

TEACHER'S PERCEPTION OF STUDENT MOTIVATION TOWARD PODCAST-BASED LISTENING ACTIVITIES AT SMK MUHAMMADIYAH 1 PALU

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history: Received: November 17, 2025 Revised: December 14, 2025 Accepted: December 11, 2025 Published: December 30, 2025 Keywords: EFL, Listening Activities, Podcast, Student Motivation, Teacher Perception	This study examined an English teacher's perception of students' motivation when podcasts were incorporated into listening activities at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Palu. The study was conducted to understand how students responded to podcast-based listening and what instructional factors appeared to influence their engagement. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed. The data were obtained from an English teacher through classroom observation, a semi-structured interview, and supporting documentation. The data were analyzed by organizing relevant information, identifying recurring themes, comparing evidence from different sources, and drawing conclusions through triangulation. The findings indicated that students' motivational responses to podcast-based listening varied considerably. Students with relatively stronger English proficiency tended to show greater interest and participation, whereas students with limited English ability generally experienced difficulties in following the audio and were less actively involved. The teacher also perceived that the use of podcast technology alone did not automatically increase students' motivation, particularly among learners who already demonstrated limited interest in English. Nevertheless, short and relevant podcast materials with accessible vocabulary were perceived as more appropriate for maintaining students' attention. The teacher's use of selected audio segments, playback-speed adjustment, level-appropriate materials, and follow-up classroom activities also supported student participation. The study concludes that podcasts may provide meaningful support for listening instruction when accompanied by appropriate scaffolding, relevant content, manageable audio length, and active learning tasks. Since the findings were based on one teacher's perception, they should be interpreted as perceived student motivation rather than direct measurement of students' motivational levels.
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INTRODUCTION

Listening is a central component of English language learning because learners must process spoken language to participate in classroom, social, and professional communication. In EFL settings, listening can be difficult because learners encounter unfamiliar vocabulary, accents, natural speech rates, and limited exposure outside school. The thesis identifies similar conditions at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Palu, where limited vocabulary and limited exposure to authentic English create challenges for listening instruction.

Podcasts can extend exposure to spoken English through accessible, episodic, and varied audio materials. Their flexibility, authentic input, topic variety, and repeated listening make them potentially useful for listening instruction. Recent studies report benefits including flexibility, listening practice, vocabulary development, engagement, and positive learner perceptions (Anissa & Suryaman, 2021; Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025; Elawati et al., 2026; Isaadah & Rizal, 2024).

Motivation is important because learners need willingness and sustained effort to engage with language learning. L2 motivation is shaped by learning goals, perceived competence, learning experiences, and classroom conditions (Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Self-determination research likewise emphasizes competence, autonomy, and relatedness as conditions supporting sustained engagement (Davis, 2020; Someya & Honda, 2020). Thus, a digital medium may support motivation, but it does not automatically create it.

Previous research often reports positive motivational responses to podcasts. Studies have found increased enjoyment, engagement, or motivation among learners using podcasts for listening (Asyifah & Indriani, 2021; Bozavlı, 2024; Delgadillo & Illera, 2024; Ikrar et al., 2024). Indonesian studies also report that learners value flexibility, topic choice, and authentic input (Dimasanti & Inayati, 2025; Gunawan et al., 2023; Miranty, 2023). At the same time, proficiency, speech rate, unfamiliar vocabulary, and topic difficulty can constrain engagement (Andayani et al., 2024; Isaadah & Rizal, 2024; Sepdiana et al., 2026).

Teacher-perceived motivation is distinct from directly measured student motivation. Teachers observe participation, attention, responsiveness, and willingness to continue tasks, but these observations do not constitute a psychometric measure of internal motivation. Nevertheless, teacher perceptions are pedagogically important because teachers decide what media to use, how to scaffold listening, and how to connect media with curriculum goals. In the thesis, the teacher reported that students' responses varied with English ability and that low motivation toward English could persist even when the medium changed from MP3 audio to podcasts.

This creates a gap in the literature. Much research examines students' perceptions or the effects of podcast interventions, whereas less attention is given to teachers' perceptions of students' motivation in vocational-school listening contexts. At SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Palu, the teacher considered BBC Learning English's 6 Minute English potentially suitable for tenth- and eleventh-grade students because of its short duration, basic vocabulary, and everyday topics, but also reported low motivation and limited English competence.

Therefore, this article focuses specifically on the thesis's second problem statement: what were the teacher's perceptions regarding students' motivation when podcasts were used in listening activities? The study aims to describe perceived motivational responses, factors shaping those responses, and instructional conditions that may support engagement. The contribution is a contextual account showing that podcast-based listening is not only a media-choice issue but also a matter of learner readiness, relevance, scaffolding, and motivational support.

Conceptual Basis: Motivation and Podcast-Based Listening

The article treats student motivation in podcast-based listening as a perceived classroom phenomenon reflected through interest, attention, willingness to participate, and persistence.

Podcasts may support these conditions through choice, repeated access, authentic input, and varied topics, but learners may need transcripts, glossaries, repetition, or playback-speed control when processing demands are high (Andayani et al., 2024; Artikasari & Anugerahwati, 2022; Bakhtiar et al., 2026). Because the original study did not administer a student motivation scale, this article reports perceived motivational behavior rather than direct measurement.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Context

The study employed a qualitative descriptive design. This design was appropriate because the purpose was to provide a close, contextual account of the teacher's perception rather than to test a causal relationship or quantify students' motivation. Qualitative descriptive research is useful when researchers seek a comprehensive description that remains close to participants' accounts and everyday events (Sandelowski, 2000). The research was conducted at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Palu, Central Sulawesi, on May 21, 2026. The setting was a vocational high school in which English listening activities were supported by digital media.

Participant

The participant was one English teacher at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Palu. The teacher was selected purposively because she was directly involved in using digital audio media in English instruction. The single-participant design was intended to obtain an in-depth account of the teacher's beliefs, classroom experiences, and observations of students' responses. Accordingly, the findings are context-specific and should not be interpreted as representative of all teachers or students in vocational schools.

Data Collection

Three sources of data were used: an observation checklist, a semi-structured interview, and documentation. The checklist contained 15 indicators covering facilities, digital audio media, and podcast teaching practices. The interview contained 11 questions about podcast relevance, student responses, barriers, curriculum time, school support, alternative media, and differences between podcasts and conventional MP3 audio. The face-to-face interview lasted about 30 minutes on May 21, 2026, and was audio-recorded. Documentation included learning materials, podcast-related materials, student worksheets, and research photographs.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis followed the thesis stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview data were transcribed and reduced to information relevant to student motivation and podcast use, then organized thematically and compared with observation and documentation. Triangulation was used to examine convergence and divergence among the three sources, consistent with qualitative data-analysis practices emphasizing reduction, display, and verification (Miles et al., 2014).

Ethical and Interpretive Considerations

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Perceived Motivational Pattern

The central finding related to the second problem statement is that the teacher perceived students' motivation toward podcast-based listening as generally low and uneven. The teacher did not describe podcasts as a technology that automatically increased students' motivation. Instead, students' responses were perceived to depend strongly on their existing attitude toward English, their level of English proficiency, and their familiarity with digital listening. This pattern is important because it complicates the common assumption that a contemporary digital medium will, by itself, make listening activities more attractive.

Theme 1. Low Motivation Toward English Limited the Motivational Value of Podcasts

The most direct evidence came from the teacher's response to the eleventh interview question, which compared students' responses to podcasts and conventional audio such as textbook cassettes or MP3 recordings. The teacher reported that students were less interested because of their low motivation to learn English. The subsequent interpretation in the thesis emphasized that students who already disliked or were unfamiliar with English did not automatically become interested simply because the learning medium was modern. In other words, the teacher perceived motivation toward the subject as more fundamental than the novelty of the medium.

The finding shifts the question from whether podcasts motivate students to under what conditions podcasts can support motivation. Although previous studies report positive motivational responses (Bozavli, 2024; Delgadillo & Illera, 2024; Perry, 2024), the present case suggests that such effects are conditional. When students have weak motivation toward English, a new medium may still be experienced as another difficult task.

Theme 2. Motivation Varied With Students' English Proficiency and Readiness

The teacher also perceived substantial variation among students. In response to the question about how students reacted when asked to listen to digital audio, the teacher explained that responses differed according to students' individual abilities. The thesis discussion elaborated that students with stronger linguistic or academic abilities tended to respond more positively: they could identify keywords more quickly, understand conversational context, and experience the listening task as a manageable challenge. Students with lower proficiency, by contrast, were more likely to need support.

The pattern suggests that motivation and competence were intertwined. Students who could understand enough of the audio could experience the task as manageable, whereas lower-proficiency students could experience confusion or frustration. This interpretation is consistent with research linking perceived competence and sustained motivation and with podcast studies reporting difficulties related to speech rate and vocabulary (Davis, 2020; Someya & Honda, 2020; Isaadah & Rizal, 2024).

Theme 3. Relevance, Short Duration, and Appropriate Difficulty Could Support Engagement

Although the overall motivational condition was perceived as low, the teacher identified conditions under which podcasts could become more attractive. BBC Learning English's 6 Minute English was viewed as particularly relevant for tenth- and eleventh-grade vocational students because it contains everyday topics, relatively basic vocabulary, and a short duration. The teacher believed that the manageable length could help students maintain attention and

avoid feeling overwhelmed. This is an important nuance: the teacher did not reject podcasts completely; rather, she considered their motivational value dependent on careful selection.

Theme 4. Scaffolding and Active Listening Tasks Were Needed to Sustain Attention

Observation data showed that the teacher did not simply play podcasts from beginning to end. She selected episodes according to students' ability, used selected sections, used the playback-speed feature, and connected podcast content with classroom discussion. The thesis discussion also emphasized supporting activities such as vocabulary lists and comprehension questions. These practices are important because they transform podcast listening from passive exposure into a guided learning task.

The finding is consistent with research showing that podcast activities become more productive when learners receive pedagogical support. Transcripts, active listening tasks, vocabulary preparation, and playback control can help lower-proficiency learners manage processing demands (Andayani et al., 2024; Artikasari & Anugerahwati, 2022; Bakhtiar et al., 2026).

Theme 5. Digital Media Choice Alone Did Not Resolve the Motivational Problem

An especially important part of the teacher's perception was her preference for YouTube videos when asked to choose another non-traditional medium. The teacher considered YouTube more relevant because students could observe visual information in addition to listening. The thesis discussion explains that facial expressions, gestures, surroundings, and subtitles could provide contextual clues for students whose English proficiency was still limited. This preference suggests that some students may need multimodal support before audio-only podcast learning becomes sufficiently accessible.

The result does not mean that podcasts are ineffective. Rather, it indicates a perceived mismatch between some students' proficiency and the demands of audio-only input. Research similarly identifies accent, speech rate, unfamiliar vocabulary, and duration as challenges in podcast listening (Isaadah & Rizal, 2024; Sepdiana et al., 2026). Visual resources can therefore function as complementary scaffolds.

Theme 6. Motivation Should Be Developed Gradually, Not Assumed

The teacher expressed willingness to continue trying podcasts, but she emphasized the need to prioritize learning materials because students' English competence was still relatively low. The teacher also indicated that students were not yet efficient in using podcasts for learning and that the existing time allocation did not fully support immediate integration. This indicates a gradual model of implementation: students need to become familiar with the medium, understand what they are expected to listen for, and develop strategies for dealing with unfamiliar language.

Triangulation of the Motivational Findings

The observation and interview data provide a complementary picture. Observation showed that the school had stable Wi-Fi, projectors, audio equipment, and teachers' access to laptops or smartphones. The teacher also used digital applications and selected podcast segments

according to students' ability. These conditions demonstrate that the motivational problem cannot be explained simply by the absence of digital infrastructure. At the same time, the interview identified external classroom noise, limited instructional time, differences in students' abilities, and low motivation as barriers. The combined evidence therefore points to a distinction between technological readiness and pedagogical readiness.

This distinction is important for interpreting the second problem statement. The teacher's perception suggests that students' motivation is shaped by an interaction among learner factors, media characteristics, and instructional conditions. A podcast may be authentic and flexible, but students still need to perceive the task as understandable, relevant, and achievable. In this sense, the teacher's role is not merely to introduce a digital tool but to design the conditions under which the tool can generate meaningful engagement.

Comparison With Previous Studies

The finding both confirms and qualifies previous research. Student-based studies generally report positive perceptions of podcasts, including flexibility, interest, and motivation (Rachmaniputri et al., 2021; Dwi Prastyo et al., 2023; Ikrar et al., 2024; Elawati et al., 2026). The present study differs because it examines a teacher's perception of student motivation in a vocational-school context and therefore produces a more cautious interpretation.

Implications for English Teaching in Vocational Schools

- First, teachers should select podcast topics that are close to students' everyday experiences and vocational interests. Relevance can make the purpose of listening more visible and may help students connect English with real communication.
- Second, teachers should begin with short podcast segments and gradually increase listening demands. The teacher's preference for BBC Learning English's 6 Minute English illustrates the value of manageable duration and controlled vocabulary.
- Third, podcast listening should be accompanied by active tasks such as predicting content, identifying keywords, answering focused comprehension questions, discussing the topic, or using a transcript after the first listening. Such tasks give students a clear reason to listen.
- Fourth, teachers should use playback-speed control, vocabulary preparation, transcripts, and visual resources strategically, while schools should provide suitable listening spaces and equipment.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the second problem statement of the thesis concerning the teacher's perception of students' motivation when podcasts were used in listening activities at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Palu. The teacher perceived students' motivation as generally low and uneven, with responses influenced by existing motivation toward English, English proficiency, and familiarity with digital listening. Podcasts were therefore not perceived as automatically motivating.

The teacher nevertheless recognized potential motivational supports in short, relevant, and comprehensible podcast materials, particularly BBC Learning English's 6 Minute English. Observation showed that she selected level-appropriate segments, adjusted playback speed, and connected the audio with classroom activities. The findings suggest that podcast-based

listening is most promising when supported by relevance, scaffolding, active tasks, and gradual familiarization.

The study highlights a teacher-perceived motivational gap between the potential of podcast technology and students' readiness to learn English. Because only one teacher participated and student motivation was not directly measured, the findings should be interpreted as perceived rather than definitive evidence of students' internal motivation. Future studies should combine teacher perceptions with student questionnaires, interviews, engagement measures, and listening achievement data.

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