

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

English has become a global language that connects people across different countries and cultures (Atasheva, 2024). Mastery of English is essential for students, especially those preparing for future professional environments (Suhartina, 2025). For students and workers alike, proficiency in English opens access to broader opportunities, including global information resources, international collaboration, and competitive employment markets. Therefore, developing strong English skills is increasingly regarded as a key foundation for student to thrive and remain relevant in today's interconnected world.

Spoken English has become a vital skill because it enables students to communicate effectively and confidently in various settings (Akhter, 2021). The ability to speak clearly and confidently allows students to express ideas and participate in global interactions. Moreover, mastering spoken English contributes to students' overall personal development (Hidayah et al., 2023). It enhances their critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills by encouraging active participation in discussion, presentation, and collaborative activities.

In contrast, listening is widely recognized as the most difficult skill to acquire among English learners in Indonesia (Nadhira & Warni, 2021). Many students struggle to comprehend spoken English due to the fast pace of speech, unfamiliar pronunciation, and limited vocabulary (Rosyada-AS & Apoko, 2023). These difficulties lead learners to misunderstanding of key information, incomplete grasp of messages, and confusion when listening to longer conversations or academic lectures. Consequently, learners may find it challenging to distinguish similar sounds or recognize words when they are spoken quickly, which further reduces their comprehension.

Nowadays, the teaching of listening in schools often focuses on artificial recordings rather than authentic communication. In fact, the lack of exposure to real-life listening materials is a major reason for poor comprehension (Rungsinanont, 2024). Therefore, this situation limits students' ability to

understand English in genuine contexts. Because, when learners are only trained with artificial recordings, they miss the opportunity to experience the unpredictability of natural speech.

In English teaching, spoken and listening skills are closely interconnected in the process of communication (Hong, 2025). Here, students need strong listening comprehension to understand messages accurately before they can respond through spoken language. When learners can follow spoken input effectively, they are better able to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and maintain smooth interactions. In addition, spoken ability develops more naturally when students receive clear and meaningful input through listening (Hinkel, 2022). Thus, strengthening both skills ensures that students can participate effectively in various communicative situations.

The advancement of technology has created opportunities to enhance listening instruction (Olayiwola et al., 2024). In English language learning and teaching, teachers can now integrate various digital media that make learning more engaging and effective. One of the most accessible and flexible tools is a podcast, which provides audio materials that can be downloaded or streamed through the internet. Podcasts contain authentic content such as conversations, interviews, and stories presented in real communicative contexts. Podcasts also provide flexibility because students can listen to them anytime and anywhere using digital devices (Salainti & Pratiwi, 2021). Moreover, learners can select topics that match their interests, which increases engagement and motivation.

Teachers at SMK N 5 Kupang have started exploring technology in English teaching, but its application remains limited due to limited training, insufficient technological infrastructure, and the challenges of selecting appropriate digital media that match students' learning needs. However, initial classroom observations indicate that students enjoy learning through digital media more than through printed textbooks. Although videos are sometimes used in listening lessons, but the use was not yet systematic or fully integrated.

Theoretically, this research is grounded in Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which states that language acquisition occurs when learners receive comprehensible and meaningful input (Javahery & Alizadeh, 2025). Podcasts serve as a source of such

input because they deliver authentic spoken English in context. Podcast shows natural expressions that textbooks do not provide. So, students can improve their listening comprehension and pick up those all exposures. Furthermore, from the perspective of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), podcasts also support authentic communication and learner-centered approaches (Yahya et al., 2024). CLT emphasizes real-life language use rather than artificial drills. Podcasts provide natural speech, exposing learners to genuine pronunciation, intonation, and discourse patterns. CLT shifts focus from teacher-led instruction to learner autonomy. With podcasts, learners can choose topics that interest them, listen at their own pace, and engage in discussions or tasks based on the content. These theories emphasize the importance of real communication and input in developing listening skills.

Several empirical studies support the effectiveness of podcasts in enhancing listening skills. Students who learned through podcasts showed better listening comprehension compared to those using traditional materials (Hasan & Hoon, 2013). Similar findings were reported that podcasts improved learner motivation and promoted independent learning (Rahimi & Katal, 2012). Another studies also confirmed that podcasts make listening more interactive and meaningful (Shiri, 2015). Despite these positive results, limited research has been conducted in Indonesian vocational school contexts.

One of examples that examined the impact of podcasts in enhancing the listening skills of tenth-grade students at SMK N 5 Kupang shows how podcast-based learning influences students' listening comprehension and learning motivation. Findings from this study are expected to provide insights for English teachers in designing more effective listening activities. The results may also encourage the use of digital learning tools in vocational education.

1.2 Research Problems

This study focuses on examining the effectiveness of podcasts as a learning medium to improve students' listening comprehension through a quantitative approach. The research questions is, 'Does the use of podcasts significantly improve listening comprehension scores of 10th-grade students at SMK N 5

Kupang?’

1.3 Aims of the Study

The main aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of using podcasts as a learning medium to enhance the listening comprehension of 10th-grade students at SMK N 5 Kupang.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of English language teaching, especially in the development of listening comprehension skills through the use of podcasts. The investigation into podcast-based learning aims to strengthen the theoretical foundation of digital media in education and offer practical insights for improving learning outcomes among vocational high school students.

1.4.1 Implication

The findings of this study are expected to provide meaningful implications for language learning theory and practice, particularly within the framework of second language acquisition and communicative learning. The use of podcasts as a medium for developing listening comprehension demonstrates how digital learning aligns with established theoretical principles and enhances their practical application in modern classrooms (McNamara & Drew, 2019).

The results of this research support Krashen’s Input Hypothesis (1985), which states that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible and meaningful input. Podcast materials provide authentic and varied listening input that reflects real-life communication (Labra, 2021). This authentic exposure enables students to understand language in context, process meaning more naturally, and internalize new vocabulary and structures effectively (Gilmore, 2007). The implication of this finding is that technology can serve as a bridge between theoretical input exposure and real linguistic practice, allowing students to experience authentic communication beyond textbook materials. CLT promotes learner-centered approaches. With podcasts, students can select topics that interest them, control pace, and revisit episodes. So it will be easy for student

to learn podcast everywhere and anywhere.

1.4.2 Application

The findings of this study can be applied to improve the quality of English language teaching, particularly in developing students' listening comprehension through the use of podcasts. The research results can serve as effective learning media to expose students to authentic English listening materials. The findings also offer insights into how podcast-based input contributes to the listening development process, providing a basis for designing more focused and relevant learning activities. The results of this study are expected to provide the following benefits :

- a) Teachers can apply the findings by designing lesson plans that utilize podcasts as supplementary materials. The flexibility of podcast media allows teachers to select content that matches students' proficiency levels, interests, and learning objectives.
- b) Students can apply the insights from this study to enhance their listening skills independently. Students can choose podcast episodes that align with their personal interests, which increases motivation and engagement in language learning. The findings encourage learners to develop autonomous study habits and become more responsible for their own progress.
- c) Educational institutions and curriculum developers can apply the results of this study to improve teaching programs and integrate digital media into English education. Schools can provide training for teachers to develop the necessary skills in designing and managing podcast-based instruction to supports the modernization of teaching strategies.
- d) Researchers and educators with similar interests can use the results of this study as a reference for future investigations. The application of the findings extends to the development of instructional innovations that integrate multimedia and interactive digital resources.