

Research paper

## The Effect of Using Digital Audio Files on Developing EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension Ability

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### Abstract

The present study was an attempt to investigate the effect of using digital audio files (e.g. podcasts) on EFL learners' listening comprehension and then explored Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward the use of digital audio files in listening comprehension. To this end, 30 female language learners were selected among 60 learners who studied at Respina Talk center in Tehran through a homogeneity test. Then, the participants were randomly divided into two groups of experimental and control. After administrating the homogeneity test, all the participants were pre-tested to assess their listening comprehension at the beginning of the course, and then the treatment was practiced on the experimental group. The experimental group received the treatment on listening comprehension through using audio files (podcasts) while the control group was taught using traditional methods of teaching listening. The materials and time allocated to both groups were similar. After ten sessions of treatment, the groups were given a post-test. Finally, 24 items of survey questionnaire were administered to experimental group to gather students' perception toward the use of audio files in teaching listening. Independent and Paired Samples t-test showed that digital audio files had a significant impact on the listening comprehension of EFL learners, and that the learners who were exposed to such a treatment held significantly positive attitudes towards the use of the audio files. The results can have implications for EFL teachers to motivate learners to improve their listening ability by going for the audio files.

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## Introduction

Listening is a necessary language skill for achieving effective communication and good academic achievements among learners. It is a highly integrative skill because it is generally the primary skill that learners develop (Oxford, 1993; Vandergrift, 1999). It has been highlighted as a crucial component within the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) process (Rassaei, 2017). It has an important role in construction of the language abilities of a Foreign Language (FL) learner (Rao, 2019). The role and importance of listening in SLA go beyond acquiring meaning from sounds because it does not only mean recognizing the sounds but it also involves detecting, conveying, and comprehending the knowledge and it allows understanding real life and creating social relationships among humans (Hamouda, 2013). Furthermore, listening is the most difficult task for learners when they start to learn a foreign language and it is the most challenging skill to be developed (Berne, 2004; Mokhtari, 2013).

Currently, technology is an important factor in people's life generally and in the field of learning a language specifically. There are various tools for communication like computers, the web, broadcasting devices, and cell phones. The web offers better learning and teaching compared to the ordinary methods. The web has created an efficient new teaching context by using Web-based collaboration that promotes classroom interaction to extend opportunities for students to supply English and authentic use and to make a learner-centered learning environment. Technology can be perceived as an enhancement to the process of language acquisition. To assist students to get improved their listening skills, it is needed to seek out their listening problems which cause difficulties for them. Furthermore, an amount of research has been administered to select out the problem in listening. It's believed that these problems were due to the speech rate, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Pourhossein Gilakjani, 2014).

The use of technologies for learning has been emphasized over the last three decades. During this period, the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) applications has created a revolution in language education (Namaziandost, 2019). The development of CALL programs can be divided into three phases: behavioristic CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL (Kern & Warschauer, 2000; Chik, 2014). Additionally, three different classifications of CALL have shown major changes in language teaching and learning since the early 1960s (Kern & Warschauer, 2000, Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The use of CALL application can raise learners' motivation to take more part in listening activities and improve their listening comprehension. As mentioned by some researchers (Brett, 1996; Grgurovic & Hegelheimer, 2007; Liou, 2000) the CALL improves the EFL learners' listening comprehension abilities. Moreover, CALL application is integrated with multimedia and the internet resources for language learning. Multimedia and internet resources can affect second language learning. According to some researchers using multimedia in the area of education has a great effect on language learning (Jones & Plass, 2005; Tsou, et al., 2006).

In recent years, studying on the effectiveness of podcasts for the development of listening skill has been a popular research field which opened doors for researchers to probe attitudes of learners toward podcasts based on the available evidence. It looks good to suggest that learners'

positive attitude towards using online multimedia input in any part of the learning experience helps to secure success in learning. It has been shown that selected high-tech listening-input helps positively in target language learning, and thus the achievement of listening comprehension learning aims. As a new teaching method, listening input through digital audio files like podcasts can motivate and prompt positive attitudes and interests, thus helping learners follow more language learning. There is no convincing reason to argue that if the learners are instructed using materials and methods associated with their favorite areas, their positive attitude increases which enhances their performance significantly to attain the learning goal. Thus, this vital element was taken into consideration in the present study (Shahid, Hossain, & Zuraina, 2017).

The purpose of the study is first to examine the effect of using digital audio files (e.g. podcasts) on EFL learners' listening comprehension and then explore Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward the use of digital audio files in listening comprehension. The researcher tries to find out the impact of digital audio files on developing EFL learners' listening comprehension and if learners have any attitude toward using new technology in the process of learning. As a sequence, this research helps students to improve their listening comprehension ability and encourage them to use new technology. In light of the points made above, this study aimed to provide answers to the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: Does using digital audio files have any effects on developing Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability?

RQ2: Does using digital audio files have any effects on changing the attitudes of Iranian EFL learners' towards listening comprehension ability?

## Review of the Literature

### Teaching Listening Skills and Digital Audio Files

Listening comprehension has a significant role in language learning. It isn't a passive activity, but rather a complex, active process in which the listener must differentiate between sounds and comprehend vocabulary and grammatical structures (Najmi, 2021). Additionally, learning listening skills can disappoint learners because the process is empty of those rules inherent in grammar teaching. One of the major barriers for students is the experience of a mental block when required to make a sudden choice based on information they have heard and not realized. This makes many students 'tune out' or convince themselves that they are unable to understand spoken English well, and negatively affecting their motivation. According to Ahmadi (2018), the new pedagogical approach to listening comprehension keeps that learners are interested in developing listening skills by audio and video reliable materials. Audio files, DVD players, and some other tools improve pronunciation. Audio stories are effective listening materials not only for children but also for adults to develop their pronunciation.

Audio files like podcasts are considered as a medium for learning that creates new opportunities in the language learning context. Research shows that audio files help memory

retention three times as effective as a text. The auditory dimension of podcasting, e.g., intonation or vocal expression, transfers a message directly to the listener's heart and brain (Panday, 2009). By using podcasts, learners profit both with their spontaneity and their applicability to intensive and extensive listening tasks (Zarina, 2009; Sze, 2006). Therefore, the reliability and sort of materials accessible in this format effectively bridge the gap between formal English and informal language, making them suited to extensive listening, stimulating students' interest in listening inside and outside the classroom.

Lynch (2009) in his book *Teaching Second Language Listening* showed in a table the relationship between different media in the case of listening comprehension. He stated that the different media, audio, and video, complement each other (p. 100). Therefore, the incorporation of audio files like podcasts can benefit learners' listening skills. Costley (2014) believed that if learners think about what is being repeated and organized it in their heads; they are likely to remember the lesson. The learning will not be as good if there is the only repetition without any thinking. Because digital audio files can be played several times, it can have a positive effect on developing students' listening and speaking skills.

### **Previous Studies**

Studies have shown that audio files are effective in developing learners' listening comprehension skills. In a study by Ghaderpanahi (2012), 30 undergraduates used authentic and aural listening activities through audiotapes, where students showed significant improvement in their listening ability. In another research, Mohamadkhani, Farohi and Farokhi (2013) stated that audio files had positive effects in improving listening comprehension of Iranian high school students, besides helping in the correct pronunciation of words. Another research was conducted by Yaqoob and Yacoob (2015) to evaluate importance given to listening skill in English textbooks in Pakistan. It was stated that audio contents can stimulate and facilitate learners to acquire English. Moreno (2015) also examined differentiated instruction in developing learners' listening comprehension skills and audio plays an effective role in the study as a tool of instruction. Also, Asemota (2015), in his paper of 'Nature, Importance and Practice of Listening Skill' mentioned that audio files can be used to make active listening activities for learners to develop listening comprehension.

A study was conducted by Lu (2007) to investigate how podcasts in both UK and US English could enhance the listening and speaking proficiency of Taiwanese EFL learners who had not previously been exposed to authentic English. The participant was asked to transcribe the podcasts, to recognize vocabulary and grammar in context, and a discussion of the topics was conducted in English at the end of each week. The results indicated that using podcasts in listening instruction has a positive effect; the participant got confidence in his ability to comprehend the English language overall.

A similar study was done by Anusiené and Kavaliauskiené, (2009) to discover the problems faced by students listening to authentic English podcasts, to analyze learners' self-evaluation of different techniques for improving listening skills. The participants had different areas of

specialization within the domain of English for Specific Purposes. The results proved that the students' self-evaluation was realistic, and their positive attitudes and techniques for improving listening skills included listening to podcasts.

Rahmatian and Armiun (2011) contrasted the impacts of audio material and video material on listening comprehension. Findings showed a positive contribution of a video message to an increased understanding of the audio message in some cases. Also, audios were found helping students concentrating on audio elements. In addition, videos also assisted in increasing accuracy, guessing, and anticipating but at the same time, they may contain some disconcerting elements leading-learners' attention away from elements.

Al Qasim and Fadda (2013) did a study on the impact of podcasting on the listening comprehension of female Saudi EFL university students. In this quantitative study, a total of 46 female undergraduates of a Saudi university participated. The participants were divided into two groups as control and experimental groups. The study employed podcasts created by students as the instructional material. Results were obtained after six weeks of the treatment period. The results indicated a significant difference between the control and experimental groups in favor of the experimental group.

Based on the available evidence, we can conclude that using digital audio files like podcasts for teaching allows the possibility of multiple positive outcomes. Online individuals listening to podcasts can listen at their own pace outside the classroom in a way that is comfortable to them, without external aid or judgment from their teachers or peers, thus maximizing motivation. Moreover, by working independently learners are likely to become more aware of their learning styles and thereby discover how best they can perfect their own listening skills and promote their own language learning. By engaging in online listening as a complement to classroom activities, all learners regardless of level can observe benefits. This is heightened by allowing learners to decide how extensively they follow listening tasks and which tasks to undertake. As mentioned earlier, the use of podcasts should be guided by teacher selection and the setting of tasks appropriate to the group of learners.

The review of the literature showed that technology sources cannot guarantee teachers' teaching and learners' learning. Teachers should be ensured by the use of technology in improving learners' learning. This means that teachers need support and training for integrating technology into language teaching and learning. The review revealed that when technology is used correctly, it can lead to a lot of advantages for teachers and learners. It is a resource that will be employed by learners because it helps them remove their learning problems and find methods to use what they have learned in ways that are effective and meaningful. Additionally, the review literature showed that the utilization of technologies has a key role in language learning, helps in self-understanding, does not stop interaction with the teacher, and creates high motivation in learners for the useful learning of language skills. Furthermore, the paper represented that learners should use technology to increase their language skills because it has a crucial role in developing learners' creativity and prepares them with interesting, enjoyable,

and exciting environments to study the language. To sum up, the findings of the literature review indicated that technology creates interaction between teachers and learners, provides comprehensible input and output, helps learners to develop thinking skills, makes learning and teaching more student-centered, develops learners' autonomy, and helps them feel safer, and increases learners' motivation to successfully learn a foreign language.

## Methodology

### Design of the Study

This research adopts a quasi-experimental design as it aimed to examine the influence of the use of digital audio files on listening comprehension among Iranian EFL learners. The study included pretest and posttest design. This design was usually based on control and experimental groups. For the purpose of this study, the participants were selected through available sampling and then were randomly divided into two groups. The independent variable in this study was the audio files and the dependent variable was listening skill.

### Participants

The participants of this study were 30 language learners who were selected among 60 students from Respina Talk center in Tehran, Iran. All of the participants were female, native speakers of Persian and their age range was from 20 to 30. The level of participants was upper intermediate. The new interchange 1, fourth edition was taught to them. In order to select a homogenous sample of participants and to make sure they were at the same English proficiency level, the learners took a version of the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) (see Appendix A). Then 30 participants whose scores were one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected as participants of the study. The participants were randomly divided into two groups; control group (CG) and experimental group (EG), each including 15 participants. All of them were at upper-intermediate level of proficiency in English based on the results of OPT. The course book was New Interchange 1 book.

### Instrumentation

Several instruments were utilized in the process of the development of the present research. The first instrument which was used in the present study to homogenize the participants was a placement test. For this purpose, the Second Version of Quick Placement Test developed by Oxford University Press and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (Syndicate, 2001) was used to choose two nearly homogenous experimental and control groups in which all the participants were at the upper-intermediate level of language proficiency. This test has two main parts including part one (Questions 1 – 40) and part two (Questions 41 – 60) that needed to be completed in 40 minutes. It included 60 multiple-choice items and the learners whose score fell between achieved from 19 to 39 were determined as the upper-intermediate level.

The second instrument was a listening pre-test. To realize current participants' listening comprehension level, a researcher-made pre-test (Appendix B) was designed based on the students' materials (i.e., New Interchange 1) developed by Richards (2008). It was a listening

comprehension test of 40 objective items including filling the blanks, true or false items, and multiple-choice items. After the treatment, a parallel version of the pre-test was also constructed and used as a post-test (Appendix C) which was given to the participants to assess their listening comprehension after the treatment period and to measure the effects of digital audio files on their listening comprehension skill. The time allocated for each test was about 30 minutes. Validities of the pre-test and post-test were confirmed by two English experts and their reliabilities indexes were calculated through Cronbach Alpha formula. Furthermore, the reliability indexes for the pretest and posttest, administered to a group of learners with similar characteristics to the sample of the study, and calculated through the K-R21 formula, were found to be .824 and .769, respectively. Finally, a survey questionnaire was given to the experimental group as a post-project evaluation to measure students' attitudes towards using podcasts as a learning strategy for their listening class. The questionnaire comprised 10 items. To test the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha formula was used and the results are presented in the following: Cronbach's Alpha: 0.735 and N of Items: 24.

## **Procedure**

### *Sample Selection*

For this study, 60 students who studied at Respina Talk center were selected. The participants were administered an OPT to determine their homogeneity regarding their levels of proficiency at the upper-intermediate level based on OPT and then 30 learners whose scores were one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected and randomly comprised of two experimental and control groups.

### *Pre-test Administering*

After the homogeneity test, the listening comprehension pre-test was administered to assess the participants' listening comprehension at the beginning of the course. So, all the participants were pre-tested, and then the treatment was practiced on the experimental group.

### *Treatment*

The treatment took 10 listening sessions, each 45 minutes. 10 podcasts were used, one podcast for each session. The experimental group received the treatment, which was teaching listening comprehension through using audio files (podcasts) while the control group was taught using traditional methods of teaching listening. The researcher played the podcast two times and after each sentence asked learners to repeat the sentence and helped them to understand the whole sentences and then asked them to answer some questions from the podcast and then elaborated the answers. Both groups had the same materials and time of instruction.

### *Post-test Administering*

A posttest of listening was given after ten-session treatment to the experimental and control groups to gather data. The pre-test and the post-test were equivalent. The test has 40 questions. The students were asked to answer questions of listening in 30 minutes.

*Attitude Questionnaire administering*

A survey questionnaire consisted of 24 items was administered to experimental group to gather students' perception toward the use of audio files in teaching listening.

**Data Analysis**

For answering the research questions, after gathering the needed data, the researcher analyzed the data with the help of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software version 22. The collected data were summarized and the procedures of descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, etc.) were followed by inferential statistics. To conduct any parametric statistical tests, the underlying assumptions have to be checked. Independent and Paired Samples t-test were run to find out the effectiveness of using audio files on teaching listening and also to compare the performance of experimental group with control group.

**Results****Preliminary Analyses**

Prior to conducting parametric tests such as independent-samples t-test and/or ANCOVA, the assumptions underlying these tests (such as the normality assumption) had to be checked. Thus, the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the OQPT, pretest, and posttest scores of the learners in the CG and EG are presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1***Results of the Normality Tests*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
EG OQPT	.155	15	.200*	.958	15	.651
EG Pretest	.124	15	.200*	.968	15	.829
EG Posttest	.161	15	.200*	.911	15	.139
CG OQPT	.162	15	.200*	.940	15	.379
CG Pretest	.199	15	.112	.918	15	.180
CG Posttest	.129	15	.200*	.953	15	.573

The p values under the Sig. column of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test have to be checked to decide whether the normality assumption is met for the OQPT, pretest, and posttest scores of the L2 learners under study. Since a p value larger than the significance level of .05 indicates no violation of the assumption of normality, it could be inferred that the distributions for all the OQPT, pretest, and posttest scores used in this study were normal. Besides the assumption of normality, the assumptions of linearity and homogeneity of the regression slopes were checked for the ANCOVA tests run in the current study, and no violations of these assumptions were assured as well.

Before presenting the results for the research questions of the study, evidence had to be provided regarding the homogeneity of the two groups of participants concerning their overall language proficiency at the outset of the study. Thus, the results of the independent-samples t



test comparing the OQPT scores of the learners in the two groups are presented in Tables 2 and 3:

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Statistics for the OQPT Scores of the EG and CG Learners*

Test	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
OQPT	EG	15	44.26	1.70	.44
	CG	15	44.00	2.10	.54

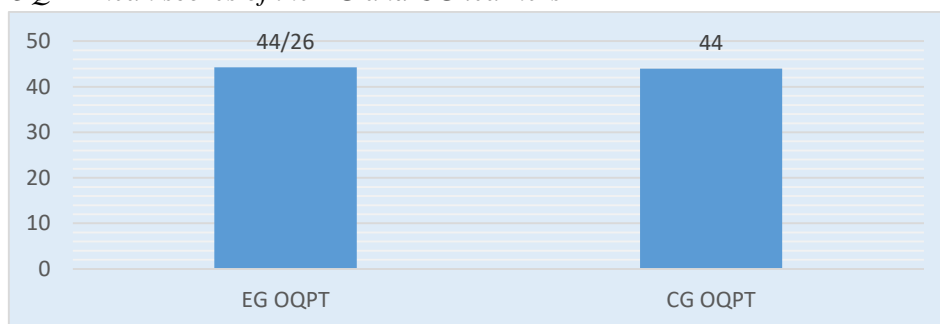
The OQPT mean scores of the EG (M = 44.26) and CG (M = 44.00) learners were not noticeably different from one another. However, to make certain that the difference between the overall language proficiency of the EG and CG learners was not of statistical significance, the results of the independent-samples t test in Table 3 had to be checked:

**Table 3**  
*Independent-Samples t Test Results for the OQPT Scores of the EG and CG Learners*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.00	.32	.38	28	.70	.26	.70	-1.16	1.70
Equal variances not assumed			.38	26.87	.70	.26	.70	-1.17	1.70

The p value under the Sig. (2-tailed) column in the t test table turned out to be .70, which is greater than the alpha level of significance ( $p > .05$ ). This means that the difference between the OQPT scores of the EG and CG learners at the outset of the study was not statistically significant. In other words, these two groups of learners were homogeneous in terms of their general language proficiency at the beginning of the study, as it could also be noticed in the bar chart in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1**  
*OQPT mean scores of the EG and CG learners*



The bar chart in Figure 1 showed the fact that the OQPT scores of the learners in the two groups of EG and CG were approximately the same, with a slight difference between them. It could thus be concluded that the learners in these two groups were at a similar level of proficiency before the beginning of the experiment.

### Digital Audio Files and Listening Comprehension

To answer the first research question of the study, the listening comprehension posttest scores of the learners in the EG and CG needed to be compared. However, the researcher had to make sure there were no pre-existing differences on the listening comprehension pretest between the learners in the two groups, or alternatively the pre-existing differences had been controlled. Thus, one-way ANCOVA was conducted because this statistical test could control for any possible pre-existing differences between the two groups and compare their posttest scores accordingly. Table 4 shows the results of the descriptive statistics for this ANCOVA analysis:

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Statistics for Listening Comprehension Posttest Scores of the EG and CG*

Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
EG	33.26	2.89	15
CG	29.80	3.02	15
Total	31.53	3.40	30

The listening comprehension posttest mean score of the EG learners ( $M = 33.26$ ) was found to be greater than the listening comprehension mean score of the CG learners ( $M = 29.80$ ). To find out whether the EG learners significantly outperformed the control groupers in terms of their listening comprehension or not, the results of the one-way ANCOVA table (Table 5) had to be examined:

**Table 5**

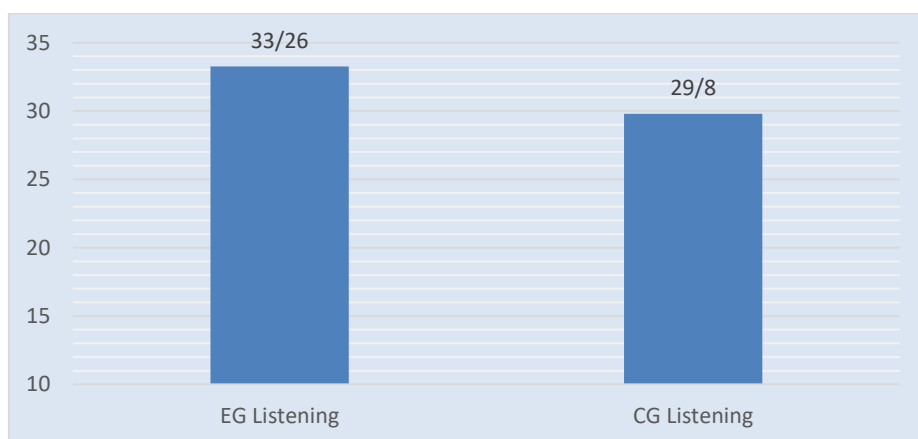
*One-Way ANCOVA for Listening Comprehension Post Test Scores of the EG and CG Learners*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	268.53	2	134.26	54.16	.00	.80
Intercept	15.68	1	15.68	6.32	.01	.19
Pretest	178.40	1	178.40	71.97	.00	.72
Groups	115.11	1	115.11	46.43	.00	.63
Error	66.92	27	2.47			
Total	30166.00	30				
Corrected Total	335.46	29				

In table 5, to find the relevant p value, if you take a glance at the row labelled Groups in the leftmost column, and read across this row, under the Sig. column, you can see the p value, which should be compared with the alpha level of significance (i.e., .05). This p value turned out to be smaller than the alpha level of significance ( $.00 < .05$ ), which indicates that the difference between the learners in the EG ( $M = 33.26$ ) and CG ( $M = 29.80$ ) on the listening comprehension post-test was statistically significant. Differently put, using the digital audio files was found to be more effective than regular instruction (without using digital audio files) as far as the L2 listening comprehension of upper-intermediate Iranian EFL learners was concerned. The magnitude of this effect, shown under the Eta Squared column of this table, was found to be very large (.63) as Cohen (1988, cited in Pallant, 2010) maintains that the effect size is small for .01, moderate for .06, and large for .14. Figure 2 also shows the fact that the EG learners significantly outperformed their CG counterparts on the post-test of listening comprehension:

### Figure 2

*Listening comprehension post-test mean scores of the EG and CG learners*



In Figure 2, it could be noticed that the difference between the listening comprehension post-test scores of the EG and CG learners was statistically significant, with the EG learners significantly outperforming the CG learners. This indicates that the null hypothesis of the study is rejected, which means that using digital audio files had significant effects on the listening comprehension of the upper-intermediate Iranian EFL learners.

The second objective of the present study was to find out about the attitudes of the EFL learners regarding the use of digital audio files for the purpose of improving L2 learners' listening comprehension. To this end, the results of the attitude questionnaire were examined. As the options in this Likert-scale questionnaire ranged in values between 5 (strongly agree) and 1 (strongly disagree), the mean score for each item was compared with the average value of the options (that is 3.00), to the effect that a mean score higher than 3.00 would indicate the learners' agreement with that given statement and a mean score lower than 3.00 implied the respondents' discord with the statement given in that item. The statements in the questionnaire, the EG learners' responses to those items and the mean score for each item are displayed in Tables 6 as follows:

**Table 6**  
Results for the EG Learners' Attitude Questionnaire

No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
1	I feel that my listening skill improved after listening to Podcasts.	6	8	1	0	0	4.33
2	Using podcast enhance my motivation in learning English	3	6	4	2	0	3.66
3	I find a difficulty to understand what the speaker says	4	4	4	3	0	3.60
4	Podcast offers authentic materials of English listening	4	4	3	2	2	3.40
5	The tasks and activities in podcasts are interesting	2	3	5	3	2	3.00
6	Podcasts is very portable and easy to use	6	7	2	0	0	4.26
7	Podcasts is not effective in terms of time	0	0	6	5	4	2.13
8	Podcasts duration is appropriate for us to concentrate on listening	3	6	4	2	0	3.66
9	My vocabulary is enriched after listening to Podcasts	5	7	3	0	0	4.13
10	I recommend teacher to use podcasts in teaching listening	6	6	3	0	0	4.20
11	I would like if podcasts were frequently used in your classroom.	4	8	3	0	0	4.06
12	I can learn about pronunciation item of English through podcast.	5	7	3	0	0	4.13
13	In future, I would like to explore more 'English learning podcasts' myself	4	6	2	2	1	3.66
14	It Would be good for me if I could learn in a web-based environment through podcast?	3	6	4	1	1	3.60
15	If I keep on practicing different podcasts, I think that I myself can produce some.	2	2	6	3	2	2.93
16	I will carry podcasts in my mobile phone, like the way I carry music.	5	6	4	0	0	4.06
17	As I can hear a special podcast repeatedly, I think that it can be beneficial for my listening.	3	5	6	1	0	3.66
18	I found the pronunciation of the clip comprehensible.	2	6	4	1	2	3.33
19	I think that the podcasts have made the content interesting and exciting	4	3	3	3	2	3.26
20	I think that the podcasts have helped me to get exposed to correct pronunciation of some English words.	6	6	3	0	0	4.20

21	Listening strategy training is important in English classes.	4	4	7	0	0	3.80
22	I think I will be able to use listening strategies when listening to entertainment, such as movies and music, in English	2	3	6	2	2	3.06
23	I think I will be able to use listening strategies in future jobs.	3	4	6	2	0	3.53
24	I think I will be able to use listening strategies when traveling.	2	3	5	3	2	3.00

It could be noticed in Table 6 that all (but two) items in this 24-item questionnaire had mean scores larger than the average value of the choices. This means that the EG learners, who responded to the questionnaire items, agreed with those 22 items, and as it could be found in Table 6, the highest mean scores in this questionnaire belonged to items # 1 ( $M = 4.33$ ), 6 ( $M = 4.26$ ), 10 ( $M = 4.20$ ), 20 ( $M = 4.20$ ), 9 ( $M = 4.13$ ), and 12 ( $M = 4.13$ ), respectively. Through these questionnaire items, the EG learners agreed that (a) their listening comprehension improved after listening to podcasts, (b) podcasts are portable and easy to use, (c) they recommend teachers to use podcasts in teaching listening, (d) podcasts helped them correct the pronunciation of some English words, (e) their vocabulary repertoire enriched after listening to podcasts, and (f) they could learn about the pronunciation of English.

On the other hands, the two items which received lower-than-average mean scores were items #7 ( $M = 2.13$ ) and 15 ( $M = 2.93$ ). In these two items, the EG learners disagreed respectively with the ideas that "podcasts are not effective in terms of time" and "if they keep practicing podcasts, they can produce some podcasts themselves". The former is a negative comment about podcasts and the learners refuted this negative comment, which means that they had positive attitudes towards using podcasts in language classes for the purpose of listening comprehension. All that went above reveals that the EG learners had a positive attitude towards the treatment they received. To see if this positive attitude reached a degree of statistical significance or not, the results of the one-sample *t* test (in Table 7) had to be considered:

**Table 7**  
*One-sample t Test Results for Learners' Attitude towards the Treatment*

	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
Attitude	24	3.61	.53	5.59	23	.00

The results presented in Table 7 show that the *p* value was smaller than the alpha level of significance (i.e.,  $.00 < .05$ ), which implies that the EG learners' positive attitude towards the effect of digital audio files on L2 learners' listening comprehension received statistical significance.

### Discussion

The results of the first research question showed that using digital audio files has a significant effect on students' listening comprehension and the higher score achieved by experimental class has proven the effectiveness of digital audio files as media to improve student's listening achievement. This fact clearly proved that the use of English audio files in teaching listening gives significant impact to students' listening comprehension. This result confirms several studies in which students who were taught by digital audio files performed better in listening comprehension skill than those who did not taught by digital audio files (Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013; Ahmed, 2016; Kavaliauskienė 2008). This is in line with the study of Mohamadkhani, Farohi, and Farokhi (2013) in which audio files had positive effects in improving listening comprehension of Iranian high school students, besides helping in the correct pronunciation of words. The same result was reached by Knight's (2010) as well as Lu (2007).

However, this result is inconsistent with findings of the study done by Davoudi and Rezaei (2016) who concluded that there was no significant difference in language comprehension scores on the post-test between the two groups. Also, the results of this study are in line with those obtained from study conducted by Verdugo and Belmonte (2007). They examined the effectiveness of digital stories by applying this intervention into the experimental group. They concluded that the experimental group scored significantly better in listening comprehension than the control group who did not receive multimedia lessons.

The findings of this study are not in line with that of Ducate and Lomicka (2009) who reported that the learners' pronunciation didn't improve significantly in terms of comprehensibility because of the course time limit. However, the results of this study, with regard to attitudes are completely in line with this study which indicated that the students' attitudes towards English language learning developed significantly after using podcast materials.

Based on the results of second research question, learners exposed to such a treatment held significantly positive attitudes towards it. It implies that the EG learners' positive attitude towards the effect of digital audio files on L2 learners' listening comprehension received statistical significance. Moreover, this study found that students in experiment class have high motivation to study English by using digital audio files such as various ELT classroom activities. Regarding to the result of questionnaire, it is clearly seen that audio files impressed students with its meaningful and appropriate content for listening, and benefits for students. This is consistent with results obtained from study by Anusienė and Kavaliauskienė (2009). The results proved that the students' self-evaluation was realistic, and their positive attitudes and techniques for improving listening skills included listening to podcasts.

The findings of this research are also in line with Lowman (2014) who examined the effect of audio and video podcasts on fourth and sixth-grade students' vocabulary acquisition. The results revealed that students' attitude was positive towards both the podcasts and the video-

podcasts. This is also in line with Mokhtari' (2013) study in which Iranian EFL learners have generally a positive attitude about the use of computer technology in language learning and are willing to accept the integration of computer technology into their language learning courses.

### Conclusion

The present research was an attempt to examine the effect of using digital audio files (e.g. podcasts) on EFL learners' listening comprehension and then explore Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward the use of digital audio files in listening comprehension. The researcher examined to find out the impact of digital audio files on developing EFL learners' listening comprehension and if learners have any attitude toward using new technology in the process of learning.

According to the findings of this study, digital audio files have a positive effect on students' listening comprehension in EFL teaching and learning. More precisely, it is found that digital audio files can improve students' listening comprehension. The success of audio files, however, depends on the teachers' competence with the use of such e-tool and the appropriate selection of the materials in a way that guides the learners to meet the learning goals. The obtained results have served the primary hypothesis, which is digital audio files in EFL classes will improve students' listening comprehension skill (Abdulrahman, Basalama, & Widodo, 2018). The result led to conclude that it is a reliable and relevant tool for listening practice and for improving EFL learners' listening. In order to integrate podcasts in EFL teaching and learning, the following recommendations need to be regarded; time allocation, availability of electronic tools in schools, and teacher with technology competence.

The results of the current study can help language learners. Based on the results, the digital audio files can motivate EFL learners to increase desirable skills such as listening skill. Specifically, digital audio files like podcasts offer students opportunity to enthusiastically respond to teachers so the levels of their learning speed up desirably. Some exercises and assignments of podcasts motivate students to use their creativity as well as to sharpen their listening skill. This motivation can be seen directly from students' enthusiasm during treatment period using podcast media in the classroom.

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Besides, the outcomes of the present study can be useful for teachers. Based on the results, the use of digital audio files in teaching can provide more comprehension for learners. By using digital audio files, teachers can increase learners' motivation to improve their listening ability

in class. Also, by using audio files, teachers can give learners the chance to listen to native speakers' speech. And also, learners generally enjoy using audio files. EFL teachers are recommended to introduce and implement digital files in their classes. This might influence student learning experience in a positive way. Learners might be more responsible for and autonomous in improving their listening ability. Digital audio files can be used by EFL teachers both directly in the classroom and out of the classroom as a supplementary tool. It can also be practiced out of the classroom while doing some related tasks in the classroom monitored by teacher, chiefly to save time.

In developing curricula, it's better to pay attention to students' likeliness to take advantage of new technology. With the growing interest in using internet among young learners, teachers and curriculum developers should try to bring technology to the classrooms. This not only will give the teachers a useful asset in following their teaching goals but also will be a motivating factor for students to follow their learning more meaningfully.

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