

THE ROLE OF PODCASTS IN IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS FOR STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The study deals with the role of English-language podcasts in improving the listening skills of students learning English as a foreign language. The study aims to determine the effectiveness of the systematic use of podcasts in developing listening skills and increasing students' learning motivation. The study involved 200 students of five levels of English proficiency (A1–C1). A pedagogical experiment with pre- and post-testing was conducted during the 2024–2025 academic year and lasted 36 weeks (64 online classes via Google Meet). Data were collected through listening pre- and post-tests, a motivation questionnaire, and open-ended student responses, and were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired-samples t-tests, and Pearson correlation analysis. The results showed a statistically significant improvement in listening performance across all groups ($p < 0.01$). The highest increase was recorded at level B1 (+18.3%), while levels A2 and B2 showed gains of +16.3% and +14.4%, respectively. Motivation also increased from 54–78% to 62–84%, with the greatest changes at levels A2–B1. A positive correlation was found between improved listening and increased motivation ($r = 0.71$; $p < 0.01$). The findings support the pedagogical value of podcasts as authentic digital resources for the development of listening skills in students learning English as a foreign language.

Keywords: Podcasts; listening skills; learning motivation; digital learning; higher education.

O PAPEL DOS PODCASTS NO APRIMORAMENTO DAS HABILIDADES DE COMPREENSÃO AUDITIVA DE ESTUDANTES QUE APRENDEM INGLÊS COMO LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA

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Resumo

O estudo aborda o papel dos podcasts em inglês na melhoria das habilidades de compreensão auditiva de alunos que aprendem inglês como língua estrangeira. O estudo tem como objetivo determinar a eficácia do uso sistemático de podcasts no desenvolvimento da compreensão auditiva e no aumento da motivação para a aprendizagem dos alunos. O estudo envolveu 200 alunos de cinco níveis de proficiência em inglês (A1–C1). Foi realizado um experimento pedagógico com pré e pós-teste durante o ano letivo de 2024–2025, com duração de 36 semanas (64 aulas on-line via Google Meet). Os dados foram coletados por meio de testes de compreensão auditiva antes e depois da intervenção, questionário de motivação e respostas abertas dos estudantes, e analisados por estatística descritiva, teste t para amostras dependentes e correlação de Pearson. Os resultados mostraram melhora estatisticamente significativa no desempenho de compreensão auditiva em todos os grupos ($p < 0,01$). O maior aumento foi registrado no nível B1 (+18,3%), enquanto os níveis A2 e B2 apresentaram ganhos de +16,3% e +14,4%, respectivamente. A motivação também aumentou, de 54–78% para 62–84%, com as maiores mudanças nos níveis A2–B1. Foi identificada uma correlação positiva entre a melhora da escuta e o aumento da motivação ($r = 0,71$; $p < 0,01$). Os achados confirmam o valor pedagógico dos podcasts como recursos digitais autênticos para o desenvolvimento da compreensão auditiva de estudantes que aprendem inglês como língua estrangeira.

Palavras-chave: podcasts, compreensão auditiva, motivação acadêmica, aprendizagem digital, ensino superior.

EL PAPEL DE LOS PODCASTS EN LA MEJORA DE LAS HABILIDADES DE ESCUCHA DE LOS ESTUDIANTES QUE APRENDEN INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

Resumen

El estudio aborda el papel de los podcasts en inglés en la mejora de la comprensión auditiva de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. El estudio tiene como objetivo determinar la eficacia del uso sistemático de podcasts en el desarrollo de la comprensión auditiva y en el aumento de la motivación de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. El estudio involucró a 200 estudiantes de cinco niveles de dominio del inglés (A1–C1). Se realizó un experimento pedagógico con pretest y postest durante el año académico 2024–2025, con una duración de 36 semanas (64 clases en línea a través de Google Meet). Los datos se recopilaron mediante pruebas de comprensión auditiva antes y después de la intervención, un cuestionario de motivación y respuestas abiertas de los estudiantes, y se analizaron mediante estadística descriptiva, prueba t para muestras relacionadas y correlación de Pearson. Los resultados mostraron una mejora estadísticamente significativa en el rendimiento auditivo



en todos los grupos ($p < 0,01$). El mayor aumento se registró en el nivel B1 (+18,3%), mientras que los niveles A2 y B2 mostraron incrementos de +16,3% y +14,4%, respectivamente. La motivación también aumentó de 54-78% a 62-84%, con los mayores cambios en los niveles A2-B1. Se identificó una correlación positiva entre la mejora de la escucha y el aumento de la motivación ($r = 0,71$; $p < 0,01$). Los hallazgos confirman el valor pedagógico de los podcasts como recursos digitales auténticos para el desarrollo de la comprensión auditiva de estudiantes que aprenden inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: podcasts, comprensión auditiva, motivación académica, aprendizaje digital, educación superior.

1. Introduction

Listening is one of the most complex and important components of foreign language communicative competence. It is the ability to understand oral speech that determines the real level of language proficiency, as it ensures the perception, interpretation, and comprehension of authentic speech signals in a dynamic context of communication. Despite this, listening often remains a secondary element of curricula in the practice of teaching English or is reduced to tests that do not reflect the real process of speech perception. This disparity between theoretical significance and practical development determines the need to find more effective teaching methods and tools.

The last decade has been characterized by the rapid growth of the role of digital technologies in foreign language teaching. Multimedia platforms, online courses, video, and audio resources are forming a new teaching paradigm in which authenticity, mobility, and flexibility come to the fore. Learning languages through digital media is becoming not only a way to train individual skills but also a means of creating an interactive educational environment that stimulates motivation, self-reflection, and autonomous learning. According to Gloria and Galvez (2025), digital platforms provide students with high emotional engagement, while increasing the risk of cognitive overload if there is no clear methodological structure.

In this context, authentic audio materials – interviews, video blogs, podcasts that reproduce the natural speech of native speakers with all its intonation, rhythm, and cultural features – attract special attention. They enable overcoming the formalism of traditional audio recordings and bring learning closer to real communicative experience. World practice proves that the use of digital audio resources contributes not only to the development of auditory skills but also to increasing students' internal motivation to learn the language (Alhaj & Albahiri, 2020; Khan & Khan, 2024).

Podcasts occupy a special place among such resources. They combine accessibility and authenticity, enabling students to independently choose the topic, speed of speech, and format of perception. Bozavlı (2024) confirmed in his experiment that systematic listening to English-language podcasts

statistically improves the results of listening tests and increases learning motivation. Similar findings are presented by Laiya et al. (2022), who found that regular use of podcasts helps reduce anxiety and overcome the psychological barrier of speech perception. At the same time, Khan & Khan (2024) and Phùng (2024) emphasize that the effect of podcasts may be superficial and short-term without methodological support (pre- and post-listening tasks).

Despite the growing body of research on podcasts in foreign language education, several important gaps remain. First, much of the existing evidence is based on short-term interventions, while longer instructional implementations integrated into the formal educational process remain insufficiently examined. Second, the differential effectiveness of podcasts across proficiency levels defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is still underexplored, although learners at different stages may respond to authentic audio materials in different ways. Third, previous studies have more often focused on listening improvement or motivation separately, whereas their combined analysis within longer classroom-based implementations remains limited. These gaps define the research niche of the present study and determine its relevance. The hypothesis of the study is that the systematic use of English-language podcasts in the educational process will contribute to a statistically significant improvement in students' listening skills and learning motivation, and that the degree of this impact will vary across CEFR proficiency levels.

The study aims to determine the effectiveness of using English-language podcasts in improving the listening skills of students learning English as a foreign language (EFL), and to analyze their impact on learning motivation across different CEFR proficiency levels.

To achieve this aim, the following research objectives were formulated: 1. Implement an author's programme for the systematic use of English-language podcasts in the educational process; 2. Determine the level of students' listening skills before and after the introduction of podcasts and assess the dynamics of changes; 3. Investigate the impact of systematic listening to podcasts on the level of students' learning motivation; and 4. Identify students' attitudes towards podcasts as a means of independent and formal learning of English listening.

2. Literature Review

The literature review deals with the analysis of current studies on the trends in the use of digital technologies, in particular podcasts, in developing listening skills and enhancing motivation to learn foreign languages. In Vietnam, Hoang (2025) conducted a quasi-experiment with 60 students and showed that eight weeks of practice with English-language podcasts significantly improved the results of speech comprehension tests, while a control group (CG) that studied with a textbook made little progress. Bao & Nguyen (2025) confirm these findings: authentic podcasts helped students to better perceive different accents and rapid speech, while increasing their confidence in their own listening skills. Both studies demonstrate the effectiveness of intensive podcast listening, but



do not consider the long-term sustainability of the results obtained, an aspect that remains open.

In the Philippines, Romualdez et al. (2025) also confirmed the positive effect of podcasts: college students who worked with podcasts showed significant improvement from pre-test to post-test, particularly in pronunciation and vocabulary. However, unlike Hoang (2025), the Philippine study captures the speaking effect of podcasts rather than a purely receptive one. In Indonesia, Samudro et al. (2025), in a qualitative study, emphasized the gradual nature of adaptation: students initially encountered difficulties (pace, accents, vocabulary), but gradually developed their own listening strategies, which indicates the formation of an autonomous listener. This distinguishes their approach from the quantitatively oriented Vietnamese and Philippine works. In a broader perspective, the results are consistent with studies by Suzani (2020) in Iran and Gonulal (2020) in Turkey, which also prove the effectiveness of podcasts, while Oraif & Alrashed (2025) in Saudi Arabia showed that contextual and thematic podcasts (on sustainable development) improve not only listening comprehension but also content motivation.

The impact of podcasts on student motivation and autonomy is a central theme of current research. Hoang (2025) showed that eight weeks of podcast use increased listening performance, autonomy, and intrinsic motivation, although the duration of the effect is unclear. Indahsari (2020) confirmed in her review that the authenticity and digital appeal of podcasts increase interest in the language, focusing on emotional engagement rather than test scores. Phùng (2024) also found positive student attitudes towards podcasts, but noted difficulties related to accents and vocabulary. As Samudro et al. (2025) emphasize, the effectiveness of podcasts depends on pedagogical design – prior instructions, group interaction, and post-listening reflection, without which they remain a passive medium.

In Ukrainian studies, attention is focused mainly on the practical implementation of podcasts in the educational process. Babenko (2020) used podcasts of the Canadian radio company CBC in teaching non-philological students, proving that authentic audio materials enhance motivation and cognitive activity. Her model with three stages of work (pre-, during-, and post-listening) contributed to a noticeable improvement in listening results. At the same time, despite the positive effects, Babenko (2020) does not analyze the possible cognitive overload of students who encounter authentic speech for the first time – an aspect that later authors pay attention to. Hryhorieva (2025) and Buranova (2021) offer three-stage models of work with BBC podcasts and German audio texts but place different emphasis. Hryhorieva focuses on the formation of listening competence in schoolchildren, while Buranova focuses on interlingual comparison and the role of post-listening tasks in the development of communicative competence. Both emphasize that success does not depend on the technology itself, but on pedagogical design: clear goals, interesting exercises, and post-listening forms of activity. In general, Ukrainian authors share the position of foreign researchers regarding the potential of podcasts in the development of foreign language listening but emphasize the methodological

component — the need to combine technology with communicative, project, and reflective tasks to avoid its formal use.

Summarizing the Ukrainian experience, we can note common features with international practices. As in the studies of Bozavlı (2024) or Indahsari (2020), domestic authors recognize the motivational potential of podcasts but place greater emphasis on methodological support. They emphasize that effectiveness depends not only on the authenticity of the material but also on a clear organization of listening, a system of exercises, and subsequent discussion. Without a well-thought-out pedagogical design, even high-quality content does not guarantee the formation of listening skills.

3. Methods And Materials

The study was conducted at the State University of Trade and Economics (Department of Modern European Languages, Faculty of International Trade and Law) from September 2024 to May 2025. All classes were held online using Google Meet platforms because of martial law. The author's annual programme of work with podcasts (see Appendix A) was developed to improve the EFL students' listening skills. The programme lasted about 36 weeks and included 64 classes (twice a week), where podcasts were used in three phases: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. The materials were selected from the resources of BBC Learning English, 6 Minute English, TED Talks Daily, and Lingthusiasm. These materials combine authenticity, a variety of topics, and levels of difficulty, which enable developing students' listening competence, critical thinking, and motivation. All participants provided informed consent to participate, and an anonymous survey was conducted using Google Forms after the experiment was completed.

3.1. Research design

The study was conducted during the 2024–2025 academic year at the Department of Modern European Languages of the State University of Trade and Economics. The study employed a one-group quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design. The same cohort of students was assessed before and after the implementation of the podcast-based instructional programme, which made it possible to evaluate changes in listening performance and learning motivation over time. The experimental programme was implemented in the format of practical English lessons for students of the Faculty of International Trade and Law. A total of 64 lessons were held (two per week, lasting 90 minutes).

The classes were conducted by the author of the study, a teacher of English at the Department of Modern European Languages. To ensure objectivity, the results were evaluated by two independent experts from the same department who did not participate in teaching or interact with the students as direct instructors. Their role was to provide external quality control and support the reliability of the measurements. Specifically, they supervised the listening tests at the diagnostic (pre-test) and final (post-test) stages,



ensuring uniform listening conditions, consistent timing, and compliance with instructions. They also verified students' responses in the listening tests and lexical-analytic tasks before the data were entered into a consolidated dataset for further processing in SPSS 29.0. In addition, the experts administered anonymous motivation questionnaires at the beginning and end of the study in order to reduce the effect of socially desirable responses. Thus, the involvement of independent experts ensured a clear separation between teaching and assessment, which strengthened the reliability and validity of the results.

Stage I. Diagnostic (September 2024). Objective: Determine the initial level of listening skills, vocabulary, and learning motivation. Instruments: 1) CEFR Placement Test (British Council) to classify participants into levels A1–C1. The level of English proficiency was determined using the CEFR Placement Test (British Council), administered as part of this study at the diagnostic stage. The test included sections on listening, grammar, vocabulary, and reading. The results automatically assigned students to levels A1–C1 according to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) scale. So, the level was determined for each participant separately, after which the students were divided into subgroups by language level to ensure comparability of the results as part of the analysis. 2) Pre-test on listening, which included excerpts from the BBC Learning English podcasts – 6 Minute English (“Are you a good listener?”, “Why do we forget things?”) and Lingthusiasm (“How words change meaning over time”). 3) Questionnaire on motivation to learn English, developed based on Gardner’s Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) scale, adapted for the online format (20 statements on a 5-point Likert scale). Testing and questionnaires were conducted online via Google Meet and Google Forms. Students listened to the audio files twice, after which they completed the test tasks and filled out the questionnaire. The duration of the stage was 2 classes.

Stage II. Formative (October 2024 – April 2025). Objective: implement a programme of systematic podcast listening and identify its impact on listening, vocabulary, and motivation. Programme: “Podcast-Based Listening Cycle” – a cycle of classes with three listening stages (pre-, while-, post-listening).

Class format: 1. Conducted online in groups of 15–20 students via Google Meet; 2. Authentic podcasts were used: BBC Learning English – 6 Minute English (topics: culture, technology, environment, health); TED Talks Daily (short educational speeches); Lingthusiasm (linguistic podcasts for intermediate and advanced levels); Big City Small World (serial audio dramas for levels A1–B1). Each class included: a) Pre-listening – a short introduction, discussion of the topic, explanation of key vocabulary, content prediction (5–10 min); b) While listening – listening to the podcast twice (3–6 min) with tasks for global and detailed understanding, highlighting keywords, filling in gaps in the transcript (25–30 min); c) Post-listening – reflective discussion in small groups, written summaries, creative tasks (creating your own short podcast, debates, lexical maps) (30–40 min). Each month had its own thematic focus (detailed in Appendix A). Examples of podcast episodes within the “Podcast-Based Listening Cycle” programme are listed in Appendix B. In the middle of the semester

(January 2025), an intermediate listening test and a short survey on changes in motivation and attitude towards podcasts were conducted.

Stage III. Control and analytical (May 2025). Purpose: check the results of the experiment and compare the “before” and “after” indicators. Tools: a) Post-test on listening (new BBC Learning English podcasts and TED Talks with topics similar to the pre-test); b) Post-experimental motivation questionnaire (identical in structure to the initial one to ensure comparability of results); c) Additional questionnaire with open questions, where students described how podcasts affected their confidence, interest, and listening strategies. Testing took place online under the supervision of two independent experts from the department, who recorded the time of completing tasks and listening conditions. After the test, students filled out the motivation questionnaire again, which made it possible to examine the dynamics of changes in motivation before and after the experiment. The data were automatically stored in Google Sheets and exported to SPSS 29.0 for descriptive statistics, paired-samples t-tests, and Pearson correlation analysis of changes in listening performance and learning motivation. All participants signed an informed consent to participate in the study. Video and audio recordings of classes were used for educational purposes only (re-listening, pronunciation analysis). The reliability of the data was increased by using triangulation of methods: testing, questionnaires, and expert observation.

3.2. Methods

The methodology combined quantitative and qualitative procedures within a one-group quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design. Quantitative data were used to assess changes in listening performance and learning motivation before and after the intervention, while qualitative data from open-ended responses were used to interpret students’ perceptions of podcast-based learning. Accordingly, the study employed the following methods and instruments: 1) Quasi-experimental pedagogical design – implementation of the podcast-based instructional programme in natural learning conditions (online classes) with pre-test and post-test measurement of the same participants. 2) Listening testing – adapted authentic BBC Learning English materials corresponding to levels A1–C1 were used in the pre-test and post-test. Listening performance was measured through an author-developed test based on authentic podcasts (20 tasks across 5 CEFR levels). Each test assessed global understanding, detailed comprehension, and recognition of lexical and grammatical features in context. 3) Student survey – a combined instrument with closed and open-ended questions. Closed items assessed learning motivation, autonomy, and frequency of podcast use on a 5-point Likert scale. Open-ended items explored students’ perceptions of podcasts, perceived difficulties, and the impact of podcast-based learning. Responses were grouped thematically. For example: “What aspect of podcasts was most useful to you?” or “How did podcasts affect your motivation?” or “What difficulties did you encounter while listening?” 4) Statistical analysis – descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. Paired-samples t-tests were applied to compare



pre-test and post-test mean scores because the same participants were measured before and after the intervention. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between changes in listening performance and changes in learning motivation. The results were considered statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, with $p < 0.01$ interpreted as a higher level of significance.

3.3. Sample

The experiment involved 200 students of the Faculty of International Trade and Law of the State University of Trade and Economics, who studied English as a mandatory foreign subject. The sample was formed on the principle of voluntary participation from among 320 students who were previously informed about the purpose of the study through an announcement on the university's educational platform. The students were able to join of their own free will after familiarizing themselves with the terms of participation and providing written (electronic) consent.

The students of 2nd–3rd years of undergraduate studies (68%) and 1st year of graduate studies (32%) were involved in the experiment. This distribution was chosen deliberately, as these categories of students who actively study practical English courses and have sufficient academic motivation to participate in the experiment. Besides, the involvement of graduate students made it possible to compare the effectiveness of the podcast methodology at different stages of language training — from intermediate to advanced levels. Other courses (for example, 4th year of bachelor's or 2nd year of master's) were not included because of the participation in industrial practices and master's projects, which made it impossible to regularly listen to podcasts during the academic year.

The sample included students of economic, legal, and international majors, for whom English is part of professionally-oriented training. Involving representatives of several majors made it possible to avoid a narrow focus of the sample and increased the generalizability of the results.

The total number of participants ensured the representativeness of the data with an error of no more than $\pm 5\%$ at a confidence interval of 95%. This sample structure made it possible to investigate the effectiveness of podcasts at different levels of language training — from elementary (A1–A2) to advanced (C1) — and to assess the universality of the author's programme for students with different levels of English proficiency.

3.4. Instruments

The statistical procedures were selected in accordance with the design of the study. Because the same participants were assessed before and after the intervention, paired-samples t-tests were used to identify statistically significant changes over time. Pearson correlation analysis was then applied to examine whether gains in listening performance were associated with changes in learning motivation. The following tools were used for data collection, processing, and



analysis: a) Google Forms – for questionnaires and obtaining primary data; 2) SPSS 29.0 – for statistical analysis (calculation of t, p, r); 3) Excel – for graphing (dynamics of motivation, frequency of independent listening); 4) CEFR Placement Test (British Council) – for determining levels of language competence; 5) Authentic podcasts BBC Learning English, 6 Minute English, TED Talks Daily – as educational material for the experiment.

The statistical significance of the difference between the indicators before and after the experiment was checked through the Student’s t-test for dependent samples (paired samples t-test). Calculations were performed in the SPSS 29.0 programme according to the formula: $t = \bar{D} / (SD / \sqrt{n})$, where: \bar{D} – arithmetic mean of the differences between the indicators “before” and “after” the experiment; SD – standard deviation of the differences; n – number of observations in the sample. The level of statistical significance was determined by a two-sided criterion at $p < 0.05$ (significance), $p < 0.01$ (high significance).

The relationship between listening and learning motivation was identified by using the Pearson linear correlation coefficient:

$$r = \Sigma(x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y}) / \sqrt{[\Sigma(x_i - \bar{x})^2 \Sigma(y_i - \bar{y})^2]}$$

Where x_i – changes in listening indicators, y_i – changes in motivation, \bar{x} \bar{y} – their average values. So, the applied methodology combined empirical, statistical, and analytical approaches, which allowed for a reasonable assessment of the effectiveness of podcasts in developing listening skills and enhancing student motivation.

4. Results

The results are presented in Table 1. All groups showed an increase in average listening scores after the program, indicating an overall positive trend.

Table 1. Dynamics of listening scores of students of different levels of English proficiency (n = 200)

Listening level	Before the experiment (M±SD)	After the experiment (M±SD)	t(df)	p-value
A1	46.3 ± 8.1	58.7 ± 7.9	4.85 (39)	< 0.01
A2	53.1 ± 9.0	69.4 ± 8.5	6.12 (38)	< 0.001
B1	61.2 ± 8.8	79.5 ± 7.3	6.87 (40)	< 0.001
B2	70.8 ± 7.6	85.2 ± 6.1	5.74 (39)	< 0.001
C1	78.9 ± 6.4	89.0 ± 5.2	4.02 (39)	< 0.01

Source: developed by the author.

For all CEFR levels, a statistically significant improvement in listening performance after using podcasts was found (all $p < 0.01$), confirming the reliability of the effect. The highest t-test values are observed at levels A2 and B1, where $t(40)=6.87$ and $t(38)=6.12$, respectively. This indicates that podcasts have the strongest impact on intermediate English students who have sufficient

vocabulary to perceive authentic material but have not yet lost their motivational impulse. At levels A1 and C1, despite the statistical significance of the results ($p < 0.01$), the effect is less pronounced, which may be explained by the limited vocabulary of beginners and the lower growth potential of advanced students. The general trend of increasing t-scores from A1 to B1, and then their gradual decrease after level B2, indicates the presence of an optimal zone of influence – the average level of proficiency (A2–B1), where podcasts provide the greatest effectiveness in developing listening skills. The cumulative values of t and p confirm that the use of podcasts has a systematic and reliable positive effect on the development of auditory competence of students of all levels, although the degree of influence varies depending on language training.

Table 2 shows the dynamics of lexicon-analytical progress (lexical enrichment and contextual understanding). It illustrates that systematic listening to podcasts contributes to the expansion of vocabulary and the ability to analyze the language context, which is a factor in the development of listening.

Table 2. Dynamics of lexical-analytical progress.

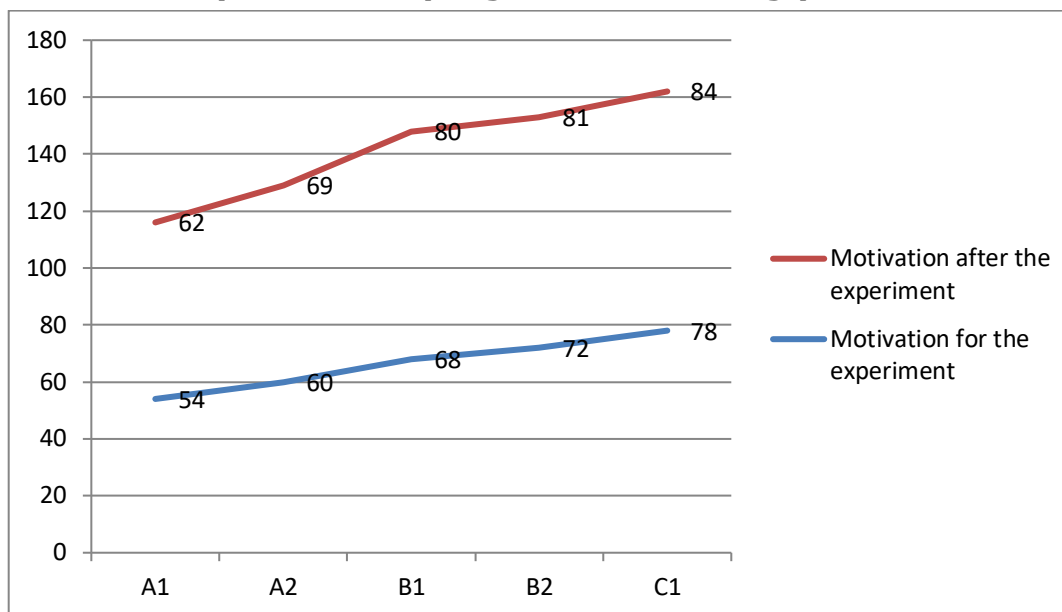
Lexical level	Vocabulary Pre-test (M±SD)	Vocabulary Post-test (M±SD)	Vocabulary Δ (%)	Analytical Pre-test (M±SD)	Analytical Post-test (M±SD)	Analytical Δ (%)
A1	45.0 ± 9.0	60.0 ± 8.5	33,3 %	40.0 ± 8.0	59.0 ± 7.9	47,5 %
A2	55.0 ± 8.8	71.0 ± 8.0	29,1 %	50.0 ± 9.0	70.0 ± 8.3	40,0 %
B1	60.0 ± 9.5	78.0 ± 7.5	30,0 %	55.0 ± 8.6	78.0 ± 7.4	41,8 %
B2	70.0 ± 7.9	84.0 ± 6.8	20,0 %	68.0 ± 7.7	86.0 ± 6.2	26,5 %
C1	78.0 ± 6.5	88.0 ± 5.7	12,8 %	76.0 ± 6.3	89.0 ± 5.5	17,1 %

Source: developed by the author.

These tables indicate a significant improvement in both vocabulary and analytical competence after the introduction of the course using podcasts. At the initial levels A1–A2, the most intensive growth of both indicators is observed – vocabulary increases by +29–33%, and analytical skills – by almost +40–48%, which is explained by the novelty effect and high motivation of students who had rarely interacted with authentic audio material before. At level B1, the maximum balance between both components was recorded: vocabulary growth of +30% and analytical +41.8%. This indicates that the effectiveness of podcast-oriented learning reaches its peak at the intermediate level – students already have a basic grammatical and lexical base and begin to actively develop the skills of understanding subtext, intonation, and logical connections. In groups B2–C1, the growth rate decreases slightly (vocabulary +13–20%, analytics +17–26%), but this does not indicate lower efficiency, but rather a saturation effect: students at these levels already have a sufficient vocabulary, so working with podcasts performs a supporting, rather than stimulating, function. Overall, the results confirm that podcasts are an effective means of developing both cognitive and metacognitive skills, especially at the stages of transition from the initial to the intermediate level of language proficiency.

According to the results of the survey conducted by independent experts, a statistically significant increase in the average indicator of learning motivation (on a 5-point Likert scale) was recorded — from 54–78% to 62–84% in all groups, which confirms the effectiveness of the podcast-oriented programme. It is worth noting that this is about self-assessment of motivation by students, and not about academic scores (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Dynamics of students’ learning motivation before and after the experimental programme of using podcasts.



Source: developed by the author.

The nature of the relationship between the cognitive (listening) and affective (motivation) and lexical components was clarified through a comparative analysis of the relative increases of both indicators. This enabled finding out to what extent the increase in understanding of authentic English-language material using podcasts is accompanied by an increase in students’ intrinsic motivation (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation between the growth of listening, lexical competence, and motivation

CEFR level	Δ listening, %	Δ motivation, %	Δ vocabulary, %	Interpretation
A1	+12.4	+8.0	+10.2	Beginners demonstrate moderate growth in motivation, listening comprehension, and vocabulary thanks to authentic podcasts.
A2	+16.3	+9.0	+13.5	Steady growth in both indicators. Everyday vocabulary is activated.
B1	+18.3	+12.0	+15.0	The highest progress in language perception, motivation, and acquisition of new vocabulary; podcasts increase listeners’ confidence and autonomy.

B2	+14.4	+9.0	+11.8	The effect persists, but the rate of growth decreases somewhat; a stable strategy for understanding the context is formed
C1	+10.1	+6.0	+8.5	Less pronounced effect, mainly supportive: students improve accuracy and variability of speech.

Source: developed by the author.

The obtained results showed a clear positive relationship between the improvement of listening skills and the growth of learning motivation of students who systematically worked with English-language podcasts. An increase in both indicators is observed at all CEFR levels; however, the rate of increase varies depending on the language preparation. The highest results were recorded for students at level B1, where the increase in listening was +18.3%, and in motivation, +12.0%. This confirms that the average level of proficiency is optimal for using podcasts, as it combines a sufficient lexical and grammatical reserve with a high level of interest in improving speaking. For levels A2 and B2, the dynamics also turned out to be consistently positive (+16.3% and +9.0%), while at the initial (A1) and advanced (C1) levels, the effect was less pronounced, which can be explained by the limited language experience in the former and the saturation of learning motivation in the latter. The revealed correlation coefficient ($r = 0.71$; $p < 0.01$) indicates a close relationship between the cognitive and affective aspects of language acquisition: the better students understand authentic speech, the higher their intrinsic motivation for further learning becomes. So, podcasts are not only a tool for developing listening skills, but also a factor of emotional and motivational support, which makes them an effective means of improving listening in students of different levels of training.

A questionnaire with open questions was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the perception of podcasts and the factors that influenced learning. The students' responses revealed both quantitative trends and qualitative changes in their attitude towards the language, level of autonomy, difficulties, and motivational stimuli. The summarized results are presented in Chart 4.

Chart 4. Students' open answers regarding the impact of podcasts on the process of learning English

Item No.	Questionnaire items	Students' generalized responses (quotes / thematic groups)	Interpretation of results
1	What aspect of the podcasts did you find most useful?	"Lively sound of the language" (42%), "different accents" (27%), "new words with context" (22%), "convenience of the format – you can listen anywhere" (9%)	Students appreciate the authenticity and mobility of podcasts, which increases motivation to listen.
2	How has your perception of the English	"I understand fast speech more easily" (38%), "I am less afraid of listening to native speakers"	A decrease in anxiety and the formation of active listening skills have been noted - typical

	language changed since participating in the programme?	(31%), "I learned to recognize intonations" (19%), "I started listening to podcasts on my own" (12%)	cognitive shifts when working with authentic materials.
3	Have the podcasts influenced your motivation to learn English? How?	"I want to improve my understanding so that I don't have to use subtitles" (29%), "it became interesting to listen to topics that are close to me" (33%), "I see real progress" (25%), "I now listen to podcasts even outside of class" (13%)	Enhanced motivation is internal — listening to podcasts is associated with the content and autonomy of learning.
4	What difficulties did you encounter when working with podcasts?	"Speech too fast" (46%), "unfamiliar words" (28%), "hard to concentrate on long releases" (17%), "technical problems" (9%)	Typical listening barriers have been identified; students need a gradual increase in the complexity of the material and self-regulation strategies (re-listening, notes, etc.).
5	Which podcasts were the most interesting for you?	"BBC Learning English" (41%), "6 Minute English" (24%), "TED Talks Daily" (18%), "Lingthusiasm" (10%), "Other (news, culture, education)" (7%)	There is a clear advantage of educational formats, but interest in popular science and cultural topics is growing - this opens up prospects for expanding the programme.
6	How would you assess your own progress after the course?	"Speech comprehension has improved significantly" (44%), "started to understand jokes/cultural references" (21%), "pronunciation has improved" (19%), "confidence in communication has increased" (16%)	Qualitative results confirm quantitative indicators of increased listening and motivation, also recording the development of language confidence.

Source: developed by the authors (selection of quotes from open-ended questionnaires).

The students' responses show that podcasts have a complex impact: cognitive (development of language understanding) and affective (growth of interest and autonomy). The most important result was the transition from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic, that is, independent listening based on interest. This confirms the effectiveness of the programme, which is focused on the regular use of authentic materials of varying complexity and topics.

5. Discussion

The results of the study showed a statistically significant improvement in listening: the average listening comprehension score increased from 67% to 83%. This is consistent with the data of Ali & Khalil (2025), who recorded higher results in the group trained according to the HURIER model (12.45 out of 15 points versus 10.02/15; $p < 0.05$). After the implementation of the author's programme using podcasts, students perceived a foreign language more confidently by ear, which indicates an increase in motivation. As in the studies of Alzamil (2021) and Al-khresheh (2020), it was confirmed that listening is one



of the most difficult aspects of language learning. Alzamil (2021) notes difficulties caused by fast speech pace, pronunciation, anxiety, limited vocabulary, and lack of background knowledge; Al-khresheh (2020) emphasizes problems at all stages of perception and the influence of cultural context. Our results are consistent with these findings: students also noted similar barriers but confirmed that focused learning helps overcome them.

Recent years have seen a surge in interest in innovative methods and digital technologies in listening instruction. Our study is consistent with previous work from 2020–2025: Alzamil (2021) outlined difficulties in language comprehension without suggesting ways to overcome them, while we tested an effective method with measurable progress. Similarly, Bozavlı (2024) found that 12 weeks of podcasting improved listening skills and motivation. The regular use of authentic materials in our study also increased students' confidence and engagement.

Our results confirm the effectiveness of video materials for listening development, as also reported by Gloria & Galvez (2025). In their survey of 536 Filipino students, TV shows contributed to vocabulary enrichment (4.16 out of 5) and comprehension (4.09 out of 5). Our respondents share these observations, but they have shown that passive viewing is not enough: only a combination of listening with discussions, reflective tasks, and vocabulary analysis provides a sustainable increase in results. This partly contradicts the findings of Gloria & Galvez (2025), who consider viewing video content as a sufficient stimulus in itself. At the same time, Thatphaiboon & Sappapan (2022) in Thailand found that the remote format of the "flipped classroom" caused fatigue and decreased student concentration, while the combination of podcasts with short interactive sessions-maintained motivation in our experiment. Therefore, the effectiveness of digital resources depends primarily on pedagogical design, and not only on the media format.

Our results are also consistent with the data of Ali & Khalil (2025), who proved that the use of authentic recordings of native speakers in the HURIER model significantly improves comprehension ($\eta^2=0.18$). Similarly, our study used diverse authentic materials, which contributed to the increase in the effectiveness of learning even in a mixed format. Our results correlate with a metacognitive approach to listening training. Elements of strategic listening (predicting content, self-monitoring, and evaluating what was heard) helped students to realize their own techniques for working with audio text. Similar conclusions are made by Fan and Tangkiengsirisin (2025): Thai students who studied according to a metacognitive model with elements of translanguaging showed significant progress in listening and metacognitive awareness. As Al-Khresheh & Alruwaili (2023) point out, strategy use and metacognitive awareness significantly influence listening performance. Comparison with other studies revealed several limitations of previous work that ours partially overcomes. Alzamil (2021) and Ali & Khalil (2025) worked with small samples (87 and 82 participants, respectively), while our study included a more diverse group of students of different genders and majors. Alzamil (2021) and Alshraideh (2021) focused mainly on questionnaires without objective



measurement of progress, while our study recorded quantitative changes in performance before and after the experiment. Similarly, Alutaybi & Alfares (2023) only examined teachers' expectations about the benefits of Netflix for strategic listening, without examining actual student outcomes. Instead, our study empirically confirms that the use of media does indeed improve oral comprehension.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed numerous challenges to distance learning in listening, both technical and psychological. More than half of students were dissatisfied with online listening lessons (Al-Harbi & Mirza, 2024). We addressed these concerns by using interactive platforms, subtitled videos, and short audio segments. Boltiziar & Munková (2024) observed that YouTube learning with subtitles helped overcome accents, rapid speech, and unfamiliar vocabulary; we found similar results, with students reporting that subtitles made it easier to understand the speech. Similarly, Alzamil (2022) found that students viewed subtitles as a useful and engaging learning tool. So, combining listening with visual support and discussions compensates for the shortcomings of purely distance or audio-based methods.

So, the study confirmed the importance and complexity of listening training (Khan et al., 2024; Jose, 2023) and proposed an effective way to overcome them. The experiment proved that the combination of authentic audio materials, visual support, a flipped classroom, and strategy training significantly improves listening comprehension.

The work fills a gap in the literature, providing empirical evidence of the effectiveness of the methodology in the Ukrainian sample and practical recommendations for classes. The limitations of the sample and the duration of the study open the prospect of further verification. Overall, the results confirm that modern technologies and thoughtful pedagogical strategies significantly facilitate the mastery of listening and increase students' communicative competence (Alhaj & Albahiri, 2025; Fan & Tangkiengsirisin, 2025; Ji & Li, 2022). The problem remains relevant but can be successfully solved through interactive methods focused on the real needs of 21st-century learners.

Unlike previous studies, this work takes three fundamental steps forward. First, a comprehensive 36-week podcast listening programme was tested for the first time in Ukraine, integrating authentic BBC, TED, and Lingthusiasm materials with a three-level pre-while-post listening methodology. Second, the study carried out a comprehensive measurement of listening progress, motivation, and lexical development with the involvement of independent expert evaluators, which ensured the statistical reliability of the results. Third, an integrated author's programme "Podcast-Based Listening Cycle" was proposed, which combines authentic listening, reflection, and creative tasks. This model can be adapted for domestic external examinations as an effective tool for improving students' foreign language competence.

5.1. Limitations

The results should be interpreted with several limitations in mind. First, the experiment covered a relatively short period of time (one academic year), so it is not possible to fully assess the long-term impact of podcasts on the retention and automation of listening skills. Second, the study involved students of the Faculty of International Trade and Law at the State University of Trade and Economics, which determines the homogeneity of the sample in terms of educational and professional orientation and may partially limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Third, the motivational indicators were based on self-assessment, which always implies a certain level of subjectivity. In addition, the one-group pre-test/post-test design did not include a parallel control group, which limits the possibility of comparing the observed changes with those in an alternative instructional condition. At the same time, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods made it possible to minimize these risks and ensure the reliability of the obtained data. Future research may therefore involve more diverse samples, compare online and face-to-face instructional formats, and examine the longer-term effects of podcast-based instruction on listening development and learning motivation.

5.2. Recommendations

The results of the study provide grounds for formulating several methodological recommendations for the use of podcasts in the process of teaching students listening. It is advisable to systematically introduce English-language podcasts into the educational process with a gradual complication of the material in accordance with the levels of English proficiency on the CEFR scale. For students at the initial level (A1–A2), it is appropriate to use short, adapted podcasts with subtitles and a clear structure, which help to overcome the fear of authentic speech and form basic listening strategies. For levels B1–C1, it is recommended to integrate authentic materials from a real communicative context (BBC Learning English, TED Talks, thematic educational podcasts), which provide increased cognitive complexity and the development of critical thinking.

It is important to combine podcasts with a three-stage work system (pre-during-, and post-listening stage), which involves predicting the content, analytical perception of information, and reflection on the results. Such an organization enables activating attention, expanding vocabulary, and strengthening intercultural competence. It is also recommended to diversify the genre spectrum of podcasts, including cultural, professional, and popular science topics, as this maintains students' interest and forms internal motivation. Promising areas of further research include studying the long-term effects of podcasts, determining their optimal frequency of use in training courses, and developing differentiated strategies for integrating podcasts for different levels of foreign language training.

6. Conclusions

The study confirmed that the systematic use of English-language podcasts is an effective means of improving listening, motivation, and lexical competence of students learning English as a foreign language. All groups demonstrated a statistically significant increase in the level of oral comprehension ($p < 0.01$), learning motivation, and expansion of active vocabulary. The highest results were observed among students at level B1: the increase in listening was +18.3%, motivation +12.0%, and vocabulary +15.0%. The high correlation coefficient between the development of listening and vocabulary ($r = 0.74$; $p < 0.01$) indicates that regular listening to authentic podcasts stimulates not only receptive, but also analytical processes of linguistic thinking.

The analysis of the correlation between listening, lexical competence, and motivation showed a close connection between cognitive and affective outcomes: the better students understand authentic speech, the higher their motivation and vocabulary development. Therefore, podcasts act not only as a means of training listening, but also as a comprehensive tool for the formation of linguistic autonomy, analytical thinking, and intrinsic interest in language learning.

The academic value of the study is the integrated approach to measuring cognitive, motivational, and lexical-analytical results. The practical significance is the creation of a phased programme, the Podcast-Based Listening Cycle, which can be integrated into university foreign language courses. The data obtained can be used to design online courses, improve curricula, and train teachers to use authentic media resources. Further research should be directed at studying the impact of podcasts on pronunciation, critical thinking, and intercultural competence, as well as at analyzing the long-term effect of linguistic and motivational progress.

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Appendix A: Plan for the experimental programme Podcast-Based Listening Cycle.

Month	Week 1–2 (2 sessions)	Week 3–4 (2 sessions)	Main Focus
September	Introduction to podcasts; monologue episodes; vocabulary; basic test	Listening and retelling monologues; self-analysis	Orientation and monologues
October	Interview podcasts; key ideas; notes	Interview role-playing; testing	Interviews
November	Conversational podcasts; two hosts; speaker positions	Pair discussions; preparing questions	Conversational formats
December	Narrative and investigative series; plot prediction	Constructing a chronology; analysing a story	Storytelling
January	Round tables; points of view; arguments	Debate and summarizing; written report	Discussions
February	Theatrical podcasts; characters; plot	Role-playing; dramatic reading	Audiodramas
March	Hybrid episodes; analysis of different segments	Preparing transcripts; mini podcast	Hybrid Formats
April	Planning your own podcast; script	Recording and editing; peer evaluation	Podcast Creation
May	Cross-cultural topics; hearing about different countries	Presentations; reflective essays	Intercultural competence
	Professional podcasts (science, business); glossary	Discussing applications; terminology	Professional vocabulary
	Independent podcast selection; journaling	Online discussion; self-assessment	Autonomy
	Repeating difficult episodes; portfolio	Summary test; future plan	Generalization

Source: developed by the authors.

Appendix B: Examples of podcast episodes within the Podcast-Based Listening Cycle programme.

Focus	Examples of English-language podcasts (short title + hyperlink)
orientation and monologues	Angelina Jolie, New York City, and celebrity charity (British Council) learnenglish.britishcouncil.org
interviews	Does your CV shine? – BBC Learning English 6-Minute English bbc.co.uk
conversational formats	Are you big on small talk? – BBC 6-Minute English bbc.co.uk – link
discussions and debates	Debating veganism: How to change someone's opinion – BBC 6-Minute English bbc.co.uk
audiodramas	Meeting friends – Big City Small World learnenglish.britishcouncil.org
hybrid formats	We have a mission! – Big City Small World learnenglish.britishcouncil.org
intercultural competence	Cheer up! – Big City Small World learnenglish.britishcouncil.org



	Episode 12: Good news and bad news – Big City Small World learnenglish.britishcouncil.org
professional vocabulary	Conspiracy theories – BBC 6-Minute English bbc.co.uk Episode 09: Aaagghhh... my injured leg! – Big City Small World learnenglish.britishcouncil.org

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