

The Impact of Podcasts and Blogs on EFL Students' Reading Skill: A Psycholinguistic Approach

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Abstract—This study investigates how EFL Saudi learners' reading perception (RP) skills could be enhanced by podcasting and blogging, as well as how effective they believe these strategies to be. Three male groups were chosen for this purpose from Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, using a convenience sample technique. After that, they were randomly divided into three groups: [1] the control group (CG), [2] the blogging group (BG), and [3] the podcasting group (PG). They then underwent a pre-test, a post-test, and a treatment program (14 two-hour sessions held thrice a week). The students from the experimental groups (BG and PG) were asked to write two statements regarding the possibility of podcasting and blogging to enhance their reading perception gains. The gathered data were analyzed using thematic coding analysis and a one-way ANOVA. At the conclusion of the treatments, the blogging and podcasting groups outperformed the control group. Moreover, the results indicated no statistically significant differences between the blogging and podcasting groups. Additionally, the qualitative results revealed that learners held positive opinions about employing blogging and podcasting to enhance reading perception.

Index Terms—podcasting, blogging, reading perception, applied linguistics, language perception

I. INTRODUCTION

Creating an environment where students can study without being limited by time or location has long been a challenge in education. As Anderson and Pearson (2000) observed, efforts to achieve this goal have led to the continuous development and invention of new tools. The rise and advancement of social media platforms have made this objective more attainable (Baker & Brown, 1984). These emerging technologies hold great potential in the field of second language acquisition (L2), particularly in fostering learner autonomy (Bartlett, 1999). In online learning environments, L2 learners develop autonomy by engaging actively in learning, problem-solving, and decision-making processes. Meanwhile, the role of L2 instructors has evolved into that of facilitators and supporters in these virtual settings (Alessi & Trollip, 2001).

According to Boling et al. (2012), L2 learners must be actively involved in the learning processes for them to acquire language skills. As such, reading comprehension—one of the cornerstones of second language learning and acquisition—requires a deliberate, fluid, and cooperative approach. L2 learners are able to fulfill their objectives when they actively participate in the reading process. They can therefore fulfill the first goal, which is to search for crucial facts and general understanding. Reading passages for learning is the second goal. Because it requires the application of several conscious and unconscious procedures in order to determine the accurate meaning of the passages, RC is generally a complex skill. The new social media tools are among the innovations that show promise for supporting L2 learning and L2 RC.

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) are among the various teaching approaches that leverage modern technological tools to facilitate second language (L2) acquisition (Cain et al., 2004). Mobile technologies such as blogging and podcasting are widely regarded as valuable tools for enhancing students' learning potential. The growing interest in MALL has increased the popularity of podcasts and blogs. Cain and Oakhill (2007) describe podcasts as online audio or video files distributed to subscribers, often on a regular basis. Similarly, Chandler (1998) highlights blogging and podcasting as innovative methods for delivering digital content to mobile devices. Additionally, Dörnyei (2005) notes that blogs and podcasts provide L2 learners with authentic resources that may be inaccessible in environments where English is not the primary language.

Considering the importance of RC skills for second language learners, it is worthwhile investigating the impact of novel and cutting-edge approaches and technologies like podcasting and blogging. In spite of this, it is unexpected that Saudi Arabia has yet to fully examine the possibilities of podcasting and blogging in fostering the reading perception of EFL students. In order to overcome this knowledge gap, the researchers plan to share how podcasting and blogging can enhance the RC gains of advanced EFL learners as well as how effective these mediums are in doing so. The results should validate the value of blogging and podcasting for advanced EFL students in developing their RC. Furthermore, the study's findings should help L2 instructors better comprehend the benefits of podcasts and blogs as innovative methods in L2 instruction.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Reading Perception

It is believed that reading is a foundational ability that is essential to the development of all other language skills. This is because, as Duff et al. (2011) noted, in order for L2 learners to acquire a language, they need to be exposed to enough intelligible reading and listening material. RC is a complex cognitive ability that is essential for gathering data and creating meaning. But, as Eisenberg (2009) emphasizes, the crucial element is that second language learners need to be able to create meaning through direct interactions with the texts.

Ellis (1994) describes reading comprehension (RC) as an active process where L2 readers engage with information and utilize various cognitive strategies to interpret meaning. Similarly, Frazier and Rayner (2010) explain that comprehension involves interacting with a text and assigning meaning to it. This process is highly interactive, relying on an individual's linguistic knowledge, understanding of the world, and familiarity with the subject matter. Gee (2013) emphasizes that RC is a dynamic activity influenced by multiple factors, including text structure, prior knowledge, and an awareness of vocabulary and grammar. As a result, effective reading strategies and the ability to draw on existing knowledge are essential for L2 readers to achieve accurate understanding (Gernsbacher, 1990).

Perception is generally categorized into three types: literal, interpretative, and critical (Hafner & Miller, 2011). Literal comprehension involves understanding the straightforward facts presented in a passage. Through interpretative comprehension, L2 readers can delve deeper into the passage by organizing, synthesizing, and analyzing the information. Critical comprehension, on the other hand, examines the assumptions and expectations of L2 readers, encouraging them to go beyond the surface meaning of the text and evaluate its accuracy (Jonassen, 2000). Exploring innovative instructional tools, such as podcasting and blogging, plays a key role in fostering comprehension skills.

To explain reading comprehension (RC), three models have been proposed: down-up, top-down, and interactive (Kintsch, 2014). The down-up approach involves L2 readers decoding individual letters to form words and derive meaning. In contrast, the top-down approach relies on readers' prior knowledge, enabling them to make predictions about the text and confirm these predictions while reading. This model emphasizes understanding syntax and semantics over dependence on the text itself. The interactive model views L2 readers as active participants who extract meaning through a combination of textual information and their stored knowledge, rather than passively receiving information (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). Notably, effective comprehension in L2 requires leveraging various sources of knowledge, including syntax, linguistic patterns, and contextual clues.

B. Integrating Technology in Perception: The Role of Podcasting and Blogging

The Audio-Lingual Method is the source of current technology used in L2 teaching (Mayer, 2009). During that time, computers were employed to encourage L2 learners to drill and rehearse the linguistic structures, which improved their speaking and listening abilities. It is therefore not strange to observe how L2 teaching and learning are impacted by the advancement of contemporary technologies like podcasting and blogging. In this context, McQuail (2005) pointed out that L2 learners can enhance their knowledge and produce their own recordings by using podcasts featuring a variety of images and background music. More intriguingly, users can use contemporary apps to create better podcasts by adding a melody and visual aids. According to Nassaji (2006), podcasting is a worthwhile and valuable method for disseminating various digital content online. O'Reilly and McNamara (2007) employed podcasting because of the multimedia environment's accessibility to image and audio files. Pinker (1994) stated that podcasting's ease of use is one of its main advantages. This implies that users can download and post any free podcast using a variety of apps, listen to them in public, and get the support they need to increase their comprehension.

According to Quirk and Greenbaum (2015), blogging and podcasting are two more effective teaching tools for improving the language proficiency of L2 learners. Furthermore, according to Rosenblatt (2004), a blog's entries are

organized chronologically much like on a website and can be updated on a frequent basis. A blog's concept and content may be shared by one or more writers, who can also arrange links to other websites that may have podcasts and videos (Schmitt, 2010). According to Sweller, Ayres, and Kalyuga, blogs fall into two categories: web-based journals that are simple to link within online communities or cross-link with other web-based journals. And second, as posts or distinct entries made by single people, or even several authors (Tomasello, 2003). The primary benefit of blogging is its time-saving nature, as entries may be published immediately. According to Ullman (2004), blogs are accessible to everyone who is interested, regardless of location or time constraints. Due to the variety of photos, videos, podcasts, and songs available on blogs, many L2 learners can benefit from these resources and enhance their learning and understanding.

C. Impact of Podcasting and Blogging on Second Language Acquisition

Numerous studies have explored the influence of blogging and podcasting on EFL learners' academic performance, particularly in reading and listening comprehension. Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) examined the use of digital texts combined with blogging to improve reading comprehension (RC) in college students, finding a substantial enhancement in RC among participants. Similarly, Warschauer and Grimes (2007) investigated the impact of blogging on the RC of EFL students, concluding that blogging significantly developed the reading comprehension of the experimental group's participants.

Yang (2012) explored whether video podcasting exercises could improve the listening skill of Saudi intermediate EFL students. The study revealed that participants who engaged in video podcasting exercises demonstrated notable improvements in listening comprehension. Likewise, Zwaan and Radvansky (1998) analyzed the effects of three pre-task activities—podcasting, watching brief videos, and topic preparation—on the listening skill of EFL students in Saudi Arabia. Their findings indicated that learners who engaged in podcast and video-based instruction outperformed others in post-test listening comprehension.

Additionally, Zwaan and Singer (2003) investigated group podcast listening's impact on vocabulary acquisition and listening comprehension among Saudi intermediate EFL learners. They also examined participants' attitudes toward the treatment using a questionnaire. Results showed that the experimental group significantly improved both vocabulary acquisition and listening comprehension. Furthermore, participants expressed positive perceptions regarding the effectiveness of podcasts in enhancing these skills.

Despite these findings, two notable gaps remain in literature. First, limited research has been conducted in Saudi Arabia on the impact of blogging and podcasting on RC improvements among advanced EFL learners. Second, there is little understanding of how EFL learners perceive the effectiveness of these tools.

To address these gaps, this study aims to explore advanced Saudi EFL learners' perspectives on the value of blogging and podcasting in improving their RC and to evaluate the potential of these tools in fostering RC development.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

A. Research Questions and Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design, where participants were not randomly assigned but organized to investigate the cause-and-effect relationship between the research variables. Three intact classes were selected for the study and underwent pre-testing, interventions, and post-testing. These classes were then randomly assigned to one of three groups: the podcasting group, the blogging group, and the control group. Additionally, some participants provided reflective written statements expressing their views on how blogging and podcasting influenced their reading comprehension (RC) improvement. The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of podcasts and blogs in enhancing RC among advanced EFL learners and to explore learners' perceptions of these tools within the Saudi context. Accordingly, the research sought to address the following questions:

[1] - Can blogging and podcasting enhance the reading skills of Saudi EFL learners?

[2] - What are the perceptions of advanced Saudi EFL students regarding the effectiveness of blogging and podcasting in improving their reading skill?

B. Participants

The current investigation was conducted in Saudi language center. Through convenience sampling, the researchers chose three complete classes. The intact classes indicate that all of the students were placed in the designated treatment groups as pre-existing groups. Twenty male and twenty female pupils were in each class. They ranged in age from 16 to 41 and had advanced language proficiency. The classes were divided into three groups at random: one for blogging, one for podcasting, and one for control. The participants received four to five hours of English instruction each week in an EFL setting. All language skills were taught at the institute, and qualified teachers used communicative ways to administer their lessons.

It's important to note that two instructors with master's degrees in applied linguistics were chosen by the researchers to oversee the care of the experimental groups. In order to comply with ethical standards, some researchers met with the institute principal and outlined the goals of the study. The manager of the institute gave the researcher permission to conduct the study there and gave the researcher directions to the classrooms. The researcher was shown throughout the classrooms with permission from the teachers and gave the students a rundown of the goals of the study. She then inquired

as to their willingness to take part in the research. Written consent was provided by study participants who were willing to take part.

The instructors and the students were given the assurance by the researchers that their participation in the study would remain private and that they were free to discontinue it at any time. Ultimately, the managers of the institute, educators, and students were informed of the researchers' final conclusions. Notably, the study was observed by the ethical committee of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University to ensure that ethical standards were fulfilled.

C. Instruments

The researchers utilized several tools for this study, starting with a homogeneity test. To ensure the participants in the classes were at similar proficiency levels, the researchers employed the Quick Oxford Placement Test. Developed in 2005 by Cambridge ESOL and Oxford University Press, the Quick Oxford Placement Test (QOPT) assesses the language proficiency of L2 learners across different ages and levels. The paper-based version of the QOPT was chosen for this study due to its ease of administration. The test consists of 60 multiple-choice questions, which must be completed within 60 minutes. It is divided into two sections, covering reading, grammar, and vocabulary.

The first section contains 45 questions designed for learners at the advanced level. If participants score more than 38 out of 45, they proceed to the second section with an additional 20 questions. The test is graded on a scale of 45 or 65, depending on the number of questions answered. To ensure the reliability and validity of the QOPT, the researchers conducted a pilot test with 20 students, including some of the main study participants. The reliability was calculated at 0.95, demonstrating high consistency. The validity of the instrument was assessed through expert judgment, with two experienced EFL teachers evaluating its face and content validity. They confirmed that the QOPT was an appropriate and authentic tool for the study.

A panel of three experienced EFL researchers and teachers developed the second set of instruments. These included two RC tests designed to measure students' reading comprehension. The tests were based on materials from the students' coursebooks and featured four reading passages, each accompanied by various questions aimed at assessing literal, interpretative, and critical perception skills.

To evaluate the reliability and validity of the two reading comprehension tests, they were piloted with a group of 25 participants. The results indicated a pre-test reliability of 0.85 and a post-test reliability of 0.84, demonstrating consistency in measurement. The validity of the tests was determined using expert judgment, with two seasoned EFL teachers thoroughly reviewing the content and providing constructive feedback. The tests were scored out of 36 points, with one point deducted for each incorrect answer.

The study also utilized a reflective written statement as an additional instrument. Six EFL participants from the podcasts group and six from the blogs group were invited to write about their experiences and perspectives on using podcasting and blogging to improve their reading comprehension. These reflections were written in the participants' native language to ensure clarity and depth of expression. They were requested to respond in writing to the following prompt:

Greetings, students

We cordially encourage you to share your thoughts and experiences regarding the ways in which English language learning blogs and podcasts might improve your reading comprehension. The main focus of your report should be your opinions on how reading comprehension is impacted by podcasts and blogs. A report of three to four hundred words would be sufficient.

D. Data Collection Procedures

To carry out this investigation, the researchers followed certain procedures. Ensuring the participants' linguistic proficiency was the initial step in the process. For the main study, learners with scores that fell within one standard deviation (SD) over or below the mean score were chosen. The instructors' training was the second step. To familiarize the professors with the principles of blogging and podcasting, the first researcher conducted two sessions with them. Pre-testing the subjects to determine their RC before the treatments was the third phase. Presenting the therapy was the fourth phase. Twelve one-hour sessions were conducted twice a week for the treatments. The main reading materials that the instructors used were blogs and podcasts. In order to create podcasting and blogging activities, the researchers worked closely with the instructors. They followed the paradigm for integrating technology and literacy (Abdulaal et al., 2022).

Regarding the operational domains, the teachers highlighted the students' proficiency with new network technologies, multimodal reading, and the usage of podcasts and blogs. The teachers gave the participants assurances that they could create and manage their own blogs and podcasts, add multimedia, edit and add comments, and hyperlink components into the blog entries and podcasts to engage with peers and instructors. The main teaching resources were podcasts and blogs, which allowed students to read the provided content and debate it with their lecturers and instructors when they understood it. The reading assignments for the podcasts and blogs were given in accordance with the planned curriculum, which pushed the students to use their reading skills in tandem to get the right comprehension.

To put it precisely, the teachers used a four-phase process. The first part of the lesson involved the teachers introducing the passage's contents and encouraging the students to look up the meanings of terms and phrases they were unsure of (10 min). During the second part of the lesson, the teachers gave the students additional comprehension questions concerning the passage, and they had to work in groups to find the answers (20 minutes). During the third stage, students were required to review their responses and post them online as blogs and podcasts so that their classmates may view and

utilize them (15 minutes).

The teachers review the students' responses in the fourth phase and provide the right solutions (10 min). The syllabus, textbooks, and assignments were all the same for the control group. Subjects were required to read the passages aloud from printed copies and submit their answers to the questions to the teacher. The experimental groups were allowed to include multimedia elements in their blog posts and podcasts; however, they were required to present their projects using these formats. The podcasting and blogging group, for example, was required to read a paragraph, determine and arrange the key elements, and create a podcast or blog post summary.

They were then required to present it to their peers and professors so they could offer their opinions and comments. At the conclusion of the instructions, the participants' RC was measured by administering the post-test in the fourth stage. The final step involved distributing the reflective written statement, in which ten participants were asked to share their thoughts on their experiences with blogging in addition to podcasting.

E. Procedures Taken for Data Analysis

The researchers analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data using various techniques. For the numerical data, they used SPSS version 22. Descriptive statistics, including mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), were calculated, and a one-way ANOVA was conducted. Specifically, the one-way ANOVA was used to assess the efficiency of podcasts and blogs in promoting RC improvements among EFL learners. It is worth noting that the researchers opted for the one-way ANOVA over the independent sample t-test due to its higher statistical power for certain independent groups (Shahzad, 2020).

For the qualitative data, a thematic coding analysis was used. This method identifies recurring themes and patterns in written and spoken materials (Riazi, 2016). Following Clarke's (2006) framework, the primary researcher first familiarized themselves with the data. The process began with the researcher reviewing the information to gain an understanding of it. She read the transcripts a great deal in order to comprehend them for this reason. Coding came in second. She attempted to categorize the information by underlining specific words and passages in the transcripts. She devised codes or labels to explain the information. The creation of the themes was the third phase. She began by examining the generated codes to find any patterns before moving on to the topics. Going over the themes was the fourth phase. She made an effort to guarantee that the themes that were extracted accurately reflected the data. She then went back to the original data set and contrasted the themes that had been extracted with it. Identifying and labeling themes was the sixth phase.

One researcher attempted to identify and characterize each theme. She made an effort to accurately depict the extracted themes' contents through their design. Writing up and presenting the qualitative results was the final step. It is important to emphasize that the researchers evaluated the validity and trustworthiness of the results. With regard to the former, they hired two code analysts. Their inter-rater consistency was 0.79 and they independently coded the data. Six students were asked to assess if the passages taken accurately reflected the authors' identified meanings as part of the researchers' member checking technique. They all stated that the passages taken were quite representative.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

A. The Results of Quantitative Analysis

The first research question probed whether podcasts and blogs developed the reading skills of Saudi EFL students. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the study. The podcasting group had a mean (M) of 23.31 and a standard deviation (SD) of 4.78, while the blogging group had a mean (M) of 22.21 and a standard deviation (SD) of 4.51. The control group had a mean (M) of 21.61 and a standard deviation (SD) of 4.37.

TABLE 1
STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' READING SCORES ON THE PRE-TEST

Group	Tests	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Podcasting	Pre-test (PT)	22	23.31	4.78
Blogging	Pre-test (PT)	22	22.21	4.51
Control	Pre-test (PT)	22	21.61	4.37

In the next phase of analysis, the researchers evaluated the normality of the data using a One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. As shown in Table 2, the values of significance were all greater than 0.05, indicating that the data followed a normal distribution. Once normality was confirmed, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether there were any statistically significant differences in the pre-test scores among the groups (Table 3). The results revealed no significant differences between the groups, with $p > 0.05$. Subsequently, the post-test was administered after the instructional interventions.

TABLE 2
OUTCOMES OF THE ONE-SAMPLE KOLMOGOROV-SMIRNOV TEST

N		PT- Control	PTT-Control	PT-Pod	PTT- Pod	PT- Blog	PTT Blog	
Normal Parameters		M	12.57	15.70	13.55	24.99	4.12	23.45
		S. D	4.39	4.37	4.70	4.43	3.67	6.98
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.080	.175	.138	.119	.137	.088	
	Positive	.080	.175	.138	.119	.137	.078	
	Negative	-.065	-.117	-.068	-.098	-.116	-.089	
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.393	.801	.605	.492	.599	.374	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.97	.56	.87	.98	.89	.97	

* PT stands for pre-test and PTT stands for post-test

TABLE 3
OUTCOMES OF THE ONE-WAY ANOVA CONDUCTED ON THE PRE-TEST DATA

		Sum of Squares	Df	M	F	Sig.
Pre-test	Between Groups	32.60	2	14.82	0.24	.208
	Within Groups	808.40	54	12.64		
	Sum	841.00	56			

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistical summary for the post-test. The podcast group achieved a mean score of 22.89 (SD = 6.54), the blogging group reported a mean of 23.76 (SD = 4.32), and the control group recorded a mean of 14.43 (SD = 3.09). A one-way ANOVA was performed to analyze the post-test findings (see Table 5). The findings indicated a statistically significant difference between the experimental groups (podcasting and blogging) and the control group ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that the instructional strategies contributed to the observed variations in post-test performance.

TABLE 4
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF LEARNERS' READING SCORES FROM THE POST-TEST

Group	Tests	N	Mean	SD
Podcasting	PTT	22	22.89	6.54
	PTT	22	23.76	4.32
	PTT	22	14.43	3.09

TABLE 5
OUTCOMES OF THE ONE-WAY ANOVA ANALYSIS FOR THE POST-TEST

		Sum	Df	Mean	F	Sig.
Post-test	Between Groups	1256.60	3	581.86	24.67	.03
	Within Groups	1476.60	55	29.21		
	Total	2733.20	58			

A Tukey test was performed to identify significant differences among the groups. As shown in Table 6, the p-value for the comparison between the podcasting group and the control group was 0.03, which is below the significance level of 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference between these groups. Likewise, the blogging group also showed a significant difference when compared to the control group, with a p-value of 0.01 ($p < 0.05$).

The researchers conducted Scheffé test to determine if there was a significant difference between the podcasting and blogging groups, as detailed in Table 7. The results indicated no statistically significant difference between the groups ($p = 0.94$, $p > 0.05$) in their reading comprehension improvements. This finding suggests that both podcasting and blogging methods were equally effective in improving participants' reading comprehension skills.

TABLE 6
TUKEY TEST OUTCOMES FOR THE POST-TEST ANALYSIS

95% Confidence Interval						
Group	Test	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Podcast	Blogging	-.951	2.557	.82	-4.66	3.78
	Control	7.950*	2.557	.00	5.02	22.48
Blog	Podcasting	.951	2.557	.82	-2.76	5.68
	Control	7.800*	2.557	.001	5.88	23.43

TABLE 7
OUTCOMES OF THE SCHEFFÉ TEST COMPARING POST-TEST RESULTS BETWEEN THE PODCASTING GROUP AND THE BLOGGING GROUP

Subset for alpha ¼ 0.05			
VAR00001	N	1	2
1.00	22	15.0589	
2.00	22		21.900
3.00	22		22.88
Sig.		1.022	.94

B. Qualitative Results

The third research question examined the views of Saudi EFL students regarding the impact of podcasts and blogs on their reading comprehension. The qualitative findings, supporting the quantitative results, indicated that EFL learners perceived podcasts and blogs as effective tools for enhancing their RC skills.

One participant emphasized:

"Using blogs significantly improved my reading comprehension. They also provided enjoyment, ease of use, and compatibility, which greatly influenced my ability to understand passages."

Echoing this sentiment, another learner who appreciated using podcasts stated:

"Podcasts were an excellent learning resource. They were easy to manage and allowed me to chronologically organize and publish my assignments. They encouraged online interactions and fostered my autonomy, making comprehension of passages less challenging."

Similarly, another participant remarked:

"I found blogs highly convenient due to their multimedia features, user-friendly interface, interactivity, and support for collaborative and autonomous learning. They enabled peer interaction and cooperation, which helped us derive accurate meanings from passages, thereby improving my reading comprehension effectively."

Another learner added:

"Podcasts transformed my study habits, helping me enhance my reading comprehension. They shifted my role from a passive user to an active contributor of information. Using them was the simplest way to engage with texts and understand their content. Additionally, podcasts facilitated experience-sharing with peers, which deepened my understanding of the passages."

Highlighting the motivational impact of blogs, one participant shared:

"Blogging significantly boosted my motivation to keep reading. Knowing that my comprehension was being assessed by peers encouraged me to strive for thorough understanding. Moreover, when peers sought my help, I meticulously read the passages to provide accurate answers."

Participants also highlighted the durability of podcasts as a key benefit. One explained:

"One major advantage of podcasts is their long-lasting availability. I could revisit previous episodes to review material and resolve issues. For instance, when I forgot how to apply skimming and scanning techniques, I simply returned to earlier podcasts to reinforce my learning."

In addition, the reflective opportunities offered by blogs and podcasts were emphasized. One learner stated:

"The effectiveness of blogs in improving my reading comprehension lies in their reflective nature. After writing blog entries, I could review them repeatedly, identify errors, and make corrections. This process helped me address gaps and improve over time."

These excerpts collectively illustrate that participants held overwhelmingly positive perceptions of podcasting and blogging as tools for enhancing their reading comprehension.

V. DISCUSSION

The first research question sought to assess whether podcasting and blogging improved reading comprehension (RC) performance among advanced Saudi EFL learners. The findings revealed that the experimental groups (podcasting and blogging) significantly outperformed the control group on the post-test. However, there was no statistically significant difference in RC gains between the podcasting and blogging groups, suggesting that both approaches were equally effective in enhancing comprehension. These results indicate that the improvements observed in the experimental groups can be attributed to instructional interventions, with participants benefiting from the use of podcasting and blogging.

The study's outcomes are consistent with previous research. For instance, Abdulaal et al. (2020) found that video podcasting significantly improved listening comprehension, while Taheri and Bartlett (1999) reported positive effects of podcast- and video-based programs on learners' performance. Similarly, Saeedakhtar et al. (2021) observed that collaborative podcast-based listening enhanced listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, aligning with this study's findings. Additional support comes from studies by Abdulaal et al. (2022) and Yeh et al. (2021), which demonstrated that podcasts and blogs improved listening, speaking, and vocabulary skills while fostering positive learner attitudes. Moreover, Cain et al. (2004) reported that podcasting significantly enhanced Saudi EFL learners' listening comprehension, further validating the current study's results.

The effectiveness of podcasts and blogs can be attributed to their unique characteristics. Unlike traditional classroom settings, these tools offer flexibility, durability, and accessibility, enabling learners to revisit content at their convenience. They also provide opportunities for collaborative learning and knowledge-sharing, fostering an interactive and cooperative learning environment. Dörnyei (2005) highlighted that the adaptability of podcasts and blogs enriches learning experiences and enhances engagement. Additionally, their capacity to support knowledge construction through interaction aligns with the principles of the communicative approach.

Podcasts and blogs also promote social interaction, creating a sense of community that motivates learners to engage more deeply with reading materials. These tools encourage learners to reflect on their understanding and integrate feedback from peers, enhancing their interlanguage development. Furthermore, learners perceive podcasts and blogs as

user-friendly, enabling them to participate actively in comprehension tasks, unlike traditional methods with limited interaction and audience reach (Hsu & Wang, 2010).

Another key advantage of podcasts and blogs is their potential for personalization. Learners can tailor their use of these tools to align with their individual needs, strategies, and learning styles. Hafner and Miller (2011) emphasized that personalization allows learners to focus on their strengths and address weaknesses, leading to faster and more effective learning. Similarly, McQuail (2005) highlighted that podcasts and blogs make learning more accessible and enjoyable, fostering a supportive environment for comprehension.

The second research question explored learners' perceptions of podcasts and blogs in cultivating RC. Participants expressed overwhelmingly positive views, citing features such as flexibility, durability of learning materials, ease of use, and opportunities for reflection and peer assessment. These tools enabled learners to adopt active roles as contributors rather than passive consumers, further enhancing their RC gains.

Consistent with Hsu and Wang (2010), who found that digital texts and blogs improved RC, this study corroborates Yakut and Aydın's (2017) findings, which similarly highlighted the value of blogging and podcasting in promoting reading comprehension. Collectively, the results suggest that podcasts and blogs are effective tools for fostering and consolidating RC in EFL contexts.

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study investigated the effectiveness of podcasting and blogging in improving the reading comprehension (RC) of Saudi EFL learners. The results indicated that both the podcasting and blogging groups performed significantly better than the control group following the interventions. However, no significant difference was found between the two experimental groups. Supporting qualitative data highlighted participants' positive attitudes toward the use of podcasting and blogging for enhancing RC. The findings suggest that these tools fostered greater interaction among learners and deeper engagement with texts, leading to notable improvements in comprehension. Based on the findings, several practical recommendations are proposed:

School principals and language institute administrators should integrate modern technologies into their institutions to support EFL teaching and learning. For instance, classrooms should be outfitted with sufficient computers and other technological tools to facilitate the use of podcasts and blogs. Curriculum developers should incorporate multimedia resources, such as podcasts and blogs, into reading materials. These resources should encourage peer interaction, include systems for regular progress monitoring, and implement new assessment practices to accurately evaluate learners' development. EFL learners should enhance their technological proficiency to use podcasts and blogs effectively in language learning. This involves gaining hands-on experience with these tools to develop the necessary digital skills. Considering the limitations of this study, the following directions are recommended for further research:

- A. *Longitudinal Studies*: While this study was cross-sectional, future research could adopt a longitudinal approach to examine the long-term impacts of podcasting and blogging on reading comprehension.
- B. *Broader Educational Contexts*: Researchers might investigate the impact of podcasting and blogging on high school and university learners, expanding beyond language institutes.
- C. *Investigating Similar Outcomes*: Additional quantitative and qualitative studies could explore why podcasting and blogging yielded similar results. For instance, observational data could provide insights into the mechanisms behind these comparable outcomes.
- D. *Micro-genetic Approaches*: Future research could utilize micro-genetic methods to track learners' moment-to-moment development in RC through podcasting and blogging, offering a more detailed understanding of their progress.

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