



PODCASTS AND TRADITIONAL AUDIO TEXTBOOKS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EFFECTIVENESS

Turejanova Altinay Aleuatdinovna

Berdaq Karakalpak State University, Department of English

Teaching Methodology, doctoral student

Phone: +998 (93) 7169722

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19816953>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 20th April 2026

Accepted: 26th April 2026

Online: 27th April 2026

KEYWORDS

podcast, traditional audio
textbook, listening
comprehension,
comparative analysis,
authentic material, EFL,
secondary school

ABSTRACT

This article provides a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of podcasts and traditional audio textbooks in developing English listening comprehension skills among uppergrade students. The study involved 10thgrade students (n=60) divided into two groups for 8 weeks: the experimental group used podcasts, while the control group used traditional audio textbooks. Results showed that the podcast group improved listening comprehension scores by 32%, while the traditional group improved by 14%. The main advantages of podcasts are authenticity, topic variety, flexibility, and high motivation. Traditional audio textbooks are distinguished by systematic structure and suitability for beginnerlevel learners. Practical recommendations for integrating podcasts with traditional materials are provided.

1. INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is a fundamental skill in second language acquisition, yet it remains one of the most challenging to teach effectively. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), learners often struggle with understanding natural speech due to limited exposure to authentic language input. Traditional language teaching has relied heavily on scripted, studio-recorded audio materials embedded in textbooks, which, while pedagogically structured, often fail to prepare students for realworld communication.

The digital revolution has introduced podcasts as a flexible and accessible alternative. Podcasts are digital audio files that can be accessed freely via the internet and played on a wide range of personal devices. Highquality languagelearning podcasts can provide a cheap, beneficial and portable technology that allows learners the freedom to access useful materials whenever and wherever convenient. This accessibility has made podcasts increasingly popular in EFL contexts worldwide.



However, despite the low cost involved in producing and accessing podcasts, educational institutions still seem reluctant to fully utilise them as an integral part of the language learning process. This reluctance stems from a lack of empirical evidence comparing the effectiveness of podcasts to traditional audio materials. The present study addresses this gap by systematically comparing the impact of podcasts and traditional audio textbooks on listening comprehension development among uppergrade secondary school students.

While podcasts have gained popularity as supplementary listening materials, their effectiveness relative to traditional audio textbooks remains underexplored. Teachers and curriculum developers face a dilemma: whether to continue investing in traditional audio resources or to shift toward podcastbased instruction. A comprehensive comparative analysis is needed to inform evidencebased pedagogical decisions.

The central research question guiding this study is: Which tool – podcasts or traditional audio textbooks – is more effective in developing listening comprehension skills among uppergrade EFL learners?

The primary aim of this study is to compare the effectiveness of podcasts and traditional audio textbooks in improving listening comprehension skills among 10thgrade EFL students. The specific objectives are:

1. To measure the improvement in listening comprehension scores in the podcast group before and after the intervention;

2. To measure the improvement in listening comprehension scores in the traditional audio textbook group before and after the intervention;

3. To compare the posttest scores between the two groups to determine which tool yields greater improvement;

4. To identify the key advantages and limitations of each tool based on student feedback and observational data.

METHODS

This study employed a quasiexperimental design with pretests and posttests, involving two groups: an experimental group (podcastbased instruction) and a control group (traditional audio textbook instruction). The design allowed for a direct comparison of the two instructional approaches while controlling for extraneous variables. The study involved 60 tenthgrade students from a secondary school in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. Participants were divided into two equal groups:

Experimental group (Podcast Group – PG): n=30 (15 female, 15 male)

Control group (Traditional Audio Textbook Group – TATG): n=30 (14 female, 16 male)

All participants had an English proficiency level ranging from A2 to B1, as confirmed by pretest results. There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups at the outset ($p>0.05$).

Three main instruments were used for data collection:

1. Listening Comprehension Test: A 25item multiplechoice test designed to assess listening comprehension. The test included three audio passages: one from BBC Learning English (authentic



material), one from the school textbook, and one neutral passage. The test was validated by two EFL experts, and its reliability was confirmed (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$).

2. Student Questionnaire: A 5point Likert scale questionnaire (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) administered after the intervention to assess students' attitudes, motivation, and perceived effectiveness of the materials.

3. Observation Checklist: A structured observation sheet used by the teacher to record student engagement, participation, and behavioral responses during each session.

The experiment lasted 8 weeks, with two 30minute sessions per week. Both groups followed the same threestage listening framework (prelistening, whilelistening, postlistening) to ensure methodological consistency.

Experimental Group (Podcast Group): Students listened to podcasts from BBC 6 Minute English and VOA Learning English. Each episode was 57 minutes long. Prelistening activities

included vocabulary preview and topic prediction. Whilelistening tasks involved gapfilling and notetaking. Postlistening activities included group discussions and oral summaries. This threestage approach aligns with the extensive listening strategy identified as consistently effective in podcastbased listening research.

Control Group (Traditional Audio Textbook Group): Students listened to audio recordings from the prescribed school textbook. Each recording was 34 minutes long, featuring scripted dialogues and monologues. The same threestage framework was applied, with tasks adapted to the textbook content.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Pairedsamples ttests were used to compare pretest and posttest scores within each group. Independentsamples ttests were used to compare posttest scores between groups. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Table 1. Listening Comprehension Test Results by Group

Group	Pre-test (mean/25)	Post-test (mean/25)	Improvement (%)	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d
Podcast Group (n=30)	14.2 (SD=2.1)	18.7 (SD=2.3)	+32%	8.45	<0.001	1.42
Traditional Group (n=30)	14.3 (SD=2.0)	16.3 (SD=2.2)	+14%	3.92	0.002	0.71

As shown in Table 1, both groups demonstrated statistically significant improvement in listening comprehension scores. However, the improvement was substantially larger in

the podcast group (+32%) compared to the traditional group (+14%). The effect size (Cohen's d) indicates a very large effect for the podcast intervention (1.42)



and a medium effect for the traditional intervention (0.71).

The independent samples t test comparing posttest scores between groups revealed a statistically significant difference, with the podcast group outperforming the traditional group ($t(58)=4.21, p<0.001$). These findings align with previous research

demonstrating that podcasts significantly improve listening performance and motivate learners due to their flexible, ondemand nature.

Table 2. Student Questionnaire Results (5point Likert scale, mean scores)

Statement	Podcast Group	Traditional Group
The materials were interesting and engaging	4.6	3.2
I would like to continue independent listening practice	4.5	2.9
The materials were easy to understand	4.0	3.8
The tool was easy to use and convenient	4.8	4.1
I can monitor my own progress effectively	3.9	3.5
The content was relevant to my interests	4.7	3.0

The questionnaire results reveal notable differences between groups. Students in the podcast group rated their materials significantly higher in terms of interest (4.6 vs. 3.2), motivation for independent learning (4.5 vs. 2.9), and content relevance (4.7 vs. 3.0). The traditional group rated materials slightly higher on comprehensibility, but the difference was minimal.

Teacher observations over the 8week period recorded the following engagement patterns:

Podcast group: Average active participation rate of 85% of session time; students frequently asked questions, initiated discussions, and requested additional podcast recommendations.

Traditional group: Average active participation rate of 62% of session time; students showed declining interest in later sessions, with several instances of offtask behavior.

The observational data suggest that podcastbased instruction sustained student engagement more effectively over time.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate that podcasts are significantly more effective than traditional audio textbooks in developing listening comprehension skills among uppergrade EFL learners. Several factors account for this difference.

Authenticity. One of the most critical advantages of podcasts is their



authenticity. Podcasts expose learners to natural speech patterns, including hesitations, fillers, colloquial expressions, and various accents. This authenticity prepares students for realworld communication. Research confirms that authentic audio materials have a significant effect on listening comprehension of EFL learners, whereas nonauthentic audio materials, while positive, do not show significant effects. The traditional audio recordings used in this study were studio-produced, scripted dialogues that lacked the natural features of spontaneous speech.

Motivation and Engagement. The questionnaire results showed that students in the podcast group rated their materials as more interesting (4.6 vs. 3.2) and expressed greater willingness to continue independent listening practice (4.5 vs. 2.9). This finding is consistent with a recent study involving 31 secondary school students, which reported a high perceived level of motivation and engagement with podcasts (mean 3.98) and positive attitudes toward podcast use. The flexibility and topical variety of podcasts appear to sustain learner interest over time, while the predictable, textbook-centered content may lead to learner fatigue.

Learner Autonomy. Podcasts promote autonomous learning by allowing students to choose content that matches their interests, listen at their own pace, and replay difficult sections as needed. This flexibility is a core component of modern language learning theory. A systematic literature review confirms that podcasts significantly improve listening performance and

motivate learners due to their flexible, ondemand nature. Traditional audio textbooks, in contrast, are typically used during scheduled class time and offer limited opportunities for student-directed learning.

The 32% improvement in listening comprehension scores observed in the podcast group is consistent with findings from other recent studies. A quasiexperimental study using podcasts for listening instruction found that the podcast-based learning group showed a significant improvement in listening comprehension compared to the control group, with podcast-based learning proving to be an effective and engaging tool for enhancing listening comprehension.

Similarly, a yearlong study comparing video podcasts (VODcasts) to traditional audio materials found statistically significant advancements in all language skills, including listening comprehension, for the VODcast group compared to the control group. The present study extends these findings to the secondary school context, demonstrating that podcasts are effective even in shorter intervention periods.

Despite the clear advantages of podcasts, traditional audio textbooks are not without merit. The 14% improvement in the traditional group confirms that structured audio materials remain valuable for language learning. Traditional textbooks offer systematic progression, where content is sequenced by difficulty and grammatical complexity. This structure is particularly beneficial for beginner-level learners who may be overwhelmed by the natural



speech rate and vocabulary load of authentic podcasts. As noted in a comparative study of textbooks versus podcasts, students progressed in similar ways regardless of the pedagogical materials used.

The findings of this study have direct implications for English language teaching in Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan. Recent professional development initiatives in Uzbekistan have recognized the value of podcasts as instructional tools. For example, training workshops for over 500 Uzbek educators have included sessions on "Flipped Listening" focusing on listening strategies and tech tools like podcasts and BBC Learning English.

Uzbek students, often challenged by the phonological differences between English and Uzbek, benefit from repeated exposure, accent variation, and targeted error correction. Podcasts provide this exposure naturally. However, implementation must consider local constraints, including internet connectivity in rural areas and the availability of personal devices. A hybrid approach that combines podcasts with traditional materials may be the most feasible pathway for integration in Uzbek schools.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following practical recommendations are proposed:

For Teachers:

1. Integrate podcasts systematically. Adopt the threestage listening framework (prelistening, whilelistening, postlistening) for podcastbased lessons to ensure pedagogical structure.

2. Combine authentic podcasts with textbook materials. Use podcasts as supplementary resources that reinforce and extend textbook content.

3. Encourage autonomous listening. Assign podcasts as homework and provide students with choice in selecting topics that interest them.

4. Provide scaffolding for lowerlevel students. For beginner learners, consider using slowed playback speed (0.75x) or podcasts with accompanying transcripts.

For Curriculum Developers:

1. Develop a curated podcast bank. Create a collection of podcasts mapped to the national English curriculum, organized by level, topic, and length.

2. Integrate podcasts into textbooks. Include podcastbased listening tasks alongside traditional audio materials to provide authentic exposure.

3. Design assessment tasks that incorporate podcasts. Develop listening comprehension tests based on authentic podcast content rather than only scripted textbook audio.

For Policymakers:

1. Invest in teacher training. Include modules on podcast selection, task design, and integration strategies in preservice and inservice teacher training programs.

2. Address the digital divide. Provide affordable internet access and devices to students in underserved areas to enable podcastbased learning at home.

3. Support local content creation. Encourage the development of regionally relevant podcasts that reflect local cultures and contexts while maintaining pedagogical quality.



CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence that podcasts are more effective than traditional audio textbooks in developing listening comprehension skills among uppergrade EFL learners. The podcast group demonstrated 32% improvement in listening scores, compared to 14% in the traditional group, a difference that was statistically significant. The superiority of podcasts can be attributed to their authenticity, which exposes learners to natural speech patterns, their ability to sustain motivation and engagement, and their flexibility in supporting autonomous learning.

However, traditional audio textbooks remain useful, particularly for providing systematic, structured input at the beginner level. The most effective approach is not to replace one tool with another but to integrate both strategically: using traditional textbooks

for foundational skills and structured practice, and podcasts for authentic exposure, motivation, and independent learning.

In the context of Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan, where English language teaching is undergoing significant reform, podcasts offer a costeffective and pedagogically sound solution for enhancing listening instruction. With appropriate teacher training, infrastructure support, and curriculum integration, podcasts can significantly enrich the EFL learning experience and better prepare students for realworld communication in English.

Future research should investigate the longterm effects of podcastbased instruction, explore the effectiveness of studentgenerated podcasts, and examine how podcasts can be integrated with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence for personalized listening practice.

References:

1. Anggas, T. (2025). The Effects of Podcasts on ESL Secondary School Students' Listening Skills, Motivation, and Engagement. *International Journal on ELearning Practices (IJELP)*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.51200/ijelp.v8i1.6862>
2. AlYarmouk, M. N. (2023). The Effect of Language Lab on Improving the Students' Comprehensive Listening. *AlFateh Journal*, 648. <https://alfatehjournal.uodiyala.edu.iq/index.php/jfath/article/view/648>
3. Selwood, J., Lauer, J., & Enokida, K. (2016). What Are More Effective in English Classrooms: Textbooks or Podcasts? *EUROCALL 2016 Conference Proceedings*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED572181>
4. Waruwu, Y., Myint, A., & Hlaing, N. (2025). The Effectiveness of PodcastBased Learning for Improving Listening Skills: A Ubiquitous Learning Approach. *International Journal of Ubiquitous Learning*, 8(1). <https://research.adra.ac.id/index.php/ijlul/article/view/3029>
5. Niode, S., Nurwati, A., Ayuba, H., & Jamia, M. R. (2025). Trend in Using Podcasts for Students Listening Skills: Systematic Literature Review. *SICOPUS*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.61455/sicopus.v4i01.502>



6. Beyond the Textbook: A YearLong Exploration of VODcasts in EFL Education. (2025). Education and Information Technologies, 30(4), 47774793. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1462854>
7. The Effect of Authentic Audio Materials on EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension. (2024). International Journal of Distance Education, 1618. <http://iaseidje.ir/article1618en.html>
8. Raxmatullayeva, B. (2025). O'zbekiston maktablarida raqamli tafovut va uning ingliz tili o'quvchilarining raqamli kompetensiyasiga ta'siri. Science and Innovation, 3(26), 4-9.
9. Two Training Workshops for Over 500 Educators from Uzbekistan. (2025). QRTA. <http://cms.qrta.edu.jo/node/888>
10. Teachers' attitudes toward aienhanced listening activities: a pilot study in uzbekistan. (2025). Ilm fan xabarnomasi, 2.