



Using Podcasts to Enhance English Reading Skills for Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of podcasts in improving English reading skills among undergraduate students. By focusing on three objectives: 1) enhancing students' English reading skills through podcasts, 2) comparing their English reading achievement before and after using podcasts, and 3) assessing their satisfaction with this learning approach. The sample consisted of 30 first-year students enrolled in the English for Life Skills course during the second semester of the 2022 academic year at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai. Participants were selected through cluster random sampling. The research instruments included lesson plans incorporating podcast-based reading activities (reading while listening), pretests and posttests, and a questionnaire to evaluate student satisfaction. Data were analyzed using percentage, mean, standard deviation, and paired sample t-test. The results revealed that podcast-based reading activities significantly enhanced the students' English reading skills. Students achieved an average score of 7.70 (S.D. = 0.296) out of 10 points across all learning units. Posttest scores (\bar{X} = 6.33, S.D. = 0.296) were notably higher than pretest scores (\bar{X} = 4.57, S.D. = 0.448), demonstrating a significant improvement in reading achievement. Furthermore, students expressed high satisfaction with the podcast-based learning approach, with a mean satisfaction score of 3.60 out of 4. These findings suggest that integrating podcasts into English reading instruction is an effective and engaging strategy for enhancing language skills among undergraduate students.

Keywords: Podcasts; English reading skills; Undergraduate students

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Introduction

English is not merely a language; it has become a global necessity. Strong English skills are the key to effective communication, education, and professional growth in today's interconnected world. Reading is particularly vital among the four core language skills—reading, speaking, listening, and writing. It is the path to vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and critical thinking. Reading is the gateway to a world of knowledge. It is fundamental for accessing and analyzing information from diverse sources, including books, research articles, documents, and foreign websites. It is the tool that makes learners resourceful and knowledgeable. According to the Higher Education Standards Board's announcement, B.E. 2567, higher education institutions tasked with improving English teaching methodologies to prepare students as academically competent graduates. This method integrates innovative approaches such as online media and digital platforms to enhance learning outcomes. To meet these standards, educational institutions must prioritize reading as a core skill. It is integral to fostering academic readiness, allowing students to build their knowledge independently, and supporting their success in standardized language proficiency tests like those aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Developing advanced reading skills ensures students equipped to excel in academic and professional arenas.

The EF Education First (2022) report reveals a concerning trend in Thailand's English language proficiency; among countries where English learned as a foreign language, Thai children and youth ranked among the lowest in 2022, with performance continuing to decline, particularly in reading skills crucial for critical thinking. Grabe (2022) highlights that reading is the most essential skill for learners of English as a foreign language, serving as the primary means of accessing academic research, textbooks, and scholarly publications. Despite its importance, research indicates significant challenges in teaching and developing reading skills in Thailand. Pantito (2020) and Rungswang and Kosashunhanan (2021) found that traditional teaching methods, lesson content, and classroom activities often fail to motivate students or promote meaningful reading practices. These approaches do not adequately support the development of critical thinking skills through reading. Furthermore, the need for



more alignment between teaching strategies and learners' needs exacerbates the issue. Effective reading skills development requires methods tailored to students' age, behavior, interests, and abilities. Such approaches are necessary for students' text engagement and stifle their critical thinking and language acquisition abilities.

At Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna in Chiang Rai, a significant issue has been observed in general English courses offered to students at all levels. A lecturer noted that many students wrote Thai phonetics over English text in their books because they needed help pronouncing English words correctly. This practice reflects inadequate English pronunciation comprehension and requires more confidence in reading aloud. However, it also presents a clear opportunity for improvement. Such behavior indicates that students struggle with foundational reading skills, particularly in decoding and pronouncing English words. This situation underscores the pressing need for targeted interventions to build their linguistic abilities and confidence, offering hope for significant progress. The urgency of the situation demands immediate action from all of us. Further observation revealed that while some students used mobile applications to read along and listen to passages, they found the content in these apps more engaging and enjoyable than the textbook materials used in class. This finding highlights a critical issue: students need more motivation, inspiration, and perseverance to develop their reading skills through traditional methods. The disparity between the engaging content provided by apps and the less appealing textbook materials underscores the need for innovative teaching approaches. Grabe (2022), Pantito (2020), and Rungswang and Kosashunhanan (2021) emphasize the importance of adopting innovative and student-centered teaching strategies to address language learning challenges. Their work highlights the need for methods to actively engage learners, foster motivation, and build confidence, particularly in reading and pronunciation, where students often struggle. Langille and Green (2021) showcase the transformative power of multisensory phonics programs in enhancing the acquisition of English as an additional language. Their findings underscore that integrating visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile elements can significantly elevate students' reading and pronunciation skills, revolutionizing language learning into a more accessible and engaging process.



Similarly, Vena and Yuliana (2023) emphasize the nurturing benefits of multisensory methods, focusing on their role in fostering student well-being among young learners. The study shows that this approach enhances language acquisition and creates a supportive and inclusive learning environment that nurtures emotional and social well-being.

Podcasts, a versatile and accessible digital medium, have emerged as a powerful tool for language learning. They offer a unique combination of auditory and textual engagement, enabling students to read along with the spoken content. This multisensory approach enhances students' motivation and provides diverse and captivating material tailored to their interests and learning needs. More importantly, podcasts are adaptable to different learning styles, making educators feel more equipped, and learners feel more understood. While podcasts effectively improve listening skills, their integration with text-based resources has significantly boosted reading comprehension and fluency (Boulanouar et al., 2024). By simultaneously hearing and seeing the language, learners can improve their pronunciation, decode unfamiliar words more effectively, and reinforce vocabulary retention. This dual functionality makes podcasts a dynamic and practical resource for enhancing English reading proficiency in modern educational contexts. By combining auditory input with written materials, podcasts provide a contextualized and engaging learning experience that encourages active listening, improves vocabulary acquisition, and enhances overall comprehension. Research supports the use of podcasts as an effective educational tool. Atalay, Azap, Kinay, and Özşirin (2022) highlight the growing popularity of audio-based technologies, noting that podcasts offer convenient, offline access to diverse content such as radio shows, dramas, and educational materials. Their episodic structure allows learners to engage with content that aligns with their interests and needs inside and outside the classroom. Podcasts are particularly effective in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, providing immersive language exposure beyond traditional classroom activities. Moreover, studies emphasize the specific benefits of podcasts in enhancing reading skills. Li and Peng (2022) found that podcasts help students improve pronunciation and reading comprehension by allowing them to follow along with written text while listening. Similarly, Lhamo, Sakulwongs (2023), and



Amin (2022) identified audio-assisted reading strategies as particularly effective in fostering reading proficiency. By combining auditory and visual learning modes, these strategies support comprehension, pronunciation, and fluency, making them ideal for EFL learners. Incorporating podcasts into reading instruction increases student motivation and engagement and aligns with modern educational practices prioritizing multimodal learning. By leveraging podcasts, educators can create dynamic and effective learning environments catering to diverse learning styles and needs, ultimately enhancing students' reading and listening skills.

Therefore, given the importance of reading skills and the challenges students face in developing them, this research explores how podcasts can address these issues. The researcher found support in existing literature for using podcasts to enhance language learning, particularly in fostering listening and reading skills. The study aims to assess the effectiveness of podcasts as a supplementary tool for improving reading comprehension, vocabulary retention, and overall engagement. This research focuses on first-year undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai. By incorporating podcasts into daily teaching and learning activities, lecturers can provide students with engaging content that fosters both listening and reading skills.

Research Objectives

1. To enhance English reading skills for undergraduate students using podcasts.
2. To compare English reading achievement for undergraduate students using podcasts.
3. To study undergraduate students' satisfaction with using podcasts to improve their English reading skills.

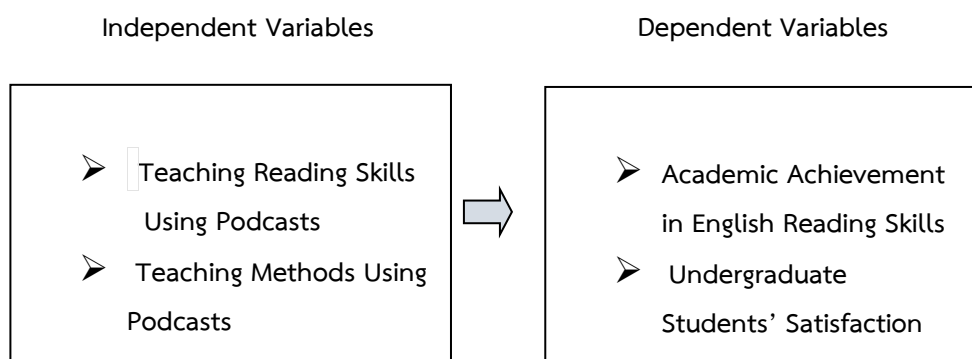
Research Hypothesis

First-year undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai, who learn English reading skills through podcasts, would achieve more effective academic outcomes than before.



Research Conceptual Framework

Picture 1 shows the conceptual framework for podcasts to enhance English reading skills for first-year undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai.



Picture 1: The Relationship between Independent and Dependent Variables

Research Methods

The study uses podcasts and follows a one-group pretest-posttest design structured as follows:

Pre-test	Experiment	Post-test
T1	x	T2

T1 represents pre-learning testing using podcasts to enhance learning and English reading skills.

X represents instructional management using podcasts to promote learning and English reading skills.

T2 represents post-learning experimentation using podcasts to enhance learning and English reading skills

Population

105 first-year students enrolled in the English language course for life skills in the second semester of 2022 at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai. The sample group comprises 30 students enrolled in the English for Life Skills



course in the second semester of the academic year 2022 at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai, selected using cluster random sampling to ensure similar distribution from each classroom.

In this study, the variables were:

1. The independent variable is instructional management, which uses podcasts to enhance English reading skills. The course covers five units: unit 1: My Home, unit 2: My Friends, unit 3: My Hobby, unit 4: My Party, and unit 5: My Vacation.

2. Dependent variables included academic achievement in reading skills and undergraduate students' satisfaction with using podcasts to improve their English reading skills.

The study instruments included:

1. A lesson plan includes English reading activities to improve life skills for first-year students. These plans cover five learning modules that use podcasts for reading and listening exercises, adapting from Tragant and Vallbona's (2018) approach. These activities contain pre-reading exercises, in which students learn vocabulary through audio and images to ensure understanding, such as guessing games. While reading activities: Students listen to a passage before beginning reading exercises. Post-reading exercises involve students reading and listening to content to comprehend and answer questions. Additionally, they can work in groups to get solutions from texts.

2. Pre-tests and post-tests are utilized to gauge English reading skills for life skills development among first-year undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai, through podcasts. Specifically designed for this purpose, the podcasts cover content across 5 units. Each unit contains 10 questions, with one point allocated to each, for a total score of 50 points, and analyzing the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) with three experts to confirm the accuracy and completeness of the content. The result was 0.85, ensuring the questionnaire's effectiveness in measuring student achievement outcomes. A passing criterion of 5 points per unit was established, ensuring an evaluation throughout the course.

3. The 10-item questionnaire measures first-year undergraduate student satisfaction with podcast-based teaching approaches for enhancing reading skills. It interprets students' satisfaction levels with podcasting techniques, categorizing mean



scores into four levels: highest (3.26 – 4.00), high (2.51 – 3.25), low (1.76 – 2.50), and lowest (1.00 – 1.75). The criteria for interpreting the mean are as follows:

$$\text{Class intervals} = \frac{(\text{Maximum score} - \text{Minimum score})}{\text{Number of classes}} = \frac{(4-1)}{4} = 0.75$$

The quality control approach entails determining the reliability and validity of the student satisfaction questionnaire by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to ensure consistency. The Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) was 0.80, ensuring the questionnaire's effectiveness in measuring student satisfaction.

The data collection comprised experimental activities to assess the reading skills of first-year students enrolled in the English for Life Skills course during the second semester of the 2022 academic year. Fieldwork occurs in classrooms according to the schedule established by the university's registrar's office.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using a dependent sample t-test, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The pre-and post-tests were analyzed using a paired t-test. The students' satisfaction was analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

Research Results

1. Using podcasts to enhance English reading skills for first-year undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology, Lanna, Chiang Rai

Table 1: Learning outcomes of comprehension reading (pass criteria: 5 points)

Units	Students	Learning Achievement Scores				Criteria
		Pre-test (10 points)	SD	Post-test (10 points)	SD	
Unit 1 My Home	30	4.73	0.8138	7.03	0.4819	Pass
Unit 2 My Friend	30	4.83	0.8975	7.67	0.7454	Pass



Unit 3 My Hobby	30	4.23	0.8439	7.73	0.6799	Pass
Unit 4 My Party	30	4.20	1.1662	8.17	0.6872	Pass
Unit 5 My Vacation	30	4.87	0.8459	7.90	0.7895	Pass
Total	30	4.57	0.448	7.70	0.296	Pass

Table 1 showed that podcast-based reading activities significantly improved students' comprehension skills in all units, with post-test scores consistently exceeding the pass criteria of 5 points. Average pre-test scores increased from 4.57 (SD = 0.448) to 7.70 (SD = 0.296) across all units, with the highest improvement observed in Unit 4 (*My Party*), where scores rose from 4.20 to 8.17.

2. Compare the learning effectiveness of English reading skills for first-year undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai through podcasts

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation, and paired sample t-test

Test	n	\bar{x}	SD	df	t	p-value
Pre-test	30	4.57	0.448	29	-30.881	0.000**
Post-test	30	7.70	0.296			

**p < 0.01

The paired sample t-test results indicated a significant statistical difference between the pre-test and post-test results at the 0.01 level among the 30 participants. On average, scores increased from 4.57 (S.D. = 0.448) in the pre-test to 7.70 (S.D. = 0.296) in the post-test.

3. Satisfaction of first-year undergraduate students of Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai, towards using podcasts activities to improve their English reading skills

Table 3: Satisfaction of undergraduate students through podcasts activities



Items	\bar{x}	S.D.	Satisfaction Level
1. Students understand reading techniques while listening to podcasts.	3.83	1.02	Highest
2. Reading activities begin with basic stories and vocabulary relevant to everyday life.	3.80	1.06	Highest
3. Reading activities and listening to podcasts increase reading and listening skills.	3.63	1.10	Highest
4. Podcast scripts are helpful, making reading easier.	3.60	1.28	Highest
5. Exercises and quizzes are appropriate for the activity.	3.60	1.19	Highest
6. Instructors are enthusiastic about teaching and providing feedback on each student's work.	3.60	0.93	Highest
7. The instructor tries to motivate students during the lesson.	3.53	1.17	Highest
8. Podcasts have many exciting stories; they are modern and can be used in many ways.	3.53	1.14	Highest
9. Students understand the content better by reading and listening to podcasts.	3.47	1.22	Highest
10. Students can practice reading anytime by using podcasts on their own.	3.43	1.17	Highest
Total	3.60	1.03	Highest

A satisfaction survey of undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai, regarding podcast use revealed the highest satisfaction levels across all measured dimensions (\bar{x} = 3.60).

Research Discussion

1. Using podcasts to improve first-year undergraduate students' English reading skills at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai



A lecturer observed that many students in the *English for Working Skills* course wrote Thai phonetics over English text in their books, indicating limited comprehension and low confidence in reading aloud. This observation underscores the urgent need to strengthen foundational reading skills among students. Notably, some learners resorted to mobile applications integrating reading and listening, reflecting a preference for multimodal learning approaches. This research revealed that podcast-based learning significantly enhanced first-year undergraduate students' reading comprehension and overall academic performance, with all participants achieving passing scores. Using podcasts, which engage multiple sensory modalities, proved particularly effective in improving comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation. During reading activities, the researcher observed that many students repeatedly listened to word pronunciations and practiced reading them aloud, suggesting that such activities contributed to more accurate reading. Tarantino (2020) found that integrating multisensory activities in a fifth-grade word study program effectively enhanced spelling, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Similarly, Rudnick (2021) demonstrated that multisensory techniques were particularly beneficial for second-grade readers struggling with decoding, leading to improved reading abilities. Kalogris (2024) further supported these findings by showing that multisensory phonics methods, when integrated with a reading curriculum, significantly enhanced reading outcomes for students in K-2 inclusion settings. These studies underscore the effectiveness of multisensory approaches in fostering literacy development, particularly for learners who face challenges in traditional reading instruction. They also emphasize the role of these methods in academic success, providing reassurance about their effectiveness. Empirical evidence supports these findings. Studies by Clinton-Lisell (2022, 2023) and Amin (2022) confirm that synchronizing auditory and visual stimuli enhances focus, memory retention, and overall learning outcomes. Similarly, Wibowo and Harahap (2022) demonstrated that podcasts improve reading and listening skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, advocating their use as practical instructional tools. Errabo, Dela Rosa, and Gonzales (2024) further highlighted the benefits of podcasts in providing exposure to authentic language, facilitating self-paced learning, and enhancing EFL training outcomes. Moreover, Indahsari (2020) emphasized that podcasts



cater to learners of all proficiency levels, offering flexible and engaging content that fosters motivation and enjoyment in language acquisition.

2. Comparing learning outcomes in English reading skills for first-year undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai, using Podcasts

The comparison of mean scores before and after the use of podcasts among first-year undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai, demonstrated a significant improvement in overall learning outcomes. Specifically, the researcher observed that students exhibited greater focus and engagement during reading activities, as they could recall details from the stories presented in the podcasts. Many students pointed to the words while listening, reinforcing their connection between spoken and written language. This observation supports the notion that “practice makes perfect.” These findings align with research by Saeedakhtar and Rouhi (2021), who noted that podcasts enhance listening and reading skills while expanding vocabulary and improving comprehension. Combining reading and listening helps the brain integrate auditory and visual stimuli, reinforcing connections between sounds and text (Clinton-Lisell, 2022; 2023; Amin, 2022). This multimodal approach stimulates multiple brain areas involved in language processing, memory, and reading skills, thus enhancing fluency and comprehension. Further studies by Hamada (2021), Fadli (2023), Hartshorn and Stephens (2023), and Herman (2020) confirmed that audio recordings supported by transcripts help students understand the relationship between letters and sounds. According to Yiemkuntitavorn and Rattanapan (2021), podcasts serve as a practical starting point for learners, particularly those with lower proficiency levels, allowing them to progress to more advanced content gradually. Furthermore, Oslawski-Lopez and Kordsmeier (2021) recommended that instructors play a crucial role in guiding students on how to use both podcast audio and transcripts effectively. They argue that this guidance is essential for students to engage with the material in various ways, enhancing their understanding and retention of the language.



3. Satisfaction of first-year undergraduate students of Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai, towards using podcasts to improve their English reading skills

Using podcasts to enhance reading skills has proven highly effective among first-year undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai. The research revealed positive student engagement throughout the activities, with participants actively involved and expressing enjoyment. Students were observed as they practiced reading aloud, repeating words and, striving to improve their pronunciation. Many students reported feeling relaxed while reading, noting that they could read more fluently without needing to write Thai phonetics over the English text in their books. This shift demonstrates increased reading confidence and highlights podcasts' impact in reducing reliance on translation. Additionally, students expressed great appreciation for the variety of stories available through podcasts, such as those focusing on contemporary issues, personal success stories, and cultural insights. For example, podcasts featuring motivational speakers discussing personal growth and stories on technological innovations or global environmental challenges resonated deeply with students. These topics sparked interest and provided a meaningful context for language learning, as students could relate the content to their own lives and current global trends. This diversity in podcast content significantly contributed to their engagement and enthusiasm, making the learning process more dynamic and relevant. This finding is consistent with Panagiotidis (2021), who argues that podcasts provide learners with authentic language exposure in a convenient format, extending language learning beyond the traditional classroom environment. Similarly, Indahsari (2020) emphasizes that podcasts contribute to improved listening, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language skills, fostering self-directed learning based on individual interests. Moreover, integrating podcasts into language learning aligns with the trends identified by Godwin-Jones (2021), who notes that technology-driven instructional methods, such as podcasts, promote collaborative, multimedia-rich learning environments. These environments, in turn, enhance both language skills and cultural understanding. Furthermore, Besser, Blackwell, and Saenz (2022) explore various methods of engaging students through educational podcasting, highlighting three case studies of successful



implementation. These case studies contribute to the growing body of knowledge on effective podcast integration by illustrating practical applications of podcasts in diverse educational contexts, providing insights into the challenges and successes of podcast use, and demonstrating how tailored podcast content can enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. By documenting real-world examples of podcast integration, the case studies offer valuable guidance on best practices, such as selecting appropriate podcast formats, aligning content with learning objectives, and fostering active student participation. These contributions help refine the understanding of how podcasts can promote interactive and practical learning experiences. In their earlier work, Besser, Saenz, and Blackwell (2020) focused on podcast use in real-world educational contexts, sharing valuable insights and lessons contributing to this knowledge base.

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant role of podcasts in enhancing reading skills among first-year undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Rai. The findings demonstrate that podcasts are an effective tool in English language education, with strong potential for successful integration into foreign language classrooms. Students showed marked improvements in learning outcomes, increased confidence in their abilities, and a greater sense of independence in their learning. Furthermore, podcasts' dual functionality supports reading and listening activities and enhances comprehension and vocabulary retention. This innovative approach, which harnesses the power of modern technology, increased student engagement during class and encouraged continued learning outside the classroom, owing to the flexibility and accessibility of podcasts. These results underscore the value of incorporating modern technology into language instruction, offering a pathway to more interactive and effective teaching methods. Multisensory teaching strategies effectively develop language skills and promote a holistic, learner-centered educational experience that supports cognitive and emotional growth. Multisensory teaching strategies effectively develop language skills and promote a holistic, learner-centered educational experience that supports cognitive and emotional growth.



Research suggestion

1. Choose a podcast appropriate for the student's language level and interests.
2. Explore using podcasts in other language skills (e.g., writing, speaking).
3. Investigate long-term effects on students' academic performance and motivation.

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