

EFL LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF
EDUCATIONAL PODCASTING

A MASTER'S THESIS

BY

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*To the memory of my dearest aunt, Serpil amlibelli...
Nothing would make me happier than defending this thesis on her birthday.
I hope she likes her birthday gift.*

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ABSTRACT

EFL LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL PODCASTING

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This study investigated EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills, and the relationship between learners' perceptions of podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English. Twenty-eight EFL learners studying at the School of Foreign Languages of Bülent Ecevit University participated in the study. The participants went through a six-week treatment period in which they were required to listen to the educational podcasts. At the end of the treatment, data were gathered through a perception questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings of this study showed that the learners generally had positive opinions about this technology. Most of them found it easy to use, effective in language learning and enjoyable at the same time. As for the preferences of the learners for listening to podcasts, the results showed that while many learners prefer to listen to the audio files on their mobile phones, they do not listen to them outside or while multitasking, thus ignoring the mobility feature of podcasting in a way. Finally, a positive moderate relationship was found between learners' perceptions of podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English.

Key words: educational podcasting, listening skills, authentic materials, technology

ÖZET

İNGİLİZCEYİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĞRENEN ÖĞRENCİLERİN EĞİTİCİ
PODCASTLER HAKKINDAKİ ALGILARI

Hazal Gül İnce

Yüksek Lisans, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi
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Bu çalışma, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin dinleme becerilerini geliştirmeye yönelik eğitici podcastler hakkındaki algılarını ve öğrencilerin podcast algıları ile İngilizce öğrenmeye karşı tutumları arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemiştir. Bu çalışmaya Bülent Ecevit Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu hazırlık sınıflarında okumakta olan 28 öğrenci katılmıştır. Katılımcılara, altı haftalık uygulama süresi boyunca eğitici podcastler dinletilmiştir. Bu sürenin sonunda, katılımcıların algı anketlerini doldurmaları ve yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeleri gerçekleştirmeleri ile veri toplama süreci tamamlanmıştır. Çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular, öğrencilerin bu teknoloji hakkında genellikle olumlu düşüncelere sahip olduklarını göstermektedir. Öğrencilerin çoğu, eğitici podcastlerin kullanımının kolay olduğunu, dil öğrenimi üzerine etkili olduğunu ve eğlenceli olduğunu düşünmektedir. Pek çok öğrenci podcastleri cep telefonları ile dinlemeyi tercih etmiş, ancak onları dışarıda ya da aynı zamanda başka bir işle uğraşırken dinlemeyi tercih etmemişlerdir. Bu sonuç, öğrencilerin podcast teknolojisinin hareketlilik özelliğinden faydalanmadığını anlamına gelebilir. Son olarak, öğrencilerin podcast algıları ile İngilizce öğrenmeye karşı tutumları arasında pozitif bir ilişki bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: eğitici podcast, dinleme becerileri, özgün materyaller, teknoloji

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It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair...

Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

I could not find any better words to summarize my MA TEFL year. There were times I felt sad, hopeless and desperate. *It was the worst of times...* Thank goodness, I had people who turned those worst of times into the best of times with their light. I would like to express my gratitude to those who were always there to help me in this challenging process.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Listening comprehension is one of the most problematic skills for language learners. However, when it is considered that many of the learners have technological devices such as MP3 players, computers, tablets and mobile phones allowing them to listen to the audio files easily, the problem of listening seems more manageable. There are many ways for improving language learners' listening skills with the help of devices mentioned above, and the combination of two simple words which are iPod and broadcasting provides language learners and teachers with one of the most promising ways of eliminating this listening problem: Podcasting.

Podcasting is a recent technology which has started to be used for language education. Recent studies on educational podcasts have supported their effectiveness in language learning (Ashton-Hay & Brookes, 2011; Hasan & Hoon, 2013; O'Brien & Hegelheimer, 2007). There have also been a few studies specifically focusing on their effectiveness on listening comprehension skills (Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013; Hasan & Hoon, 2012; Kavaliauskienė & Anusienė, 2009). However, there is another factor as important as the effectiveness of this technology, which is the acceptance of educational podcasting by learners. Therefore, this study aims to explore English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills. The study also examines whether there is a relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English.

Background of the Study

Listening comprehension is emphasized as a vital skill in language learning as it is difficult to learn a language without understanding the input provided (Osada, 2004). Vandergrift (2007) supports this idea by saying that “listening comprehension is at the heart of second language (L2) learning” (p. 191). However, many learners feel uncomfortable with this vital skill. As Buck (2001) states, this is largely because of the complexity of the listening process in which “the listener takes the incoming data, the acoustic signal, and interprets that, using a wide variety of information and knowledge for a particular communicative purpose” (p. 29). During the listening process, the learners may experience problems like the inability to understand the speech, to keep up with its rate and to concentrate on it.

In order to overcome these problems caused by the complexity of listening process, learners need significant practice to improve. Many researchers agree on the positive role of authentic listening materials while practicing listening skills (Field, 1998; Osada, 2004; Vandergrift, 2007; Zhao 2003). Being exposed to authentic listening materials helps learners understand the language in real-life situations, get used to natural speech rate and become motivated, especially when there is no threat of evaluation (Vandergrift, 2007). Therefore, significant practice along with authentic materials may cause learners to feel more comfortable with L2 listening. Technology is one of the means of accessing those materials and practicing this vital skill.

The developing technological devices and the opportunities provided by the Internet have the power to surround the language learners with authenticity. Watching films, listening to songs and radio shows, participating in video chats and even playing computer games in the target language provide authentic listening materials to the learners. As these activities are chosen by the learners, they do not

put any pressure on them; hence, learners' motivation and attitudes towards listening may change in a positive way. There are many studies on the positive outcomes of novel technology-based applications within EFL literature (Chapelle, 2004; Hamzah, 2004; Meskill & Anthony, 2007). One of those novel technologies which may be especially promising in developing listening skills is educational podcasting.

Podcasts are audio files which can be automatically downloaded to the user's computer or mobile device whenever a new episode is available through subscription to the feed. One enormous advantage of their use in language education is that learners can listen to the podcasts wherever and whenever they want on their computers or mobile devices. So, podcasts give learners flexibility, mobility and control over their own learning (Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013; Edirisingha, Rizzi, Nie, & Rothwell, 2007; McCombs & Liu, 2007). Moreover, educational podcasting has the potential to increase learners' motivation and decrease their anxiety (Hasan & Hoon, 2013).

Podcasting technology may be used in many different ways as a tool of language education. One alternative is that learners may record regular podcasts in order to enhance their self-confidence, communication and collaboration skills. Teachers may also record their own podcasts in order to support their learners and courses. Another alternative is that authentic materials may be provided as podcasts, and the learners may choose the ones most suitable for their needs. Hasan and Hoon's (2013) review of literature on podcast applications in language learning concludes that educational podcasts using authentic materials are effective in improving learners' listening comprehension skills. Additionally, learners seem to have positive attitudes towards this technology. These conclusions suggest that educational podcasting may be a promising technology in language teaching which is worth investigating especially in terms of its effects on listening skill.

Statement of the Problem

Many studies show that listening comprehension is the skill with which L2 learners feel most uncomfortable (Artyushina, Sheypak, Khovrin, & Spektor, 2011; Graham, 2006; Osada, 2004). The use of authentic listening materials may help language learners to manage listening related problems (Chinnery, 2006; Gilmore, 2011; Osada, 2004). These materials are easily accessible thanks to the recent developments in technology which includes educational podcasting. Podcasting may have a huge potential for improving students' listening skills and making them more comfortable with it (Artyushina et al., 2011). However, because of the novelty of this technology, the studies on educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills are limited (Fox, 2008; Hasan & Hoon, 2013; O'Brien & Hegelheimer, 2007).

As observed by the researcher, the students taking compulsory English preparatory courses at the School of Foreign Languages of Bülent Ecevit University which is located in Zonguldak, Turkey, have difficulty with their listening skills. This is reflected in the failure rate on the listening examination that all students take as part of their coursework. This may be in part because of the limited exposure they may have to English-language texts and their dependency on the listening activities conducted during the classes. Many of them do not use any out-of-class activities and authentic materials to improve their listening skills. For this reason, podcasting may provide a different way of improving listening skills, and it may help the learners develop positive attitudes towards this skill which is crucial in foreign language learning.

Research Questions

- 1) What are EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills?
 - a. What are EFL learners' podcast listening preferences?
 - b. What do EFL learners think about podcasting in terms of ease of use, enjoyableness, and effectiveness in language learning?
- 2) Is there a relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English?

Significance of the Study

One of the main advantages of podcasts is that the students can listen to them at a place, time and pace of their choice. Because of its potential as an out-of-class activity to improve listening skills, student perceptions of this technology play a crucial role on this issue. As Kavaliauskienė and Anusienė (2009) state, research on the reactions of students towards podcasting is still in progress; however, the studies which have been conducted so far suggest that podcasts are highly regarded (Başaran, 2010; Cebeci & Tekdal, 2006; Chan, Chi, Chin, & Lin, 2011). This study may contribute to a better understanding by revealing tertiary level EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills.

At the local level, the findings of this study may offer solutions for listening related problems to the students, teachers and administrators of the School of Foreign Languages of Bülent Ecevit University and other institutions in Turkey as well. Administrators may consider integrating educational podcasting into curriculum as an out-of-class activity so that it will not take any time during the classes. Based on the results, the teachers may also decide to raise awareness of this technology which can provide students a flexible way of improving their listening skills.

Conclusion

In this chapter, a brief introduction to the literature on educational podcasting along with its potential in enhancing learners' listening skills has been provided. Moreover, the background of the study, the statement of the problem, research questions, and the significance of the study have been presented. The next chapter will present the review of literature on listening, technology and educational podcasting.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study addresses EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills and the relationship between learners' perceptions of podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English. Therefore, this chapter attempts to review the literature for the related issues and provide a comprehensive overview of them. For this purpose, related literature will be presented in three main sections. In the first section, the information about listening comprehension, learners' problems related to listening, recent studies on language learners' perceptions about listening problems, listening strategies and the importance of authentic materials to enhance listening skills are provided. In the second section, the use of technology for language education is investigated. Finally, in the last section, educational podcasting, and the recent studies conducted on this technology are reviewed.

Listening

Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension, which requires listeners to actively involve themselves in the interpretation of incoming data by combining their own background and linguistic knowledge, is a crucial skill in language learning (Schwartz, 1998). Listening allows listeners to interact with speakers to understand the comprehensible input, which is essential during the learning process (Hasan, 2000). In order to be able to understand the spoken language and sustain effective communication, learners need to improve their performance in listening. However, because it is a complex and unobservable process which interrelates hearing,

attending, comprehending, and remembering, many learners experience difficulty in listening comprehension (Graham, 2006; Osada, 2004; Schwartz, 1998; Vandergrift, 1999).

The reason why listening comprehension is a problematic skill for language learners is explained by many researchers. Brown (2001) states that clustering, redundancy, reduced forms, performance variables, colloquial language, rate of delivery, stress, rhythm and intonation, and interaction are among the features which make listening difficult. Osada (2004) emphasizes the need for simultaneous utilization of the knowledge and skills necessary for listening comprehension. The researcher goes on to explain that, as the speech disappears and cannot be repeated, listeners need to comprehend the text the moment they listen to it, retain the input in memory and interpret it with the help of prior knowledge. Problems occur when learners try to understand the speech word by word (Artyushina et al., 2011). Learners tend to think that they have difficulty in understanding because of the speed of the speech. But there are many other factors that may cause difficulty, such as pronunciation, hesitation, pauses, varied accents, text structure, and background knowledge. Moreover, learners need to be aware that they may have difficulty in listening because of insufficient exposure, low motivation and lack of knowledge of listening strategies (Field, 1998; Goh, 2000; Hasan, 2000).

Language Learners' Perceptions of Listening Related Problems

Researchers recognized the necessity to investigate language learners' perceptions of listening and listening related problems, as their beliefs may influence their comprehension either positively or negatively (Graham, 2006; Hasan, 2000). The studies conducted on this issue showed similar findings.

Goh (2000) conducted his study on language learners' listening comprehension problems, and categorized challenges to listening comprehension into

one of three different phases. The first one, the perceptual processing phase, included problems like the inability to recognize words, neglecting the next part of the speech when thinking about meaning, the inability to chunk the stream of speech, missing the beginning of texts and concentration issues. The second one, the parsing phase, consisted of quickly forgetting what is heard, the inability to form a mental representation from words heard and not being able to understand subsequent parts of input because of missing the earlier words. Finally, the last one, utilization phase, included the issues like understanding words but not the intended message and being confused about the key ideas in the message. The researcher suggests direct and indirect strategies to teachers in order for them to overcome listening related problems.

A similar study which was conducted by Hasan (2000) shows that learners experience a wide range of listening problems related to learner strategies, text, task, speaker, listener attitudes and other factors. Based on the results of the study, the researcher suggests effective listening strategies to confront learners' problems of listening comprehension.

Supporting the findings of these two studies, the study conducted by Graham (2006) revealed that many learners considered themselves as less successful in listening than any other language areas. Most of the learners attributed their failure in listening to their low ability in the skill and the difficulty of the listening tasks and texts. The researcher concluded that having certain beliefs about listening might influence learners' approach to it.

The literature shows that Turkish students also have difficulty in listening comprehension. The study conducted by Yıldırım (2013) showed that the learners had difficulties arising from message-related, task-related, speaker-related, listener related and strategy-use problems. Moreover, Demirkol's (2009) study showed that

Turkish EFL students had listener-related problems most frequently and task-related problems least frequently in terms of listening comprehension.

Strategies for Listening Comprehension

Listening strategies can be divided into two groups: Cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies depend on both bottom-up and top-down processing. Bottom-up is a part to whole process which requires moving from the smallest units of a text to get the meaning of whole. On the other hand, top-down is a whole to part process which requires background knowledge to interpret the message (Carter & Nunan, 2001). According to Schwartz (1998), bottom-up strategies include scanning for specific details, recognizing cognates, or recognizing word-order patterns, whereas top-down strategies include inferencing or predicting depending on the listener's background knowledge and expectations. While cognitive strategies may directly affect comprehension, metacognitive strategies make indirect contributions. They involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Vandergrift (1999) states that the use of cognitive strategies increases the potential of metacognitive strategies. So, it can be concluded that in order to enhance listening comprehension, both of these strategies should be used in an integrated way.

Shang (2008) defines skillful and unskillful listeners saying that “the skillful listeners often use keywords, inferences from context, and grammatical knowledge to help comprehension; the unskillful listeners mainly use keywords, translations, and grammatical knowledge, but they rarely use inferences from context” (p.32).

Moreover, Schwartz (1998) lists the features of a strategic listener:

Strategic listeners are proficient listeners. They are listeners who:

- are aware of their listening processes;
- have a repertoire of listening strategies, and know which work best for them, with which listening tasks;

- use various listening strategies in combination and vary the combinations with the listening task;
- are flexible in their use of strategies and will try a different strategy if the one they originally chose does not work for them;
- use both bottom-up and top-down strategies; and plan, monitor, and evaluate before, during, and after listening. (p. 7)

As a result, language learners should be taught how to be strategic listeners so that they can overcome the problems they experience related to listening comprehension.

Authentic Materials

The use of authentic materials may play an important role in enhancing learners' listening comprehension skills. These materials include hesitations, false starts and pauses which are the characteristics of natural speech. Learners need to practice listening with authentic materials in order not to have problems with communicating in real life situations (Field, 1998). According to Berne (1998) "the use of authentic, as opposed to pedagogical, listening passages leads to greater improvement in second language listening comprehension performance" (p. 170). Vandergrift (2007) supports him by emphasizing that the ultimate goal of listening instruction is helping language learners comprehend the target language in real life situations. He states that authentic materials are "best suited to achieve this goal because they reflect real-life listening, they are relevant to the learners' lives, and they allow for exposure to different varieties of language" (p. 200). These materials can be used both out of class and during the class. When they are used within the classroom, they may also frame meaningful communicative classroom discussions (Adair-Hauck, Willingham-McLain, & Youngs, 1999). However, it should also be noted that these materials may be difficult to comprehend for lower level learners as

they are not modified to suit the proficiency level or needs of language learners (Li, 2012).

Technology

The Potential of Technology for Language Education

Technology is a broad concept which is hard to define because it “encompasses a wide range of tools, artifacts, and practices, from multimedia computers to the Internet, from videotapes to online chatrooms, from web pages to interactive audio conferencing” (Zhao, 2003, p. 8). The field of language education has adapted a number of these technologies for its use. There have been many studies examining these uses of technology, with many documenting the advantages that technology brings.

One of the greatest advantages of technology is that it has the power to increase learners’ motivation and decrease their anxiety (Gütl, Chang, Edwards, & Boruta, 2013; Martínez, 2010; Yang & Chen, 2007). As the students of today grow up with many technological devices and enjoy using them, using technology as a tool for language learning may be effective in altering students’ attitudes towards the language. In addition, technology can bring authenticity into the language classrooms with the help of Internet, computers, tablets, mobile devices, and many other technological advances (Adair-Hauck et al., 1999; Carter & Nunan, 2001; Zhao, 2003). Multimedia capabilities which are provided by technology can enhance learning as they provide rich and comprehensible input for language learners. Meskill (1996) emphasizes the individualized access to the materials provided by technology as they allow learners to have the control over their learning. Furthermore, technology helps learners communicate with people living many miles away. It is easy to interact with native speakers of a language via videoconferencing, chatting, e-mail exchanging and many other possible ways.

There are also many other opportunities that technology offers to language teachers and learners. However, the existence of technology does not guarantee its effectiveness. Zhao (2003) warns language teachers and researchers on this issue with the following statement:

The effects of any technology on learning outcomes lie in its uses. A specific technology may hold great educational potential, but, until it is used properly, it may not have any positive impact at all on learning. Thus, assessing the effectiveness of a technology is in reality assessing the effectiveness of its uses rather than the technology itself. (p. 8)

Therefore, teachers should pay special attention when integrating technology into language classroom. If it is used properly, it can both enhance learning and increase student motivation.

Recent Studies on Technology and Language Learning

There have been many studies investigating the effects of technology on language learning from different aspects (Chinnery, 2006; Coryell & Chlup, 2007; Meskill & Anthony, 2007). The following examples also belong to the studies conducted on technology in language learning.

The study of Yang and Chen (2007) investigated the perceptions of language students regarding language learning in a technology environment. The students participated in activities like group e-mailing, a Web-based course, an e-mail writing program, English homepage design, video-conferencing and chat room discussions. The results of the study showed that learners enjoyed learning English via such activities. However, the students with low language proficiency needed longer time to adapt themselves to the technology environment. Similarly, the study of Wan (2011) investigated EFL learners' perceptions of the use of weblogs for language learning. The results of the study support the view that weblogs are promising

interactive tools which are found both entertaining and educating by language learners. Another perception study was conducted by Öz (2014) in Turkey in order to explore EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of interactive whiteboards as learning tools. The findings of the study showed that the use of white boards were effective in changing the beliefs of learners towards learning English in a positive way. However, it was also found that teachers needed more training to get the most benefit of this technology.

The studies specifically conducted on the use of technology to enhance listening comprehension skills of the language learners also reveal positive results. The study of Barani (2011) supports the efficiency of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) to improve listening ability. Fuente (2014) conducted a similar study investigating the effects of mobile assisted language learning (MALL) on the listening comprehension of language learners, and she observed significant positive differences between the experimental and control groups.

The review of recent studies shows that technology has a lot to offer in terms of language learning. It can be used specifically for improving listening comprehension because it both provides different opportunities to practice and authentic materials.

Podcasting

Definition

The term podcast was first coined in 2004 by blending the words iPod and broadcast (Kavaliauskienė & Anusienė, 2009). In 2005, it was announced as the word of the year by the editors of the New Oxford American Dictionary, and subsequently defined as “a multimedia digital file made available on the Internet for downloading to a portable media player, computer, etc.” by the New Oxford American Dictionary (Oxford University Press, 2005). Many of the researchers

define a podcast as a series of media files which can be automatically downloaded through subscription to an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed (Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013; Cebeci & Tekdal, 2006; Chan et al., 2011; O'Brien & Hegelheimer, 2007). Software called 'podcatchers' regularly read the RSS Feed of a subscribed podcast in order to download the new episodes onto computers or portable devices. Podcasts are generally composed of audio files which are easier to produce than video podcasts (vodcasts) (Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013).

Educational Podcasting

Advantages of educational podcasting. Although educational podcasting is still in its infancy (Chan et al., 2011; McCombs & Liu, 2006; O'Bannon, Lubke, Beard, & Britt, 2011), the literature supports that it has many advantages in terms of its use for education. One of the biggest advantages of podcasting is that it does not require much technical information or expensive equipment. Many of the students already have technological devices such as computers, mp3 players, tablets or mobile phones. Through podcasts, they can use these popular devices to enhance their knowledge on a specific subject, to review their lectures or to improve their language skills (Abdous, Camarena, & Facer, 2009). Maag (2006) states that as students will have the audio files and the relevant technological devices which are the learning materials of educational podcasting, the feeling of ownership for those materials may also lead to an increase in learners' motivation.

Flexibility and portability are also among the advantages of this technology. Podcasts can be transported and accessed on a portable device such as an MP3 player or mobile phone, and students can listen to these audio files whenever and wherever they want. They can even listen to them while walking. So, this technology allows for multitasking, time shifting and mobility (Chan et al., 2011; Heilesen, 2010; Thorne & Payne, 2005). Bell, Cockburn, Wingkvist and Green (2007) mention the

attractiveness of podcasting by saying that “it potentially enables students to increase the number of hours of studying without necessarily having to remove something from their schedule such as doing household chores, or exercising” (p. 1). Moreover, there are many podcast channels and web sites which provide podcasts that have specific educational purposes. Students have the opportunity to choose the ones suitable for their needs. Thus, they have the control over their own learning (Lee & Chan, 2007). Cross (2013) summarizes these advantages in his article:

In particular, pod-casts provide an up-to-date, varied and extensive online source of audio and video broadcasts for learners wishing to improve their language learning beyond the confines of the classroom. Anytime and anywhere, learners can select from, subscribe to, and download podcasts via the Internet according to their needs and interests. (p.9)

McGarr (2009) emphasizes the three purposes behind the use of podcasting for education which are enhancing the flexibility of learning, increasing accessibility to learning and enhancing the student’s learning experience. Language education is one of the fields for which these purposes are well-suited. The literature reveals that educational podcasts have the potential of improving learners’ language skills. Listening comprehension skill is one of those language skills which can take the most advantage of this technology. Cebeci and Tekdal (2006) note in their article that “human beings have used listening as a primary method for thousand of years in learning process” (p. 49). They go on to say that learning through listening may be attractive and motivating for language learners who have auditory learning styles. In addition, learners can listen to the podcasts which provide them updated and authentic listening practice both inside and outside of the class (Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013). Kavaliauskiene and Anusienė (2009) note that autonomous listening contributes to learners’ own performance judgment and evaluation of success or

failure. They also state that transcriptions and follow-up exercises provided along with the podcasts can help the learners enhance their listening skills.

Despite its advantages and potential in developing language skills, podcasts may create an adverse effect in some situations. In order to avoid those unwanted effects, Cross (2013) puts forward some recommendations for language teachers. He states that teachers should guide their students about the use of podcasts. Students may not be aware of this technology or they may not know how to use it. If teachers raise awareness of podcasting, students can benefit from it. Another point that the researcher mentions is the length of the podcasts. He claims that selecting shorter podcasts is better as longer podcasts may cause boredom and loss of concentration. The existing literature also supports this suggestion by revealing the ideas of students who wished for shorter but more frequent podcast units (Ashraf, Noroozi, & Salami, 2011; Cebeci & Tekdal, 2006; Chan et al., 2011). Heilesen (2010) states that the frequent use of podcasts to improve language skills may also help students, especially the ones interested in technology, to develop better study habits.

Recent Studies on Podcasting as a Language Learning Tool

Al Qasim and Al Fadda (2013) put forward that podcasts for language learning can be divided into two groups: Those consisting of authentic content and those using materials especially created for language learning by either students or learners. Here, the literature on teacher-generated podcasts, student-generated podcasts and authentic material based podcasts will be reviewed.

Teacher-generated podcasts. As educational podcasting allows for mobility in learning, some researchers wanted to use this feature by moving the lecture out of the classroom. In their 2007 article, McCombs and Liu discuss a podcasting project conducted at the University of Houston. Surveys were conducted both with the instructors and students of the institution focusing on podcasting course materials,

podcasting and learning styles, and podcasting and learning effectiveness. The podcasts were generated and provided to the students by the instructors. As a result of the study, the availability of lectures in the format of podcast audio files was found beneficial by the students. Listening to the lecture before classes in a convenient place and time enabled them to be more active in class as they had more time for discussions and interaction with the instructor and other classmates during the course. However, the article emphasizes the need to integrate podcasting into the classroom and incorporating other learning activities with podcasting content delivery. The researchers state that podcasting should not be the only instructional method. They also recommend that instructors teach their students how to use podcasts and to generate short podcasts for their courses.

The study of Abdous et al. (2009) contrasted the supplemental and integrated use of podcasting comparing the instructional benefits of each of them. Unplanned supplemental use included lecture podcasts recorded by the instructors whereas planned integrated use included recorded critiques of student projects, student presentations, interviews, lectures, discussions and guest lectures. The results of the study indicated that podcasting can be an effective tool in language acquisition if instructors use it for a variety of instructional purposes. Similarly, Lonn and Teasley (2009) conducted a study on the use of teacher-generated podcasts. The findings of the study revealed that the students used the podcasts to review the classes generally before exams rather than using them to skip classes. Also, the study found that instructors did not modify their lectures for more effective teaching while recording the audio files. The researchers emphasize that “if podcasting is to act as a catalyst to change instruction in higher education, instructors must be willing to adjust their teaching styles and not merely lecture, but create environments that provide a variety of learning opportunities” (p.92).

In his review article, McGarr (2009) provides significant suggestions for the use of teacher-generated podcasts. He states that if the recordings of lectures or course materials are provided to students in the format of podcasts, lack of study skills to use support material effectively may affect learning negatively since students may perceive those supplementary materials as the primary source of the course.

In conclusion, the relevant studies show that teacher-generated podcasts may be useful for the learners if the issues mentioned above are carefully handled.

Student-generated podcasts. The idea of including students in the production phase of educational podcasts led to some studies investigating the results of student generated podcasts. One of the factors that may motivate students to create podcasts is the aim of reaching real audience. Before conducting her study, Dlott (2007) was impressed by this idea and decided to investigate the effects of student-generated podcasts. She worked with elementary students and helped them generate their own podcasts. Students were really excited as their recordings would be listened to by their families and friends. During the study, they not only recorded themselves but also commented on each other's podcasts on the blog of their class. The findings of the study showed that student-generated podcasts could improve the language skills of the learners and could be a good source of motivation.

Similarly, Al Quasim and Al Fadda (2013) conducted a study with EFL students in higher education. The students created their own podcasts during the study. At the end of six-week treatment period, it was found that podcasts could enhance students' listening skills better than traditional classroom instruction. Although the literature does not reveal much about the effects of student-generated podcasts in language learning, these studies show that podcasts generated by the collaboration of students may have positive effects on their learning, motivation and self-confidence.

Authentic material based podcasts. The most common type of podcasting which is used for language education is providing authentic material based podcasts to the learners. A case study was conducted by O'Brien and Hegelheimer (2007) to determine the effects of integrating podcasts into classroom to enhance learners' listening skills. Students were provided with authentic material based podcasts and follow up activities over a fifteen week period. At the end of the treatment period, the instructors stated that they found this technology highly beneficial because the students had the opportunity to be exposed to different types of spoken English. The studies of Ashraf et al. (2011) and Cross (2013) support the findings of the previous studies with significantly positive results of authentic material based podcast implementations. Finally, Fox (2008) touches upon the pedagogical potential of talk radio podcasts which promote effective and deep learning while motivating students through authentic experiences with a global audience.

To sum up, educational podcasting can be used in different ways according to the needs of the learners and objectives of the courses. It can be seen that all three alternatives used for educational podcasting have their own advantages along with the issues which requires special attention.

Learners' Perceptions of Educational Podcasting

The studies provided in the previous sections suggest that educational podcasting may be a powerful learning tool. However, in order for it to be effective, it must first be accepted by the learners. As Heilesen (2010) states "increasing student acceptance of podcasting as a useful tool for studying may help improve the academic environment" (p. 1066). For this reason, there have been some studies conducted to reveal learners' perceptions of this technology. The literature shows that general perceptions of learners about educational podcasting are quite positive. Many of the researchers conducted questionnaires and interviews with the students

about their perceptions of podcasting as a language learning tool (Chan et al., 2011; Farshi & Mohammadi, 2013; Hasan & Hoon, 2012; Lee & Chan, 2007; Edirisingha et al., 2007). The results were similar. Students find podcasts attractive, amusing and helpful. They feel motivated to learn languages through podcasts. What they like most about podcasting is the flexibility that it provides. Students enjoy learning anywhere and anytime. Moreover, they are happy to have the opportunity to listen to an audio file again and again to improve their language skills at their own pace.

The study of Kavaliauskiene and Anusiene (2009) reveal important implications about student perceptions. The researchers state that learners feel more motivated when they try to improve their language skills with out of class activities without being observed by peers or teachers. They also emphasize the encouragement arising from self-evaluation of achievements.

In their 2012 article, Rahimi and Katal contributed to the literature by revealing the relationship between students' podcast-use readiness and their perceptions of podcasting. They found that the perceptions of students about podcasting for language education are affected by their attitudes towards technology and Internet.

Finally, in one of the very few studies about podcasting in Turkey, Başaran (2010) investigated students' self-efficacy in language learning and the effect of podcast use on the change in their self-efficacy. The results showed that students' self-efficacy perceptions of learning English significantly improved after a twelve-week treatment period with podcasts.

In conclusion, the studies conducted on this technology show that podcasting is promising in language learning. Moreover, almost all of the researchers state that because of the infancy of this technology, it needs further studies.

Conclusion

The review of the literature shows that listening comprehension is a problematic skill for language learners. Practice with authentic materials can be an effective strategy for listening related problems. Thanks to the developing technologies, it is easy to practice listening comprehension and to obtain authentic materials with the use of devices owned by learners. One of the most promising advances in technology is podcasting which can be used as a language learning tool. In light of this information, the next chapter will provide information about the methodology of the study including setting and participants, research design, treatment, instruments, and finally data collection procedures and data analysis.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing their listening skills. The study also examines whether there is a relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English. To this end, the study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) What are EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills?
 - a. What are EFL learners' podcast listening preferences?
 - b. What do EFL learners think about podcasting in terms of ease of use, enjoyableness, and effectiveness in language learning?
- 2) Is there a relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English?

This chapter consists of six main sections: Setting and participants, research design, treatment, instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis procedures. In the first section, the information related to the setting and the participants of the study are explained in detail. In the second section, the research design of the study is revealed. In the third section, the details related to the treatment are presented. In the fourth section, the instruments for collecting data are described. In the fifth section, data collection procedures are explained step by step. Finally, in the sixth section, the data analysis procedures are presented.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at the School of Foreign Languages of Bülent Ecevit University, a state university in Zonguldak, Turkey. Depending upon their entry level of English, undergraduate students in some departments at the university are required to take one-year compulsory English preparatory courses at the Department of Basic English of the School of Foreign Languages in order to be able to continue with their own departments. English competency of students is evaluated by a proficiency test which is administered at the beginning of each academic year. Students who score 60 or above out of 100 can continue on to take courses with their own departments. The ones who fail are placed in one of two levels of preparatory classes, A1 (low) and A1+ (high) based upon their proficiency levels to study English for a year. These levels correspond to the description of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). In the primary course, which integrates all four skills, instructors use the textbook *English File* (2013) by Oxford University Press. Throughout the academic year, the success of students is assessed by quizzes, presentations, portfolio assignments, four midterms and one final exam. This particular university was chosen as it is organized in a manner typical of universities in Turkey. Additionally, the researcher had access to information and student participants for the study.

Three classes were assigned for this study by the administration of School of Foreign Languages of Bülent Ecevit University. At the beginning of the treatment period, 43 pre-intermediate students of the three classes volunteered to participate in this study, and signed the participant consent forms. These students took 26 hours of instruction for the primary course, 2 hours for the speaking course and 2 hours for the self-study course per week. At the end of six-week treatment period, they filled out the perception questionnaire. Their questionnaire results were taken into

consideration according to their responses to the first question of Section B of the questionnaire. Students were asked to indicate how many podcasts they had listened during the treatment period. The students who had not listened to any podcasts were asked to skip to Section D which was about their attitudes towards learning English. Fifteen participants stated that they did not listen to any podcasts and just filled out D part. The responses of the rest of the participants varied. Ten of them checked '1-3', nine of them checked '4-6' and nine of them checked '7-9'. None of the participants stated that they had listened to more than nine audio files. Although the responses of the 28 participants who listened to at least one podcast were used to answer the research questions, data about the English learning attitudes of the 15 participants who did not listen to any podcasts during the treatment period were still gathered to see whether their attitudes towards English affected their participation in the study. For this reason, an independent samples t-test was run on SPSS. There was no significant difference between English learning attitudes of podcast listeners and non-listeners. It can be concluded that the reason why they did not listen to any podcast was not related to their attitudes towards English.

To sum up, although 43 participants signed the consent forms to participate in the study voluntarily, 15 of them did not listen to any podcasts. As a result, the responses of 28 participants (see Table 1 for a summary of the demographic information of the students) were used to answer the research questions.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Participants

		<u>Gender</u>		Total
		Female	Male	
Age	18	6	5	11
	19	6	1	7
	20	3	4	7
	21	0	1	1
	27	0	2	2
Total		15	13	28

Research Design

In this study, EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills and the relationship between their perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English were investigated. To this end, after providing a tutoring session about podcasting and the treatment period, the six-week treatment period started. The students listened to the podcasts chosen by the researcher during this period. At the end of the treatment period, a questionnaire gauging students' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English was filled out by the participants. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with eight of the participants who volunteered in order to gain a deeper insight into the perceptions of students.

Treatment**Selection of the Podcasts**

In this study, British Council *Learn English Elementary Podcasts* were used as the main tools of the treatment period. The students were provided with a total of

eight episodes of Series 3 within the six-week period. Each of the episodes took ten minutes or less. The rationale behind choosing British Council *Learn English Elementary Podcasts* was that they were appropriate for the learners' proficiency levels and the contents of the episodes focused upon daily issues like finding a job or the weather (see Appendix F for the screenshot of British Council web page and Appendix I for the content of podcast episodes). Moreover, the lengths of the episodes were not too long, the conversations were enjoyable, transcriptions and slow listening mode were available to the students, and the recordings were of good quality. Students were also given a list of other educational podcasts, such as *Six Minute English Podcasts* of the BBC, *Learning English Broadcast* of Voice of America and *Absolutely Intercultural Podcasts* suitable for their proficiency level as supplementary materials. The researcher suggested that the participants could listen to as many of these additional podcasts as they wished within the treatment period, as well as the last two weeks of the six-week period which was set aside for free podcast listening.

Tutoring Session

Before the treatment period started, a tutoring session was provided to the students by the researcher. At the beginning of the tutoring session, the students were asked whether they had any knowledge of or experience with podcasting. All of the students stated that it was the first time they had heard of the term. After obtaining this information, the researcher explained what podcasting was, how it could be used for educational purposes, the nature of the treatment within this study, and what the students needed to do in order to fulfil the requirements of this study. The students were also taught how to use mobile and desktop versions of podcast managers or podcatchers, which are applications used for subscribing to podcasts and downloading them (see Appendix G for the screenshot of a podcatcher). At the end

of the tutoring session, all of the students were taken to the computer laboratory to practice using podcasts and sign up for Edmodo, the online platform used to communicate with students and monitor students during the treatment period.

Use of Edmodo

Edmodo is an online platform which can be used by teachers and students for educational purposes. A restricted group was created by the researcher on this online platform, and the participants signed up for that group during the tutoring session. The Edmodo group was used to communicate with students. For example, the researcher posted the links of the episodes to the group. The participants also posted their questions related to the treatment period, all of which were answered by the researcher. Additionally, short quizzes which were composed of two or three simple comprehension questions were provided through Edmodo. The questions were generally about the main idea of the audio files, and they were designed to ensure that the participants were actually listening to the podcasts (see Appendix H for the screenshots of Edmodo web page). At the end of the treatment period, it was seen that there were some participants who could not take the quizzes on the online platform because of technical issues such as internet connection problems or lack of a computer. However, many of those 28 participants were able to take the quizzes and follow the posts on Edmodo.

Treatment Process

The treatment period lasted from February 23, 2015 to April 3, 2015. The students were provided with the schedule for the podcasts during the treatment period at the tutoring session. Additionally, they received weekly reminders through the Edmodo group. During the first four weeks of the treatment period, two episodes of British Council *Learn English Elementary Podcasts Series 3* were posted to the Edmodo group each week. Also, follow-up quizzes composed of a maximum of three

simple comprehension questions were posted. The last two weeks of the treatment period were identified for free podcast listening. During this two-week period, students were to listen to any podcast that they liked from the suggested podcasts list provided by the researcher, and the podcasts of the previous weeks if they missed any. The aim of posting quizzes was to make sure that students were listening to and comprehending the audio files. The results of the quizzes were not included in this study.

Instruments

As this study uses a mixed method research design, a questionnaire and interviews served as the main instruments of the study to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.

The questionnaire was in Turkish and it consisted of five parts (see Appendix B for Turkish and English versions of the questionnaire). The first part included students' demographic information such as their age and gender. The second part which had six questions investigated podcast listening preferences of the participants. The eighteen questions on the third part sought information about the participants' general perceptions of educational podcasting. These questions investigated participants' perceptions of educational podcasting in terms of ease of use, enjoyableness and effectiveness in language learning. The fourth part of the questionnaire contained fourteen questions examining participants' attitudes towards learning English. Responses to these questions were used to answer the second research question which investigated the correlation between English learning attitudes and educational podcasting perceptions. The last part of the questionnaire consisted of two open-ended questions about podcast listening problems and general ideas on podcasting. This part provided data for the first research question. It took approximately 10 minutes for the participants to fill out the questionnaire.

The items of section B and C of the questionnaire were adapted from the studies of Li (2010) and Lee and Chan (2007) who also investigated learners' perceptions of educational podcasting with similar research designs. In addition, the items of section D of the questionnaire were adapted from the study of Alkaff (2013) who specifically focused on students' attitudes towards learning English. As the treatment period was necessary for the students to be able to answer the questions, piloting of the questionnaire could not be done beforehand. However, a reliability analysis was run on Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 after the completion of the questionnaire by the participants. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .83 for part C and .89 for part D.

After filling out the questionnaires, interviews were conducted with eight participants who were the volunteers for the interviews to gain deeper insight into the research questions. The questions were directed at learning more about participants' podcast listening experience within the past six weeks (see Appendix C for the interview questions). The interviews were generally less than ten minutes. The recordings were transcribed for qualitative data analysis.

Data Collection Procedures

Firstly, the permission to conduct this study was obtained from the administration of the School of Foreign Languages of Bülent Ecevit University. The administration assigned three classes for this study. Before starting to work with the students, the researcher explained all phases of the study to the teachers of each three classes. Then, the researcher provided the tutoring session to students after which participant consent forms were collected and the treatment period started (see Appendix A for participant consent form).

During the treatment period, the participants listened to the podcasts, and many of them took the follow up quizzes online. Whenever they experienced

problems with podcasting technology, they communicated with the researcher to find solutions. At the end of the treatment period, the questionnaire created by the researcher was given to the participants. After all of the questionnaires were filled out, the researcher conducted interviews with eight of the participants who volunteered for the interviews. The interviews were recorded for later transcription and analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

Both quantitative and qualitative data analyses were used in order to answer the research questions which aimed to shed light on EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills.

The data collected through the perception questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively except for the last part of the questionnaire which consisted of two open-ended questions. SPSS was used to calculate the descriptive statistics and correlation between the perceptions about educational podcasting and attitudes towards learning English.

The data collected through the open-ended questions at the last part of the questionnaire and the data gathered from the interviews were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis. Common themes were coded into groups in order to be interpreted to support the questionnaire results and to gain better insight into the research questions.

Conclusion

In this methodology chapter, setting and participants, research design, treatment, instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis procedures were described in detail. The next chapter will provide the detailed analysis of quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the participants through the perception questionnaire and interviews.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills. The study also examines whether there is a relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English. To this end, the study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) What are EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills?
 - a. What are EFL learners' podcast listening preferences?
 - b. What do EFL learners think about podcasting in terms of ease of use, enjoyableness, and effectiveness in language learning?
- 2) Is there a relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English?

In order to answer the research questions, the data were gathered from 28 pre-intermediate students studying at the School of Foreign Languages of Bülent Ecevit University in 2014-2015 academic year. After a six-week treatment within which the students listened to the podcasts, a perception questionnaire which was compiled by the researcher was provided to the students. The same day, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight of the participants in order to gain a deeper insight into the research questions. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and then translated into English (see Appendix D for the sample translations of interview transcriptions). For quantitative data analysis, the data collected via the first four sections of the questionnaire were entered into the statistics software program, SPSS

v.22. The open-ended questions in the fifth section of the questionnaire and the interview transcriptions were analyzed via content analysis.

This chapter presents the results of the study in accordance with the research questions in two main sections. In the first section, the EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting are revealed using the descriptive analysis of data from the second and third sections of the questionnaire, and content analysis of the qualitative data. EFL learners' podcast listening preferences and their opinions about the ease of use, enjoyableness and effectiveness of podcasts in language learning are presented in this section. In the second section, the relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English is discussed based upon the correlation analysis results.

Results

EFL Learners' Perceptions of Educational Podcasting

How EFL learners prefer to listen to podcasts. The responses of the participants to the second section of the questionnaire were used to analyze their podcast listening preferences. Descriptive analysis was run in order to calculate frequencies and percentages. Table 2 summarizes the preferences of learners in terms of the devices used for listening to the podcasts.

Table 2

Podcast Listening Device Preferences

Device	f	%
Desktop / laptop computer	9	32.1
MP3 player	1	3.6
Mobile phone	17	60.7
Tablet pc	1	3.6
Total	28	100

The results show that 60.7% of the participants preferred listening to the podcasts with their mobile phones, whereas 32.1% of them used their computers to listen to the audio files. The table shows that using an MP3 player or a tablet pc was not a preferred listening method.

Table 3

Podcast Listening Location Preferences

Location	f	%
Home / dormitory	25	89.3
On the road	2	7.1
Other	1	3.6
Total	28	100

Table 3 shows the summary of the responses related to the question which investigated where the participants usually listened to the podcasts. A majority of the students (89.3%) chose the ‘home/dormitory’ option whereas only two of them stated they listened to the audio files on the road and one of them chose ‘other’ option.

Table 4

Podcast Listening Time Preferences

Occasion	f	%
While travelling	2	7.1
While waiting(e.g., for a friend, for the class)	1	3.6
While carrying out other tasks (e.g. household chores, exercising)	2	7.1
I set aside dedicated time to listen to the podcasts	20	71.4
Other	3	10.7
Total	28	100

Table 4 shows the results of the fifth question of section B. It is seen that 71.4% of the participants set aside some time to listen to the podcasts. Just a few of them preferred to listen to the audio files while travelling, waiting or carrying out other tasks.

The last item of section B investigated whether students preferred to listen to the podcasts with transcriptions or not. The results show that 75% of the students preferred listening with transcriptions while the rest did not prefer transcriptions of the audio files.

The opinions of EFL learners about podcasting in terms of ease of use, enjoyableness, and effectiveness in language learning. Descriptive statistics were run in SPSS in order to analyze the responses of the participants to the third part of the questionnaire. The questions were divided into three categories; ease of use of podcasting, enjoyableness of podcasting and effectiveness of podcasting in language learning. After the statistical analysis was conducted, content analysis was applied to the interview transcriptions and the responses given to the open-ended questions of the questionnaire. The information related to the research questions were categorized thematically and used to support questionnaire results. Table 5 shows the summary of the findings related to the ease of use category:

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Responses to Ease of Use Items

Question		1	2	3	4	5
C1. It is easy to access the podcast audio files.	f	0	1	5	14	8
	%	0	3.6	17.9	50.0	28.6
C2. It is easy to play the podcast audio files.	f	0	1	6	17	4
	%	0	3.6	21.4	60.7	14.3
C3. Subscribing to podcasts allows me to access them more easily.	f	0	3	3	16	6
	%	0	10.7	10.7	57.1	21.4
C4. Using podcasts is possible everywhere and everytime.	f	1	6	5	11	5
	%	3.6	21.4	17.9	39.3	17.9
C5. I don't know how to handle this new technology.*	f	1	0	4	18	5
	%	3.6	0	14.3	64.3	17.9
C6. I found the 8 to 10 minute podcasts to be of the right length.	f	2	2	8	11	5
	%	7.1	7.1	28.6	39.3	17.9
C7. Transcriptions make me understand the audio file better.	f	1	2	2	8	15
	%	3.6	7.1	7.1	28.6	53.6

Note. N=28; *Items were reverse coded; 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree

The first and the second items investigated participants' perceptions of the ease of accessing and playing the audio files. The results were similar for both items as 78.6% of the participants agreed that it was easy to access podcasts, and 75% of them agreed it was easy to play the audio files. Similarly, the responses to the third item showed that 78.5% of the participants agreed that subscribing to podcasts eased their access to audio files.

The fourth item investigated whether students agreed that podcasts could be used in different locations and times. While 57.2% of the students agreed on this item, 25% disagreed and 17.9% took a neutral stance. Qualitative data also revealed information related to this item. Some of the students talked about their problems related to Internet connection. They reported that they had difficulty in accessing the podcasts at times because of the lack of Internet connection. They also stated that they could not reach the audio files when and wherever they wished as they were limited to the areas with Internet connection.

The fifth item was a negative statement. As a result, it was reverse coded before running descriptive statistics. The responses show that 82.2% of the participants reported knowing how to handle this new technology. The results of this item support the responses given to the previous items.

The sixth item was about the length of the audio files. The results show that 57.2% of the learners found the 8-10 minutes length of the podcasts appropriate, whereas 28.6% of them were not sure, and 14.2% of them disagreed with the statement. Students also expressed their ideas about the length of the audio files in the interviews and open-ended questions. While some of the students stated that they were happy with the length of episodes which was around 10 minutes for each audio file, some of them were displeased with the length. One of the students stated her opinions by saying: "There were times I got bored because of the length of the podcasts because I set aside a specific time to listen to the episodes, and listening to an audio file for 10 minutes was boring at times."

Another student complained about the length of the audio files when she was asked about the problems she experienced. She answered one of the open-ended questions as follows:

I believe that I can improve my listening skills once I start to understand the podcasts. I think I should listen to 4 or 5 minutes podcasts at the beginning. Because I get bored if I do not understand the conversations in longer podcasts.

So, it was seen that students had different ideas about the optimal length of the audio files. Another point that the students put forward was related to the speed of speeches. Some of the students stated that it was difficult for them to catch each word although the audio files were designed for elementary learners. The following quotation was taken from one of the interviews. “Sometimes the speakers speak too fast. When I cannot keep up with the speed of speech, I need to go back to the beginning or read the transcriptions while listening.”

Even though there were some students who had difficulty in keeping up with the speed of speech, the interview data and responses to open-ended questions showed that there were also some students who found the solution by slowing down the audio file which is another feature of this podcasting technology.

The seventh item was related to the use of transcriptions. A majority of the participants (82.2%) agreed that the availability of the transcriptions along with the audio files enhanced their comprehension. The qualitative data also revealed significant information related to the availability of the transcriptions with the audio files. The participants had the chance to follow the transcriptions using both mobile applications and computer software. Many of the students reported that they benefited from the transcriptions; however, some of them used the transcriptions at the early weeks of the treatment period while some of them reported needing the texts through the end of the treatment period. The following quotation belongs to a student who was interviewed.

At the beginning, I did not look at the transcriptions because I was able to understand by just hearing the audio files. But, the episodes became more difficult in terms of vocabulary as the time passed. As a result, I started to listen to them with transcriptions.

In contrast, another student who stated his ideas about transcriptions as a response to the open-ended questions explained that he needed the transcriptions while listening to the first podcasts: “I did not understand what I was listening at the beginning. So, I followed the transcriptions while listening. However, when I got used to the speeches, I did not need the texts.”

There was also another student who reported that he looked at the transcriptions only when he lost his concentration. So, it can be inferred from the qualitative data that many learners benefited from the transcriptions in different ways.

In short, the results show that the participants mostly agreed on the ease of use of educational podcasts. However, the responses to the fourth item suggest that some of the students may have had some problems using the podcasts at different times and locations. Additionally, the length of the audio files was not universally approved.

Table 6 summarizes the responses to items (8, 10, 11 and 14) which are related to enjoyableness of podcasts.

Table 6

Frequency Distribution of Responses to Enjoyableness of Podcasts Items

Question		1	2	3	4	5
C8. I enjoy listening to podcasts.	f	0	3	10	14	1
	%	0	10.7	35.7	50.0	3.6
C10. I don't think podcasts are interesting.*	f	1	8	7	11	1
	%	3.6	28.6	25.0	39.3	3.6
C11. I will listen to podcasts in the future.	f	0	4	14	9	1
	%	0	14.3	50.0	32.1	3.6
C14. Podcasts bring me no fun at all.*	f	2	6	4	13	3
	%	7.1	21.4	14.3	46.4	10.7

Note. N=28; * Items were reverse coded; 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral;

4=agree; 5=strongly agree

Questionnaire items 8, 10 and 14 are quite related to each other and the responses seem to support each other. The responses to the eighth item show that 53.6% of the participants enjoyed listening to podcasts whereas 35.7% of them were unsure about it. There were just three participants who stated that they did not enjoy podcasts. Item 10 and 14 were stated negatively and were reverse coded for the analysis. The results are similar. Responses to item 10 show that 42% of the participants found podcasts interesting, 32.2% of them found them uninteresting and 25% of them took a neutral stance. As for item 14, 57.1% of the participants found podcasts fun, 28.5% did not find them fun and 14.3% were unsure about the item. When the participants were asked whether they would listen to the podcasts in the future, 10 of them agreed that they would whereas 14 of them were not sure.

The analysis of the qualitative data also supports the responses to these items. In the interviews and open-ended questions, some of the students mentioned their

dissatisfaction with the content of the podcasts. They stated that they found some of the episodes boring. A few students stated that they found the introduction of British Council and music in the recordings irritating. The following quotation belongs to one of the interviewees. “I did not like the jingles. The conversations were interrupted constantly for those jingles starting with “www”. I did not like those parts as I lost my concentration.”

Although there were some negative comments related to the content, the general opinions were positive. There were many students writing and talking about how enjoyable the podcasts were. The following quotation belongs to one of those students: “I enjoyed them a lot. Learning new things through podcasts was like listening to stories. You learn and have fun at the same time.” To sum up, the results of enjoyableness category show that the participants have different opinions about the enjoyableness of podcasts and just some of them seem to listen to podcasts in the future.

Table 7 summarizes the answers of the participants to the questions (9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17 and 18) related to the effectiveness of podcasts in language learning.

Table 7

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Effectiveness of Podcasts in Language**Learning Items*

Question		1	2	3	4	5
C9. Listening to English podcasts has made me more motivated to learn the language.	f	0	1	12	12	3
	%	0	3.6	42.9	42.9	10.7
C12. Podcasts are useful for language learning.	f	0	0	5	15	8
	%	0	0	17.9	53.6	28.6
C13. Listening to podcasts is effective for improving listening skills.	f	0	0	4	14	10
	%	0	0	14.3	50.0	35.7
C15. Listening to podcasts is effective for improving my comprehension skills.	f	0	2	2	18	6
	%	0	7.1	7.1	64.3	21.4
C16. Listening to the podcasts was not a productive use of my time.*	f	0	6	4	13	5
	%	0	21.4	14.3	46.4	17.9
C17. After working with English podcasts, I am more open to learning through podcasts in the future.	f	1	2	14	10	1
	%	3.6	7.1	50.0	35.7	3.6
C18. I would recommend that other students learning English listen to the podcasts.	f	0	1	6	15	6
	%	0	3.6	21.4	53.6	21.4

Note. N=28; * Items were reverse coded; 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree

Responses to the ninth, twelfth, thirteenth and fifteenth items were mostly positive. Half (53.6%) of the participants agreed that podcasts had motivated them to learn the language. A strong majority of the participants (82.2%) agreed to the

usefulness of podcasts in language learning. As for the effectiveness of podcasts in improving listening and comprehension skills, 85.7% of the participants agreed to the statements.

The content analysis also revealed that the students found the educational podcasts effective in language learning in terms of listening comprehension, vocabulary and pronunciation. When the students were asked whether there was any difference between their experiences in listening to the first and the last episode within the treatment period, some of them stated it was difficult for them to understand the audio files at the beginning however they ended up with comprehending most of the speech at the end.

When the students were asked about their positive and negative opinions about educational podcasting in the open-ended questions of the questionnaire, there were also many responses related to the effectiveness of this technology in improving listening comprehension skills. One of the students wrote that listening to the podcasts made her more comfortable in the listening parts during the courses at school. Another student noted that: "I think educational podcasts improve our pronunciations and listening comprehension skills. It can cause really great effects in terms of learning English in the long run."

In addition to the effects of educational podcasting on the listening comprehension skills, many of the students mentioned its benefits for enhancing their vocabulary and improving their pronunciations. As a result, students found educational podcasting beneficial especially for vocabulary, pronunciation and listening comprehension.

Item 16, which was a negatively stated item, aimed to measure whether students thought they had used their time productively by listening to the podcasts. According to the responses, 64.3% of the students agreed that listening to podcasts

was a productive use of time. As for item 17 which explored whether participants were open to learning through podcasts after this study, just three students disagreed whereas 11 of them agreed with the statement. However, 50% of the participants were unsure about learning through podcasts in the future. Although many respondents were unsure about item 17, the responses to item 18 showed that most (75%) would recommend learning English through podcasts to other students.

EFL Learners' Perceptions of Educational Podcasting and Attitudes towards Learning English

A correlation test was conducted to see whether there is a relationship between learners' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English. For this purpose, the mean scores for the questions in Section C (perceptions of educational podcasting) and Section D (attitudes towards learning English) were calculated separately for each participant. In order to see whether the variables have a normal distribution, a normality test was conducted. The result of the Shapiro-Wilk normality test run for the mean results of English learning attitudes showed that the variable was normally distributed with a significance level of .132. Skewness (-.898) and kurtosis (.675) results also supported the result of Shapiro-Wilk test. As for the second variable, the significance level of Shapiro-Wilk for the mean scores of educational podcast perceptions was .042 which signed for a non-normal distribution. However, when skewness and kurtosis results (-.655 and -.635, respectively) were taken into account, it was decided that a parametric correlation test could be run on the variables (see Appendix E for normality test results).

After running the normality tests, Pearson correlation test was used in order to explore the relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English. The results revealed that there is a moderate positive relationship between two variables ($r(26)=.51, p < .01$).

Figure 1 demonstrates the relationship between the variables.

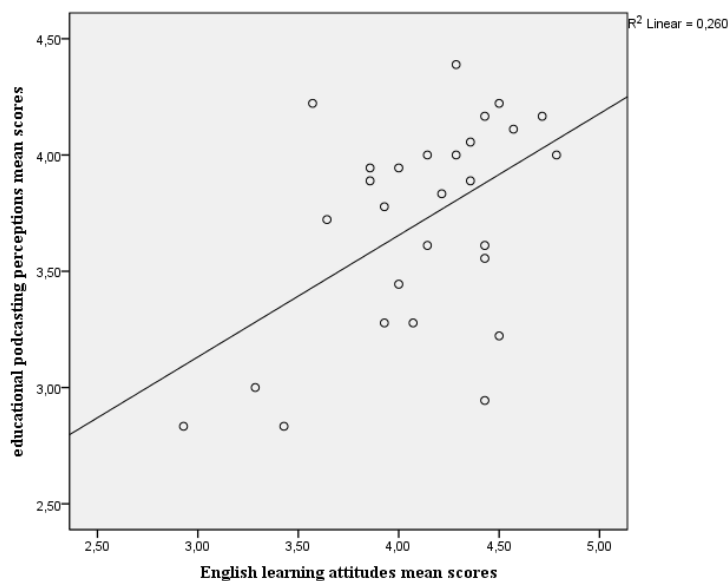


Figure 1. The correlation between the mean scores of educational podcasting perceptions and English learning attitudes

In conclusion, the result of the correlation test shows a positive relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English. Learners with more positive attitudes towards learning English also had more positive perceptions of podcasting.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the data gathered via the compiled questionnaire and semi-structured interviews from 28 EFL learners studying at the School of Foreign Languages of Bülent Ecevit University were used to answer the research questions of the study. The first research question was answered by the descriptive analysis of the second and third sections of the questionnaire and content analysis of the interview transcriptions and open-ended questions of the questionnaire. As for the second research question, the correlation results were explained to reveal the relationship between learners' perceptions of podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English. The next chapter will present an overview of the study, the findings and discussion, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills. The study also examines whether there is a relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English. To this end, the study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) What are EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills?
 - a. What are EFL learners' podcast listening preferences?
 - b. What do EFL learners think about podcasting in terms of ease of use, enjoyableness, and effectiveness in language learning?
- 2) Is there a relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English?

This chapter consists of four sections. In the first section, the findings of the study are evaluated and discussed with regards to the research questions and the relevant literature. In the second section, pedagogical implications are presented. In the third section, the limitations of the study are defined. Finally, in the fourth section, suggestions for further research are provided.

Findings and Discussion

EFL Learners' Perceptions of Educational Podcasting

How EFL learners prefer to listen to podcasts. Data collected from the questionnaire were used to find out about the podcast listening preferences of learners in terms of listening devices, locations and times. It was seen that many of the participants preferred to listen to the audio files on their mobile phones, though some used their computers with just a couple of them using either an MP3 player or a Tablet PC. The results are not unexpected because almost all of the students had smart phones, which allowed them to use this podcasting technology easily. These results are interesting because they contradict the findings of a study conducted in 2009. Lonn and Teasley (2009) found that the students preferred listening to the podcasts on their desktops or laptops rather than other mobile devices. They concluded that: "Over time, the location for students' consumption of podcast educational materials may change as mobile digital devices become a more popular method for accessing the Internet" (p. 91). It can be clearly seen that their prediction was right, as six years have passed since they conducted their study, and the change in the preferences of learners is obvious. Moreover, this may be a hopeful finding, as access to a computer may no longer be a barrier to using podcasting.

Cebeci and Tekdal (2006) state that podcasting allows for anytime and anywhere mobile learning. However, the results of the questionnaire showed that the participants of this study did not take advantage of this mobile learning. A strong majority of students preferred to use this technology at home or in a dormitory where they set aside a specific time to listen to the audio files. They did not report multitasking while listening, although it is one of the features which makes podcasting different from traditional listening activities. Although these results contradict the findings of some studies in which the learners enjoyed and benefited

from the mobility of this technology (Ashraf et al., 2011; Bolliger, Supanakorn, & Boggs, 2010), there were also some studies in the literature which had found similar findings (Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013; Lee & Chan, 2007). Lee and Chan stated that “the fact that learners use certain technologies for work, communication and entertainment does not necessarily mean that they will automatically use them in similar ways for effective learning” (p. 216). Bell et al. (2007) support this finding by saying that learners are more likely to listen to the learning materials in a non-mobile situation to avoid distractions. In addition to these researchers’ conclusions, the novelty of this technology for the learners and learners’ low proficiency levels may be other reasons for their approaching educational podcasting like a traditional listening activity. It takes time to get used to new strategies and methods. A six-week exposure to podcasting may not be enough to change the way students think and go about learning language skills. However, the general findings of this study support Li (2010), who states, “Though it takes time, the benefits podcasts bring to students are overwhelming” (p. 87). So, time may change the way learners prefer to listen to podcasts.

The opinions of EFL learners about podcasting in terms of ease of use, enjoyableness, and effectiveness in language learning. Data collected from the perception questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were analyzed and evaluated under the light of information retrieved from the literature. As for the ease of use of podcasting, it was seen that the participants found subscribing, accessing, and playing the podcasts quite easy. Not surprisingly, there were a few negative responses as none of the participants had ever experienced podcasting before. These results show that the tutoring session provided at the beginning of the treatment period was beneficial for the participants as they apparently learned how to handle this technology well. However, it was seen that some students had difficulty in using

podcasts in different locations and at different times, keeping up with the speed of speech, and concentrating on the audio files because of the length.

In the interviews and open-ended questions, some students mentioned that they experienced technological problems, such as the lack of Internet connection. The lack of Internet prevented them from accessing the audio files at locations and times of their choice. In order to overcome such problems, the learners might be instructed to download the audio files at places with Internet connection such as the school building or the library, for future listening. As for the problem of speed of speech, it was observed that some students overcame this problem by slowing down the speech rate which is another feature allowed by podcasting. However, as Ashraf et al. (2011) also suggest, listening to the podcasts in slow mode may cause problems when the learners experience real life listening. Although the learners may consider the rate of speech as a problem, as the learners get used to the natural speech rate in the podcasts over time, it may decrease future problems caused by the speed of speech in real life situations. When it comes to the length issue, some students expressed their dissatisfaction with the length of the audio files which was around 10 minutes. It was seen that long podcasts could cause boredom and loss of concentration among students. Some students stated that podcasts of five minutes would have been better. This problem is similar to the one reported by Li (2010). The researcher also had a participant who was reluctant to continue the research because of the length of the podcasts. Although the learners want shorter podcasts, Chan et al. (2011) state that it might be hard to cover the learning content in an audio file in less than ten minutes. These researchers suggest increasing the frequency of podcasts if the length is shortened.

One of the most interesting issues coming out of both the quantitative and qualitative data was related to the transcriptions provided within the podcasting

technology. A majority of the participants agreed that the availability of transcriptions assisted in their understanding of the audio files. However, the students had different preferences related to reading the transcriptions. Some of them used transcriptions during the first weeks of the treatment when they were still new to the podcasts. Some read the transcriptions through the end of the treatment as the audio files got more difficult for them. Others reported using the transcriptions when they lost their concentration while listening. These findings are in line with the discussion of Kavaliauskienė and Anusienė (2009) who also mentioned the use of transcriptions for different reasons by students during listening to the podcasts. This suggests that the availability of transcriptions as an integrated part of this technology supports the participants during their listening experience.

When it comes to the enjoyableness of podcasting, it was seen that students had different opinions about the enjoyableness of this technology. Nearly half of the participants agreed that educational podcasting was fun and interesting, which is in line with the findings of the studies of Al Qasim and Al Fadda (2013) and Li (2010) whose participants also found learning through podcasts both entertaining and exciting. However, there were also some students who were neutral, finding podcasting neither fun nor interesting. There may be several reasons lying behind this issue, such as the dissatisfaction with the content, negative attitudes towards technology in general or expectations of students about this technology. However, Chan et al. (2011) state that students may have a tendency to listen to educational podcasts as if they were entertaining radio programs; that is why, they may feel disappointed when the podcasts do not meet their expectations. For that reason, the researchers emphasize the importance of utilizing podcasts that fulfill both pedagogical objectives and learners' expectations of entertaining listening. Moreover, considering the fact that each participant has different interests, providing

them with different types of podcasts is important. That is why, the researcher suggested some alternative educational podcasts which were shorter and of different styles. However, not many of the participants listened to these recommended podcasts; instead most limited themselves to the ones provided by British Council which may have caused boredom for some participants.

When it comes to the effectiveness of podcasts in language learning, the participants generally had positive opinions. The questionnaire results showed that many of the participants thought listening to educational podcasts motivated them to learn the language. These results are in agreement with previous studies which also found podcasts to be a positively motivator for language learners (Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013; Chan et al., 2011; O'Brien & Hegelheimer, 2007). Both the quantitative and qualitative data revealed that a large majority of participants found educational podcasts useful for language learning and listening skills. The students reported that their listening comprehension skills improved over time during the treatment period with the help of podcasts. These findings support the results of the previous studies in which the participants reported their ideas on the positive effects of educational podcasting on their listening skills (Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013; Ashraf et al., 2011; Li, 2010). It was interesting that although the questionnaire and interview questions were directed at the effects of educational podcasting on listening skills, the participants focused heavily on the enhancements to their vocabulary and pronunciation. This may be due to the fact that the learners had the opportunity to follow the transcriptions while listening so that they could recognize new vocabulary and check their pronunciation. The literature also reveals significant information related to the benefits of educational podcasting on different language skills, which is in line with the findings of this study. For example, Abdous et al. (2009) state that students found educational podcasts useful not only for oral and aural skills, but also

for vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Similarly, Chan et al. (2011) report that educational podcasts had positive effects on learners' speaking skills and pronunciation as well as listening comprehension. Considering the results of this study and previous studies, it can be concluded that educational podcasts can be used for enhancing a range of skills by setting proper pedagogical goals and defining how to use this technology in accordance with those goals.

Although most of the students had a generally positive view of podcasting, their attitudes varied. Most stated that they would recommend educational podcasting to other English language learners. Additionally, they also agreed on its effectiveness in language learning, productive use of time and its positive effects on their motivation. Nevertheless, half of the students were neutral about future learning through podcasts. There may be several reasons behind this result. As this was a study in which students participated voluntarily, they may not have thought seriously about the potentials of educational podcasting. That is why, they may feel unsure about learning through podcasts in the future. Another reason may be that they might have needed more time to get used to this technology and to get the most benefit from it. A six-week period may not be enough to convince them to learn through podcasts.

EFL Learners' Perceptions of Educational Podcasting and Attitudes towards Learning English

The second research question investigated the relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English. A correlation test was conducted for the mean scores of the responses for Section C (perceptions of educational podcasting) and Section D (attitudes towards learning English). It was found that there was a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. In other words, learners with more positive attitudes

towards learning English also had more positive perceptions of podcasting. While positive correlations between two attitudes do not mean that one attitude causes another, the general positive attitudes towards podcasting suggest the need to investigate possible effects of podcasting on negative attitudes of learners towards learning English. It might be possible, for instance, that unenthusiastic students might start enjoying the language by using their favorite technological devices to listen to podcasts. There are also some other studies which underline this positive correlation between perceptions of podcasting and attitudes towards learning English, and the results of this study are in line with those studies (Başaran & Cabaroğlu, 2014; Farshi & Mohammadi, 2013).

In conclusion, this study reinforces previous findings about the potential of educational podcasts for increasing student motivation towards learning the language.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the study suggested that EFL learners generally had positive perceptions of educational podcasting in terms of ease of use, enjoyableness and effectiveness in language learning. Although the learners prefer to set aside a specific time to listen to the audio files and they prefer listening at home without any distractors, thus not taking advantage of the mobility feature of podcasting, they do use their mobile phones for this technology, which means that they still benefit from the flexibility of this technology. Only minor problems that could be overcome by the learners with a little effort were reported. The fact that educational podcasting has a moderately positive relationship with English learning attitudes of students also showed that learners with more positive attitudes towards learning English also had more positive perceptions of podcasting. This information points to some important pedagogical implications for the school administrators and language teachers.

As this study suggests, educational podcasting can be used to enhance not only listening comprehension skill but also other language skills. So, school administrators may think of integrating this technology into their curriculum. Considering the fact that students are living in a technology age and most of them own devices needed to listen to podcasts, engaging learners in the language with such attractive activities or assignments may enhance both their learning and motivation. However, special attention should be paid to the choice of podcasts by material development offices, because there are a lot of educational podcasts, and students may have difficulty in finding ones suitable for their proficiency levels, which may lead to lack of motivation for using this technology. Therefore, if existing podcasts are used, it is better to provide a list of suitable podcasts to students to provide them the freedom of choice and to aid in the process of choosing. Moreover, educational podcasting may also be used in other ways, such as teacher-generated podcasts and student-generated podcasts as mentioned in the second chapter. All of these suggest ways that technology might be used with appropriate planning.

Another issue which should be considered while integrating podcasting into the learning process is the provision of training and teacher encouragement. As Abdous et al. (2009) also stated that learners need training about how to use podcatchers to subscribe, download or save the audio files. They also noted that learners may need guidance on how to benefit from transcriptions, and how to deal with possible problems which may occur during listening process. Once the learners feel themselves capable of using this technology, they can take control of their own learning outside the classroom. However, as it can be seen from the findings of this study, it takes time for the students to get used to podcasting. They may approach this technology like a traditional listening activity, ignoring the mobility feature which enables flexibility in learning. In light of the literature, teacher guidance,

encouragement, and patience during this process are quite important. Teacher training sessions to assist their learners should be provided by the school administrations as well.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of this study which suggest that the findings should be interpreted cautiously. The first limitation is that the results might change in different settings with different participants. This study was conducted with preparatory students from three different classes at Bülent Ecevit University School of Foreign Languages. Although 43 students volunteered to participate in the study at the beginning of the treatment period, at the end it was seen that 15 of them did not listen to any of the podcasts. The findings are therefore based on the data collected from 28 participants who met the requirements of this study. A higher number of participants could have revealed different findings. Also, it should be noted that this study is limited to preparatory class students whose median ages was 19. The perceptions may change according to the ages and proficiency level of the learners.

Another limitation is that during the treatment period, the researcher was not teaching at the institution where the data were collected. As she was not there to assist the learners in each phase of the treatment period, the teachers of the three classes helped the participants during this process. However, considering the fact that listening to the podcasts was not a compulsory but a voluntary action for the students, the differences in the assistance and encouragement among the three teachers may have also affected the approach of participants to this technology. As the researcher was living in another city during that treatment period, she used Edmodo, the online platform, to communicate with participants and post short quizzes with simple comprehension questions to make sure they were actually listening to the audio files. However, it was seen that the use of Edmodo also had its

limitations. Some students stated that they could not access the online platform because of technical issues although they could use podcasts easily. So, the use of this online platform may have had some negative effects on the perceptions of learners.

This study used existing podcasts utilizing authentic materials. However, as mentioned in the previous sections, educational podcasting can also be used in different ways, such as having students prepare their own podcasts or providing students with the podcasts of lectures which they missed. The participants of this study were directed at consuming podcasts prepared mostly by native English speakers. So, their perceptions are limited to just one aspect of educational podcasting. Moreover, the treatment period lasted six weeks. A longer period could have changed the opinions and approach of students to podcasting as it is obvious that they need time to get used to this novelty.

Finally, the choice of podcasts can be considered as one of the limitations of this study. Although the learners were provided with alternative podcast lists along with the main ones provided by British Council, only a few of the learners tried listening to the alternatives. For most of the participants, their perceptions of podcasting were based upon *Learn English Elementary Podcasts* of British Council. The use of different audio files could also change the results.

Suggestions for Further Research

The findings of this study indicate that educational podcasting can be useful in enhancing language skills and learners generally have positive perceptions of this technology. These findings, as well as the limitations of the study discussed above, lead to some suggestions for further research.

A different research design might address some of the limitations of this study. For instance, a longitudinal study could be conducted with more participants

to observe learners' perceptions. Interviews might be conducted after each podcast experience to get immediate feedback. Being physically on site with the students during treatment may also eliminate monitoring issues.

This study investigated learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at listening skills. Other studies focusing on other language skills could also be conducted as it was seen that this technology may also enhance other language skills in different ways. Moreover, longitudinal studies could be conducted to see the effects of this technology on students' success in different skills.

Both the literature and the findings of this study reveal conflicting ideas about the optimal length of educational podcasts. Studies which specifically focus on the length of the audio files might be conducted to gain deeper insight into this issue.

This study focused on the use of educational podcasts as an out-of-class activity. Other studies could be conducted in-class under the supervision of the teacher to observe the effects. Other uses of podcasts with a variety of follow-up tasks appropriate to the proficiency levels of the learners could also be investigated

Finally, to see the effects of different uses of this technology, longitudinal research designs with teacher-generated or student-generated podcasts are suggested. Instead of making students or teachers passive listeners, turning them into active generators may have great effects on motivation and self-efficacy.

Conclusion

This study investigated EFL learners' perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills, and the relationship between learners' perceptions of podcasting and attitudes towards learning English. Twenty-eight EFL learners studying at the School of Foreign Languages of Bülent Ecevit University participated in the study. The participants went through a six-week treatment period in which they were required to listen to the educational podcasts. At the end of the

treatment, data were gathered through a perception questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

The results showed that learners generally had positive opinions about this technology. They found it easy to use, effective in language learning and enjoyable at the same time. As for the preferences of learners for listening to podcasts, the results showed that while many learners prefer to listen to the audio files on their mobile phones, they do not listen to them outside or while multitasking, thus ignoring the mobility feature of podcasting in a way. This result may be explained by the shortness of treatment period and the continuing novelty of this technology. Moreover, the students might have felt the need for studying without outside distractions. Finally, a positive moderate relationship was found between learners' perceptions of podcasting and their attitudes towards learning English.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Consent Form

Katılımcı Onay Belgesi

Araştırmanın adı :İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğrenen Öğrencilerin
Eğitici Podcastler Hakkındaki Algıları
Araştırmacının adı :Hazal Gül İNCE
E-mail adresi :hazalince@gmail.com

Sevgili öğrenci,

Ben Bülent Ecevit Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu okutmanlarından Hazal Gül İnce. Şu anda Bilkent Üniversitesi'nde Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi programında yüksek lisans yapmaktayım. Tez çalışmam için bilimsel bir araştırma projesi yürütmekteyim.

Bu çalışmanın amacı İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil Olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin, dinleme becerilerini geliştirmeye yönelik eğitici podcastler hakkındaki algılarının incelenmesidir. Araştırmamda bana yardımcı olmanız için sizleri bu çalışmaya katılmaya davet ediyorum. Aşağıdaki bilgileri okuduktan sonra araştırmaya katılmak isterseniz lütfen bu formu imzalayınız.

Bu araştırmaya katıldığınız takdirde, altı hafta boyunca ders dışı aktivite olarak belirlediğim podcastleri dinlemenizi isteyeceğim. Altı haftalık uygulamanın sonunda, sizlerden bir anket doldurmanızı rica edeceğim. Bu anket podcast teknolojisi hakkındaki algılarınızı ölçecek. Anket sonrasında aranızdan bazıları ile röportaj yapacağım.

Bu araştırma bilimsel bir amaçla yapılmaktadır ve katılımcı bilgilerinizin gizliliği esas tutulmaktadır. Ses ve(ya) video kayıtlarınızı, cevaplandığınız anketleri ya da soruları hiçbir şekilde başka bir kurumla paylaşmayacağımı ve bilgilerinizin gizli tutulacağını belirtmek isterim.

Bu araştırmaya katılmak tamamen isteğe bağlıdır. Katıldığınız takdirde çalışmanın herhangi bir aşamasında herhangi bir sebep göstermeden onayınızı çekme hakkına da sahipsiniz. Araştırma projem hakkında ek bilgi almak istediğiniz takdirde lütfen benimle e-posta yoluyla iletişime geçiniz.

Eğer bu araştırma projesine katılmayı kabul ediyorsanız, lütfen bu belgeyi imzalayınız.

Ben,, yukarıdaki metni okudum ve katılmam istenen çalışmanın kapsamını ve amacını, gönüllü olarak üzerime düşen sorumlulukları tamamen anladım. Çalışma hakkında soru sorma imkânı buldum. Bu çalışmayı istediğim zaman ve herhangi bir neden belirtmek zorunda kalmadan bırakabileceğimi ve bıraktığım takdirde herhangi bir olumsuzlukla karşılaşmayacağımı anladım.

Bu koşullarda söz konusu araştırmaya kendi isteğimle, hiçbir baskı ve zorlama olmaksızın katılmayı kabul ediyorum

Katılımcının Adı-Soyadı:

İmzası:

E-posta:

Tarih:

Telefon:

Appendix B: Turkish and English Versions of the Questionnaire

PODCAST ALGI ANKETİ

Bülent Ecevit Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu'nda İngilizce okutmanı olarak çalışmakta ve aynı zamanda Bilkent Üniversitesi MA TEFL programında yüksek lisans yapmaktayım. İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğrenen öğrencilerin dinleme becerilerini geliştirmeye yönelik eğitici podcastler hakkındaki algıları üzerine bir çalışma yürütmekteyim. Sizden aşağıdaki anketi dikkatlice okuyup doldurmanızı rica ediyorum. Bu çalışma yüksek lisans kapsamında yürütülmekte olup vereceğiniz tüm kişisel bilgiler saklı tutulacaktır.

Hazal Gül İNCE

A- Lütfen aşağıdaki boşlukları kişisel bilgileriniz ile doldurunuz.

Öğrenci No: Yaş: Cinsiyet: E / K

B- Lütfen sizin için uygun olan kutucukları işaretleyiniz. (Uygun yerlerde birden fazla kutucuk işaretleyebilirsiniz)

- 1- Geçtiğimiz altı hafta boyunca kaç tane podcast dinlediniz? (Eğer 0 seçeneğini işaretlediyseniz sadece D bölümümü yapınız.)
0 1-3 4-6 7-9 10-12 12+
- 2- British Council tarafından hazırlananlar dışında herhangi bir eğitici podcast dinlediniz mi? (ör: BBC Podcasts, Absolutely Intercultural vb.)
Evet Hayır
- 3- Podcastleri aşağıdakilerden hangisiyle dinlemeyi tercih edersiniz?
 Masaüstü/dizüstü bilgisayar
 MP3 çalar
 Cep telefonu
 Tablet PC
- 4- Podcastleri genellikle nerede dinlersiniz?
 Evde/ Yurtta
 Okulda
 Yolda
 Diğer
- 5- Podcastleri genellikle ne zaman dinlersiniz?
 Seyahat ederken
 Beklerken (ör: sırada beklerken, arkadaşımı beklerken, ders saatini beklerken)
 Günlük işlerimi yaparken (ör: ev işi yaparken, spor yaparken)
 Sadece podcastleri dinlemek için kendime zaman ayırım
 Diğer
- 6- Podcastleri dinlerken aynı zamanda transkripsiyonları (ses kaydının yazılı hali) okumayı da tercih eder misiniz?
 Evet Hayır

C- Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelere ne kadar katılıp katılmadığınızı belirtiniz.



No	Sorular	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
1	Podcastlere ulaşmak kolaydır.					
2	Podcastleri dinlemek kolaydır.					
3	Podcastlere abone olmak onlara daha kolay bir şekilde ulaşmamı sağlar.					
4	Podcastleri dinlemek her yerde ve her zaman mümkündür.					
5	Bu teknolojiyi nasıl çözeceğimi <u>bilmiyorum.</u>					
6	Podcastlerin sürelerinin 8-10 dakika aralığında olması benim için uygundur.					
7	Ses dosyalarının transkripsiyonlarını (kayıtların yazılı hallerini) görmek onları daha iyi anlamamı sağlar.					
8	Podcastleri dinlemekten keyif alırım.					
9	İngilizce podcastleri dinlemek beni yabancı dil öğrenmeye daha da çok motive etti.					
10	Podcastlerin ilginç olduğunu <u>düşünüyorum.</u>					
11	Gelecekte de podcastleri dinleyeceğim.					
12	Podcastler dil öğrenimi için faydalıdır.					
13	Podcastleri dinlemek İngilizce dinleme becerimi geliştirmemde etkilidir.					
14	Podcastler bana eğlenceli <u>gelmiyor.</u>					
15	Podcastleri dinlemek İngilizce anlama becerimi geliştirmemde etkilidir.					
16	Podcastleri dinlemek zamanımı verimli kullanmamı <u>sağlamadı.</u>					
17	Dinlediğim İngilizce podcastlerden sonra gelecekte de podcastler ile İngilizcemizi geliştirmeyi düşünüyorum.					
18	İngilizce öğrenen diğer öğrencilerin de podcastleri dinlemesini öneririm.					

D- Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelere ne kadar katılıp katılmadığınızı belirtiniz.

No	Sorular	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
1	İngilizce öğrenmek eğlencelidir.					
2	İngilizceyi gerçekten öğrenmek istiyorum.					
3	İngilizceyi <u>sevmiyorum</u> .					
4	İngilizceyi sadece hazırlık sınıfında okumak zorunlu olduğu için öğreniyorum.					
5	İngilizceyi iyi konuşmak insanlarda iyi bir izlenim bırakır.					
6	İngilizce öğrenmek geleceğim için önemlidir.					
7	İngilizce öğrenmek ileride daha iyi iş imkânlarıyla karşılaşmamı sağlayabilir.					
8	İngilizce öğrenmek benim lisans ve lisansüstü öğrenimim için gereklidir.					
9	Yurt dışında seyahat ederken İngilizceye ihtiyacım var.					
10	İnternette araştırma yaparken İngilizceye ihtiyacım var.					
11	İngilizcemi geliştirmek için yeterli vaktim <u>yok</u> .					
12	İngilizce müzik dinlemekten hoşlanırım.					
13	İngilizce film izlemekten hoşlanırım.					
14	İngilizce çalışmayı seviyorum.					

E- Lütfen aşağıdaki soruları cevaplayınız.

1- Podcastleri dinlerken hangi problemlerle karşılaştınız?

2- Eğitici podcastlerle ilgili olumlu veya olumsuz düşüncelerimiz nelerdir?

PODCAST PERCEPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

I am an English Instructor at Bülent Ecevit University School of Foreign Languages. I am doing my master at MA TEFL program of Bilkent University at the same time. I am conducting a study on **English as a Foreign Language Learners' (EFL) perceptions of educational podcasting directed at developing listening skills** for my master thesis. I request you to carefully read and fill the questionnaire below and assure you that the data generated shall be kept confidential.

Hazal Gül İNCE

A- Please provide your personal information

School No: Age: Gender: M / F

B- Please check the boxes that are suitable to you.

- 1- Within past six weeks, how many podcasts did you listen to?
0 1-3 4-6 7-9 10-12 12+
- 2- Did you listen to podcasts other than those provided by British Council? (e.g. BBC Podcasts, Absolutely Intercultural etc.)
Yes No
- 3- How do you prefer to listen to the podcasts with?
 Using a desktop/laptop computer
 Using an MP3 player
 Using a mobile phone
 Using a tablet PC
- 4- Where do you usually listen to the podcasts?
 At home / dormitory
 At school
 On the road
 Other
- 5- When do you usually listen to the podcasts?
 While travelling
 While waiting (e.g. waiting for a friend, waiting for the class)
 While carrying out other tasks (e.g. household chores, exercising)
 I set aside dedicated time to listen to the podcasts
 Other
- 6- Do you prefer to listen to the podcasts with transcriptions?
 Yes No

C- Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements.

No	Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	It is easy to access the podcast audio files.					
2	It is easy to play the podcast audio files.					
3	Subscribing to podcasts allows me to access them more easily.					
4	Using podcasts is possible everywhere and everytime.					
5	I don't know how to handle this new technology.					
6	I found the 8 to 10 minute podcasts to be of the right length.					
7	Transcriptions make me understand the audio file better.					
8	I enjoy listening to podcasts.					
9	Listening to English podcasts has made me more motivated to learn the language.					
10	I don't think podcasts are interesting.					
11	I will listen to podcasts in the future.					
12	Podcasts are useful for language learning.					
13	Listening to podcasts is effective for improving listening skills.					
14	Podcasts bring me no fun at all.					
15	Listening to podcasts is effective for improving my comprehension skills.					
16	Listening to the podcasts was not a productive use of my time.					
17	After working with English podcasts, I am more open to learning through podcasts in the future.					
18	I would recommend that other students learning English listen to the podcasts.					

D- Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements.

No	Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Learning English is fun.					
2	I really want to learn English.					
3	I dislike English.					
4	I only learn English because its courses are compulsory in the Preparatory Year.					
5	Speaking English well can create a good impression.					
6	Learning English is important for my future.					
7	Learning English can help me find better job opportunities in the future.					
8	Learning English is essential for my undergraduate and post graduate studies.					
9	I need English when I travel abroad.					
10	I need English when I search in the Internet.					
11	I do not have time to improve my English.					
12	I like listening to music in English.					
13	I like watching movies in English.					
14	I like studying English.					

E- Please answer the following questions.

1- What problems did you come across while listening to podcasts?

2- Do you have any other positive or negative comments on educational podcasting?

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interview Questions in Turkish and in English

- 1- İngilizce öğrenmekten keyif alıyor musun?
Do you enjoy learning English?
- 2- İngilizcenizi geliştirmek için sınıf dışında neler yapıyorsunuz?
What do you do to improve your English outside the classroom?
- 3- Yetersiz olduğunu düşündüğün yabancı dil becerilerin hangileri?
What are your weak language skills?
- 4- Dinleme becerini geliştirmek için neler yapıyorsunuz?
What do you do to improve your listening skills?
- 5- İngilizce film izleme, müzik dinleme ve radyo programı dinleme gibi aktiviteleri yapıyor musun?
Do you engage in activities like watching films, listening to music or radio shows in English?
- 6- Teknoloji hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz? Teknoloji ile ilgilenmeyi seviyor musun?
What do you think about technology? Do you like it?
- 7- Sence eğitici podcastler dinleme becerilerini geliştirmede etkili olur mu? Ne gibi etkileri olur?
Do you think educational podcasts are effective in improving listening skills? If so, how?
- 8- Eğitici podcastlerle ilgili neleri seviyorsunuz ya da sevmiyorsunuz?
What do you like or dislike about educational podcasts?
- 9- Onları dinlerken ne gibi problemlerle karşılaştınız?
What kind of problems did you come across when you were listening to them?
- 10- İleride yabancı dil becerilerinizi geliştirmek için eğitici podcastler dinlemeyi düşünüyor musunuz?
Would you like to listen to educational podcasts to enhance your language skills in the future?

Appendix D: Sample Translations of Interview Transcriptions

I: Can you tell me about your experiences about educational podcasting?

S4: I had problems with comprehension of the podcasts at the beginning, that's why I followed the transcriptions mostly. I was checking what I heard from the text. Then I got used to it and started to understand the speeches easily.

I: Did you always listen to them with transcriptions?

S4: I listened to them with transcriptions only at the first weeks.

I: Did you slow the speed of the audio files down while you were listening?

S4: No, I listened to them at normal speed.

I: Is there any difference between your first and last podcast listening experience in terms of comprehension?

S4: Yes, I comprehended them better as I listened more.

I: Did you enjoy them or did you find them boring?

S4: I enjoyed them. I enjoyed more when I started to understand better.

I: What do you think of the length of the podcasts?

S4: They were not too long. I did not get bored. The length was enough.

I: What kind of problems did you come across while listening to podcasts?

S4: I had comprehension problems at the beginning. Then I listened to them with transcriptions and started to understand. I did not experience any other problems.

Appendix E: Normality Test Results

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Podcast Perceptions	,152	28	,094	,923	28	,042
English Attitudes	,120	28	,200 [*]	,943	28	,132

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Descriptives

		Statistic	Std. Error
Podcast Perceptions	Mean	3,7123	,08515
	Skewness	-,655	,441
	Kurtosis	-,635	,858
English Attitudes	Mean	4,1097	,08301
	Skewness	-,898	,441
	Kurtosis	,675	,858

Appendix F: Screenshot of British Council Web Page

The screenshot shows the British Council LearnEnglish website. The header includes the British Council logo and 'LearnEnglish'. A navigation bar contains links for Home, Listen & Watch, Grammar & Vocabulary, Fun & Games, Business & Work, Writing, IELTS, and Apps. The main content area is titled 'Series 03 Episode 01' and features a video player for 'Elementary Podcasts'. Below the player, there are download links for high quality mp3 (14MB), enhanced podcast for iOS (14.3MB), transcript (36KB), and support pack (40KB). A text block below the downloads states: 'Elementary Podcasts is back! Some things are the same (Tess, Ravi and Carolina) and some things are new, for example the presenters. So whether you're new to Elementary Podcasts or have been listening since Series 1, give it a try!'. On the right side, there is a 'User login' section with fields for 'Username or e-mail' and 'Password', and links for 'Create new account', 'Request new password', and 'Log in'. Below the login section is a 'Search' box and 'Tags in Admin' (Audio, Gap Fill drag & drop, Grouping) and 'Tags in Teacher'.

Appendix G: Screenshot of a Podcatcher

The screenshot shows a Podcatcher application interface. The top bar displays the current podcast: 'TEWS: Face the music: 16 Dec 14' by 'The English We Speak'. The main interface is divided into a left sidebar and a main content area. The sidebar lists several podcasts, including 'Görülmemiş Bölümler', 'Learning English Broadcast - Voice of America', 'English as a Second Language (ESL) Podcast - Learn English Online', '6 Minute English', 'British Council - LearnEnglish - Elementary Podcasts', 'The English We Speak' (selected), and ''absolutely intercultural!' > podcast'. The main content area shows the details for 'The English We Speak' by BBC World Service, including the current episode 'TEWS: Face the music: 16 Dec 14' and a list of other episodes with their dates and durations. The episodes listed are: 'TEWS: To downsize: 13 Jan 14', 'TEWS: At the movies: 06 Jan 14', 'TEWS: Killing time: 30 Dec 14', 'TEWS: Like turkeys voting for Christmas: 23 Dec 14', 'TEWS: Face the music: 16 Dec 14', and 'TEWS: Internet speak: 09 Dec 14'. Each episode entry includes a brief description and a download icon.

Appendix H: Screenshots of Edmodo Web Page

podcasters Group

Group Code Join URL

LOCKED

Posts >

Folders >

Members 53 joined >

This group has been created in order to monitor the students who take part in a scientific project investigating students' perceptions of educational podcasting...

Small Groups

Me to podcasters

To see the transcriptions, please click on 'instructions&downloads'. Check the jpg file to make it clear.

8 minutes ago

Reply Share

Me to podcasters

Episode 1 questions

Turned in (20) Due Feb 28, 2015

3 questions

3 Replies Feb 25, 2015

Yagmur B. said Feb 28, 2015
Teacher I dont see questions

Yagmur B. said Feb 28, 2015

Me said Feb 28, 2015
Hello yağmur. Are you using Edmodo's mobile app? You can see the questions on your computer or on your mobile browser. Mobile app does not show the questions. If you can't see them even on your computer, I will fix it.

Type a reply...

Me to podcasters

Here is the first podcast! Enjoy it!

Appendix I: The Content of Podcast Episodes

Episode	Content
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The presenters of the podcast, Rob and Adam briefly introduce themselves and Learn English podcasts. After the introduction, the conversation between Tess and Ravi starts. - Tess and Ravi are talking about a famous British food, fish and chips. They explain how the dish is cooked and served. They state how often they eat fish and chips. They also have discussion about the healthiness of this dish. - After the conversation between Tess and Ravi, the presenters talk about the topic and the vocabulary in the conversation, such as chop, slice, boil, and grill. They explain the meaning of the words and end the episode.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rob and Adam talk about the posts of podcast listeners from all around the world about the topic of the previous week. They share different recipes from different countries. Then, they introduce Carolina and Emily. - Carolina and Emily meet again after summer holiday. When they are unpacking Carolina's luggage, they talk about Carolina's Venezuelan accent, her clothes and her boyfriend, Jamie. - At the end, Rob and Adam comment on Carolina and Emily's conversation. They explain the meaning of unpack. Then they state how the prefix un- is used to give the opposite meaning.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adam talks about the different ways to greet people in different countries based on the comments of podcast listeners. Then, he introduces the topic of the week, which is weather. - Tess and Ravi talk about the weather of Britain. They mention how it rains in Britain and how the climate is. They have a discussion on how rainy weather affects people's lifestyles. - Adam comments on Tess and Ravi's conversation by giving examples from Scotland. He asks the listeners to post their comments on the weather of their countries and their favorite time of year.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rob and Adam talk about the weather types of different countries according to the posts of the listeners. Then, they remind the previous conversation of Carolina and Emily and present their next conversation. - Carolina has a problem. She has run out of money. Emily offers some suggestions for this problem. Later on, Jamie who is Carolina's boyfriend joins the conversation. At the end, Carolina decides to find a job. - Rob and Adam comment on Carolina's situation and they talk about their first jobs. They want the listeners to write them about their first job experiences.

Episode	Content
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rob talks about the posts of the listeners about their first job experiences. Then he reminds Tess and Ravi. - Tess and Ravi talk about football hooligans. They talk about the bad reputation of English football fans. They mention the problems caused by hooliganism. - Rob comments on the conversation of Tess and Ravi. He tells his favorite football team and asks for the favorite teams of his listeners.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adam comments on the posts of the listeners about football. Then he reminds the previous conversation of Carolina, Emily and Jamie. - Carolina has a job interview in a convenience store. Jamie and Emily help her to get ready for the interview. At the end, Carolina gets the job. - Adam explains the right uses of prepositions such as in, with and at by giving examples from Carolina, Emily and Jamie's conversation. He wants the listeners to share their ideas about their favorite times of a day.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adam and Rob talks about the comments of the listeners about the topic of the previous episode. Then they present the conversation of Tess and Ravi. - Tess and Ravi talk about the importance of queuing in Britain. They mention their own experiences on this issue. They also discuss politeness. - Adam and Rob explain how different expressions are used for liking and not liking things. They state the difference between like, love, enjoy, hate, dislike and can't stand by giving examples from the conversation of Tess and Ravi.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adam and Rob talks about the posts of listeners about their queuing experiences. Then, they present the conversation of Carolina and Jamie. - Jamie and Carolina have an argument because of Carolina's working hours. As Jamie is starting a band, he needs to practice on Sundays which is the only free time of Carolina. - Adam and Rob explain the uses of possessives by giving examples from the conversation of Carolina and Jamie.