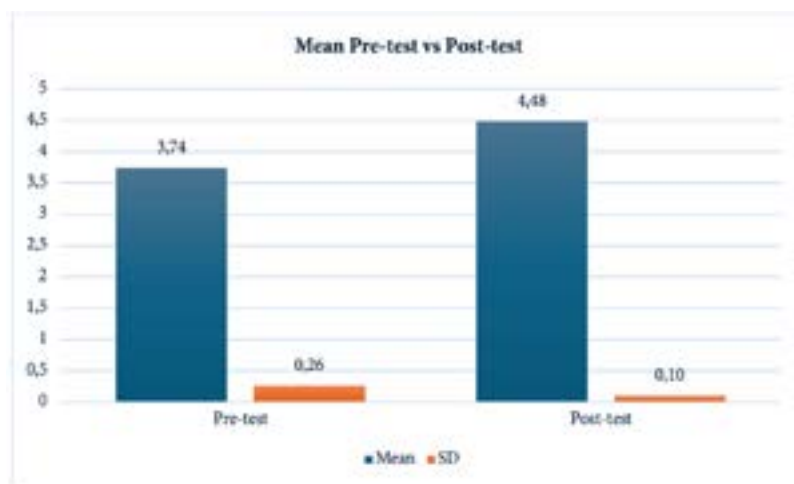
Descriptive results indicate an enhancement in students' listening development following the intervention. The average score rose from $M = 3.74$ ($SD = 0.26$) in the pre-test to $M = 4.48$ ($SD = 0.10$) in the post-test. This is a rise from 62.32% to 74.64%. The overall post-test results indicated a positive tendency of listening development in the group. The average gain was 0.74 points on the 0–6 scale, corresponding to roughly +12.32 percentage points. These results imply that the gains in listening development seen may be linked not only to the repeated exposure to spoken English, but also to the structured nature of the instructional activities which focused students' attention on specific listening processes. Here, the authentic audio input and the scaffolded classroom tasks may have facilitated students' engagement in listening comprehension skills. Table 1 and Figure 1 present these descriptive results. The score scale came from the adapted six-item listening instrument, in which each correct answer received one point. The 95% confidence range for the mean increase was [0.63, 0.85], signifying a consistently favorable improvement among individuals.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for pre-test and post-test scores

Measure	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean	3.74	4.48
SD	0.26	0.10

Source: Own elaboration

Figure 1. Mean pre-test vs post-test scores with 95% confidence interval



Source: Own elaboration

Inferential Statistics (Paired-Samples Analysis)

A paired-samples t-test was performed to assess the disparity between pre-test and post-test scores. The results showed a considerable improvement, $t(22) = 13.88$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed; exact $p \approx 2.31 \times 10^{-12}$). The effect magnitude was large: Cohen's $d = 2.89$; Hedges' $g = 2.80$. This result

suggests that the difference between pre-test and post-test performance was substantial in practical terms, suggesting the gains were not just statistically significant but educationally meaningful as well. These results imply a significant amount of discrepancy between the two measures.

Individual Gains

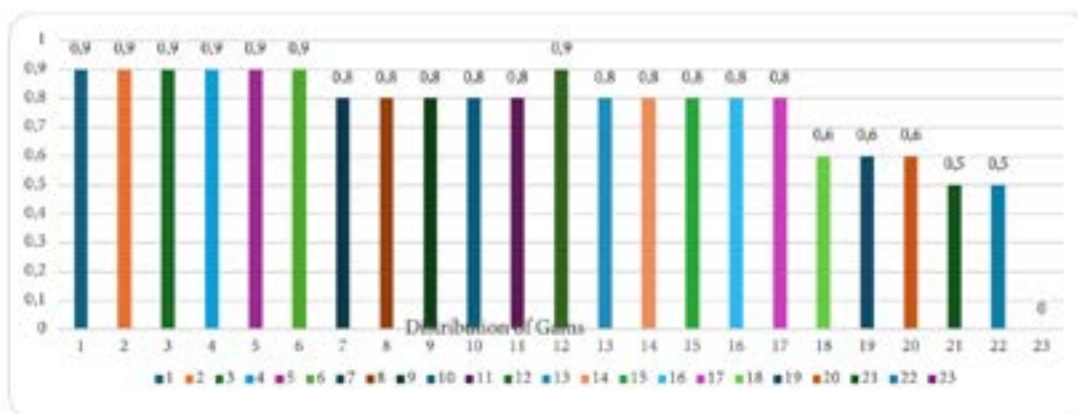
Most participants improved from pre-test to post-test. Twenty-two students obtained higher scores, one student remained unchanged, and no participant showed a lower score in the post-test. This pattern, summarized in Table 2 and Figure 2, suggests a positive post-intervention tendency in the group.

Table 2. Individual student scores and gains

Student	Pre	Post	Gain
S1	3.5	4.4	0.9
S2	3.5	4.4	0.9
S3	3.5	4.4	0.9
S4	3.5	4.4	0.9
S5	3.5	4.4	0.9
S6	3.5	4.4	0.9
S7	3.6	4.4	0.8
S8	3.6	4.4	0.8
S9	3.6	4.4	0.8
S10	3.6	4.4	0.8
S11	3.6	4.4	0.8
S12	3.6	4.5	0.9
S13	3.7	4.5	0.8
S14	3.7	4.5	0.8
S15	3.7	4.5	0.8
S16	3.7	4.5	0.8
S17	3.7	4.5	0.8
S18	3.9	4.5	0.6
S19	3.9	4.5	0.6
S20	3.9	4.5	0.6
S21	4.0	4.5	0.5
S22	4.0	4.5	0.5
S23	4.0	4.0	0.0

Source: Own elaboration

Figure 2. Distribution of gains (post-test minus pre-test)

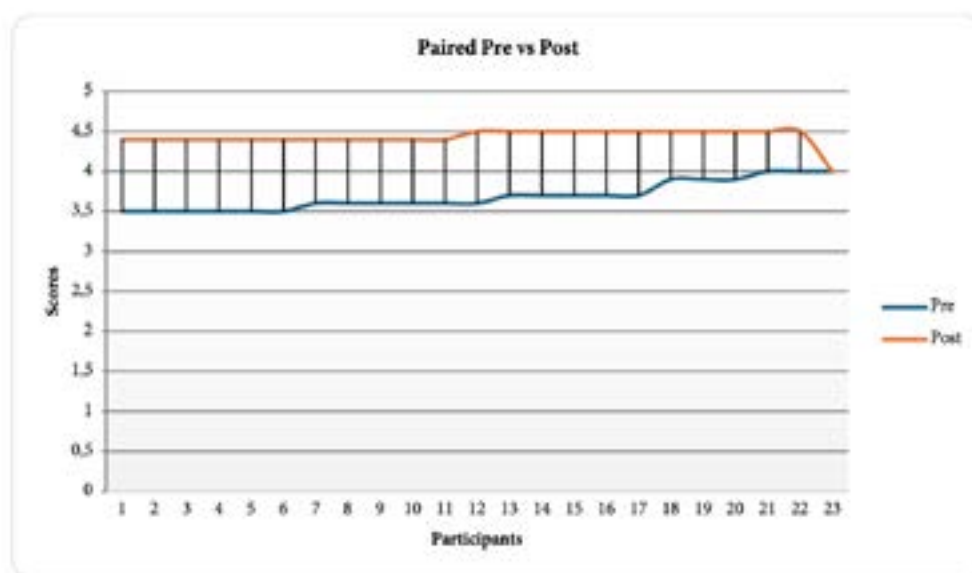


Source: Own elaboration

Distribution of Scores

The score distribution increased from pre-test to post-test. Pre-test scores exhibited greater fluctuation, whereas post-test values were more concentrated, signifying enhanced consistency in student performance. This decrease in score dispersion would indicate that the students' listening development became more homogenous during the instructional sequence, with less between-group variations for low and high performers. This is evidenced by the decrease in standard deviation (from 0.26 to 0.10). The boxplot depiction corroborates this pattern, indicating a larger median and lower dispersion in post-test data as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Individual pre-test and post-test scores



Source: Own elaboration

Students' Perceptions About Podcast Usefulness

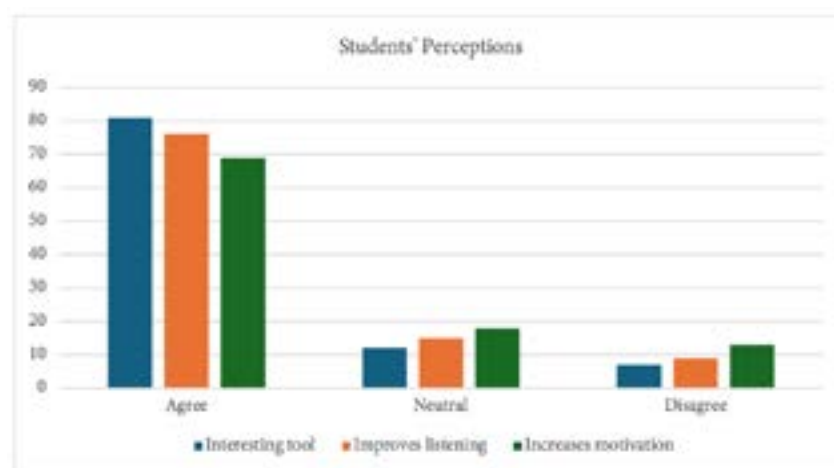
Responses from the self-evaluation survey indicate that 81% of the students found the podcasts engaging learning materials, 76% expressed support for development in listening comprehension and 69% reported an increase in motivation. Also, 12% had neutral ideas about podcast usefulness, 15% did not see any significant gain in listening development and 18% had neutral opinions about motivation. A small minority disagreed: 7% did not find podcasts fascinating, 9% did not think that podcasts improved listening, and 13% did not report an improvement in motivation, as shown in Table 3; Figure 4.

Table 3. Students' perceptions of Podcast-based instruction

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Interesting tool	81%	12%	7%
Improves listening	76%	15%	9%
Increases motivation	69%	18%	13%

Source: Own elaboration

Figure 4. Students' perceptions of podcast use



Source: Own elaboration

Discussion

Potential usefulness of podcast-based instruction on listening comprehension.

The improvement observed in students' listening development may be explained by the combined effect of sustained exposure to comprehensible input and the structured nature of the instructional intervention. From a theoretical perspective, podcast-based instruction in this study provided opportunities for meaningful input consistent with Krashen's (1985), Input Hypothesis, while the inclusion of scaffolded listening activities facilitated deeper cognitive processing of the auditory material. This suggests that the effectiveness of podcast-based instruction is not solely

attributable to exposure to authentic spoken language, but also to the pedagogical integration of that input within guided learning sequences that support active engagement, attention to form, and strategic listening processes.

Similar trends were documented by Abdulrahman et al. (2018), who noted positive variations in listening performance when EFL classrooms were included in the structured podcast activities. Nonetheless, the results should be regarded with caution based on the nature of the study following a one-group pre-test/post-test design with no control group. Other classroom factors, repeated exposure to similar activities and familiarity with the assessment tasks may possibly have affected student performance.

From a theoretical point of view, these results can be explained by Krashen's (1985), Input Hypothesis, which underlines the role of intelligible input in the acquisition of language. In this study, students were immersed into genuine yet level-appropriate audio materials that provided opportunities to interact with spoken English in relevant circumstances. Similarly, Gonulal (2020), stated that podcasts give learners more possibilities to meet actual spoken language than traditional classroom materials. The improvement seen in most participants indicates that listening skills can be developed through sustained exposure to actual spoken language. Moreover, many students reported feeling engaged and interested throughout podcast activities. This can possibly be related to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis as lower anxiety and favorable emotional situations can foster language acquisition. Saeedakhtar et al. (2021), said that employing collaborative listening approaches boosted learner motivation, resulting in more student engagement and vocabulary learning.

Similarities have been discovered in other investigations, for example Abdulrahman et al. (2018) and Partiwi (2022), noted good trends in listening comprehension with the implementation of structured podcast activities in EFL lessons. Another feature that Chaves and De-La Peña (2023), noticed is that authentic digital resources are more meaningful when used in guided educational sequences matched to learners' competency levels. In this way, the results found in the present study seem to be in line with prior research conducted in technologically enhanced EFL contexts. Yet even the results must be understood in the educational settings of the study. It is also probable that not only the podcasts, but the planned organization of the listening activities played an essential impact in aiding students' comprehension, and that the use of pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening exercises assisted the students in focusing their attention on listening processes and in getting more actively involved in the audio contents.

This shows that podcast-based instruction may rely not only on exposure to actual spoken information but also on the pedagogical techniques employed to scaffold learners' listening behaviors. Saragih et al. (2022) and Sabrila and Apoko (2022), likewise, stressed that when activities are accompanied by educational direction, podcasts can expose the students to natural pronunciation and contextualized terminology. Notwithstanding, the findings also indicate that the observed improvements cannot be attributed exclusively to the use of podcasts as a technological tool. Rather, the structured design of the instructional sequence, including pre-listening activation, gui-

ded comprehension tasks, and post-listening reflection, likely played a central role in facilitating learning, which led to highlighting the importance of instructional design in technology-enhanced learning environments, suggesting that digital resources are most effective when integrated into pedagogically coherent frameworks. In this sense, podcasts function not as isolated tools but as components within a broader system of guided learning that supports both cognitive engagement and skill development.

Another finding of this research revealed that students improved more in wider listening subskills such as finding main ideas and understanding overall meaning than in more difficult skills such as understanding idiomatic expressions or implicit meanings. This pattern is consistent with the findings reported by Rahmi et al. (2025), who proposed that learners tend to choose to obtain global listening comprehension before gaining more inferential listening skills. These results would seem to indicate that pupils first got familiar with general processes of thinking before learning more sophisticated interpretative skills.

Although the general trends were encouraging, some students experienced problems with speed of delivery, pronunciation and accent variation. This suggests that real audio materials may not be useful to all students equally without supplementary pedagogical support. Similar issues were raised by Bozavli (2024), who claimed that genuine listening materials could be problematic for lower proficiency learners if listening activities are not appropriately scaffolded. Bozavli (2024), also mentioned the related challenges of unfamiliar accents and speech rate, especially for learners who do not have much exposure to real listening materials.

The data also gives indirect support to Swain's (1985), Output Hypothesis. Although students seemed to gain from frequent exposure to the auditory input, opportunities for engagement and language output also seemed to be beneficial in the context of classroom activities. In this study, students were encouraged to compare interpretations, clarify misunderstandings, and reflect on the meaning of the audio content by engaging in post-listening discussions and collaborative answer checking rather than simply listening passively. This view is in line with Swain's (1985), observation that language development is promoted when learners are encouraged to communicate, negotiate meaning and become actively engaged in communicative tasks. This finding suggests that the activities based on podcasts could be enhanced with contact possibilities and active involvement.

Use of podcasts and motivation to learn

The results of the self-evaluation survey revealed a generally good attitude to the use of podcasts. Most students said that podcasts were interesting learning tools, and they felt more motivated during the listening sessions. Listening comprehension improved for several participants following the session. The findings indicate that podcast-based instruction may be associated with listening practice and positive learner perspectives and participation in classroom activities. Similar findings were discovered by Chaves and De-La Peña (2023), who stated that students are more

positive about the attitudes of listening exercises when genuine digital resources are employed in teaching in the classroom.

The findings imply that from an educational standpoint, podcasts should not be used as a passive listening medium alone. Chaves and De-La Peña (2023), pointed out that technology-based resources are more successful when they are integrated into structured instructional sequences. In this study, podcast activities were supported with pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening exercises which helped the students to follow the listening process. These structured exercises appeared to play a role in students' participation in listening tasks and classroom discussions, as well as in the development of cognitive and metacognitive skills.

Taking together, the results found in this study indicate that podcasts might be helpful complementary tools for listening training in EFL secondary education situations. When materials are tailored to students' proficiency levels and instructional needs, their use in organized classroom activities seems to be related to listening practice, learner engagement, and more exposure to actual spoken English. In this sense, Puteri and Ni'mah (2025) and Putri et al. (2025), also proposed that podcasts could be additional resources to promote listening practice and learner engagement in secondary EFL contexts.

Furthermore, the pattern of improvement observed across participants suggests that listening development may occur progressively across different levels of processing. Gains in global comprehension (e.g., main ideas and gist understanding) appear to precede more complex inferential skills, indicating that learners may first develop general processing strategies before refining their ability to interpret implicit meanings. This aligns with existing models of listening comprehension that emphasize the interaction between bottom-up decoding and top-down processing strategies, highlighting the importance of scaffolded exposure to increasingly complex listening tasks.

Limitations and internal validity

Several considerations should be taken into account when interpreting these findings. Some valuable insights into the application of podcast-based instruction in EFL classrooms have been observed. The research was carried out on a small sample of twenty-three students of an educational institution. The results should be interpreted with caution, as they may be peculiarities of this case, as Abdulrahman et al., (2018) and Partiwí, (2022), suggested that the use of podcasts in the classroom has been somewhat limited in that contextual characteristics and it can influence the extent to which the findings can be applied to other educational settings.

Research design is another factor that should be considered. Since the study was conducted using a one-group pre-test/post-test design without a control group, it could not identify whether the improvements were solely related to the podcast-based activities. As Chaves and De-La Peña (2023), pointed out, there are other aspects inside technology-enhanced learning environments that can affect students' performance, such as classroom practices, teacher support, and opportu-

nities to encounter English beyond the instructional intervention itself. Thus, alternative reasons for the observed advances cannot be ruled out totally.

It is also worth noting that the students were aware that they were part of a research study. Such understanding may have led to greater motivation and participation during the intervention period. Given that learner engagement was one of the positive outcomes mentioned in the self-evaluation survey, the potential for observation to lead to greater effort should be considered when interpreting the data. Similarly, the knowledge of the listening test after doing the pre-test might have contributed to the improvement of the performance in the post-test. As Rahmi et al. (2025), stated, this is especially crucial when different listening subskills develop with repeated practice for instance, it can also affect assessment outcomes over time.

Furthermore, despite the students' favorable experience with podcasts, several participants encountered various issues such as speaking rate, pronunciation and change in accent. Bozavli (2024), identified similar difficulties and concluded that realistic listening resources could still be difficult for learners when other scaffolding is missing. Therefore, the benefits of using podcasts may differ based on the learners' level of skills and previous exposure to the genuine spoken language.

These characteristics collectively suggest possible risks to internal validity and indicate that the results should be seen as patterns in this educational setting, not as conclusive evidence of causal links. Future research could contribute to the evidence base by using control groups, larger samples, longer intervention periods, delayed post-tests and additional qualitative data sources. Such recommendations are also compatible with the proposals proposed by Gonulal (2020) and Saeedakhtar et al. (2021), because it is important additional research on the long-term effects of podcast-based instruction in EFL settings.

Conclusion

This study explored the use of podcast-based instruction as a complementary resource for supporting listening development of EFL high school students. In summary, the results indicated that higher listening scores were observed after the intervention. Most learners also reported positive perceptions towards the usage of podcasts in the classroom, especially regarding motivation and engagement of listening tasks.

The results suggest that the use of authentic audio materials in organized instructional sequences may be associated with the development of listening subskills such as detecting main ideas, interpreting general meaning, and identifying specific information in spoken texts. These findings are in line with earlier studies that have proved the educational advantages of podcasts as additional listening materials in EFL settings. However, the study also highlighted several issues relating to speech tempo, pronunciation and accent variation. Many students continued to have difficulty with understanding unfamiliar spoken language, especially in listening activities that

were more inferential. This highlights the importance of carefully selecting podcast materials and the use of appropriate scaffolding tactics that are tailored to the learners' competency levels and classroom demands.

Another essential factor seen throughout the intervention was the function of interaction and guided activities in the process of listening. Study findings suggested that podcast use was more relevant when students engaged in pre-, while- and post-listening exercises that promoted reflection, discussion and collaborative interaction. For this reason, podcasts should not be embedded as solitary listening practice but as part of a planned sequence of instruction that promotes active engagement with spoken language.

This study also adds to the current literature by offering evidence from a secondary education context, an area that still receives less attention in earlier podcast-related studies. Nevertheless, several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting these findings. This study was limited by a small sample size within a single educational context and lack of a control group. Moreover, the short duration of the intervention does not allow the study of long-term impacts. Future research may include larger sample sizes, longer duration of interventions, delayed post-testing, and other qualitative measures such as interviews or classroom observations to better understand students' development and perceptions of podcast use in the classroom. In summary, the findings of this study underscore the pedagogical potential of structured podcast-based instruction as a complementary approach to facilitate listening development in secondary EFL contexts, particularly when activities are tailored to learners' proficiency levels and supplemented by guided instructional support

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