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## Analyzing the Perception of Generation Z on Using Podcasts to Improve English Listening Skills : A Qualitative Approach

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the perception of Generation Z regarding the use of podcasts as a learning medium to improve English listening skills. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design and involves students from the English Education Study Program at Mulawarman University who are part of Generation Z. Data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire analyzed descriptively, and in-depth interviews analyzed using thematic analysis. The results indicate that most students have positive perceptions of podcast use, particularly regarding ease of access, increased learning motivation, vocabulary enrichment, and the effectiveness of podcasts in supporting listening skills. However, some students faced challenges such as limited internet connectivity and a lack of experience in regularly using podcasts. Based on the interviews, it was also found that engaging content types, such as viral issues, education, and general knowledge, were the main attractions for students. These findings indicate that podcasts are a potential and suitable learning medium for Generation Z, particularly in the context of English language learning in the digital age.

**Keywords:** Student Preceptions, Podcast, Listening Skills, English language, Generation Z

### INTRODUCTION

In today's era of globalization, language plays an important role in human life. According to Istiara et al. (2022) language and humans are two inseparable things, because every human action is always related to the use of language in various aspects of life. Through language, humans can convey thoughts, feelings, and build effective communication even with different cultural backgrounds. With the development of information and communication technology, geographical boundaries are no longer a barrier to establishing cross-border and cross-cultural relationships. Intercultural communication has become part of the daily life of the global community. Language also functions as a means of expressing cultural identity and as a unifying force in cultural communication (Muhammad et al., 2022). When someone uses a language, they are indirectly expressing their personal way of thinking, beliefs, and cultural practices of the community they belong to, social groups, or alternative associations. Thus,

language not only functions as a tool for conveying messages but also as a representation of identity and cultural expression for each speaker.

English is one of the languages that plays a major role in facilitating international communication. Based on Edmett et al., (2024) revealed that around two billion people worldwide, or nearly one-third of the global population, use English with varying levels of proficiency. This is because English has the widest range of usage compared to other languages across various fields, including education, technology, business, and diplomatic relations. In addition to being the first language in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, English is also the second language in several countries, including India, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Singapore, and Malaysia (Ayu Sapitri & Suryadi, 2023). This widespread use reflects the important role of English in bridging international communication. Furthermore, Salainti P. et al. (2023) revealed that in addition to being a language that plays an important role in the world, English is also the main language for studying many subjects around the world. In Indonesia itself, English is integrated into the national curriculum and taught as a compulsory subject in schools from junior high school (SMP) to senior high school (SMA) and vocational high school (SMK) (Revola, 2023).

In learning English, four primary skills must be mastered: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Among these four skills, one of the most frequently practiced skills is listening. According to Gultom et al. (2023) listening skills are the first skills that humans acquire and master to determine the development of a person's first language. People tend to listen to English in their daily lives, whether consciously or unconsciously. Listening is also the most frequently used practice in classroom learning compared to other skills. This aligns with the opinion of Slamet & Mukminatien, (2024) stated that time spent communicating is typically divided among various language skills, with approximately 45% allocated to listening, 30% to speaking, 16% to reading, and only 9% to writing. This data indicates that listening skills are the dominant aspect in language communication and learning. Even according to Suri et al. (2022) stated that other language skills will not develop optimally without first mastering listening skills. Therefore, it is important to master listening skills first to master other language skills. However, many people still struggle with their English listening skills. This presents a unique challenge because listening to English requires the ability to quickly and accurately understand the message being conveyed.

Generation Z is a group of individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s. Regmi (2024), states that Generation Z is now the majority of students worldwide. According to Hastini et al. (2020) Generation Z is a generation that has been accustomed to interacting with technological advances since birth. Furthermore, Szabó et al. (2021) reveal that since childhood, Generation Z has not had a completely offline life experience. This condition makes them very familiar with technology and an integral part of their daily lives. Generation Z, often referred to as “digital natives,” possesses unique characteristics such as the ability to multitask while learning, distinct patterns of thinking, and different ways of accessing information compared to previous generations (Alruthaya et al., 2021). Furthermore, according to Yalçın-İncik (2022) Generation Z tends to prefer communicating through social media, is accustomed to multitasking, enjoys short yet personalized learning experiences, is more interested in hands-on practices, tends to focus on visuals such as graphs before reading text, and prefers interactive and video-based learning.

The continuous development of digital technology in the modern era presents opportunities in the field of education. According to Khoiriyah et al. (2024) students today live in a dynamic and interactive digital environment, so successful teaching approaches need to be adapted to their constantly changing learning styles. Therefore, effective teaching approaches must be able to adapt to their evolving learning styles. One of the most commonly used applications of digital technology is online applications. In this regard, Umida et al. (2021) state that the use of audio and video materials aims to improve the effectiveness of comprehension

in listening and strengthen students' listening skills. Additionally, recent research shows that the use of audio-visual media such as videos can significantly improve listening comprehension by presenting visual cues alongside audio, which also enhances student engagement and understanding (Maya et al., 2023).

One digital medium that is increasingly being used is podcasts. Podcasts have emerged as a relevant learning medium for Generation Z, especially in improving English listening skills. This means that this medium not only provides authentic language exposure but also creates a more relaxed and engaging learning environment, thereby motivating Generation Z students to actively participate in the learning process. Indahsari, (2020) emphasizes that podcasts are beneficial for both students and teachers because they provide repeated exposure that can boost students' confidence in language learning. In line with this, Putra & Dianti (2022) argue that the use of podcasts is an innovative method that can increase motivation in supporting the language learning process and encourage active student participation in learning activities. Supporting these views, Ningtias et al. (2021) found that Podcast Apps is effective to improve the students' listening comprehension.

Based on the above problem statement, this study aims to investigate how Generation Z students perceive the use of podcasts to improve their English listening skills. Several relevant previous studies support this study. First, research by Prasetyo et al. (2023) entitled *Students' Perception of Using Podcasts to Improve Listening Skills at the 3rd Semester Students of the English Department at Universitas Bandar Lampung*. The findings of this study show that students' perspectives on the use of podcasts to improve listening skills demonstrate progress in terms of effectiveness and uniqueness. Second, research by Harahap (2020) entitled *Podcast Impacts on Students' Listening Skill: A Case Study Based on Students' Perceptions*. The results of this study reveal that most participants felt that podcasts helped them improve their English language skills. Referring to the results of previous studies, this study seeks to make a further contribution by focusing on the context of Generation Z students who live in the digital age and have different learning characteristics from previous generations.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design to investigate Generation Z's perceptions of using podcasts to improve their English listening skills. The participants in this study were students from the English Education Department at Mulawarman University who belonged to Generation Z and had experience in listening to podcasts. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. According to Friday & Leah (2024) purposive sampling techniques are widely used in various studies because they can be applied in various research paradigms. This method helps researchers obtain relevant and high-quality samples without bias, thereby increasing the reliability and credibility of research results. Data were collected through two main techniques, namely questionnaires and interviews. In this study, the researcher used a closed-ended questionnaire. Closed-ended questionnaires can be analyzed qualitatively using the Likert Scale to identify response trends. The questionnaire was designed using a Likert Scale with five points, including Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Statements in this study are adapted from a study by Harahap (2020) entitled *Podcast Impacts on Students' Listening Skills: A Case Study Based on Students' Perceptions*. The questionnaire data was processed using a descriptive approach to see the response trends for each statement item. Additionally, the researcher conducted interviews with three selected students and recorded their responses. In this study, the researchers used semi-structured interviews. According to Ruslin et al. (2022) stated that in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer typically prepares a set of guiding topics or themes to investigate during the conversation. The qualitative data from the interview results were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results of the

questionnaire and interviews were then compared and synthesized to provide an overview of Generation Z's perceptions of the use of podcasts in improving English listening skills.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings in this study were obtained through data analysis. The data analysis process was conducted descriptively because this study used a case study design. Research using a case study approach requires in-depth exploration of individuals, groups, or specific events in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of phenomena in real-life contexts (Coombs, 2023).

### 1. Analysis of Questionnaire

The initial stage in analyzing questionnaire data is to calculate the percentage results of each statement item filled in by students using the percentage formula. Furthermore, the following are the results of the percentages for each statement item.

Table 1 Percentage results of Generation Z Students' Perceptions of Each Questionnaire Item

No	Statements	The Percentage for Each Stage				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I like podcasts to improve my listening skills	16.7%	54.2%	29.2%	0.0%	0%
2	The podcast is easy to access and appropriate for me	25.0%	62.5%	8.3%	4.2%	0.0%
3	The podcast gave me the motivation for me in learning English, especially listening skills	33.3%	37.5%	20.8%	8.3%	0.0%
4	The podcast gave me the new vocabulary	45.8%	37.5%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
5	In a podcast, we can join to improve our English in a special comment column	16.7%	45.8%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%
6	I think listening is easier when using a podcast	20.8%	45.8%	29.2%	4.2%	0.0%
7	The podcast contains authentic text.	4.2%	25.0%	62.5%	8.3%	0.0%
8	I did not need a podcast	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	41.7%	16.7%
9	My listening skill is lacking, I need the media to support it	29.2%	37.5%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%
10	Podcast should be implemented in the listening subject in the classroom	20.8%	45.8%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%

Based on the results of the questionnaire data analysis, which consisted of 10 statements and involved 24 Generation Z student respondents from the English Education Study Program at Mulawarman University, it was generally found that Generation Z's perception of the use of podcasts in improving English listening skills was positive. This was reflected in the majority of respondents who agreed and strongly agreed with most of the statements in the questionnaire.

In the first statement, 16.7% of students strongly agreed and 54.2% agreed, indicating that most students have a high interest in using podcasts as a medium for learning English listening skills. Meanwhile, a small number of students (29.2%) responded neutrally. This can be interpreted as meaning that they do not yet have sufficient experience or are not yet fully convinced of the effectiveness of podcasts in improving English listening skills. No students responded disagree or strongly disagree to this statement. This shows that there is no rejection of this medium, reinforcing that podcasts are positively accepted by students.

Furthermore, in the second statement regarding the ease of access and suitability of podcasts for students, the majority of students (62.5%) agreed, and a significant number (25.0%) strongly agreed. These findings indicate that podcasts are viewed not only as an engaging medium but also as a practical and relevant learning tool for the needs of today's digital generation. Generation Z, who have grown up in an environment surrounded by advanced technology, tend to seek flexible learning media that can be accessed anytime, anywhere, without being limited by space and time. A small percentage of students (8.3%) chose a neutral response. This suggests that they have not yet gained sufficient experience in actively using podcasts for learning and have not directly felt their benefits. Meanwhile, only a small portion of them (4.2%) expressed disagreement. This indicates that resistance to the use of podcasts as a learning medium is very low. The low level of rejection reinforces that podcasts have been widely accepted as an easy and relevant medium for learning English in the present day.

Furthermore, the third statement relates to the assumption that podcasts are a medium that can motivate English learning, especially in listening skills. A total of 33.3% strongly agreed and most of the other students (37.5%) agreed. These findings show that podcasts not only serve as a means of conveying information but also play a role as a source of motivation for students in learning, especially in listening to English. This is related to the characteristics of podcasts, which present discussion material in a more relaxed, contextual manner that aligns with listeners' interests, thereby enhancing their enthusiasm and desire to continue learning. On the other hand, some students (20.8%) chose a neutral response, indicating that they have not yet fully experienced the impact of podcasts on learning motivation because they have not consistently used them in their learning process. Meanwhile, only a small number of students (8.3%) expressed disagreement, and none (0%) answered strongly disagree. This indicates that resistance to podcasts as a tool for motivation is very low.

In the fourth statement discussing the ability of podcasts to provide new vocabulary, most students (45.8%) agreed strongly, and a significant number (37.5%) agreed. These findings indicate that podcasts are considered effective in enriching students' vocabulary. This is because the language used in podcasts generally employs everyday language and is authentic. A small number of students (16.7%) chose a neutral response, which may be due to their limited use of podcasts in terms of vocabulary acquisition. Interestingly, however, none of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. This indicates that, in general, students have a positive perception of podcasts in terms of their contribution to vocabulary acquisition in English.

Nevertheless, regarding the fifth statement about participating in the comment section of the podcast to improve English listening skills, a small percentage of students (16.7%) strongly agreed, and a significant number of students (45.8%) agreed. This shows that the comment section in the podcast provides an interactive space for students to enhance their listening skills. Through active participation in the comment section, students have the opportunity to discuss the content of the podcast they are listening to. This participation indirectly encourages students to focus more on listening to the content and information critically. Meanwhile, 37.5% of students chose to answer neutrally. This indicates that not all students are accustomed to utilizing the special comment section feature on podcasts as a tool for improving their listening skills. However, none of the students answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree.” This indicates that the dedicated comment section on podcasts as an interactive space is not rejected, although it is still not fully utilized optimally.

In the sixth statement, which states that listening becomes easier when using podcasts, 20.8% of students strongly agreed, and the majority (45.8%) agreed. This data shows that the majority of students feel that there is ease in the listening process when using podcasts as a learning medium. This is due to the highly flexible nature of podcasts, which allows students to adjust the timing, speed, and frequency of listening according to their needs. However, a

significant number of students (29.2%) chose a neutral response. This neutral stance reflects that some students have not had consistent experience in regularly using podcasts as a learning medium or face challenges such as difficulty understanding the speaker's accent, speaking speed that is too fast, and limited prior listening skills. Meanwhile, a small number of students (4.2%) expressed disagreement. This is due to differences in students' learning styles. Some students may prefer visual learning methods over audio-based media like podcasts. These differences in preferences are quite normal because each individual has very unique learning tendencies.

Regarding the seventh statement about the authenticity of the text in podcasts, only a small number of students (4.2%) strongly agreed and (25.0%) agreed. Meanwhile, more than half of the students (62.5%) chose a neutral answer. This is because many students are not yet aware that podcasts present narratives that reflect the use of real language in everyday life. Lack of knowledge about the importance of authenticity of material is the main reason they chose a neutral position. Additionally, a small number of students (8.3%) disagreed with the statement, and none (0%) strongly disagreed, indicating that while there is some doubt, there is no firm rejection among students of the idea that podcasts contain authentic text. This finding suggests that students' understanding of the authentic characteristics of podcasts remains limited.

Interestingly, in the eighth statement regarding students' lack of need for podcasts, none of the students (0%) agreed or strongly agreed. This shows that no students think podcasts are unnecessary in their learning process, especially for English listening skills. Meanwhile, one-third of students (33.3%) chose a neutral response, reflecting their uncertainty about the consistent benefits of using podcasts to improve English listening skills. On the other hand, the majority of students (41.7%) disagreed with the statement, and 16.7% even strongly disagreed. This means that the majority of students actually consider podcasts to be a medium that they greatly need in the English learning process, particularly in listening skills. The rejection of the idea that podcasts are unnecessary reinforces previous findings that podcasts have been positively accepted as a learning need for Generation Z.

Furthermore, the ninth statement states that "my listening skills are lacking, I need media to support it." In response to this statement, the majority of students showed a positive response. As many as (29.2%) of students answered strongly agree and (37.5%) others answered agree. This finding indicates that most students are aware of their limitations in listening skills and feel that they need effective learning media to improve them. Meanwhile, 25.0% chose a neutral response. This reflects the belief that the use of certain supporting media may not necessarily be effective in aiding the learning process, particularly in improving English listening skills. On the other hand, only 8.3% of students disagreed, and none (0%) strongly disagreed. This means that students are aware of the importance of supportive media such as podcasts in enhancing their English listening skills.

The last statement discussed the implementation of podcasts in listening lessons in the classroom. A total of (20.8%) students strongly agreed and most of the others (45.8%) agreed. However, there were still (33.3%) students who chose a neutral answer. However, none of the students (0%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This reflects that students demonstrate a positive attitude toward the use of podcasts in English listening instruction. The majority of students support the idea that podcasts can be integrated into classroom teaching, although some remain unconvinced about the effectiveness of this medium in the classroom learning context.

## 2. Interview Data

Interviews were conducted with three Generation Z students in the English education study program at Mulawarman University who were selected as samples. The interview process was recorded in audio format using a smartphone. In this interview, four main questions were asked of each student. Then, the interview results were transcribed into written form for further

analysis. The findings from this interview process serve as supporting and reinforcing evidence for the results of the questionnaire data analysis presented earlier.

This section specifically discusses the perceptions of students, particularly Generation Z, regarding the use of podcasts in English listening skills. The researcher carefully read the interview transcripts to understand the context related to the use of podcasts in English listening comprehension learning. Informants were obtained from three categories of perception, namely low, medium, and high, based on their intensity and experience in using podcasts. This classification helps researchers map differences in experiences and perspectives among individuals in a more structured manner. The interview results were then analyzed and summarized into several main themes. The following table presents a thematic summary of the responses from the three informants:

Table 2 Classification of Generation Z Students' Perceptions of Podcast Use in Listening Learning

Themes	Name of Students		
	Salwa	Widan	Luthfianis
Frequency & Interest in listening to podcasts	Rarely listens, feels bored	Listen 1-2 times a week, depending on the topic	Listen regularly 2-3 times a week, feel helped
Podcast Content	Education, news, current events	politics, general knowledge, current issues outside.	Business and education
Challenges to the use of podcasts	Confused about the topic and not very interesting	Network disruptions and time constraints	Bugs, connectivity while traveling, and platform limitations
Suggestions & Expectations	Podcasts need to be more interesting so they don't become boring.	Teachers should choose topics that are interesting and not too formal.	Podcasts are suitable for modern learning and can be used as AI-based school media.

Based on the results of the interview on the first question related to the frequency and interest of Generation Z students in listening to podcasts, it was found that the level of podcast usage varies among students. One student, Salwa, stated that she rarely listens to podcasts and admitted to feeling bored when listening to them, indicating a low level of interest in this medium. On the other hand, two of them, Widan and Luthfianis, responded that they frequently listen to podcasts. Especially Luthfianis, who has the highest frequency of podcast listening, as she mentioned during the interview:

*“So, sometimes I still rarely listen to podcasts during the week, maybe only 2 or 3 times.”*  
(Interview: Luthfianis)

These findings indicate that the more frequently Generation Z students receive oral input through podcasts, the greater their chances of developing their English listening skills. Conversely, when the frequency of listening is low due to lack of interest, the potential of podcasts as a medium for developing listening skills is not maximized. This low interest is often triggered by the mismatch between podcast content and the personal interests of Generation Z students. Therefore, the use of podcasts in the context of English listening comprehension learning will be more effective if topics relevant to the interests of Generation Z students are chosen.

Furthermore, the second question relates to what type of content is considered interesting by Generation Z students, thereby fostering motivation to use podcasts as a learning medium, particularly in improving their English listening skills. Based on the interview results, the three students provided diverse answers according to their personal interests. However, they all have a similar interest in content related to education or general knowledge. As Salwa expressed:

“I am usually interested in listening to podcasts about education or viral news, especially if there are current events that are being widely discussed. It makes me feel more enthusiastic because it's relevant to what's happening now.” (interview: Salwa)

This reveals that informative and factual podcast content is particularly appealing to Generation Z students in using podcasts as a listening learning medium. Although the three students have diverse interests, such as business, politics, and education, they all show the same tendency because they prefer content that is relevant to current conditions and provides them with new knowledge. This shows that Generation Z students are more inclined to listen to English podcasts if the topics presented are relatable to their daily lives and align with current social dynamics. Therefore, selecting appropriate content for Generation Z students becomes an important factor in optimizing the use of podcasts as a medium for learning English listening skills.

The next question is about the challenges faced by Generation Z students in using podcasts. Out of three students, two of admitted to having problems or obstacles due to network disruptions. As expressed by Widan:

“There are quite a lot of challenges. The main challenges are poor internet connection in my boarding house and lack of time due to other activities.” (interview: Widan)

Based on the results of the second interview question, it was revealed that the main challenge faced by Generation Z students in using podcasts as a listening learning medium is the limitation of internet connectivity. Network disruptions become a significant obstacle, especially for students living in areas with unstable internet connections. This shows that although podcasts offer flexibility as a learning medium, technical accessibility remains an important factor affecting their effectiveness in improving the listening skills of Generation Z students in English. Therefore, the success of utilizing podcasts in the learning context highly depends on the availability of supporting digital infrastructure.

The last question explores the suggestions and hopes of Generation Z students regarding the use of podcasts as a learning medium to improve their English listening skills in class. Based on the interview results, the three students provided diverse yet complementary suggestions. Here are the three suggestions from Salwa, Widan, and Luthfianis:

“Podcasts should be more interesting so students don't get bored, especially because they're usually long” (Salwa)

“Teachers should choose engaging, trending topics and avoid using overly formal language.” (Widan)

“Podcasts are a modern learning tool. Integrating them with AI can make English learning more effective and relevant today.” (Luthfianis)

These findings indicate that Generation Z students not only have a positive view of using podcasts as a listening learning medium but also provide supportive feedback to optimize the use of podcasts in the classroom to better align with their generational characteristics. Thus, overall, the students' suggestions and hopes emphasize the need for innovative, contextual, and technology-based listening learning so that podcasts not only serve as supporting media but also become a learning strategy relevant to the needs of Generation Z today.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the questionnaire and interview analysis, it can be concluded that the perception of Generation Z students towards the use of podcasts in English listening comprehension learning tends to be positive. Most students stated that podcasts help increase

learning motivation, enrich vocabulary, and provide a more flexible and authentic listening experience. In addition, podcasts are considered easily accessible and suitable for the learning needs of today's digital generation. Although there are several challenges, such as network disruptions, time constraints, and a lack of understanding of podcast characteristics, most students still show enthusiasm and interest in this medium. Interviews also revealed that contextual, current, and interest-aligned content is the key to the successful use of podcasts as a learning medium. Therefore, podcasts can be used as one of the innovative learning strategies that support the improvement of English listening skills, especially for Generation Z students who are adaptive to technology.

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