

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

In the era of globalization, English language skills have become one of the important needs to support various aspects of life, especially in the academic and professional fields. The ability to speak in English is one of the main skills that students must master in the era of globalization. English plays a vital role in communication, education, and global business, with its learning now influenced by information technology (Sari et al., 2024). English is essential in daily life for international communication, accessing universal knowledge, and pursuing educational or career opportunities (Pinkan Maulida et al., 2024). And In the tourism industry, English serves multiple roles including communicative, integrative, lingua franca, relationship-fostering, business/economic, and functional roles, making it a fundamental skill for those working in this sector (Damayanti et al., 2019). Overall, English proficiency is crucial for personal, professional, and economic growth in today's interconnected world.

In Indonesia, English is taught from elementary school to university level. However, despite having studied it for years, there are still many students who face difficulties in speaking English fluently. Despite English being taught from

elementary to high school, many university students still struggle with proficiency (Lubis et al., 2024). Speaking skills are classified as the abilities that allow us to speak meaningfully with one another. It provides us with the ability to express information verbally. Affective factors, such as self-esteem, anxiety, and motivation, play an important role in developing speaking skills. Positive affective factors facilitate language acquisition, while negative factors inhibit it (Kiruthiga & Christopher, 2022). In addition, the use of mother tongue and the demands of proper grammar in speaking also contribute to difficulties (Muamar et al., 2019; Ristati et al., 2022). Based on data from the EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) 2024, Indonesia ranks 80th out of 116 countries with a score of 468, which falls into the low category. This data shows that the English language skills of Indonesians still need to be improved.

Along with the times, digital learning media is considered effective in overcoming this. The integration of technology in English language teaching has become increasingly important, offering numerous benefits for both teachers and learners. Studies show that technology integration significantly enhances English language skills acquisition (Uyunnasirah Hambali et al., 2023; S. Kustini, 2020). It promotes multiliteracy skills, encompassing reading, writing, speaking, and technological proficiency in various contexts

and cultures (Kustini, 2020). Technology-based learning improves student engagement and enriches learning experiences through access to interactive resources (Sholihin, 2024).

Podcasts are one of the many digital media that have surfaced as a result of technology advancements and can be used as aids for learning English. A podcast is a program that is available digitally. According to Díez, M. T., & Richters, M. A. (2020:40), the terms 'podcast' and 'podcasting' (a blend of Pod from Apple iPod and broadcast) refer to a digital audio file (generally in MP3-format), as well as a system of distribution or syndication on the Web: RSS (Really Simple Syndication). This program is an innovative mobile technology consists of series video and digital audio broadcast that could be downloaded and played on mobile devices (Abdulrahman et al., 2018). Podcasts provide authentic materials and exposure to native speakers, helping learners develop their speaking abilities (Alfa, 2020). The use of podcasts in tertiary education is considered to promote motivation and engagement, cognition and learning, learner autonomy and innovative opportunities for teaching and presenting (Salmon & Nie, 2008 in Phillips, B. (2017:159). When combined with lexico-grammatical resources and descriptive image exercises, podcasts can enhance vocabulary, grammar, and confidence in speaking (Suseno, 2024). This is

in line with (Krashen, 1982) Input Theory which suggests that language learning occurs through comprehensible input. Podcasts give students access to authentic language with diverse accents, vocabulary and sentence structures, which helps them absorb language naturally.

In the context of education, Podcasts have emerged as a versatile and engaging tool in educational contexts, offering benefits for both formal and informal learning environments. They can support active learning, enhance student engagement, and promote dialogue with underrepresented communities (Moore, 2024). Podcasting enhances learning in higher education by enabling mobile, flexible, and supportive learning (Pat Ormond, 2008). Several studies have shown that the use of podcasts in English language learning has a positive impact on students' speaking ability. Recent studies highlight the effectiveness of podcasts in enhancing English speaking skills among university students. Podcasts have been found to increase motivation, self-efficacy, and engagement in language learning (Perry, 2024; Firdausiyah & Rohaniyah, 2024)). They provide a flexible platform for developing fluency, accuracy, and communicative competence (Firdausiyah & Rohaniyah, 2024). Students have shown positive attitudes towards podcasts as a learning tool, reporting improvements in vocabulary, pronunciation, and overall speaking abilities (Sansinadi et al., 2020). Podcasts also offer

opportunities for assessment, reflecting real-world practices and increasing student motivation (Perry, 2024). In the context of distance learning, podcasts have emerged as a valuable Web 2.0 technology for developing listening and speaking skills (Sapon et al., 2021). The accessibility, ease of use, and didactic potential of podcasts make them a promising tool in foreign language teaching, particularly for technical university students (Sapon et al., 2021).

Despite the considerable potential of podcasts as a learning medium, but there are still a number of obstacles that prevent them from being used effectively to improve speaking abilities in the English language. A study by (Rahmasai et al., 2021) shows that although students realize the benefits of podcasts in learning, many of them do not understand how to utilize them optimally. This is reinforced by (Nova, 2022) findings which show that the use of podcasts as speaking activities in online classes is often less effective due to students' lack of understanding and engagement. Students' perception of podcasts as learning media is also an important factor in determining the effectiveness of their use. Another study by (Sotlikova & Haerazi, 2023) at the University of Uzbekistan found that students have a positive perception of the use of podcasts in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning. Students felt that podcasts helped them improve their speaking skills, especially in terms of pronunciation and

understanding the context of communication. However, the study also noted challenges, such as the lack of integration of podcasts in the curriculum and the lack of guidance from teachers in making the most of podcasts.

Although various studies have demonstrated the potential of podcasts in improving speaking skills, there is still a gap in the understanding of how university students actually perceive the use of podcasts in learning. Students' perceptions are an important aspect to research because positive perceptions can motivate them to use this media consistently and optimally. Perception is a fundamental cognitive process that involves the organization and interpretation of sensory information by the brain (Bartoshuk, 2019). In addition, research on students' perceptions can also help educators and educational institutions to understand the challenges students face in using podcasts as a learning medium.

From the results of the pre-observation that has been conducted, it is known that the majority of 4th semester students at UINFAS Bengkulu still face various difficulties in speaking English. The students revealed that the main obstacles that cause them to experience difficulties in speaking English come from several fundamental factors. Common difficulties include lack of vocabulary, confidence, and motivation (Dessy Puspita Sari et al., 2021; M. Dalem, 2017). Limited vocabulary, which makes it difficult for them to find

the right words to express their thoughts orally. In addition, many of them feel a lack of confidence when speaking, mainly because they are worried about making mistakes in pronunciation or sentence structure. Speaking English poses various challenges for non-native speakers, particularly students. Students often struggle with expressing words and sentences in direct speech, fear of making mistakes, shyness, and anxiety (Dessy Puspita Sari et al., 2021; M. Dalem, 2017; Pranati Mishra et al., 2020). This is exacerbated by the lack of opportunities to practice speaking in their environment, both in class and outside of class, so they are not used to using English in daily conversation. On the other hand, the students also realized that technology can play an important role in helping them improve their English speaking skills. One form of technology that they find useful is the use of digital media in the form of podcasts as learning media. Which has great potential to help them overcome these obstacles and improve their speaking skills more effectively. the use of podcasts in language learning provides an interactive and technology-integrated approach that challenges both students and teachers to develop their English skills creatively (Ramli & Kurniawan, 2018; Anita et al., 2023). However, it is known that only some students used podcasts as an additional learning resource outside the classroom. They listen to English podcasts through platforms such as Spotify or YouTube to practice their

listening and pronunciation skills. However, in classroom learning, the use of podcasts as learning media has not been formally implemented by lecturers. This shows that although the potential for using podcasts is quite large, their utilization in formal learning is still limited. therefore it is important to explore how students perceive the use of podcasts.

Based on this background, this study aims to explore students' perceptions towards the use of podcasts in improving English speaking skills. This research will explore how students perceive podcasts as a learning medium, what factors influence their perceptions, and the extent to which podcasts can be accepted as an effective tool in supporting the learning of speaking skills. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more effective technology-based learning methods, as well as provide recommendations for educators and educational institutions in utilizing podcasts as relevant and innovative learning media.

B. Identification of the Problem

1. Students only have limited opportunities to speak in English, both in class and outside of class.
2. Many students are not directly exposed to native English speakers or correct English pronunciation models.
3. Many students feel shy or unconfident to speak English for fear of making mistakes.

C. Limitation of the Research

1. This research will only be conducted on 4th semester students at UINFAS Bengkulu campus.
2. This study only focuses on students' perceptions of the use of English podcasts to improve speaking ability.

D. Research Question

1. How do students perceive the use of podcasts as learning media to improve English speaking ability?
2. How can podcasts help in teaching speaking ability that students consider important?
3. How do students experience using podcasts?

E. Objective of the Research

1. To analyze students' perceptions of the use of podcasts as learning media in improving English speaking ability.
2. To identify the factors that influence students' perceptions of podcasts in assisting the learning of speaking ability.
3. To know students' experiences in using podcasts to support their English speaking practice

F. Benefit of the Research

This research is expected to make several important contributions both theoretically and practically:

1. Theoretical Uses.

Theoretically, this study can contribute to the body of knowledge already available on the use of technology in

English language instruction, particularly in relation to the use of podcasts as a speaking learning tool. It is anticipated that this study will contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which digital media, like podcasts, might impact the process of learning English and the elements that affect students' opinions about how effective they are. The findings of this study can also be used as a foundation for future investigations into how other digital media affect the development of speaking abilities in foreign languages.

2. Usefulness in Practice for Teachers and Educational Establishments.

It is anticipated that this study will give educators valuable information for creating engaging and successful teaching strategies. Through gaining insight into how students view podcasts, teachers may create more engaging, interactive, and student-friendly learning activities. Furthermore, the findings of this study can assist teachers in recognizing the limitations or difficulties that students encounter when using podcasts, allowing them to offer more suitable assistance.

3. Usefulness in Practice for Curriculum Development.

The findings of this study can help educational institutions create curricula that better suit the requirements and preferences of students in the digital age. As digital

technology advances, using podcasts to teach English might be a fascinating option that should be taken into account for the curriculum. Universities can use this information to create training or learning programs that use podcasts to help students become more proficient speakers.

4. Useful Applications for Students.

As a result of this study, students may have a better grasp of how to use podcasts to enhance their speaking abilities. In addition to offering ideas on how to use the many podcast formats available to enhance vocabulary and pronunciation, this research can assist students in realizing the promise of podcasts as an adaptable and anytime, anywhere learning tool.

5. Policy Suggestions for Podcast Use in the Classroom.

It is anticipated that this study will also offer policy suggestions to authorities or educational institutions about the value of integrating technology into the classroom, particularly when it comes to enhancing students' speaking abilities. It is intended that the findings of this study would increase the motivation to use digital media, like podcasts, in several facets of learning English.

G. Definition of Terms

1. *Speaking ability*

Speaking ability is a person's skill to express thoughts, ideas, and information in oral form using English. This skill includes aspects of fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, and confidence in communication.

2. *Podcast*

A podcast is a form of digital audio media consisting of a series of episodes that can be accessed via the internet. Podcasts usually contain monologues or conversations that review various topics.

3. *Student Perception*

Student perception refers to the way students interpret, process and evaluate their experiences with a particular learning tool, strategy or method.