

Tailored English Podcasts for Vietnamese University Students as a Supplementary Source of English Learning – Evaluation from Users’ Perspectives


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ABSTRACT

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In the era of globalization and the rapid advancement of information technology, Podcasts have increasingly been recognized as an effective tool in language education, particularly in enhancing listening skills, expanding vocabulary, and fostering confidence in English communication. This study aims to explore the perspectives of tailored English podcasts as a supplementary resource for enhancing English language proficiency among Vietnamese university students. A mixed-methods research design was employed, integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to explore students' perceptions and experiences. Survey data were collected from 233 students, complemented by semi-structured interviews conducted with 15 participants selected from the survey cohort. Based on the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, this research aims to assess the extent to which podcasts facilitate students' daily English learning activities. Expectedly, the findings can be of some help to academic and educational administrators, teachers in the field of ELT by providing theoretical foundation as well as practices. As a result, more tailored and impactful teaching strategies for language learners can be applied and make significant changes in the context of higher education.

Introduction

In recent years, language teaching is constantly seeking innovative, learner-centered approaches to align with the development and adoption of technology in educational contexts. Podcasts have distinguished themselves among the new tools thanks to their adaptability, accessibility, and ability to meaningfully engage students. Therefore, they have been becoming an increasingly useful tool in global English language instruction because of their authentic spoken input and allowance for self-paced listening experiences.

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Embedding podcasts into language learning practices can help improve oral fluency and listening comprehension. Moreover, learner motivation and engagement also increased as a result of podcast use (Bamanger and Alhassan, 2015). Further supporting these findings, Farshi and Mohammadi (2013), Yoestara and Putri (2019), and Namazian Dost et al. (2017) highlighted the role of podcasts in fostering learner autonomy and offering flexible access to authentic language input.

Despite these encouraging results, the majority of previous research has focused on outcomes, or how podcasts impact language proficiency, rather than examining the design and user evaluation of podcast content in particular educational settings. Understanding how to successfully incorporate tailored, localized podcasts into EFL learning environments is still lacking, especially in Southeast Asian contexts.

Due to academic integration and economic globalization, there is a great demand for communicative English proficiency in Vietnam. In particular, university students are under more and more pressure to reach higher proficiency levels in order to meet academic and professional standards. However, the exposure and practice required to develop spontaneous speaking and real-time listening skills are frequently lacking in traditional classroom instruction. This gap in teaching has led educators and researchers to look for supplementary methods to help students acquire languages outside of the classroom.

This study investigates the use of the customized English podcast channel, *"English, etc"*, developed specifically to support the language learning needs of students at Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI). The podcast aims to support learners through thematically relevant episodes that supplement classroom instruction and promote active engagement in English. The central research question guiding the study is:

How do users evaluate the "English, etc" English podcast channel as a supplementary source for English learning?

In addressing the above-mentioned research question, the study would provide a comprehensive understanding of how podcasts can be designed and used in EFL contexts at higher education levels.

Literature review

A Brief Overview of Self-Directed Learning in Language Education

Self-Directed Learning (SDL) has long been known as a construct which enables learners to self-control and direct their own learning. Proposed by Garrison (1997) as "an approach where learners are motivated to assume personal responsibility and collaborative control of cognitive (self-monitoring) and contextual (self-management) processes in constructing and confirming meaningful and worthwhile learning outcomes" (p.18), SDL has a three-part model: self-management, self-monitoring, and motivational control - capturing the cognitive and affective demands that podcast-based learning entails. In digital environments lacking direct teacher guidance, SDL becomes essential for sustained engagement and learning success.

Research consistently links SDL with positive language outcomes. In Vietnam, Dang et al. (2022) reported high SDL readiness among undergraduates, though sustaining motivation remains a challenge, especially in later academic years.

Given the autonomy required in podcast use, reviewing the literature on SDL is not only relevant but necessary. It provides the theoretical foundation to understand how learners engage

with podcasts and informs how educators can scaffold digital tools to foster agency, persistence, and long-term language development.

Podcasts: Definition and Classification

The term podcast - a blend of iPod and broadcast - was first coined by Ben Hammersley in 2004 (Bottomley, 2015), referring to digital audio content distributed via the internet for on-demand listening. Officially recognized in the Oxford Dictionary in 2005, podcasts have since evolved into a flexible and widely accessible medium across education, entertainment, and news domains (Yaman, 2016; Drew, 2017).

Podcasts are typically categorized by content, purpose, and format (Markman & Sawyer, 2014).

- By content, podcasts may be educational, delivering structured, lecture-style knowledge (Lazzari, 2009); entertaining, featuring humor or storytelling with authentic language use; or news-oriented, providing timely updates and analyses (Berry, 2016).

- By purpose, they are either professional - produced by experts with high-quality standards (Bottomley, 2015) - or personal, characterized by informal, creative expression and interactive listener engagement.

- By format, podcasts include interview-based shows offering diverse perspectives, narrative podcasts that emphasize storytelling and production aesthetics, and conversational formats marked by informal dialogue, linguistic variety, and day-to-day expression (Archard & Merry, 2010).

These categories reflect podcasts' versatility as both educational tools and cultural products. Their portability, authenticity, and ease of access make them particularly suitable for language education. This study adopts Archard and Merry's (2010) conversational podcast model, forming the basis for the English, etc. podcast channel - designed around informal interviews and discussions to enhance learner engagement through clarity, simplicity, and a relatable tone.

The Benefits of Podcasts in Foreign Language Education

Podcasts have become a valuable, learner-friendly tool in language education, offering flexible, personalized, and authentic learning experiences. Recent research highlights five key benefits they offer as follows:

Accessibility and Learner Autonomy

The asynchronous and mobile nature of podcasts enables learners to engage with content anytime, anywhere, supporting informal, lifestyle-integrated learning (Shamburg et al., 2023). Features such as playback control allow learners to tailor input to their needs and proficiency levels (Yaman, 2016; Lazzari, 2009), fostering self-regulation.

Listening Comprehension and Linguistic Exposure

Through a variety of genres, accents, discourse styles, and pragmatic elements, podcasts expose students to real spoken language (Rachmaniputri et al., 2021; Archard & Merry, 2010). For auditory learners in particular, this rich input environment improves listening comprehension and makes it easier to internalize real-world linguistic patterns.

Pedagogical Integration and Engagement

Podcasts are a useful pedagogical tool that fosters reflective, interactive learning while also reducing learner anxiety. Torres (2011) emphasizes their potential for collaborative knowledge-building, whereas Dang et al. (2022) note that audio-based tasks lessen visual pressure. When

embedded in digital platforms, podcasts extend classroom dialogue and deepen content engagement.

Cognitive and Affective Dimensions of Learning

Podcasts not only support learners build vocabulary, develop critical thinking, and understand academic content, but they also enhance motivation and emotional connection. When podcasts are socially grounded, they create a sense of community and encourage learners to feel more invested in their learning (Lee et al., 2011).

Academic and Disciplinary Applications

In tertiary contexts, podcasts reinforce academic literacy and discipline-specific language. Liu (2023) found that podcasts help learners internalize academic registers more effectively than traditional lectures. Additionally, they develop critical listening and analysis skills by presenting diverse viewpoints in accessible spoken formats (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

In sum, podcasts bridge formal instruction and informal learning, offering multimodal benefits that align with communicative and autonomous approaches in foreign language education.

Drawbacks of Podcasts in Foreign Language Teaching

Despite their pedagogical promise, podcasts present notable limitations that merit critical attention. Recognizing these challenges helps avoid overgeneralized enthusiasm and fosters more strategic, inclusive implementation. Key concerns can be grouped into following areas:

Technical and Production Barriers

High-quality podcasting requires technical expertise, time, and equipment. Without proper production - clear audio, consistent pacing, and noise control - listening comprehension can be hindered, particularly for lower-proficiency learners (Cebeci & Tekdal, 2006; Indahsari, 2020). Poor audio quality disrupts input clarity and reduces learner motivation.

Inconsistencies in Format and Delivery

Unlike standardized textbooks, podcasts differ significantly in length, format, and focus, which can be disorienting for learners who benefit from structured, predictable input (Rosell-Aguilar & Fernando, 2007). Moreover, the wide range of learner preferences - from casual conversation to formal academic content - make it difficult to design universally engaging materials.

Cognitive Load and Listening Fatigue

Engaging with spontaneous, unscripted speech in audio-only formats requires considerable cognitive effort, particularly for lower-proficiency learners, often leading to fatigue and diminished confidence (Ashton & Brookes, 2011). Unlike video or text, podcasts offer minimal visual or contextual scaffolding, making comprehension more demanding.

Linguistic and Pedagogical Misalignment

Podcasts often include specialized vocabulary, complex structures, or unfamiliar accents that may exceed learners' proficiency levels (Liu, 2023; Shamburg et al., 2023).

Previous Studies and Research Gap

Over the last 20 years, using podcasts in language education has been paid much attention to and discussed as a hot topic. More specially, in the context of rapid technology development, podcasts have emerged as an effective teaching tool thanks to their adaptability, accessibility and authentic input resources. This is particularly beneficial for language learners to enhance their listening and speaking skills (Yoestara & Putri, 2019). According to Farshi & Mohammadi

(2013), podcasts serve as supplementary tools to promote students' learning independence and engagement, even outside the traditional classroom because of their flexibility and ease of use. Besides, Nguyen & Ho (2018) also support that these podcast features can help to improve EFL learners' oral fluency, pronunciation and listening comprehension. In their research, many authors mostly concern the significance of content alignment when creating podcast channels. They suppose that podcast materials need to correspond to the educational requirements and learners' linguistic proficiency. For example, Bamanger & Alhassan (2015) emphasize that learners are more motivated when they find podcast content to be accessible and relevant. Similarly, Al-Ghamdi (2019) confirms that the effective podcasts must be tailored to learners' listening competency and incorporate strategies to enhance their comprehension and retention.

Recent research conducted in Vietnam also share similar viewpoints with the findings mentioned above. Nguyen & Nguyen (2021) and Chan (2016) agreed that podcasts significantly enhance learners' speaking and listening skills, especially for English majors and international students. Additionally, Cao and Bui (2023) argue that using authentic materials, such as podcasts, can foster greater engagement by exposing students to real-world language use in classes like English for Specific Purposes.

Despite the encouraging results, most existing studies have centered on learner outcomes - that is, the effects of podcast use on language performance - while comparatively fewer investigations have addressed the developmental process of podcast production, including design models, content structuring, media formatting, and distribution strategies. Furthermore, there remains a lack of research on how learners interact with podcasts in real-time, including how they respond to interactive features, such as feedback mechanisms, mini-games, or reflective exercises embedded in podcast episodes (NamazianDost et al., 2017; Tran, 2017).

This study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive framework for podcast integration through the documentation of the development, distribution, and assessment of a specially tailored English podcast channel called "English, etc." for HaUI students. Unlike previous research that focuses primarily on post-implementation outcomes, this study incorporates both the design and experiential dimensions of podcast use, capturing users' feedback, analyzing usage patterns, and exploring how digital audio content can be optimized to meet learner needs in Vietnamese higher education contexts.

In sum, while prior research has firmly established the value of podcasts in supporting language acquisition, there remains a pressing need to investigate how podcasts can be systematically designed, implemented, and evaluated as a sustainable, learner-centered resource. This study aims to fill that gap by contributing both theoretical and applied insights into podcast-mediated language learning.

Methods

Pedagogical Setting

This study was conducted at Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI) – one of the biggest universities in the North of Vietnam. It provides a wide range of programs from undergraduate to postgraduate levels, including social and natural science majors like Information and Technology, Automobile and Mechanical Engineering, Electronic Electrical Engineering, Business Administration, Accountancy, Tourism and Hospitality and language-related majors such as Korean linguistics, Chinese linguistics, Japanese linguistics, Vietnamese linguistics and English linguistics. With all majors, English is a mandatory subject accounting for 10 to 15

credits. Besides, a blended learning approach is employed in its delivery, which requires completing both online and offline components. This emphasis aligns with the institution's goal of equipping students with career-specific language competencies necessary for their future professional success.

Research design

Creswell (2018) recommended that mixed methods allow for a comprehensive exploration of research questions by incorporating both numerical data and rich contextual insights. Following that, in this research, a mixed-method approach was employed to gather data on students' attitudes, engagement levels, and evaluations of the English podcast "*English, etc.*". A survey questionnaire with closed-ended questions and Likert scale-based options and semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions as a part of qualitative component were developed. The usage of these instruments aimed to explore the learners' thoughts on and experiences with the podcast channel "*English, etc.*".

Participants

This study, conducted during the first semester of the 2023–2024 academic year, examined the use of an English podcast channel by foreign language majors at HaUI. Because of the extensive nature of this research topic, the researchers focused on a cohort of students majoring in foreign languages, encompassing those specializing in English as well as students from other language disciplines who were taking English as a second language training programs, such as Japanese, Korean, and Chinese. This choice aims to look at how diverse and representative the samples are while also giving a brief picture of the state of education at HaUI.

The survey questionnaire was distributed to 233 randomly selected students, including 118 English majors and 115 from other language majors. The decision to apply random sampling will lower selection bias and improve the external validity of the quantitative study results. Random selection ensures that every learner in the target demographic has an equal chance of being included in the sample, therefore increasing the likelihood that it fairly reflects the larger community. The sample was specifically meant to consist of 115 students from diverse language backgrounds and 118 English majors. This fair allocation was deliberate to ensure that the points of view and experiences of main English language learners as well as those of individuals learning English as a secondary language in a foreign language curriculum were fairly reflected. Important comparisons and a deeper understanding of how podcasts are applied in various foreign language programs at HaUI are made possible by this fair depiction.

Additionally, selected for semi-structured interviews from the survey respondents were 15 individuals. A group of 15 students participating in the interview (including 04 students majoring in English, 04 students majoring in Chinese, 04 students majoring in Japanese, and 03 students majoring in Korean) answered detailed questions in about 10-15 minutes in Vietnamese via the Zoom application or directly in the school's foreign language classroom, either individually or in groups. The qualitative component served purposes distinct from the quantitative survey. While the survey produced overall statistical results, the semi-structured interviews were supposed to give participants in-depth knowledge of their experiences, perspectives, and specific challenges using English podcast platforms. By means of personal opinions, motivations, learning strategies, and problem-oriented analysis, the interviews enable one to grasp the quantitative results in a more thorough and deep sense. This qualitative data provides the necessary background and depth not achievable from a survey by itself, therefore illuminating why particular trends appeared in the survey data and offering practical solutions for better use of English podcast platforms. With qualitative research where depth of knowledge takes center stage instead of statistical generalizability, the small number (15) is usual and

acceptable.

Data collection & analysis

Two primary instruments were employed to collect user data and evaluate the effectiveness of the podcast channel "*English, etc*": surveys and semi-structured interviews.

The first instrument, the survey questionnaire, aimed to gain insight into students' attitudes, engagement levels, and assessments concerning the English podcast channel. To construct the survey questionnaire, the researchers based it on the survey questions used in (i) the study by Istanto (2011), which employed a questionnaire to collect information related to the current usage status regarding the frequency, duration, type, and purpose of using the podcast channel in learning a language as a second foreign language, and (ii) the survey questionnaire of Kavaliauskienė and Anusienė (2009) aimed at gathering information on how to exploit and evaluate the improvement in listening skills after using English podcasts by students. With the criterion of collecting information to evaluate the quality of the podcast channel and the effectiveness of the podcast channel in improving foreign language learning skills, especially English listening skills, the survey questionnaire models in the studies of Lee et al. (2011), and Tran (2016) were approached by the researcher and served as the basis for constructing related questions with similar purposes in this study. Especially in Tran's (2016) study, which was also built on the Likert scale, the researchers also used this scale in most of the survey questions of the study. The questionnaire has 5 sections with different question types. Part I collected participants' personal information such as: Email, phone number, and student majors. Part II delved into current usage status, investigated *Channels for students to access the English Podcast "English, etc"* (e.g., Facebook page, QR code on EOP), their podcast listening habits (e.g., number of episodes listened to, frequency of listening, and their purposes for using the English podcast. These sections usually included multiple-choice questions or checkboxes with different answers. Part III and part IV focused on Participants' assessments of the podcast's effectiveness. These sections used a 5-point Likert scale, which ranged from 'Strongly Disagree' (1) to 'Strongly Agree' (5). This scale assessed participants' agreement or disagreement with statements about the podcast's quality (e.g., topic compatibility, audio quality, hosts and guests' voices) as well as perceived usefulness for improving specific English skills (e.g., vocabulary, pronunciation, listening comprehension, motivation).

Finally, other information in Part V included a Likert scale item for the podcast, recommendation as well as an open-ended inquiry for criticism or ideas.

The second tool, semi-structured interviews, was chosen for this study because this tool allows flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences and the researchers to get deeper insights into participants' viewpoints with the main questions and then follow up with additional questions depending on the information obtained from the main questions. This is also affirmed by Creswell and Creswell (2018) in their studies. With similarities in the subjects (students learning English as a foreign language), the goal of exploring a new language learning tool beyond traditional language learning ones, particularly focusing on podcasts' effectiveness in improving listening skills. The researchers built up their semi-structured interview questions based on the data used in the studies of Tran (2016) to make them suitable for the target research subjects.

Data from the survey questionnaire were displayed via charts and tables. They included responses to questionnaire items and Likert scale-based options, the analysis was performed using Excel. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and means, were computed to summarize participants' attitudes and evaluations of the English podcast, with results

presented in charts and figures. These quantitative analyses offer a whole picture of user interaction and points of view. The data from semi-structured interviews were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were verbatim transcribed before being submitted to a manual, iterative thematic analysis. This included becoming acquainted with the data, creating initial codes, grouping these codes into bigger themes, and then systematically examining, identifying, and labeling the identified themes. Direct participant quotes were then used to reinforce the rich qualitative observations.

Data from various sources, following independent analysis, was aggregated and cross-verified based on two themes:

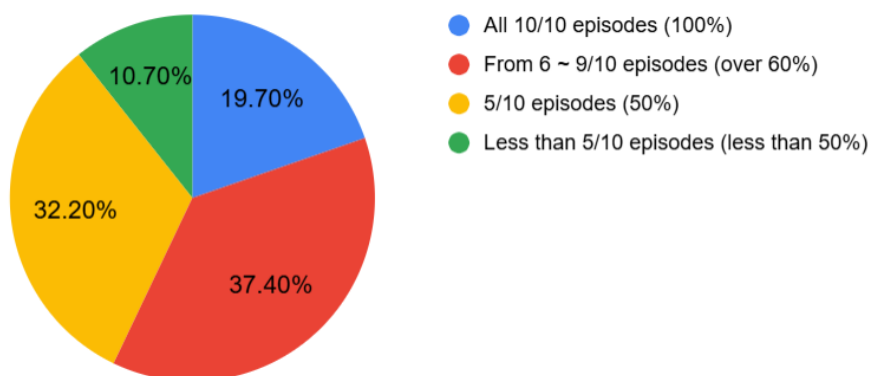
- Perspectives of participants regarding the development and utilization of the English podcast channel "*English, etc.*"
- Participants' evaluation of the effectiveness of the English podcast "*English, etc.*"

Results and Discussion

Perspectives on the development and utilization of the podcast

Figure 1

The level of students' access to the podcast "English, etc"



Regarding engagement levels, 19.7% of students listened to all 10 episodes, demonstrating high commitment despite their demanding schedules. However, as shown in Figure 1, the majority of participants (approximately 70%) reported listening to fewer episodes.

Several factors could explain this observation, including both subjective and objective reasons. Firstly, it might be due to their multiple learning tasks, which lead them not to have enough time. As one student shared, "*I tried to follow all the episodes, but between classwork, group projects, and part-time jobs, it was hard to keep up*" (S#2). Another participant echoed this, saying, "*I usually listened to the podcast only when the teacher reminded us—it was hard to stay consistent on my own*" (S#8). These responses suggest that although interest existed, podcast listening often took a backseat to core academic demands. Secondly, they do not clearly see the usefulness and interest that the podcast channel can bring them at any time. One student commented, "*I listened to the first few episodes, but I didn't know if it would really help me with exams or homework, so I stopped for a while*" (S#10). This points to the importance of clearly communicating how supplementary tools like podcasts align with academic outcomes - something that may have been underemphasized. Besides time constraints, technical issues such as broken audio links are also a problem. One participant explained in the interview, "*I couldn't finish all episodes because I had so many assignments and sometimes the links didn't work*"

(S#6). This finding broadly supports work of the study by Prasetya (2024), where technical difficulties hindered consistent usage of digital learning tools.

To explore students' listening habits and how they processed podcast content, two questions were examined. The first focused on how often students listened to the "*English, etc*" podcast, and the second on how many times they needed to replay each episode to fully understand it.

Figure 2 below shows the distribution of students' listening frequency. Besides, Figure 3 below illustrates how many times students typically needed to replay episodes in order to understand them.

Figure 2

Students' frequency of listening to the podcast "*English, etc*"

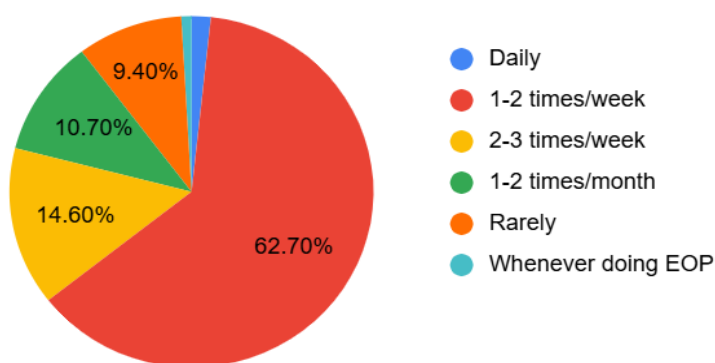
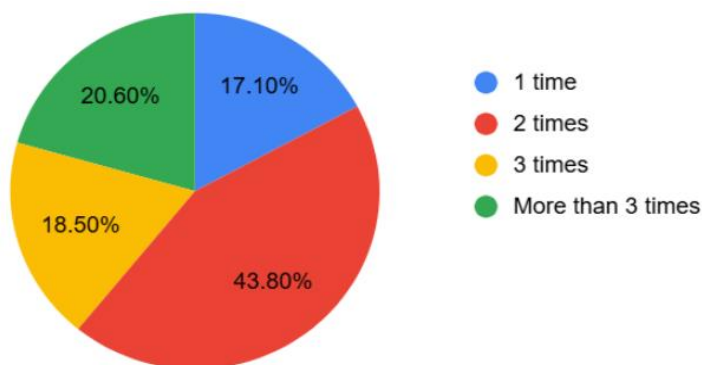


Figure 3

Frequency of understanding the content of each episode



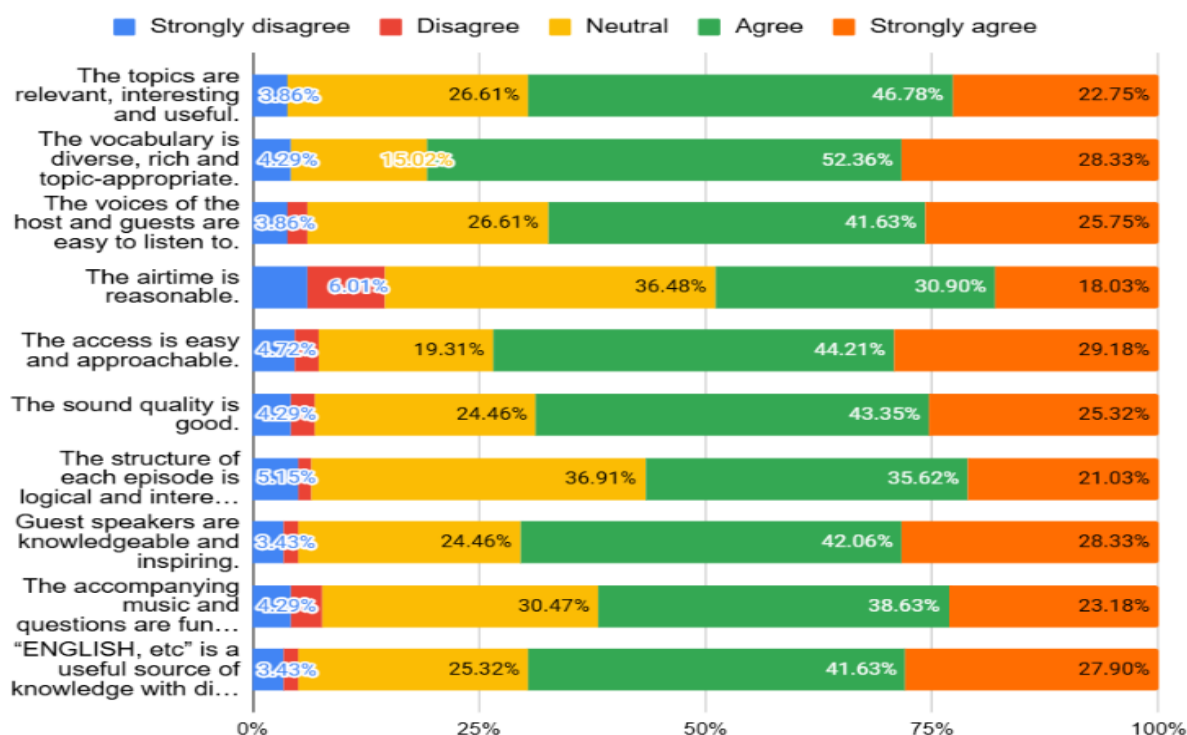
Regarding students' listening habits, Figure 2 reveals that the majority of participants spent time listening 1-2 times/week (accounting for 62.7%); about 14.6% chose the option of listening 2-3 times/week; 9.4% chose the option of "rarely" listening, the rest chose other options. This survey also shows that a significant number of participants listened to each episode once to fully grasp the content. About 43.8% chose the option of listening twice, 18.5% chose the option of listening three times, 20.6% chose the option of listening more than three times. Only about 17.1% chose the option of listening once to immediately understand the content (Figure 3). Commenting on this, one of the interviewees

stated, “I usually had to listen to each episode twice, especially if the topic was challenging or had a lot of new vocabulary” (S#11). Another remarked, “For some cultural topics or guest interviews, I needed to slow down the speed or replay several times to catch the meaning” (S#7). These results also seem to be consistent with other research which found that authentic materials other than textbooks can provide learners with different experiences from learning with textbooks in class (Ibrahim, 2019).

To comprehensively evaluate the perceived quality of the podcast “*English, etc*” students were invited to rate 10 aspects using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5). Regarding students’ listening habits, Figure 2 reveals that the majority of participants spent time listening 1-2 times/week (accounting for 62.7%); about 1 “Strongly Agree” (5). These statements covered content-related elements such as topic relevance and vocabulary diversity, as well as technical and structural aspects like sound quality, access, and episode organization. Figure 4 below summarizes students’ responses across these categories.

Figure 4

Students’ perceptions towards the quality of the podcast “*English, etc*”



Concerning students’ perceptions of podcast content, the survey indicates that a large number of students (about 69.5% both agreeing and strongly agreeing) claimed that the podcast topics were engaging and aligned with their learning objectives. In accordance with the present results, previous research by Basenko and Baskakova (2021) has demonstrated that relevant and contextualized content enhances motivation and language learning outcomes. A student highlighted this point, sharing, “The podcast topics were interesting and connected to what we were studying in class, like discussions on cultural festivals” (S#3). Another student added, “I liked how some episodes linked directly to our assignments or classroom themes. It made them feel more useful” (S#12). The alignment between the podcast content and students’ academic needs was a remarkable strength, as it provided opportunities for real-world application of language skills. This, therefore, addresses the research question regarding the podcast as a supplementary tool for language learning.

Furthermore, the inclusion of diverse guest profiles, including teachers, native speakers and peers, significantly enriches the podcast's content. As shown in Figure 4, the majority of respondents (67.38% both agreeing and strongly agreeing) claimed that the voices of the hosts and guests were easy to listen to. Students particularly appreciated the exposure to authentic conversations, as one student stated, *"Listening to both native speakers and my peers helped me to understand different accents and somehow improve my pronunciation"* (S#9). *"I think it was helpful to hear different tones and ways of speaking. It's not something we learn much about in class"*, another participant (S#2) said. This conclusion was also reported by Thy (2023), who emphasized the need of providing multiple linguistic inputs to help pupils adapt to different accents and speaking styles. The podcast's practical exposure complements classroom learning, which provides additional access to linguistic and cultural authenticity.

The need for better sound balance during interactive segments was another notable feedback point. While most students appreciated the clarity of the hosts' voices, some mentioned difficulties in following guest interactions due to inconsistent audio quality. This finding is contrary to previous research by Tran (2016), which focused primarily on content-related barriers, suggesting that technical quality can equally impact user satisfaction.

As shown in Figure 4, over 80% of students (52.36% agreeing and 28.33% strongly agreeing) praised the podcast for not only its diversity, richness and appropriateness to the topic but its role in expanding their vocabulary as well. Some, however, found that there were many advanced terms challenging to understand without additional support. As one interviewee put it: *"Sometimes there were too many unfamiliar words in one episode, so I had to replay parts and look up definitions"* (S#11). Another remarked, *"I wish there had been a vocabulary list before each episode. Some parts were hard to follow without preparation"* (S#5). This finding reflects prior observations of Bhatti et al. (2019) that authentic materials frequently require additional scaffolding, such as glossaries and multilingual subtitles, with view to improving accessibility for learners of varying competence levels.

Participants' assessments of the podcast's effectiveness

Students' skill development

In order to access students' perceptions towards the effectiveness of the podcast, a series of 11 statements was scored on a 5-point Likert scale that went from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). According to the data, listening comprehension had the highest mean score of 4.07, followed by speaking speed and pronunciation, and vocabulary acquisition by topic with the mean scores of 4.00 and 3.99, respectively. Besides, broadcast time received the lowest rating (3.66) from the participants. Detailed percentages for each response level are also included to show variation in student perspectives across items.

Table 1 below presents the percentage distribution and mean values for each item related to students' perceptions of the *"English, etc"* podcast.

Table 1

Students' perceptions towards the effectiveness of the English podcast "English, etc"

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean
"English, etc" helps improve English vocabulary by topic	3.86	0.43	17.17	50.21	28.33	3.99
"English, etc" helps improve intonation, pronunciation and English speaking speed	3.43	2.15	16.31	48.07	30.04	4.00
"English, etc" helps improve English speaking reflexes	3.86	1.29	18.03	51.07	25.75	3.93
"English, etc" helps improve English listening comprehension skills	3.43	1.29	12.88	49.79	32.61	4.07
"English, etc" helps improve English speaking skills	3.86	1.29	20.17	48.93	25.75	3.93
"English, etc" increases my motivation to learn English	4.29	2.15	29.61	39.91	24.04	3.77
"English, etc" enriches my own knowledge	3.43	0.86	20.6	48.93	26.18	3.94
"English, etc" creates an enjoyable experience	3.86	3.00	21.46	43.78	27.9	3.91
"English, etc" is convenient to learn anytime, anywhere	3.00	3.43	24.89	39.91	28.77	3.88
Reasonable broadcast time makes it easy for me to absorb knowledge to the maximum	5.15	8.15	27.47	38.2	21.03	3.66
The speaking speed of the host and guests is appropriate, making it easy for me to grasp the information	3.43	2.15	21.46	46.35	26.61	3.91

Note. SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree

Table 1 shows that the overwhelming majority of participants (including 49.79% agreeing and 32.61% strongly agreeing) experienced significant improvements in their listening comprehension skills after engaging with the "English, etc." podcast. The mean score for this item was 4.07, the highest among all measured areas, which indicated that students perceived listening comprehension as the most positively impacted skill. In this study, thereby authentic materials within the podcast were found to be the factor that allowed learners to process natural English in context, which echoes. One student expressed, "Listening to native speakers on the podcast really helped me adjust to their speed and tone, which is different from what I usually hear in class" (S#8). Repeated listening also emerged as a valuable strategy in listening comprehension. There were some negative comments from participants that revisiting episodes enabled them to grasp complex vocabulary and better understand idiomatic expressions. For example, one interviewee agreed, "I often replayed parts with unfamiliar phrases. This helped me recognize similar expressions in other situations later" (S#3). Another student explained, "The first time I couldn't catch everything, but listening again while reading the transcript

helped a lot” (S#12). This broadly supports Tran’s (2016) observation that repeated exposure to authentic materials fosters both comprehension and retention over time. Moreover, the podcast’s ability to improve listening comprehension is in accord with its educational goal of equipping students with tools to interpret spoken English effectively in academic and real-world contexts. The structured content provided clear themes, which not only supported comprehension but also served as a practical framework for broader language learning activities.

Another striking finding is that more than 70% of participants, with 48.93% agreeing and 25.75% strongly agreeing, reported noticeable improvements in their speaking fluency, pronunciation, and intonation after regularly engaging with the podcast. The mean score of 3.93 in this aspect showed a strong perceived impact on students’ speaking performance. According to the participants, the conversational and dialogic format of the episodes provided practical models for learners to mimic natural speech. One student remarked, *“I copied the speakers on the podcast, so I learned how to adjust my tone and stress words correctly”* (S#11). Another reflected, *“Some guest speakers spoke naturally and casually. It gave me an example for how to sound more fluent in daily conversations”* (S#10). Moreover, several students mentioned they had become more confident in speaking spontaneously. For example, one student claimed, *“It helped me react faster because I think I heard real conversations, not just textbook ones”* (S#6). These results reflect those on podcast efficacy of NamazianDost et al. (2017), Nguyen and Ho (2018) and Nguyen et al. (2023), who also found that podcasts significantly contribute to the development of pronunciation and speaking skills.

As can also be seen from the table above, thematic episodes within *“English, etc.”* were particularly effective in expanding students’ vocabulary, with 80% of participants claiming significant improvements in their word usage. With the mean score of 3.99 for vocabulary development indicating a high level of students’ satisfaction, this was further supported. Vocabulary acquisition occurred through direct comprehension of podcast content as well as supplementary activities, such as looking up unfamiliar terms and practicing with exercises after listening. For example, *“Whenever I didn’t understand a word, I would look it up and practice using it in other sentences or examples”*, one interviewee said. *“It made the new word or term easier to remember”* (S#6). Another student added, *“Sometimes the same phrases were repeated in different episodes. This really helped me remember them better”* (S#13). While some students may struggle with uncommon, advanced vocabulary at first, they noted that focused preparation and post-listening activities such as reviewing transcripts and repeating phrases helped them overcome these challenges. *“To me, there actually were some words that were really hard to hear, but I can use the provided transcripts to help me learn more”*, one participant acknowledged (S#9). The finding demonstrates that this approach not only introduced new words to students but also created opportunities for them to apply the vocabulary into practice. The thematic structure also allowed learners to remember and use vocabulary in relevant contexts, which thereby enhances their flexibility in language use. *“It seemed easier for me to remember words when they were all related to one topic, like festivals or studying abroad”* (S#4). These findings support evidence from previous observations of Rachmaniputri et al. (2021) and Tran (2017), which emphasize podcasts’ effectiveness in vocabulary enrichment through contextualized content. The results also highlight that thematic learning makes vocabulary acquisition more intuitive and applicable across different communication scenarios.

Students’ broader learning outcomes

Among the findings coming from the data revealed from participants’ perspectives, the

connection between language learning and cultural understanding was the most highlighted. Most interviewees expressed that listening to such episodes about culture, festivals helped them connect what they have learnt about language in their class with real-life applications. *“The episodes about cultural festivals”*, one student shared, *“not only taught me new vocabulary but also gave me information about how people from different countries celebrate their important occasions”* (S#12). Notably, Lazzari’s (2009) has shared a similar view on the way that podcasts can be a good bridge between language learning and cultural education. He also affirmed that necessary exposure to diverse perspectives and traditions both raised learners’ cultural awareness and fostered intercultural competence.

Moreover, thematic episodes with cultural content made their learning process more engaging and memorable. For instance, a student explained, *“When I watched and learned about traditional foods in one episode, it was easier for me to remember the vocabulary because I could visualize the dishes”* (S#10). This supports Nguyen and Ho’s (2018) finding that cultural framing enhances vocabulary retention and real-world language application. Another participant reflected on the broader impact, *“I started noticing cultural references in English movies and news more often after listening to the podcast”* (S#14), which suggests the increasing emphasis on intercultural competence in modern language education.

What is more, the flexibility of the podcast *“English, etc”* was reported to be an outstanding good point, which encouraged students’ independent learning habits. A majority of participants (70%) reported the fact that they were able to listen to the podcast at any time, and this made it easier to sustain their consistent practice. As one student shared, *“I usually listened to the podcast on the bus to school. I think it made my time useful and helped me stay consistent with my practice”* (S#7). *“I, myself, listened before bed and during breaks at school. I must admit that it fit my schedule easily”*, S#2 added. In accordance with the present results, previous research by Shamburg et al. (2023) has demonstrated that the portability and accessibility of podcasts empower learners to take control of their own progress.

Furthermore, several participants mentioned that they felt more confident in their ability to learn independently after using the podcast. *“The podcast taught me how to learn on my own. I started to explore other English resources because I realized I could improve by myself”* (S#11). Others mentioned feeling more confident in seeking out practice opportunities outside of class. *“It made me realize I didn’t have to wait for lessons to practice listening or speaking,”* reflected another (S#13).

Students’ motivation and engagement

Data from Table 1 clearly shows that a substantial number of participants (over 65%) reported an increase in motivation to learn English after engaging with the *“English, etc”* podcast. The mean score of 3.77 for this item, while slightly lower than that of language skills development, still reflects a strong positive perception of the podcast as a motivational tool. This enhanced engagement appears to stem largely from the podcast’s relaxed, informal style and flexible accessibility, which stood in contrast to more traditional classroom-based approaches. Multiple interviewees highlighted that the casual tone and interactive nature of the episodes kept them engaged without feeling pressured. One student agreed, *“The casual tone of the hosts made it feel less formal and more fun, which motivated me to keep listening”* (S#5). And another commented, *“I listened to the podcast while walking or doing chores. It felt like a productive way to use my time, and I never felt forced to do it”* (S#3). There are similarities between the attitudes expressed by students in this study and those described by Nguyen and Nguyen (2024), which claims that integrating podcasts is an effective strategy to enhance students’ interest in learning English. The finding also supports Farshi and Mohammadi’s (2013) conclusion that

engaging content fosters learner motivation and enhances the overall language learning experience.

Conclusion

This study aims at evaluating the possible impact of the podcast channel “*English, etc*” designed by a group of teacher-researchers with the purpose of providing students with another good choice of self-study resource from users’ perspectives. Data analysis from the survey questionnaire for students and semi-structured interviews with randomly-selected students at HaUI showed that the “*English, etc*” podcast channel effectively supports them in the way that it raises awareness of the urge for boosting vocabulary. It is also of some help in increasing their learning motivation and providing them with an engaging learning experience. The educational content and the value of entertainment are two aspects that receive quite positive appreciation. The various topics which are chosen on purpose and student-friendly enable the listeners to develop their language proficiency.

Apart from such positive evaluations, some need-to-improved aspects were pointed out by the participants such as some recordings should be more carefully edited with the appropriate volume, the speech rate, timing, etc. The podcast showed strong potential to be a motivating resource which can combine entertainment and education for better use of language in general and English in particular.

In spite of its significant contribution, the study still reveals several limitations. First, the small-scale population limited to only students of language-majors in a single university can decrease the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, the students' prior experience with podcasts and their different levels of proficiency may have influenced the way they evaluate the podcast channel “*English, etc*”. What is more, one podcast channel with a modest number of episodes may not be the representative for podcast channels in general.

It is suggested that further research should be done with the extension to more diverse participants in more institutions, and more varied in age range. In addition, more comparisons should be made to the target podcast channel “*English, etc*” and other ones to get multiple views on the levels of difficulty, format, and the diversity of content. Thus, it is more likely to get deeper insights into how to build up suitable format and content for the podcast to meet the learners’ needs. It is also recommended for researchers to evaluate how technologies impact learning outcomes and identify the training requirements for teachers to use them effectively. Understanding the role of digital resources could modernize instructions and help bridge the gap between classroom learning and the communicative demands of contemporary professional environments.

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