

STEM-EI

STEM Education International

The Use of Podcasts among University Students in Learning English Vocabulary

Musdalipah Musdalipah, La Sunra, Geminastiti Sakkir*

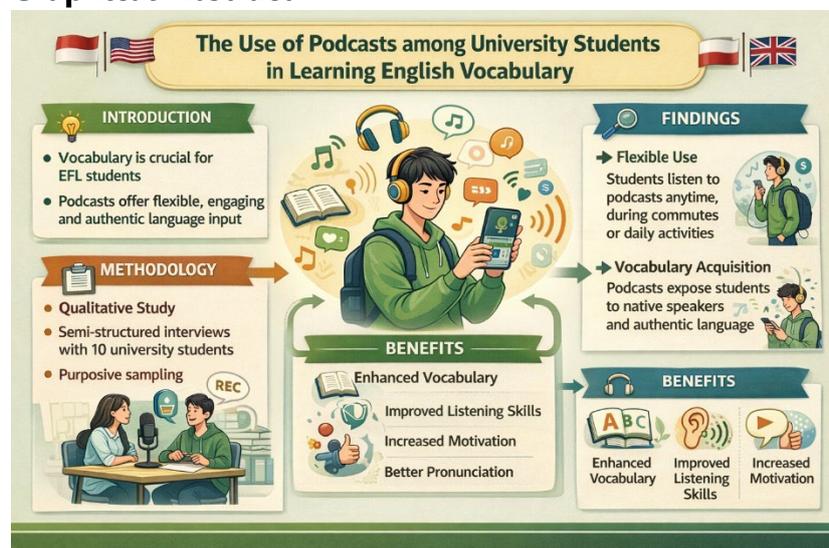
English Education Department, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia, 90224

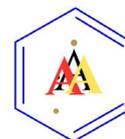
*Corresponding author: geminastitisakkir@unm.ac.id

Abstract: This study aims to describe how students use podcasts to learn vocabulary and to explore their perceptions of using podcasts in vocabulary learning. This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten students from the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Makassar, selected using purposive sampling. The findings reveal that students use podcasts flexibly, either for focused learning or during daily activities, and they gain new vocabulary through exposure to authentic language.

Keywords: Podcasts, vocabulary learning, EFL students

Graphical Abstract





INTRODUCTION

There are many elements involved in learning English, such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Among all of these, vocabulary is one of the most essential. When students build a strong vocabulary, it becomes much easier for them to understand and use English effectively in all aspects of communication. According to Rohmatillah (2017), vocabulary is crucial to language acquisition. Vocabulary is also an essential skill for learning to read, speak, write and listen. People cannot properly communicate and express their feelings in writing or speech if they lack a large enough vocabulary. This statement shows that vocabulary has a vital role in mastering English.

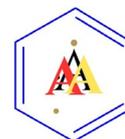
However, despite its crucial role in language learning, vocabulary remains one of the major obstacles faced by Indonesian students in acquiring English proficiency. Even though students have studied English since elementary school, many students still struggle to communicate in this language due to limited vocabulary (Harahap & Pajaitan, 2021). Vocabulary is one of the important elements to be taught in learning a foreign language because it will be difficult to speak without a lot of vocabulary (Rohmatillah, 2019). Additionally, Susanto (2021) said that vocabulary is a crucial skill for learning to read, speak, write, and listen. Without sufficient vocabulary, people cannot communicate or express their thoughts effectively, both in spoken and written forms. The more vocabulary they have, the more freely they can express themselves in all aspects of language use. This underscores the critical importance of vocabulary in mastering English.

This study focuses on the use of podcasts for vocabulary learning. To explore this further, a preliminary survey was conducted with English Language Education students to determine whether they utilise podcasts as a tool for learning English. The results indicate that many students use podcasts as a learning medium and find them effective in improving their vocabulary skills.

Effective learning media play an important role in supporting English learning. According to Putri and Apriliani (2022), English learning media consist of audio, visual, and audiovisual forms. Among these, podcasts as a form of audio media have gained attention for their flexibility and ability to provide authentic input. Abdulrahman, Basalama, and Widodo (2018) explain that the term podcast comes from the words iPod and broadcast. Podcasts allow learners to access real-life language anytime and anywhere, making learning more practical and enjoyable.

Podcasts expose learners to natural pronunciation, expressions, and contexts that help improve listening, speaking, and especially vocabulary skills, as stated by Sansinadi and Wardhany (2020). In higher education settings, podcasts support students in enhancing vocabulary, comprehension, and pronunciation through flexible mobile-based learning, as noted by Davoudi and Rezaei (2016). However, the effectiveness of podcasts also depends on how students perceive their usefulness in the learning process.

Several previous studies have discussed the use of podcasts in English learning. Sengang et al. (2022) found that students gave positive responses to the use of podcasts in improving speaking skills, while Abdulrahman et al. (2018) showed that



podcasts increase motivation and listening comprehension. Both studies used quantitative methods and focused on speaking and listening. However, there are still limited qualitative studies exploring the use of podcasts for vocabulary learning at the university level. Therefore, this study, entitled "The Use of Podcasts among Students in Learning English Vocabulary", aims to examine how students use podcasts to learn English vocabulary.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the total number of words in a language that support communication (Salawazo, Simbolon, Hutabarat, Veronika, and Saragih, 2020). Therefore, the more words someone has, the more it will support them in communicating, and communication will be easier with lots of vocabulary.

Rohmatillah (2017) also stated that vocabulary is a list of words with a form or expression that includes three elements: significance, word use, and form (pronunciation and spelling). From this statement, it can be seen that vocabulary is a form that includes meaning (significance), word use, and form, which includes pronunciation and spelling. Vocabulary is not just a list of words, but also involves understanding their meaning, how to use them in context, and how to write and pronounce them correctly.

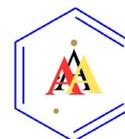
From these definitions, it can be concluded that vocabulary is a collection of words that a person knows and uses to communicate, which includes meaning, usage, pronunciation, and spelling. Vocabulary is not just a list of words, but also a dynamic aspect of language skills that develops over time through learning and practice, and supports effective communication.

Words in a language are small elements which make up a language and function to express ideas. Hasan (2018) stated that linguistics classifies vocabulary into two kinds:

- a. Receptive vocabulary refers to the words or lexical items which can be recognised and comprehended in the context of listening and reading
- b. Productive vocabulary refers to words that are used in speaking and writing.

Nation (2001) stated there are three aspects of vocabulary knowledge, namely:

- a. Form, mastery of word form includes the ability to recognise and pronounce words in their spoken form, write and recognise correct spelling in the written form, and understand the internal structure of words such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots. This aspect is crucial as a foundation for recognising and storing vocabulary in long-term memory.
- b. Meaning, this aspect emphasises understanding the relationship between word forms and meanings, the meaning of words in real-world contexts, and the semantic relationships between words such as synonyms, antonyms, and other associations. This ability supports reading comprehension and meaningful communication.



- c. Use, the use aspect involves the ability to apply words correctly within grammatical structures, recognise natural collocations, and understand the restrictions on word usage based on social contexts and specific situations. This is essential for active vocabulary use, both in speaking and writing.

Podcasts

Qasim & Fadda (2013) define podcasts as multimedia digital files available for download to portable media players and computers, emphasising their flexibility and accessibility as learning tools for students. Abdulrahman et al. (2018) extended this definition by noting that podcasts are not limited to audio; they can also include video broadcasts. This highlights the evolving nature of podcasts, offering both audio and video content. Such versatility provides students with multiple ways to engage with educational materials, making podcasts an ideal medium for delivering diverse learning content.

From these definitions, it can be concluded that podcasts are digital multimedia files (audio or video) that can be downloaded and consumed online through various electronic devices, such as computers, tablets, and smartphones. They encompass the practice of listening to or watching educational content, allowing users to customise the way they consume information based on their preferences.

According to Luthfia (2022), there are several types of podcasts, namely:

- a. Interview podcasts
- b. Conversation podcasts
- c. Podcast monologue
- d. Storytelling/Investigation Podcast
- e. Roundtable podcasts
- f. Theatrical podcasts

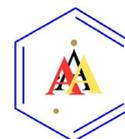
Indriastuti and Saksono (2014) stated that audio podcasts are an effective learning resource for several reasons, namely:

- a. Podcasts are organised according to learning objectives, enabling the achievement of the desired results.
- b. Podcasts are able to stimulate the imagination of listeners by presenting content that not only contains learning material but is also clarified with illustrative music and sound effects, making it more interesting.
- c. The content presented in podcasts is more dynamic.

The Disadvantages of Podcasts

Like other media, podcasts also have several disadvantages. The following are the disadvantages of podcasts put forward by UKEssays (2018), namely:

- a. Podcasts require a lot of time. When the files are too big, certain podcasts require an excessive amount of time to download.
- b. Hard to locate. Even with the advancement of technology, it can occasionally be challenging to locate the information straight in the file.



- c. Problems with accessibility. It requires a strong and quick connection to download and play podcasts in an easy and comfortable manner.
- d. Easily tired. Long-form podcast content can be challenging for listeners and cause them to become disinterested.

Research conducted by Scutter, Stupans, Sawyer, and King (2010) illustrates how students use podcasts in learning. The study highlights several key aspects relevant to English vocabulary learning.

- a. Situation and Time of Use: Students listen to podcasts in various contexts such as at home, while commuting, or during other activities because of their flexibility and accessibility.
- b. Purpose: Podcasts are used to enrich vocabulary, review lecture materials, understand new terms, improve pronunciation, and help students catch up on missed lessons.
- c. Learning Strategies: Students apply active strategies such as pausing, repeating certain parts, taking notes of new words, and using dictionaries or transcripts. According to Schmitt (2008), vocabulary learning is most effective when learners are cognitively engaged through repetition and note-taking, making podcasts effective for both intentional and incidental learning.
- d. Benefits: Podcasts can be accessed anytime and anywhere and help learners understand pronunciation and meaning, especially for EFL students.
- e. Constraints: Some students face problems such as unclear audio, lengthy content, and difficulty finding specific information.

METHOD

This qualitative descriptive study was conducted at the Faculty of Languages and Literature, Universitas Negeri Makassar, in July 2025. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted both offline and online with ten students selected through purposive sampling from the English Language Education Program who had experience using podcasts.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen to explore students' podcast use and perceptions in depth, following Sugiyono's framework as cited in Sulfiani (2020). Data were analysed using the Miles and Huberman (2014) model, which includes three stages. The first is data reduction, where the study selected and organised relevant information from interviews. The second is data display, where data were presented in tables or grouped by themes. The last is conclusion drawing, which involves interpreting findings by comparing participants' answers and referring to relevant theories to ensure validity.

RESULTS

This section examines how students use podcasts to learn English, focusing on the situations and times of use, their learning purposes, applied strategies, perceived benefits, and technical constraints.



Flexible and Practical Learning Tool

The findings reveal that students viewed podcasts as flexible and practical media for learning English vocabulary. Most participants mentioned that they could listen anytime and anywhere, even while doing other activities. Podcasts helped them learn naturally in daily routines such as traveling, relaxing, or doing chores.

One participant shared her experience:

"Biasanya itu di jalan habis belajar di kampus, kadang ada kosakata yang tidak dimengerti jadi dengar podcasts untuk pelajari kosakatanya, atau di waktu santai-santai saja."

"Usually, I listen on the way home after classes. Sometimes there are words I don't understand, so I listen to podcasts to learn the vocabulary or just during my free time."
(P1)

Another student emphasized the practicality of podcasts that allow them to learn comfortably:

"Kalau alasan saya itu karena podcasts-nya praktis jadi bisa didengarkan di mana saja, kapan saja, bisa sambil rebahan."

"My reason is because podcasts are practical, so you can listen anywhere, anytime, even while lying down." (P2)

Overall, participants agreed that podcasts' flexibility made learning more enjoyable and continuous outside the classroom context.

Vocabulary Development through Daily Topics

Students reported that podcasts discussing daily life topics helped them improve vocabulary that could be used in real communication. Most participants preferred simple and relatable content, such as daily activities, hobbies, or personal stories, because these are easier to understand.

One participant said:

"Kalau saya itu lebih ke percakapan sehari-hari, soalnya lebih berguna menurut saya jadi bisa pakai bahasa Inggris juga di keseharian."

"For me, it's more about everyday conversation because it's more useful, so I can use English in daily life too." (P1)

Another explained that simple topics were enjoyable and easy to follow:

"Saya lebih suka topik yang ringan, seperti kegiatan sehari-hari atau cerita pengalaman karena mudah dipahami dan bisa digunakan langsung."

"I prefer light topics, such as daily activities or experience stories, because they are easy to understand and can be used directly." (P5)

These findings indicate that podcasts provide authentic and meaningful input, helping students naturally develop vocabulary from real-life situations.



Active Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Most students actively used strategies such as taking notes, pausing, repeating, and checking dictionaries when listening to podcasts. These methods helped them focus and remember new words better.

One participant explained her approach:

"Kalau saya taking note jadi dijeda dulu dan kalau ada kata tidak paham terus ditulis lalu dicari di kamus."

"I usually take notes by pausing the podcast, writing down unfamiliar words, and then looking them up in the dictionary." (P1)

Another student described how she used a dictionary for better understanding:

"Saya biasa langsung buka kamus di HP, jadi bisa tahu artinya dan cara bacanya juga."

"I usually open the dictionary on my phone to know the meaning and how to pronounce it." (P6)

Others said they replayed parts they did not understand:

"Biasanya saya pause dulu kalau ada kata sulit, lalu putar lagi sampai paham atau bisa mengucapkannya."

"I usually pause if there is a difficult word, then replay it until I understand or can pronounce it." (P2)

These strategies show that students engage actively and independently in their vocabulary learning process.

Learning Challenges and Adaptation

Despite their benefits, students faced several challenges when learning through podcasts. The most common issue was understanding fast-spoken English by native speakers. Some students also struggled with slang and accent variation.

One participant said:

"Kalau native speaker yang bicara cepat, saya sering tertinggal dan harus putar ulang beberapa kali supaya paham."

"When native speakers talk fast, I often fall behind and have to replay several times to understand." (P4)

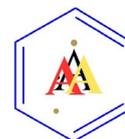
Another mentioned:

"Kalau menggunakan slang bahasa Inggris begitu banyak yang tidak dimengerti."

"When they use English slang, there are many words I don't understand." (P1)

Environmental factors also influenced comprehension, as stated by one student:

"Kalau lingkunganku sangat berpengaruh karena misalnya kalau berisik itu di kampus juga susah masuk gitu."



"My environment has a big influence because if it's noisy on campus, it's hard to focus."
(P7)

Even with these challenges, students learned to adapt by re-listening, taking notes, and choosing quiet environments. This shows that persistence and adaptation help them maximise the benefits of podcast-based learning.

DISCUSSIONS

Flexibility and Accessibility

This result supports Yaman (2016), who stated that podcasts enable language learning beyond classroom boundaries. Indriastuti et al. (2014) also emphasised that flexibility is one of the main strengths of digital audio media. Students' experiences showed that being able to choose when and what to listen to made learning more engaging and personal.

Students also mentioned that podcasts are easy to access and replay. One student explained, "If I do not understand some words, I just pause and replay them." This aligns with Abdulrahman et al. (2018), who stated that such accessibility encourages active engagement. Participants also felt that selecting podcast topics based on personal interests made learning vocabulary more enjoyable.

These findings are in line with Nation (2001), who highlighted that meaningful language exposure supports incidental vocabulary learning. Flexibility and accessibility help students develop independence and sustain motivation in learning English. In conclusion, podcasts give students autonomy to manage their learning, making vocabulary practice part of their daily routine. This promotes continuous, self-directed vocabulary learning in a natural and enjoyable way.

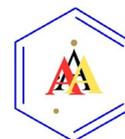
Vocabulary Development through Authentic Input

This finding is consistent with Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, which states that learners acquire language effectively when exposed to comprehensible input. Amiri (2012) also found that podcasts provide real linguistic exposure that mirrors everyday communication. Students in this study learned vocabulary incidentally through repeated listening rather than memorisation.

Some students mentioned that they started recognising words more easily after hearing them several times in different podcast episodes. One said, "After listening many times, I can understand new words and sometimes use them when speaking." This supports Nation (2001), who explained that repeated and contextual exposure leads to better vocabulary retention.

These results confirm that authentic input in podcasts encourages students to infer meaning from context, as stated by Indriastuti and Saksono (2014). Students felt proud when they could follow natural speech, which also built their confidence in using English.

In conclusion, podcasts function as authentic materials that improve vocabulary learning through natural and meaningful exposure. They allow students to experience



real communication, making vocabulary learning more human, enjoyable, and effective.

Active Learning Strategies

This finding reflects O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) idea that active learning involves processing information to create personal understanding. Students' strategies, such as note-taking and repetition, show metacognitive awareness and responsibility for their own learning. Yaman (2016) also stated that podcast-based learning promotes self-directed and meaningful learning.

Students used digital tools like online dictionaries or translation applications to find meanings and examples. This aligns with Schmitt (1997), who classified such discovery activities as part of vocabulary learning strategies. One student mentioned, "I check the meaning immediately on my phone so I can understand the context." Using technology naturally supports vocabulary growth and confidence, as Nartiningrum and Nugroho (2021) also found.

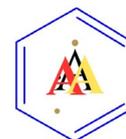
In conclusion, the use of active learning strategies demonstrates that effective vocabulary learning occurs through conscious, reflective engagement. By combining listening, note-taking, and vocabulary application, students turn podcast listening into active and meaningful learning.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored how students from the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Makassar engaged with podcasts as a tool for learning English vocabulary. The research involved ten students and was guided by sixteen interview questions designed to explore their experiences, practices, and perspectives. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that students used podcasts in flexible, practical, and autonomous ways to enhance their vocabulary knowledge. They incorporated podcasts into their daily routines, such as while commuting, doing chores, or relaxing before bed. This shows that podcasts serve not only as supplementary learning tools but also as accessible, adaptable resources that fit into students' lifestyles. Through authentic audio materials, students encounter real-world vocabulary usage, pronunciation variations, and contextual vocabulary, helping them understand words beyond textbook definitions. They can also practice active learning strategies, such as repetition, noting unfamiliar words, checking words in a dictionary, and using new vocabulary in sentences, demonstrating self-directed learning behaviour.

AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY STATEMENT

While preparing this work, the authors employed ChatGPT to generate a graphical abstract by supplying a suitable prompt to verify the content's validity.



REFERENCES

- Abdulrahman, T., Basalama, N., & Widodo, M. R. (2018). The Impact of Podcasts on EFL Students' Listening Comprehension. *International Journal of Language Education, 2*(2), 23-33.
- Al-Qasim, N., & Al Fadda, H. (2013). From Call to Mall: The Effectiveness of Podcast on EFL Higher Education Students' Listening Comprehension. *English Language Teaching, 6*(9), 30-41.
- Amaliah, S., Baa, S., Wahyuni, I. Y., Mansyur, M., & Sakkir, G. (2025). Exploring the Role of Polysemy Awareness for "Get" and "Make" in Podcasts on EFL Learners' Collocational Speaking Ability. *ARRUS Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 5*(2), 929-942.
- Atmowardoyo, H., & Sakkir, G. (2021). Efek Materi Mata Kuliah Belajar Dan Pembelajaran Berbasis Best Practice Dalam Meningkatkan Pengetahuan Kosakata Bahasa Inggris. In *Seminar Nasional Hasil Penelitian 2021* (pp. 546-558). LP2M Universitas Negeri Makassar.
- Atmowardoyo, H., & Sakkir, G. (2021). Effects of best-practice based materials in receptive language learning behaviours in improving receptive language skills. *inguistics and Culture Review, 5*(S1), 1313-1334.
- Atmowardoyo, H., Sakkir, G., & Sakkir, R. I. (2023). Students' English skills and their ways of learning. *Celebes Journal of Language Studies, 333-338*.
- Atmowardoyo, H., Weda, S., & Sakkir, G. (2020). Information technology used by millennial good English language learners in an Indonesian university to improve their English skills. *Solid State Technology, 63*(5), 9532-9547.
- Harahap, S. W., & Panjaitan, B. (2021). Komparasi metode blended learning dengan metode tpr dalam keefektifannya terhadap sistem pembelajaran daring pada materi vocabulary bahasa Inggris. *Jurnal Mutiara Pendidikan Indonesia, 6*(2), 83-89.
- Kohar, E., & Salam, U. (2014). Students' perception Towards the Use of Podcast for Learning English. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Khatulistiwa (JPPK), 3*(12).
- Luthfia, D. (2022). Student's Perception on Using English Podcasts in Improving Listening Skill (Doctoral dissertation, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh).
- Nation, I. S., & Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language* (Vol. 10, pp. 126-132). Cambridge: Cambridge university press.
- Putri, A. R., & Apriliani, A. (2022). Students' perceptions Of Podcast as A Learning Media to Improve Their Listening Skill. In *Proceeding Virtual English Education Students Conference (Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 220-226)*.
- Rohmatillah, R. (2017). A Study on Students' difficulties in Learning Vocabulary. *English Education: jurnal tadrís bahasa Inggris, 6*(1), 75-93.
- Ruing, F. H., Jabu, B., Baa, S., & Sakkir, G. (2025). The Role of Critical Reading Skill in Enhancing The Academic Competence of Law Students in The Context of International Law. *Ethical Lingua: Journal of Language Teaching and Literature, 12*(1).
- Sakkir, G. (2025). Exproling Students' Perspective of The Use Audio-Visual in English Listening Skill. *International Journal of Language, Education, and Literature, 2*(4), 662-609.



- Sakkir, G., Syam, A. N., & Awaliyah, N. (2025). Exploring Students' Perspectives of The Use Audio-Visual in English Listening Skill. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 13(2), 9354-9367.
- Schmitt, N. (2008). Instructed second language vocabulary learning. *Language teaching research*, 12(3), 329-363.
- Schmitt, N. (2010). *Researching vocabulary: A vocabulary research manual*. Springer.
- Scutter, S., Stupans, I., Sawyer, T., & King, S. (2010). How do students use podcasts to support learning? *Australasian journal of educational technology*, 26(2).
- Susanto, H. (2021). A Study on Students' difficulties in Learning Vocabulary. *Journey: Journal of English Language and Pedagogy*, 4(2), 46-50.