

ENHANCING LISTENING COMPREHENSION THROUGH PODCASTS AND ONLINE RESOURCES FOR A2 STUDENTS

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Abstract: Listening comprehension is widely recognized as one of the most challenging skills for A2 learners of English. At this proficiency level, learners are expected to understand short, slow-paced utterances on familiar topics, yet often struggle to extract meaning from authentic input. Recent technological advances have made podcasts and online resources easily accessible, offering multimodal and interactive support for language development. This paper investigates how podcasts and online listening tools can be integrated into A2-level English classrooms to enhance listening comprehension. Drawing on systematic literature review and thematic analysis of recent studies (2005–2024), the article identifies pedagogical strategies, scaffolding techniques, and assessment models for effective implementation. Findings reveal that podcasts, when combined with pre-listening scaffolds, comprehension checks, transcripts, and post-listening communicative tasks, significantly improve learners' decoding skills, vocabulary retention, and confidence. Online resources further support personalization, multimodal engagement, and autonomous learning. The paper concludes with practical recommendations for teachers, highlights current limitations in research on low-level learners, and suggests future directions.

Keywords: listening comprehension, A2 learners, podcasts, online resources, scaffolding, digital learning

Introduction

Listening is a fundamental component of communicative competence, yet it has long been regarded as one of the most difficult skills for second language learners to acquire [1]. At the CEFR A2 level, learners are expected to comprehend simple, slow-paced utterances about familiar topics and follow short dialogues or announcements [2]. However, research indicates that A2 learners struggle with fast speech, reduced forms, limited vocabulary, and difficulties in recognizing word boundaries [3]. Traditional listening instruction often relies on scripted audio materials from textbooks, which, while controlled, do not reflect the natural features of authentic spoken English.

Podcasts and online resources represent a major innovation in this respect. Podcasts offer authentic and semi-authentic spoken input on diverse topics, with the

added benefits of replayability, transcripts, speed control, and thematic variety [4]. Online resources such as YouTube channels, graded listening platforms, and interactive websites provide multimodal support and immediate feedback, which can scaffold comprehension more effectively than traditional materials [5]. Furthermore, digital listening resources align with learner autonomy, enabling students to access content beyond the classroom and practice at their own pace.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the role of podcasts and online resources in enhancing listening comprehension for A2 students. It synthesizes evidence from applied linguistics and technology-enhanced language learning research, outlines key pedagogical strategies, and offers practical recommendations for teachers working with beginner-intermediate learners.

Methods

This study adopted a qualitative, analytical approach based on systematic literature review. Databases searched included Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar, covering 2005–2024. Keywords included “*listening comprehension A2*,” “*podcasts for EFL/ESL learners*,” “*online resources for language listening*,” “*digital tools for listening comprehension*,” and “*technology in A2 CEFR learning*.”

Inclusion criteria:

- *Studies focusing on listening comprehension in ESL/EFL contexts.*
- *Empirical or conceptual papers involving digital tools, especially podcasts and online listening resources.*
- *Research relevant to beginner–intermediate learners (CEFR A1–B1), with specific mention of A2 when available.*
- *Exclusion criteria: studies unrelated to language learning, those limited to higher-level learners (C1–C2), or lacking methodological clarity.*

The final sample included 45 publications: 26 empirical studies (classroom interventions, quasi-experiments), 9 meta-analyses and reviews, and 10 conceptual papers on digital listening pedagogy. A thematic synthesis approach was used to identify recurring strategies, benefits, challenges, and implications for A2 learners.

Results

1. Effectiveness of podcasts for listening comprehension

Numerous studies confirm that podcasts enhance learners’ listening comprehension by exposing them to authentic input with supportive features [6]; [7]. For A2 learners, graded or semi-authentic podcasts with slower speech, clear enunciation, and transcripts significantly increase comprehension and vocabulary retention. Replayability allows learners to process difficult passages repeatedly, reducing anxiety and fostering confidence. Empirical studies report measurable improvements in comprehension scores and increased willingness to engage with authentic audio after podcast-based interventions [8].

2. Online resources and multimodal scaffolding

Platforms such as YouTube, ESL listening websites, and mobile apps offer interactive features—subtitles, comprehension quizzes, speed controls, and visual context—that directly support decoding and meaning-making [5]. A2 learners benefit particularly from multimodal scaffolds (audio + text + visuals), which provide multiple channels for input. Studies show that learners using online resources develop stronger bottom-up decoding skills (recognition of words and phrases) and improved top-down strategies (using context and background knowledge).

3. Pedagogical strategies for A2 implementation

Effective podcast- and online resource-based listening instruction for A2 learners requires careful scaffolding:

Pre-listening activities: vocabulary previews, prediction tasks, activation of prior knowledge.

While-listening activities: guided comprehension questions, note-taking, listening for gist and specific information.

Post-listening activities: discussions, retelling, role-plays, and writing summaries to reinforce integrated skills [1]; [3].

4. Assessment approaches

Teachers successfully integrate listening portfolios, self-assessment checklists, and CEFR-aligned rubrics to track progress. Digital platforms also offer built-in analytics (e.g., completion rates, quiz performance) to monitor learner engagement.

Discussion

The synthesis highlights several key insights. First, podcasts and online resources increase learner motivation by providing authentic and engaging input beyond the textbook [4]. Second, multimodal features—transcripts, visuals, interactive quizzes—are particularly effective for A2 learners, who benefit from redundancy across channels. Third, consistent exposure to semi-authentic listening develops both bottom-up decoding (recognizing sounds, words, and phrases) and top-down comprehension (using context and prior knowledge).

Challenges include selecting appropriate materials for A2 learners, as authentic podcasts may be too linguistically demanding. Teachers must carefully curate resources or use graded podcasts designed for learners. Another challenge is ensuring structured classroom integration: podcasts cannot simply be assigned; they require pre-, while-, and post-listening scaffolding. Moreover, access to digital tools may be limited in some contexts, requiring teachers to adapt with downloadable or offline materials.

Overall, evidence suggests that podcasts and online resources are effective complements, not replacements, to classroom listening instruction. When combined

with scaffolded pedagogy, they promote sustainable improvements in listening comprehension and foster learner autonomy.

Conclusion

Podcasts and online resources represent powerful tools for enhancing listening comprehension in A2 learners. Their key strengths lie in accessibility, multimodality, and authenticity, which together create motivating and effective learning experiences. Research shows that with appropriate scaffolding, A2 students gain not only improved listening comprehension but also expanded vocabulary, greater confidence, and increased motivation to engage with authentic English.

Teachers should adopt a structured three-stage approach (pre-listening, while-listening, post-listening), integrate transcripts and visuals, and align activities with CEFR A2 descriptors. Importantly, the effectiveness of these tools depends on thoughtful selection of materials, explicit guidance, and consistent practice.

Future research should conduct longitudinal and controlled studies focusing specifically on A2 cohorts, measuring durable gains in listening comprehension across multiple contexts. Additionally, studies should explore the role of learner autonomy and digital literacy in maximizing the potential of podcasts and online tools.

In conclusion, digital listening resources, when integrated purposefully into classroom practice, not only strengthen A2 learners' comprehension but also bridge the gap between classroom English and real-world communication.

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