

Podcasting as a Pedagogical Intervention for English Vocabulary Development among Senior High School Students in the Philippines

Khylla Marie M. Julian¹, James Humphrey R. Hizon¹, Darwin G. Dela Cruz^{1,3,*},
Mercedita M. Reyes² and Jonard A. Barlaan¹

¹*Department of Communication and Development Studies, Central Luzon State University,
Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija 3120, Philippines*

²*Department of English and Humanities, Central Luzon State University, Science City of Muñoz,
Nueva Ecija 3120, Philippines*

³*Department of Development Communication, Pampanga State Agricultural University,
Magalang, Pampanga 2011, Philippines*

(*Corresponding author's e-mail: dgdelacruz@clsu.edu.ph)

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Abstract

The Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index has consistently reported a decline in the English proficiency of Filipinos. This emphasizes the need to strengthen students' vocabulary development. In response, this study examined the effectiveness of podcasting as a pedagogical tool and channel to improve English Proficiency of Senior High School students. The study employed an experimental method with a non-randomized pretest–posttest control group design. Two sections of Grade 12 students under Humanities and Social Science strand from Nueva Ecija High School in Nueva Ecija, Philippines were assigned as the control group (traditional teaching) and the experimental group (podcast intervention). The intervention lasted for three sessions over one week, with vocabulary-focused podcasts developed by English teachers of 3–5 minutes in duration, and were made available through Spotify. Data were gathered using pretest and posttest quiz-type questionnaires. This was supported by a Likert-scale survey on students' interest in podcasts, and validated through a focus group discussion. Results revealed that students in the experimental group showed significant improvement in vocabulary acquisition compared to the control group. Moreover, their level of interest significantly increased after the podcast intervention, with overall responses shifting from “Agree” to “Strongly Agree.” The findings suggest that podcasts are not only effective in enhancing vocabulary but also serve as engaging, accessible, and enjoyable learning tools. This study recommends integrating podcasting into classroom instruction as a modern approach to enrich students' vocabulary learning and support language proficiency.

Keywords: Podcast, English proficiency, English vocabulary, Pedagogy, Educational tool

Introduction

English proficiency of Filipinos has been decreasing for years based on the Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index. In 2018, the Philippines ranked 14th, and 20th in 2019. In 2020, the ranking dropped drastically to 27th place. On the brighter side, in 2021, the Philippines climbed to 18th place, though still far from its 13th place ranking in 2016 (Santos et al., 2022).

The decline in English competence among graduates in the Philippines is a result of a decreasing proficiency in the English language (Fontillas et al., 2022; Samillano & Pastolero, 2025). According to the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), only 24% of Filipino students, approximately one in four, achieved basic reading proficiency (Chi, 2023). Further, among 81 participating countries, the

Philippines ranked sixth-lowest in reading. These outcomes point to deeper issues in language acquisition that affect learners' ability to process and understand texts (Brooks, 2025).

Within this context, vocabulary development becomes a critical area of concern (Ong et al., 2019). Vocabulary must be emphasized, as it plays a vital role in language acquisition and acts as a building block for the comprehension and production (Nation, 2013; Wilang et al., 2025). It is a key component for communicating thoughts, sharing knowledge, understanding others, and building relationships. As emphasized by Qobilovna (2024), communicative competence relies heavily on the ability to use language appropriately across different social contexts, which in turn depends on adequate vocabulary knowledge.

Given this, it is therefore crucial for students to develop effective vocabulary acquisition strategies and strengthen their vocabulary knowledge, especially as they strive to become more fluent and expressive in English. Second language acquisition and the eventual English proficiency can be dependent on vocabulary acquisition; and this acquisition can also be studied with factors such as learning preferences and teaching strategies (Reyes, 2023). Ayana and Alemu (2024) mentioned that vocabulary strategies training significantly improves achievement and motivation, shifting learners from dictionary reliance to active methods like keyword techniques.

Despite its importance, vocabulary acquisition, however, is one of the most challenging skills to teach and learn, often due to insufficient schemata. Limited vocabulary knowledge poses a significant issue in language proficiency among students in the Philippines, particularly for senior high school students who must meet Department of Education (DepEd) standards and academic reading requirements. Limited capacity to produce and meet academic requirements may affect academic performance and schooling in general (Ravago et al., 2022).

Addressing this issue requires not only a focus on vocabulary itself but also on the adoption of effective and innovative teaching strategies (Pangket, 2019). Learning strategies, as noted by Akbari (2016), serve as essential tools that enhance learners' capacity to understand and retain new information. While traditional approaches such as lectures and

brainstorming remain widely used (Mojares, 2013), these methods may not fully engage contemporary learners, highlighting the need for more adaptive and learner-centered pedagogies. Aligned with this need, podcasts have received growing attention from researchers as a potential educational tool to help students expand their vocabulary. For example, Mashhadi and Jalilifar (2016) compared podcasts with traditional and self-study methods in teaching English vocabulary, and found that podcast-supported instruction was more effective in promoting vocabulary growth.

In this context, Grade 12-HUMSS students from Nueva Ecija High School – Senior High School (NEHS-SHS) were observed on their vocabulary. Their specialized DepEd-prescribed subjects focus on creative writing and literary essays. Using podcasts as an innovative pedagogical strategy may expand their vocabulary knowledge, which is essential for strengthening macro skills.

Therefore, this study seeks to determine whether podcasting is an effective tool for enhancing vocabulary knowledge, serving as a stepping stone for students to improve their language proficiency and become more receptive to new vocabulary.

Method

This study utilized an experimental method of research with a non-randomized pretest-posttest control group research design. Two (2) sections of Grade 12 HUMSS students from Nueva Ecija High School–Senior High School (NEHS-SHS) in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, were selected as respondents. The two (2) sections were purposively chosen, then randomly assigned through draw lots as either the control group or the experimental group, considering the availability of gadgets for the intervention.

Before the intervention, both groups took a pre-test. The control group underwent traditional teaching, facilitated by a Grade 12 HUMSS teacher using lessons equivalent to those used in the podcast sessions. Meanwhile, the experimental group received podcast-based instruction. The podcasts, developed by English teachers in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines and were made available on Spotify, focused on deep English vocabulary and these lasted 3–5 minutes per session, consistent with the recommendations of Tryanti

et al. (2018) regarding preferred podcast duration. The intervention ran for three (3) sessions with a two-day interval. The first two (2) sessions introduced sets of vocabulary, while the third session served as a recap.

The NEHS-SHS was chosen as the locale because of its reputation as one of the oldest schools in Nueva Ecija, Philippines and its innovative use of multimedia materials such as PowerPoint presentations and Audio-Visual Presentations (AVP) in instruction. Grade 12 HUMSS students were considered appropriate respondents because of their exposure to writing tasks, which demand a wide vocabulary base.

The research instruments included a pre-test and post-test, both in quiz format with 30 vocabulary-based multiple-choice items. The items were checked and validated by an NEHS-SHS teacher. The post-test used the same set of items as the pre-test but with shuffled order to minimize recall bias. In addition, a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire measured the experimental group's interest in learning vocabulary through podcasts, both before and after the intervention. To further validate their responses, the researchers also conducted a focus group discussion (FGD) with the experimental group to gain deeper insights into their interest in improving English vocabulary through podcasting.

Moreover, to ensure the validity of the test instruments, the questionnaire underwent pre-testing with 30 HUMSS students who were not part of the actual study. This step confirmed that the questions were answerable and aligned with the objectives of the research.

The primary data-gathering instrument used in this study is an existing Vocabulary Size Test, which was employed to determine the English vocabulary level of the respondents. In addition, researcher-developed questionnaires were utilized to collect supplementary data relevant to the study.

All collected data were processed, calculated, and verified with the assistance of a statistician to ensure accuracy and reliability and were analyzed using several statistical measures. Percentage frequency distribution was used to determine the extent to which students experienced difficulties in English vocabulary. This measure was also applied to analyze the pretest and post-test results of the students.

The average weighted mean was employed to assess the overall level of students' interest in improving their English vocabulary. Responses were interpreted using a five-point Likert scale, with corresponding weighted mean ranges: 4.21–5.00 (*Strongly Agree*), 3.41–4.20 (*Agree*), 2.61–3.40 (*Neutral*), 1.81–2.60 (*Disagree*), and 1.00–1.80 (*Strongly Disagree*).

Descriptive analysis was further used to summarize and present the data, providing a clear overview of trends and patterns. This method also supported the interpretation of relationships among variables within the study.

To determine whether there is a significant difference between the control and experimental groups, a t-test was applied. Moreover, standard deviation was used to measure the variability or dispersion of the data.

Finally, the researchers followed the ethical review procedures of Central Luzon State University. Students served as respondents in accordance with CLSU's ethical guidelines. Before the study commenced, the researchers provided information about the study, and all respondents willingly gave their informed consent to participate.

Results

Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic profile of the respondents of the control group and experimental group. In terms of sex, it shows that the respondents from the control group were mostly male students with a frequency of 21 or 56.76% of the total respondents, while the females were 16 or 43.24%. On the other hand, the table also indicates that in the experimental group, the male respondents are also higher with a frequency of 24 or 66.70% and the females are 12 or 33.33%. Thus, it means that the majority of the respondents in this study are male.

Moreover, it is indicated in the results that most of the respondents in the control group are in the age bracket of 18 - 19 years old, while the age with the least number of respondents is in the age range of 20-21. For the experimental group, most of the respondents are in the age range of 16-17 years old, and the age bracket with the lowest number of respondents is age group 20-21. This data shows that the majority of the respondents from the experimental group and control group do not have a similar age range. However, of all the

respondents, the majority are in the age bracket of 16-17 years old with a frequency of 39 or 53.42% of the total respondents.

Initial level of vocabulary knowledge of Grade 12-HUMSS students from NEHS-SHS

Table 2 shows the pre-test scores of respondents from the control and experimental groups. In the pre-test of the control group, the majority of the respondents obtained scores ranging from 1-10 with a frequency of 27 or 72.97%. While the remaining 10 or 27.03% of

respondents got scores ranging from 11-20. The pre-test of the control group has a mean of 9.05.

On the other hand, in the experimental group, during the pre-test, most of the respondents acquired scores that ranged from 1-10 with a frequency of 23 or 63.89%. While the remaining 13 or 36.11% of the respondents got scores ranging from 11-20. The pre-test of the experimental group has a mean of 9.61.

Overall, the pre-test mean of the experimental group with 9.61 is higher compared to the pre-test mean of the control group that is 9.05. The difference between the pre-test score of both groups is 0.56.

Table 1 Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

Profile	Controlled Group (n=37)		Experimental Group (n=36)		Both (n=73)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Sex						
Male	21	56.76	24	66.70	45	61.64
Female	16	43.24	12	33.30	28	38.36
Age						
16-17	14	37.84	26	72.22	39	53.42
18-19	20	54.05	8	22.22	29	39.73
20-21	3	8.11	2	5.56	5	6.85
Mean	17.90		17.33		17.64	

Table 2 Initial level of vocabulary knowledge of Grade 12-HUMSS students of NEHS-SHS from pretest

Scores	Controlled Group (n=37)		Experimental Group (n=36)		Both (n=73)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1-10	27	72.97	23	63.89	50	68.49
11-20	10	27.03	13	36.11	23	31.51
21-30	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Mean	9.05		9.61		9.33	
SD	2.09		2.78		2.48	

English vocabulary scores before and after the implementation of the podcasting intervention compared to traditional teaching method

Table 3 shows significant differences ($p < 0.001$) in the average test scores before and after the podcasting intervention and average scores of traditional teaching methods. This implies the effectiveness of both

podcasting intervention and traditional teaching methods.

However, comparing the t-test result of the experimental group and control group, it shows that the t-test score of the experimental group is higher, which is 10.347 compared to the control group that scored 5.945.

Table 3 T-test results of the English vocabulary scores before and after the implementation of the podcasting intervention

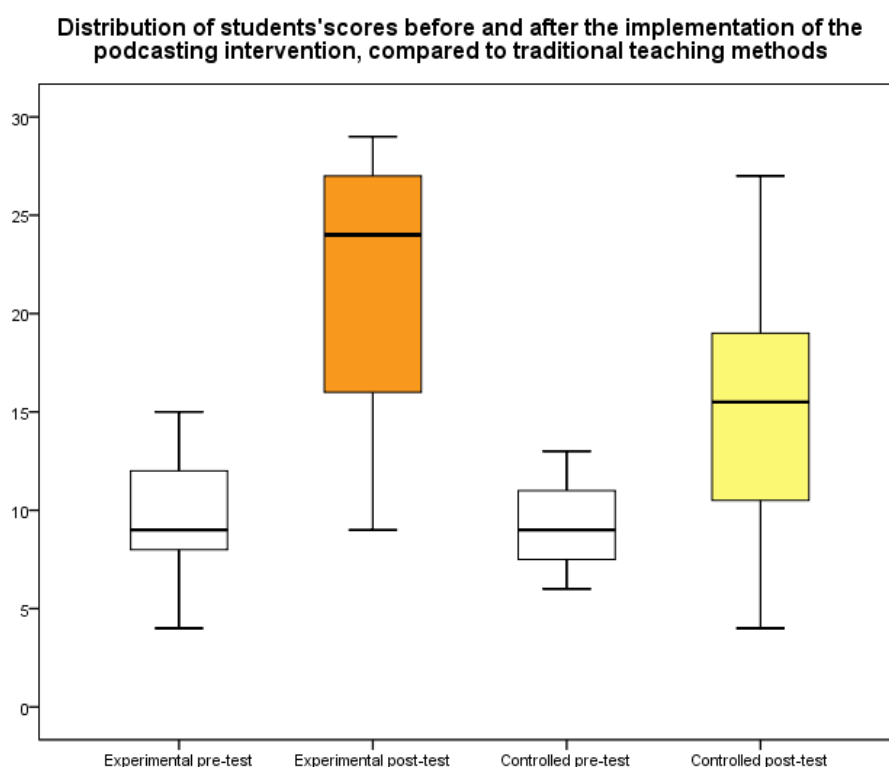
Parameters	Mean	SD	t	p-value
Experimental group				
Pre-test	9.61	2.82	10.347*	<0.001
Post-test	21.97	5.99		
Control group				
Pre-test	9.05	2.09	5.945*	<0.001
Post-test	14.92	5.78		

Note: *p<0.01, significantly difference

Distribution of students' scores before and after the implementation of the podcast intervention, compared to traditional teaching method

The distribution of the students according to vocabulary knowledge scores is shown in the boxplot (Figure 1). Boxes indicating post-test scores were plotted at a higher position. This is a good indication of the effectiveness of the podcasting intervention received.

As seen in the figure below, the post-test score of both groups are higher compared to their pre-test score. However, the post-test result of the respondents from the experimental group is plotted higher compared to the control which indicates that respondents from the experimental group showed higher improvement compared to the control group.

**Figure 1.** Distribution of students' scores before and after the implementation of the podcasting intervention

Students' interest level in podcasting as a tool for improving their English vocabulary

Based on Table 4, before the intervention, the statement "Listening to podcasts helps me in improving my pronunciation of words" obtained the highest mean of 4.06, while "I enjoy listening to podcasts" had the lowest mean of 3.56. The overall mean of 3.72 was interpreted as "Agree", indicating that the respondents already perceived podcasting as an educational tool that could support vocabulary development and that they found it enjoyable and accessible, given its replayability.

After the intervention, the statement "I am interested in improving my English vocabulary through

podcast" recorded the highest mean of 4.47 ("Strongly Agree"), while "When I am listening to podcasts, I keep focused" obtained the lowest mean of 4.00 ("Agree"). The overall mean of 4.25, described as "Strongly Agree", shows that the level of interest among respondents significantly increased after exposure to the podcast intervention. This suggests that students not only enjoyed listening to podcasts but also valued them as engaging, accessible, and effective tools for vocabulary learning.

Supporting this, several respondents mentioned in the focus group discussion that they liked using podcasts because of their interesting aspect, ease of use, and because they can listen to them multiple times.

Table 4. Interest in improving English vocabulary through the podcast of the experimental group

Statements	Before		After	
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description
1. I like to use podcasts because I can access them easily.	3.58	Agree	4.31	Strongly Agree
2. I enjoy listening to podcasts.	3.56	Agree	4.11	Agree
3. I find podcast as an educational tool	3.67	Agree	4.36	Strongly Agree
4. Podcasts improve my listening skills	3.89	Agree	4.31	Strongly Agree
5. Listening to podcasts helps me in improving my pronunciation of words.	4.06	Agree	4.36	Strongly Agree
6. When I am listening to podcasts, I keep focused.	3.67	Agree	4.00	Agree
7. I like using podcasts because I can listen to it multiple times.	3.64	Agree	4.17	Agree
8. I like podcasts because I can listen to them anywhere.	3.61	Agree	4.14	Agree
9. Podcasts keep me engaged when listening to the discussion.	3.58	Agree	4.31	Strongly Agree
10. I am interested in improving my English vocabulary through podcasts.	3.94	Agree	4.47	Strongly Agree
Overall	3.72	Agree	4.25	Strongly Agree

Legend: 1-1.79 Strongly Disagree (SD), 1.80-2.59 Disagree (D), 2.60- 3.39 Neutral (N), 3.40-4.19 Agree (A), 4.20-5.00 Strongly Agree (SA)

T-test results of the student's interest in using podcasting

Table 5 reveals that there are significant differences ($p=0.001$) in the average students' interest in using podcasting to improve their English vocabulary

before and after exposure of the experimental group to podcasting. This indicates the effectiveness of the student's interest in improving English Vocabulary through podcasts.

Specifically, the mean interest score increased from 3.72 before the intervention to 4.25 after the

intervention, with a t-value of 3.694*, and a p-value of 0.001.

Table 5 T-test results of the experimental group student's interest in using podcasting

English vocabulary	Mean	SD	t	p-value
Before	3.72	0.72	3.694*	0.001
After	4.25	0.54		

Note: * $p < 0.05$, significantly difference

Distribution of students' interest before and after exposure to podcasting

The figure 2 shows the distribution of students before and after exposure to podcasting. Box pertaining to after exposure to podcasting was plotted at a higher position, proving the result that the students are interested after the exposure to podcasting to improve their English vocabulary.

It is shown in figure 2 that there was significant improvement in the respondents' interest in improving their English Vocabulary through podcasts. The respondents who underwent podcast intervention became more interested in improving their English Vocabulary. This conforms to the findings of Dewi (2023) among students in Indonesia.

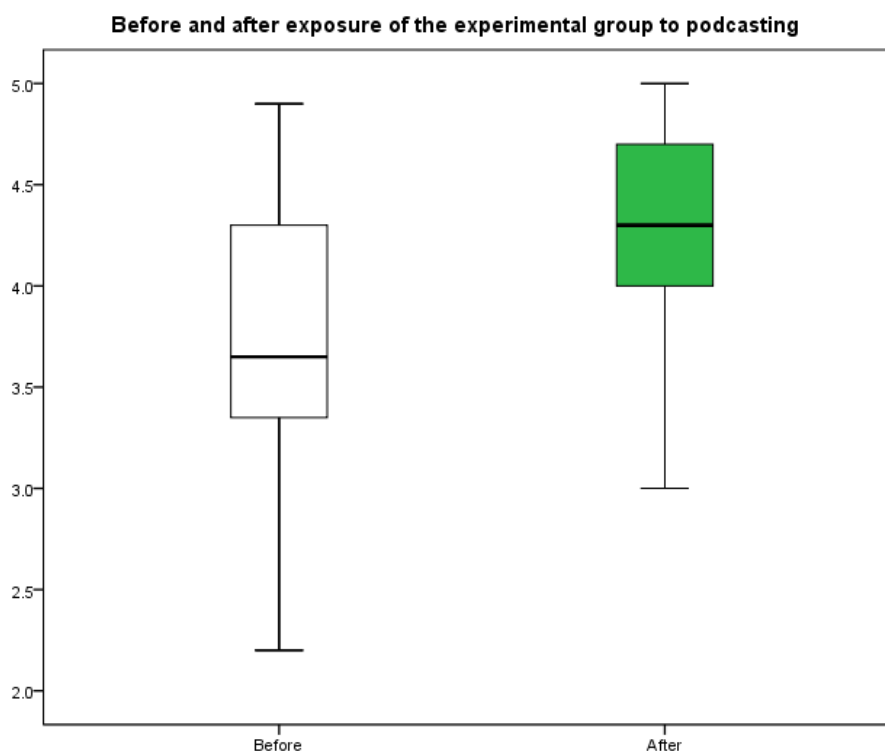


Figure 2. Distribution of experimental group's interest before and after exposure to podcasting

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that podcasting is an effective instructional tool for enhancing students' English vocabulary and for increasing their interest in vocabulary learning. While

both the control and experimental groups showed significant improvements, the greater gains observed in the experimental group indicate that podcast-assisted instruction provides added benefits beyond traditional teaching methods.

The significant improvement in the experimental group aligns with previous research highlighting the effectiveness of technology-assisted learning, which fills the void that traditional learning fails to provide (Haleem, 2022; Abbey et al., 2024). In particular, this result is aligned with McKinney et al. (2008), which emphasized that students who listened to the podcast performed significantly better than those who attended the in-class lecture. The higher t-value observed in the experimental group suggests that podcasts may facilitate deeper learning through repeated exposure and contextualized language input.

Podcasts provide opportunities for learners to engage with authentic language, revisit content multiple times, and learn at their own pace (Syafei et al., 2024). These features support active vocabulary learning strategies, as emphasized by Ayana and Alemu (2024), and may explain the greater improvement observed among students exposed to the intervention.

In addition to improving vocabulary knowledge, podcasting significantly increased students' interest in learning. The shift from "Agree" to "Strongly Agree" in the post-intervention results indicates that students became more engaged and motivated after experiencing the use of podcasts. This result aligned with Baird and Fisher (2006) and Edirisinha and Salmon's (2007) findings, which showed the effectiveness of podcasts intervention in capturing and keeping the participant's attention and interest.

The increased interest may be attributed to the accessibility and flexibility of podcasts, which allow students to learn anytime and anywhere. These characteristics align with the preferences of modern learners, who tend to favor technology-based and self-directed learning environments (Ravago et al., 2024). As noted by Farshi and Mohammadi (2013); Joquino and colleagues (2024), podcasts are capable and effective tools for enhancing vocabulary.

Although the control group also showed improvement, the relatively lower gains suggest that traditional teaching methods alone may not be sufficient to meet the needs of contemporary learners. This finding supports scholars (Mojares, 2013; Tsai et al., 2020; Ravago et al., 2023) who noted that commonly used strategies may require supplementation with more innovative approaches.

Taken together, the study confirms that podcasting is not only an effective tool for vocabulary development but also a motivating and engaging medium for students. It offers a practical and accessible approach that can complement traditional teaching methods and support improved language learning outcomes.

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Declaration of generative AI in scientific writing

The authors declare that generative AI tools were used solely for grammar checking and language editing in the preparation of this manuscript. Specifically, Grammarly was utilized to improve clarity, coherence, and correctness of the English language. The authors take full responsibility for the integrity, originality, and accuracy of the work.

CRediT author statement

Khylla Marie P. Julian: Methodology, Investigation, Visualization, Data curation, Writing- Original draft preparation. **James Humprey R. Hizon:** Methodology, Visualization, Data curation, Writing- Original draft preparation. **Darwin G. Dela Cruz:** Supervision, Methodology, Validation, Writing- Original draft preparation, Writing- Reviewing and Editing. **Jonard D. Barlaan:** Methodology and Conceptualization. **Mercedita M. Reyes:** Methodology and Conceptualization, Writing- Reviewing and Editing.

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