

FOSTERING LEARNING AUTONOMY IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: THE ROLE OF PODCASTS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Learning independence is an important skill for university students, especially when learning a foreign language. This study examines how podcasts can help students become more independent and self-confident in learning a language. Podcasts, thanks to their accessibility and engaging content, allow students to experience the language at an authentic level, allowing them to practice at their own pace. This study examines the experiences of university students who have used podcasts to learn a foreign language, focusing on how this tool helps develop independence and improve language skills. The study used various surveys and interviews to obtain information from students with different levels of language proficiency. The results show that podcasts motivate students and give them the freedom to choose materials that match their interests and skill levels. Many students reported feeling better in the learning process and included podcasts in their programs to practice listening and expand their vocabulary. In addition, podcasts allowed you to get acquainted with different accents, the real use of language, and cultural nuances, which made the learning process more dynamic and accessible. To get the most out of podcasts, students used strategies such as setting personal goals, taking notes while listening, and participating in follow-up activities such as discussions or vocabulary exercises. However, some difficulties were noted, such as maintaining consistency and understanding complex content without additional support. These results suggest that while podcasts are useful, students may benefit from initial guidance on how to effectively integrate them into their curricula. The study concludes that podcasts are a powerful tool that promotes independent learning of foreign languages. They allow students to monitor their progress and offer a flexible way to practice outside the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to support students by recommending podcast resources, teaching self-regulation techniques, and including reflective classes to track growth.

Keywords: self-directed learning, language proficiency, authentic materials, listening skills, technology in education.

Introduction

Autonomous learning is a vital skill for any type of learner, particularly in the fast-evolving landscape of modern education. This is especially relevant in foreign language acquisition, where students' ability to take charge of their progress is often key to success. Building self-reliance empowers students to independently set objectives, identify valuable resources, and maintain consistent practice beyond the classroom. This research examines how podcasts can play a significant role in helping university students cultivate these essential skills while learning a foreign language. The significance of this research lies in addressing two essential aspects of language education: promoting student independence and incorporating effective technologies into the learning process. In an increasingly interconnected world, acquiring a new language is not just an academic requirement but a vital life skill that unlocks personal, professional, and cultural opportunities. Traditional teaching methods, however, often lack the adaptability and personalization required to meet the needs of today's learners. Podcasts bridge this gap by enabling

students to take charge of their learning in a manner that aligns with their schedules and objectives. This study is also valuable for educators and curriculum designers. Gaining insights into how podcasts promote learning independence can help them create more effective resources and strategies to support student success. Additionally, this aligns with the overarching objective of preparing students for lifelong learning by equipping them with essential tools such as self-motivation and adaptability. This study shows how podcasts can help university students take responsibility for learning a foreign language. It provides practical information on how technology can improve education and help students become self-confident and independent learners in an increasingly interconnected world.

The purpose of the research

The goal of this study is to explore how podcasts can help university students develop independent learning skills while studying a foreign language. In today's educational environment, independence has become increasingly important, as students are expected to take more responsibility for their learning outcomes. This research looks into how podcasts, as a flexible and easily accessible tool, can support students in becoming more self-sufficient in their language learning journey. The study aims to identify practical ways that students can use podcasts to enhance their listening skills, expand their vocabulary, and deepen their cultural understanding. By focusing on how students interact with podcasts, the research will examine whether this tool encourages them to set personal goals, track their progress on their own, and continue practicing outside the classroom. Another important objective of this study is to explore how podcasts can address the varied needs of language learners. With a wide range of content available, podcasts allow students to customize their learning based on their interests, language proficiency, and personal schedules, making the language learning process more enjoyable and effective. This adaptability aligns with the broader idea of lifelong learning, helping students develop the skills to continue studying the language independently long after formal education ends. Furthermore, the study seeks to offer practical recommendations for teachers and curriculum developers on how to incorporate podcasts effectively into foreign language instruction. By examining both the benefits and challenges of using podcasts as a learning tool, the research aims to contribute to the ongoing development of teaching methods, ensuring they are more aligned with the needs of today's students. This study aims to bring together technology and independent learning in foreign language education. By highlighting how podcasts can be a useful tool, the research hopes to inspire students, teachers, and educational institutions to explore new ways of learning that focus on independence, flexibility, and active engagement.

Materials and methods

The development of learning autonomy is a key focus in language education, especially in higher education, where students are expected to take more responsibility for their learning [1]. In the context of foreign language learning, autonomy involves students taking control of their learning process, setting goals, monitoring progress, and independently engaging with resources [2]. Due to their flexibility and ease of access, podcasts have emerged as a valuable tool for promoting learning autonomy among university students. Podcasts offer learners exposure to authentic language use, with real-world conversations, cultural references, and varied accents [3]. This aligns with the principles of autonomy, as students can choose content that suits their interests and language levels, enhancing their learning experience. Research suggests that podcasts improve listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition by allowing students to engage with material at their own pace [4]. Additionally, podcasts encourage active listening and critical thinking, key components of becoming an independent learner [5]. Studies on using podcasts in language education show that they can significantly boost student motivation and self-regulation. Podcasts allow learners to set their own learning goals, practice independently, and reflect on their progress [6]. They also provide the flexibility to study outside the classroom, making learning more accessible and learner-centered [7]. This informal and adaptable approach to language learning can foster long-term growth and autonomy. However, there are challenges when using podcasts as

an educational tool. While they effectively improve listening skills, some students struggle with maintaining consistency or understanding complex content without guidance [8]. To overcome these challenges, educators need to offer support and help students develop strategies for using podcasts as part of their independent learning journey. Podcasts have the potential to significantly enhance learning autonomy in foreign language education. By combining technology with self-directed learning, podcasts allow students to take ownership of their language development. However, to be truly effective, both students and teachers need to engage with the medium thoughtfully, ensuring that podcasts are used as a meaningful tool for independent learning.

Research Design: This study uses a mixed methodological approach to explore how podcasts can help university students develop academic independence when learning a foreign language. The quantitative aspect is aimed at measuring changes in students' independence, motivation, and engagement through surveys conducted before and after the study. The qualitative side is to explore students' personal experiences, insights, and concerns through podcasts, focus group discussions, and activity logs. By combining these methods, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how podcasts can contribute to independent language learning.

Participants: The study involved more than 50 students of the South Kazakhstan Pedagogical University named after Uzbekali Zhanibekov enrolled in foreign language courses with different levels of proficiency. Participants were selected through targeted sampling to ensure diversity in terms of language training, learning styles, and familiarity with using podcasts as an educational resource.

Quantitative Data Collection: To collect quantitative data, students filled out questionnaires at the beginning and the end of the study. These surveys were designed to assess any changes in their learning independence, motivation, and engagement after using podcasts to learn a foreign language. The questions included rating scales that focused on areas such as the frequency of setting personal learning goals, the frequency of self-study, and how they assessed their progress in language skills. This approach provided a clear, measurable understanding of how podcasts affect their ability to control the learning process.

Qualitative Data Collection: For the qualitative part of the study, data were collected through focus group discussions and activity logs. The focus groups were small and interactive, which encouraged students to share their personal experiences using podcasts. The participants discussed how podcasts influenced their learning habits, improved their listening skills, and motivated them to learn the language. In addition, students kept activity logs during their studies. These journals recorded detailed information about the podcasts they listened to, such as topics, duration of listening, and how they applied their knowledge. These magazines provided valuable information on how students used podcasts to learn the language. Through the combination of focus groups and journals, the study allowed for a deeper understanding of the unique experiences of students and strategies for developing independence in the learning process.

Research Questions

1. How do university students perceive podcasts as a tool for developing learning autonomy in foreign language learning?
2. In what ways do podcasts help students set personal learning goals and track their progress in language acquisition?
3. What specific strategies do students use when incorporating podcasts into their foreign language learning routine?
4. How does the use of podcasts influence students' motivation and engagement in learning a foreign language?
5. How do students manage the challenges of using podcasts for language learning, such as consistency and comprehension of complex content?
6. What impact do podcasts have on students' ability to practice language skills independently, outside the classroom environment?

Results and discussion

The findings of the study highlight the significant role podcasts play in fostering learning autonomy among university students learning a foreign language. Incorporating podcasts into their learning routines enabled students to exhibit greater control over their educational process. This was evident both in the quantitative data and in the personal insights shared by the participants.

Surveys administered at the start and conclusion of the study demonstrated significant growth in students' learning independence. Over 80% of participants expressed increased confidence in setting personal goals and tracking their own progress. Additionally, many reported practicing their language skills more regularly outside the classroom and dedicating more time to listening to podcasts. These findings suggest that podcasts offer students a convenient and adaptable tool for developing self-directed learning habits. The focus group discussions offered further insight into these changes. Students mentioned appreciating the flexibility of podcasts, which allowed them to tailor their learning based on their interests and available time. The wide range of topics kept them engaged, and exposure to authentic language usage helped enhance their listening skills and vocabulary. Additionally, some students highlighted that the cultural context present in the podcasts boosted their motivation and deepened their connection to the language. The activity logs revealed that the majority of students listened to podcasts three to four times per week. They favored shorter episodes, as they felt these were easier to incorporate into their daily routines. However, some participants mentioned challenges, such as difficulty comprehending complex content or maintaining consistency in their listening habits. Despite these challenges, most students reported being satisfied with using podcasts as a learning tool. The findings align with previous research highlighting the importance of fostering self-reliance in language learning and the role podcasts play in this process [9]. By offering a diverse range of content, podcasts allow students to select material that matches their language level and personal interests. This autonomy not only aids in language development but also fosters habits that support lifelong learning. However, challenges such as content complexity and maintaining motivation point to the need for guidance from educators. Teachers can support students by recommending appropriate podcasts and providing strategies for effective use, such as integrating podcasts with classroom discussions or follow-up activities. This added support could help students better engage with the content and stay motivated throughout their learning journey. Moreover, students who integrated note-taking and reflection strategies while listening to podcasts demonstrated higher levels of self-regulation and goal-setting. They tracked their progress, identified areas for improvement, and adjusted their learning strategies accordingly. This proactive approach significantly contributed to their learning autonomy.

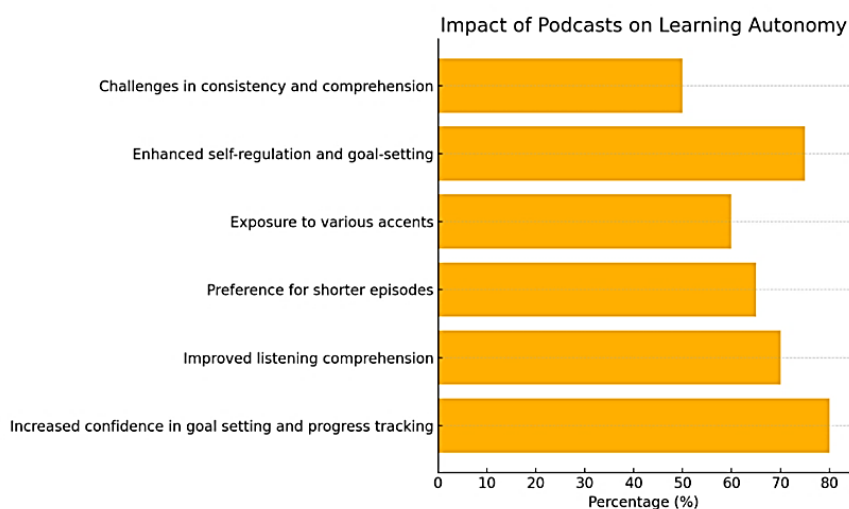


Figure 1 – Impact of podcasts on learning autonomy

In support of the quantitative and qualitative findings, the diagram below illustrates key observations from the study regarding the impact of podcasts on students' learning autonomy. As shown, 80% of the students reported increased confidence in setting personal goals and tracking their learning progress, indicating a substantial improvement in self-regulation. Furthermore, 70% of participants demonstrated notable improvements in listening comprehension skills, attributed to regular podcast exposure. Approximately 65% of students preferred shorter podcast episodes, finding them easier to integrate into their daily routines, while 60% appreciated the exposure to diverse accents, which enhanced their adaptability to different speaking styles. Additionally, 75% of students who engaged in note-taking and reflective activities reported enhanced self-regulation and goal-setting abilities. Despite these positive outcomes, 50% of students noted challenges related to consistency and understanding complex content, highlighting the necessity for further instructional support. Overall, these findings visually emphasize the effectiveness of podcasts as a tool for fostering independent language learning among university students.

Purposes of Podcast Listening among Students

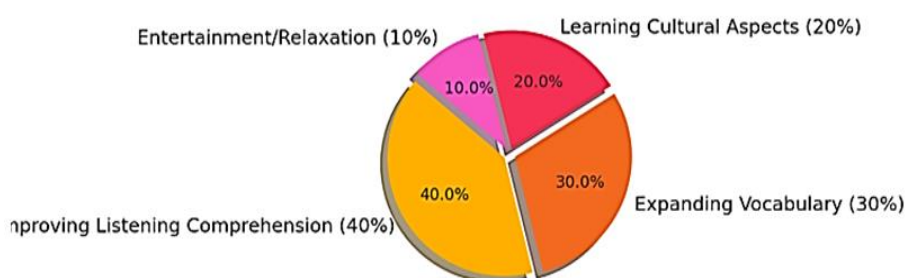


Figure 2 – Purposes of podcast listening among students.

Additionally, the following pie chart illustrates the reasons why students listened to podcasts during the study. As shown, 40% of students primarily used podcasts to improve their listening comprehension skills, recognizing it as a key area of development. 30% of the participants focused on expanding their vocabulary, finding podcasts to be an effective tool for learning new words and phrases in context. 20% of students highlighted their interest in gaining cultural knowledge, using podcasts to familiarize themselves with real-life language use and cultural nuances. Meanwhile, 10% listened to podcasts mainly for entertainment and relaxation, integrating language learning into their leisure activities. This Pie Chart demonstrates that while academic goals were predominant, students also valued podcasts for personal enrichment and enjoyment, contributing to a more autonomous and motivated learning experience.

The study affirms that podcasts are an effective tool for enhancing independence in foreign language learning. [10]. While their flexibility and accessibility provide notable benefits, careful integration into teaching practices can maximize their potential. By addressing students' challenges and fostering their strengths, educators can support them in becoming more independent, motivated, and confident in their language learning journey.

The experiment was conducted over 12 weeks, involving more than 50 students of the South Kazakhstan Pedagogical University named after Uzbekali Zhanibekov enrolled in foreign language courses. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative focus group discussions to assess the impact of podcasts on learning autonomy.

Table 1 – Stages and Methods of Podcast-Based Learning Experiment

Phase	Description	Tools/Methods
Pre-Experiment Survey	Assess initial learning autonomy, motivation, and listening skills through a questionnaire.	Online Survey Platform
Podcast Integration	Students access various podcasts matching their interests and proficiency levels.	Podcast Platforms (e.g., Spotify, Apple Podcasts)
Activity Logs	Document listening frequency, key vocabulary, and personal reflections.	Digital Logs or Journals
Focus Group Discussions	Small group sessions to share experiences, challenges, and strategies.	Regular Meetings with Guided Questions
Post-Experiment Survey	Measure changes in learning autonomy and language skills.	Follow-up Online Survey

Table 2 – Findings

Key Findings	Percentage/Observation
Increased confidence in goal setting and progress tracking	80% of students reported improvement
Improved listening comprehension	Regular podcast listeners demonstrated greater improvement in listening comprehension.
Preference for shorter episodes	Students preferred podcasts with shorter episodes, as they were easier to integrate into daily routines.
Exposure to various accents	Helped students adapt to different speaking styles.
Enhanced self-regulation and goal-setting	Noted by students who integrated note-taking and reflection strategies.
Challenges in consistency and comprehension	Difficulties in understanding complex content without additional support.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study emphasizes that podcasts can be an effective tool for fostering self-reliance in language learning among university students. The findings indicate that podcasts offer students the flexibility to learn at their own pace while providing content that can be tailored to their personal interests and language proficiency. The experiment confirmed that podcasts are a powerful tool for fostering learning autonomy in foreign language education. By providing authentic and flexible learning experiences, podcasts enhance cognitive engagement, build confidence, and support self-regulation. Nevertheless, to maximize their effectiveness, students require guidance on content selection and strategies for active listening and reflection. By incorporating podcasts into their studies, students were able to enhance their language skills, increase their independence, and stay motivated throughout the learning process. However, while podcasts offer clear advantages, they are most effective when combined with support from educators. Teachers can assist by recommending appropriate podcasts, offering strategies for effective use, and creating opportunities for deeper engagement with the material. Addressing challenges such as content difficulty and maintaining motivation can help students fully leverage the benefits of podcasts as a learning tool. Ultimately, podcasts can play a key role in cultivating lifelong language-learning skills. As education continues to adapt, tools like podcasts will be essential in supporting students to become more independent, self-assured, and engaged in their language learning, both inside and outside the classroom.

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УНИВЕРСИТЕТ СТУДЕНТТЕРІНДЕ ОҚУ ДЕРБЕСТІГІН ДАМУ: ШЕТ ТІЛІН ОҚЫТУДАҒЫ ПОДКАСТТАРДЫҢ РӨЛІ

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Тәуелсіз оқу дағдысы – шет тілін үйренуде университет студенттері үшін маңызды қабілет. Бұл зерттеу подкасттардың студенттердің тілді өз бетінше меңгеріп, өзіне деген сенімділігін арттыруға қалай көмектесетінін қарастырады. Подкасттар қолжетімділігі мен тартымды мазмұнының арқасында студенттерге тілді шынайы деңгейде меңгеруге мүмкіндік беріп, өз қарқынында жаттығуға жағдай жасайды. Зерттеу шет тілін үйренуде подкасттарды пайдаланған университет студенттерінің тәжірибелеріне негізделіп, бұл құралдың қалайша тәуелсіздікті дамытып, тілдік дағдыларды жетілдіруге ықпал ететінін талдайды. Әртүрлі тіл деңгейіндегі студенттерден ақпарат алу үшін сауалнамалар мен сұхбаттар қолданылды. Нәтижелер подкасттардың студенттерді ынталандыратынын және олардың қызығушылықтары мен дағдыларына сәйкес материалдарды таңдау еркіндігін беретінін көрсетті. Көптеген студенттер оқу процесінде өзін жайлы сезініп, подкасттарды тыңдау және сөздік қорын кеңейту үшін өз бағдарламаларына енгізгенін айтты. Сонымен қатар, подкасттар арқылы әртүрлі акценттермен, тілді шынайы қолдану үлгілерімен және мәдени ерекшеліктермен танысу мүмкіндігі туды, бұл оқу процесін динамикалық әрі қолжетімді етті. Подкасттарды барынша тиімді пайдалану үшін студенттер жеке мақсаттар қою, тыңдау барысында жазба жүргізу және кейінгі әрекеттерге, мысалы, талқылау немесе сөздік жаттығуларға қатысу сияқты стратегияларды қолданды. Алайда, кейбір қиындықтар да байқалды, мысалы, тұрақтылықты сақтау және күрделі мазмұнды қосымша қолдаусыз түсіну. Бұл нәтижелер подкасттардың пайдалы екенін көрсеткенімен, студенттерге оларды оқу бағдарламасына тиімді енгізу бойынша бастапқы нұсқаулықтың қажет екенін айқындайды. Зерттеу қорытындысы бойынша, подкасттар шет тілін өз

бетінше меңгеруді қолдайтын қуатты құрал болып табылады. Олар студенттерге өз прогресін бақылауға мүмкіндік беріп, сыныптан тыс икемді тәжірибе ұсынады. Оқытушыларға студенттерге подкаст ресурстарын ұсыну, өзін-өзі реттеу әдістерін үйрету және даму үрдісін қадағалау үшін рефлексивті сабақтарды енгізу ұсынылады.

Кілт сөздер: өз бетінше оқу, тілдік дағды, тыңдау дағдылары, білім берудегі технология.

РАЗВИТИЕ УЧЕБНОЙ АВТОНОМНОСТИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТСКИХ СТУДЕНТОВ: РОЛЬ ПОДКАСТОВ В ОБУЧЕНИИ ИНОСТРАННОМУ ЯЗЫКУ

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Навык самостоятельного обучения – важная способность для университетских студентов, изучающих иностранный язык. Данное исследование рассматривает, как подкасты помогают студентам осваивать язык самостоятельно и повышать уверенность в себе. Благодаря доступности и увлекательному содержанию подкасты позволяют студентам овладевать языком на аутентичном уровне, предоставляя возможность практиковаться в удобном для них темпе. Исследование основано на опыте студентов университетов, использовавших подкасты для изучения иностранного языка. В нем анализируется, каким образом этот инструмент способствует развитию автономности и совершенствованию языковых навыков. Для сбора данных были применены опросы и интервью среди студентов разных уровней владения языком. Результаты показали, что подкасты мотивируют студентов и предоставляют свободу выбора материалов в соответствии с их интересами и потребностями. Многие студенты отметили, что чувствовали себя комфортнее в процессе обучения, включали подкасты в свою учебную программу для расширения словарного запаса и улучшения восприятия речи. Кроме того, подкасты позволяли познакомиться с различными акцентами, примерами естественного использования языка и культурными особенностями, делая процесс обучения более динамичным и доступным. Для наиболее эффективного использования подкастов студенты применяли стратегии, такие как постановка индивидуальных целей, ведение записей во время прослушивания и последующие действия, например, обсуждения или лексические упражнения. Однако были выявлены и некоторые трудности, например, поддержание регулярности занятий и понимание сложного контента без дополнительной поддержки. Несмотря на эти вызовы, результаты исследования подтверждают полезность подкастов, но также указывают на необходимость первоначальных рекомендаций по их эффективному включению в учебный процесс. В заключение подчеркивается, что подкасты являются мощным инструментом для самостоятельного изучения иностранного языка. Они позволяют студентам контролировать свой прогресс и предоставляют гибкий опыт вне аудиторных занятий. Преподавателям рекомендуется предлагать студентам подкаст-ресурсы, обучать методам саморегуляции и вводить рефлексивные занятия для отслеживания процесса развития.

Ключевые слова: самостоятельное обучение, языковые навыки, навыки аудирования, технологии в образовании.