Podcast As Reflection Platform for Promoting EFL Preservice Teachers' English Skill, Sense of Motivation, And Critical Thinking

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Abstract: This study investigated how pre-service EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers perceived the use of podcasts as a reflective tool to improve their motivation, critical thinking, and English language skills. The primary goal was to find out how podcasts can reinforce language competencies, reflective practice, professional development, and richer and deeper learning. Autoethnography was the methodological approach employed used whereby 34 students of a private Indonesian university participated in a two-week podcasting exercise. Semi-structured interviews and surveys were the methods used to gather data. It revealed that the podcasts encouraged self-expression, critical reflection, and growing confidence alongside linguistic skill, in terms of listening and speaking. In addition to this, participants reported that freedom to learn alone had increased motivation and satisfaction levels. The study makes several recommendations for improving the use of podcasts in EFL contexts, including making sure the content is credible, incorporating interactive elements to prevent passive learning, and completely incorporating podcasts into the EFL curriculum. It is recommended that future studies investigate the use of podcasts in diverse educational contexts and look into their long-term effects. All things considered, the study shows that podcasts are a versatile and useful tool that can enhance future EFL teachers' language learning.

Keywords: *Critical thinking, EFL preservice teachers, English language skills, podcast.*

INTRODUCTION

In an era of global communication, equipping pre-service teachers with strong English language proficiency, high intrinsic motivation, and well-developed critical thinking is a crucial component of teacher education. English skills particularly speaking and listening serve as a foundation for effective classroom communication, content delivery, and global academic engagement. Motivation, meanwhile, acts as the internal drive that determines the consistency and quality of a teacher's lifelong learning. Critical thinking enables pre-service teachers to analyze information, make informed decisions, and engage in reflective teaching practices. As future educators, they must embody these qualities not only to support their own professional development but also to foster them in their future students, consequently, students encounter challenges in adapting to the variations in accent, speaking rate, and vocabulary employed by native speakers (Misdi et al., 2021). Thus, investigating strategies that cultivate these competencies in an integrated and meaningful way is both timely and necessary.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), student-teachers must acquire a repertoire of skills to enhance their critical thinking abilities. It is imperative that they optimize the available resources rather than engaging in frivolous activities (Misdi et al., 2021). The possession of a smartphone is a common occurrence, and these individuals frequently engage in the practice of editing and disseminating their video content through various public channels, including prominent platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and their personal websites. The primary benefit of podcasts is their adaptability. Students have the capacity to access podcasts

at any time and in any location, thereby facilitating more autonomous and customized learning. Moreover, podcasts offer a unique opportunity to encounter authentic English, encompassing a wide array of accents, idioms, and colloquial expressions elements that are often underrepresented in conventional learning materials. However, there is a paucity of research that explores EFL students' perspectives regarding the use of podcasts as a means of reflection platform. Indeed, a comprehensive understanding of preservice teachers is paramount to the development of efficacious and pertinent learning strategies (Suseno, 2024) A multitude of studies have demonstrated a correlation between teacher enthusiasm and a variety of positive outcomes. For instance, it has been associated with students' enjoyment, interest, and sense of motivation. The majority of research on teacher enthusiasm has been conducted within the context of conventional learning environments, such as classrooms.

Narrative autoethnography is a qualitative research method that utilizes personal experience, termed "auto," to elucidate and interpret cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices, termed "ethno". Narrative autoethnography sets itself apart from traditional autoethnography by placing a stronger focus on personal experiences and emotions. In this approach, the researcher's own story becomes a way to explore and understand how podcasts can serve as tools for reflection. Acquiring, distributing, and using information have been transformed through the swift growth of digital technologies. In facilitating quality learning, the autoethnographic approach as a methodology framework takes into account personal experience, reflection, and multiple sources of information (Adams & Herrmann, 2023). This strategy promotes the utilization of internet technologies. The application of podcasts in professional skill acquisition is a prime example under this strategy. This strategy accommodates autoethnography values in that motivation, active engagement, and the promotion of critical thinking are emphasized as core elements, especially in pedagogy.

Podcasts are a common and growing way of learning. Podcasts offer students and teachers an interactive and cost-effective way of information sharing and acquisition (Marzuki et al., 2025). This review summarizes the advantages, applications, issues, and efficacy of podcasts in various learning environments. It is informed by research articles published between 2015 and 2025. Autoethnography, one of the learning concepts that focus on incorporating visuals and sound to enhance understanding, is one that comfortably adapts to podcasting. Emerging evidence reveals podcasts can be harnessed to engage students in content, reflectively think about reading, and establish connections between new and old material. Podcasts have also been reported to allow self-reflection and facilitate significant language skills development when learning English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly for pre-service teachers. Perhaps one of the best things about podcasts is the independence that they provide. Both teachers and students can select the material they wish to learn, learn at their own pace, and learn in the environment that is most conducive to them. Podcasts do have some drawbacks, however, even with these benefits. One of the first concerns is the potential for passive learning. Pupils can hear but not learn actively or think critically without interactive elements (Dashtestani & Hojatpanah, 2022). Technical limitations are another issue with limited access to hardware or reliable internet connections, particularly in areas with such limitations. Besides this, there is also the potential for instructional inconsistency and even the dissemination of misinformation due to the fact that content in podcasts does not always go through quality checks, thus posing problems regarding the validity of the content (Renisyifa et al., 2022). Podcasts must be integrated with great caution into the remaining instructional materials and aligned with certain educational objectives so that they may be made as effective as possible (Al-Jarf, 2023). Aside

from facilitating everyone to learn, recent studies have also emphasized the significance of accessible podcast design, including presenting content in various languages and being compatible with assistive devices (Haleem et al., 2022).

In the context of higher education, the integration of podcasts into academic courses is a rarity (Waldron et al., 2025). Podcasts have been identified as a valuable resource for student-teachers' development of English skills and critical thinking abilities (Archila et al., 2024). This is notable because speaking courses are a standard component of the curriculum, offered every semester from Year 2 to Year 3 of the student-teachers' program. However, the impact of podcasts as a medium for cultivating students' critical thinking skills remains an untapped area in research. Therefore, the objective of this study was to ascertain the potential of podcasts as a reflective platform for teacher candidates. The guiding research question of this study is as follows: How do EFL preservice teachers perceive podcasts as a platform for improving their English and professional skills for teaching.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study investigated student-teachers' perceptions of using podcast activities to enhance their listening ability, employing a qualitative case study design. Conducted in the English department of a private university in Indonesia, the study focused on how podcast-based learning influenced students' language skills, motivation, and critical thinking. A total of 34 pre-service teachers voluntarily participated in a two-week podcast project, followed by questionnaire distribution and semi-structured interviews for data collection.

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative case study design, which is suitable for exploring complex phenomena within their real-life context. Specifically, the study aimed to explore pre-service EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers' experiences and reflections on podcast activities as a means to foster English language development, build motivation, and enhance critical thinking. The case study design allowed for a contextualized, multi-faceted understanding of the participants' learning experiences.

Research Subject

The research was conducted within the English Department of a private university in Indonesia. The target population consisted of third-year pre-service teachers enrolled in a four-year English language education program. Out of 64 students invited to participate, 34 students volunteered for the study. A purposive sampling approach was initially used to select students who had completed the podcast project as part of their coursework. From this group, a random sampling technique was then employed to ensure that the 34 participants represented a balanced sample of gender, academic performance, and podcast engagement level.

Additionally, for the interview stage, a subsample of 6 participants was selected using maximum variation sampling. This strategy aimed to capture a broad range of perspectives by including participants with diverse podcasting experiences, reflective depth, and language abilities. This multi-stage sampling ensured both representativeness and richness of qualitative data

Research Procedure

The research was conducted in two key phases:

1. Questionnaire Distribution:
   After completing the podcast project, all 34 participants were given a semi structured questionnaire consisting of both closed-ended (Likert scale) and open-ended items. The questionnaire measured perceptions on speaking improvement, motivation, engagement, and cognitive reflection.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews:
   Based on questionnaire results, 6 participants were selected for in-depth interviews. These interviews explored participants' insights, challenges, perceived improvements, and emotional responses toward the podcast activity. Interviews lasted approximately 20–30 minutes each and were audio-recorded for analysis.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

Questionnaire was conducted to assess students' self-perceptions related to language skill development, motivation, and engagement in the podcast task. The tool was pilot-tested for clarity and reliability. Interview Protocol a semi-structured interviews guided by open-ended questions allowed flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences. The protocol ensured consistency while enabling emergent themes to surface naturally.

Table 1. Interview guide

How does the experience of learning through podcasts create personal and academic meaning for students?
In what aspects did students' language skills develop during the podcasting process?
How do podcasts facilitate reflection on students' teaching practices?
What role do podcasts play in increasing students' self-confidence and interest in learning?
How does the podcast stimulate students to critically evaluate information and construct arguments?

Data analysis technique

This study adopted a narrative autoethnographic approach to analyze qualitative data derived from the participants' reflections and interview responses. Autoethnography, particularly narrative autoethnography, positions the participants' voices and lived experiences at the center of the analysis, enabling the researcher to explore the emotional, cultural, and educational dimensions of learning through podcasting.

Narrative autoethnography combines personal storytelling to construct meaning from individual accounts within a specific cultural and pedagogical context. This method was chosen due to its alignment with the reflective nature of podcasting, where participants shared personal insights, language learning struggles, and identity construction as future teachers.

Analysis Process:

1. Transcription and Familiarization
   All interview recordings and written reflections were transcribed verbatim. The researcher then engaged in repeated reading and listening to gain an immersive understanding of each participant's narrative voice, context, and emotional tone.

2. Narrative Construction
   Each participant's data was restructured into narrative vignettes short, storied segments that presented their experience in a cohesive, first-person voice. These vignettes preserved the participants' language choices, metaphors, and emotional nuances.

3. Thematic Interpretation
   From the constructed narratives, themes were drawn using inductive coding, focusing on recurring patterns related to:

   a) Identity development as a language learner/teacher
   b) Emotional engagement (e.g., enjoyment, anxiety, pride)
   c) Perceived transformation in speaking confidence
   d) Reflective depth and critical thinking
   e) Connection between podcasting and experiential learning

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

several key findings regarding EFL preservice teachers' perceptions of using podcasts as a reflective platform to enhance their English skills, motivation, and critical thinking.

Table 2. EFL preservice teachers' perceptions of using podcasts as a reflective platform to enhance their English skills, motivation, and critical thinking

Main Theme	Brief Description	Representative Quotation
Podcast as a Tool for Meaningful Learning	Podcasts create meaningful learning experiences by combining accessibility, personalization, and emotional engagement.	"This podcast means a lot to me because it is very valuable [meaningful] for education students." (NF, Female, 22)
Development of English Language Skills	Students improved speaking, listening, vocabulary, and pronunciation through exposure to authentic English in podcast activities.	"The utilization of podcasts has proven to be instrumental in enhancing my proficiency in English language skills…" (KH, Female, 22)
Podcast as a Platform for Self-Reflection	Podcasts facilitated students' reflections on their professional journeys, especially through microteaching discussions.	"Discussing micro teaching in the podcast allowed me to reflect on my journey and growth as a future educator." (RZ, Male, 21)

Language Growth Through Challenge	Using English in podcast discussions pushed students out of their comfort zones, which eventually improved their language competence.	"Speaking in English continuously during the podcast was challenging at first, but over time it became fun." (AB, Male, 22)
Building Self-Confidence and Enjoyment	Podcasting made learning enjoyable while boosting learners' self-confidence in speaking English.	"Using podcasts as learning media is very fun and educational. It encourages me to speak with more self-confidence." (DA, Female, 22)
Enhancing Critical Thinking	Podcast activities required students to evaluate peers' opinions, fostering analytical skills and critical thinking development.	"… and critical thinking when I should evaluate my partners' statements." (NY, Female, 23)

Podcast as a Tool for Creating Meaningful Learning

Podcasts were shown to be an effective tool for creating meaningful learning experiences by combining accessibility, engagement, and personalization, thereby promoting critical thinking and emotional engagement in education students. This highlights the potential value of podcasts as a valuable resource for contemporary education systems. This aligns with other research suggesting that podcast pedagogies help students understand the power of their own voices and their relationship to common ideas about language, learning, and storytelling, and that educational podcasts can also help students learn more effectively. Thus, research demonstrated that podcasts have been utilized as a creative learning tool and an engaging instructional resource, positioning them as an effective platform for meaningful learning.

Podcast as a Tool for Improving English Language Skills

For English Education students, this medium allows immersion in authentic language contexts, facilitating vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation refinement, and adaptation to diverse English accents. The informal and engaging nature of podcasts contributes to learner motivation. Lowe (2021) posits that podcasting constitutes a valuable form of independent professional development for language teachers, and Bueno-Alastuey (2020) contends that podcasts are more effective in fostering engagement with new vocabulary. Therefore, it can be concluded that podcasts can support educators' autonomous growth while also fostering deeper student interaction with language skills.

Podcasts Used as a Reflection Platform

Podcasts are an effective platform for reflection among education students by facilitating critical analysis of teaching experiences and promoting personal growth. This reflective practice not only contributes to individual development but also fosters a sense of community among educators striving for continuous improvement in their teaching practices. Podcasting is a powerful self-reflection tool that improves professional skills and self-directed learning.

Podcasts Improve English Skills (further elaborated)

This demonstrates the efficacy of podcasts as a medium for enhancing English language proficiency. Podcast is a powerful tool; this method is not only conducive to language acquisition but also fosters an engaging and interactive learning environment. The integration of podcasts into the learning environment can be a compelling option for individuals seeking to enhance their language proficiency efficiently.

Podcasts Build Self-Confidence and a Sense of Enjoyment

Podcasts are effective tools for building self-confidence and creating a sense of enjoyment in learning. They provide learners with autonomy, opportunities for active participation, and a supportive environment for growth. Supported by theories like Self-Determination Theory and Experiential Learning Theory, podcasts empower individuals to develop both professional skills and personal confidence while enjoying the process.

Podcasts Promote Critical Thinking

Drawing upon a range of learning theories, it is evident that this approach fosters an environment conducive to in-depth analysis and evaluation of information, a critical component of critical thinking. Consequently, podcasting emerges as a potent instrument for cultivating critical thinking skills among learners.

The perception of podcasts as a tool for creating meaningful learning experiences is a cornerstone of this study's findings. Participants found podcasts to be "very valuable," aligning with research that underscores the power of student voice and personalized learning (McNamara & Shaw, 2022; Waldron et al., 2025). Podcasts, by their accessible and engaging nature, inherently support a learner-centered approach. This is crucial for preservice teachers who need to experience and internalize such methodologies to apply them in their future classrooms. The finding that podcasts foster "critical thinking and emotional engagement" suggests a deeper level of learning beyond rote memorization. Unlike traditional textbook audio, podcasts offer exposure to diverse accents, colloquialisms, and natural speech patterns. This is invaluable for preservice teachers aiming to develop not just linguistic competence but also sociolinguistic awareness. The "informal and engaging nature" of podcasts contributing to "learner motivation" (Bueno-Alastuey & Nemeth, 2022; Lowe et al., 2021) is critical. Motivated learners are more likely to engage in autonomous professional development, a key attribute for lifelong learning in the teaching profession. The finding that continuous English use in podcasts, though initially challenging, became "fun" underscores the affective benefits that can drive language acquisition.

Reflection is important for teacher development, enabling educators to critically analyze their practices and grow professionally. By discussing their teaching journeys, preservice teachers engage in metacognitive processes, leading to a deeper understanding of pedagogical principles and their own development as educators. (Cutler et al., 2023).

Teacher confidence is directly linked to classroom effectiveness and resilience. This highlights the importance of the affective domain in learning. When preservice teachers feel confident and enjoy the learning process, they are more likely to experiment, take risks, and develop a positive disposition towards teaching and technology integration. Critical thinking is a higher-order skill essential for effective teaching and problem-solving. Podcast content, and particularly creating it, moves learners from passive recipients to active constructors of knowledge. The need to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information for a podcast naturally cultivates critical thinking. Teachers need to evaluate information, student responses, and

pedagogical approaches. Experiences that hone these skills during their training are therefore invaluable.

CONCLUSION

According to the study findings, podcasts are a very effective and versatile pedagogical device for prospective EFL teachers. Podcasts have several strengths, such as inspiring as well as English language fluency and increasing critical thinking capabilities and reflective practice. Because of their high adoption to personal needs, convenience, and engaging nature, podcasts hold strong potential behind learning experiences. They also function very well if utilized in the teaching of languages because they subject learners to real experiences, a variety of accents, and actual language use. Podcasts serve very well for self-study as well as for language learning. They support continuous professional development, facilitate active participation, give confidence, and assist potential teachers in critically assessing their own classroom practice. Several recommendations are proposed based on these results. First, as another learning tool for language acquisition, reflection, and critical thinking, learning institutions can integrate podcasts into EFL courses. Second, in the interest of equipping prospective teachers with the ability to utilize this tool to the maximum degree, teacher training programs should incorporate special modules on podcast use. Third, after students have the right guidance on how to choose content that is appropriate for their interests and objectives, they can be motivated to use podcasts for independent study. Future researchers are encouraged to investigate the impact of listening to podcasts on long-term language acquisition and critical thinking and the impact on students with various backgrounds and learning environments. Through the implementation of these suggestions, teachers and schools can unlock the full potential of podcasts as a revolutionary tool for professional development, personal growth, and EFL instruction.

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