

A Longitudinal Study: The Effectiveness of Podcasts for Learning English

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A longitudinal study was carried out to determine if listening to English-learning podcasts correlates with higher listening scores on TOEFL-TOEIC-Dictation-type tests. Nine motivated Japanese university students with an average TOEIC score of 564 (SD=155) listened to whatever English podcasts they liked, whenever they liked, during a 5-month period. During this time, they sent short, weekly e-mail reports to the researchers, describing how much and in what ways they were listening to podcasts. Fifty-item listening tests were given to the students at the beginning of the experiment, 5 months later at the end, and then a follow-up test was given two months later to determine if they retained knowledge. This study included a control group, and also it tested to see how parallel the three tests were.

It was found that the nine students, as a group, did not improve their overall listening skills significantly during the 5-month period, improving an average of only 3.6%. Some students got slightly better scores while other students got slightly worse scores. But a couple of students seemed to have significantly improved. And, as a group, the students significantly improved on the sub-skill of dictation ($p < .05$).

One reason for the lack of significant progress in overall listening as a group is attributed to the fact that the average student listened to podcasts only a couple of hours per week. Other interesting information was also gleaned from their weekly reports. Importantly, this study also identified 10 listening structures which students found difficult, including Conditional Past "If" grammar, and words such as "barely" and "(bank) checks".

BACKGROUND

Podcasts are a new and exciting way for students to improve their English listening skills. For usually no money, students can download interesting and educational programs from the Internet into personal computers and mobile devices such as iPods. The audio and/or visual programs are automatically delivered to subscribers, often on a weekly or even on a daily basis. Learners can utilize those materials whenever they want, wherever they want, and as often as they want—again, virtually for no money.

But are podcasts really effective for improving English listening skills?

Theoretically, they appear to be very powerful (e.g., Rosell-Aguilar, 2007; Hinkel, 2006; Sloan, 2005). Podcasts seem to conform well to communicative approaches (interacting with the real world), behaviorist notions (listening and repeating), and lifelong learning theories. For example, podcasts are studied mostly outside of class, and so are imbedded in real life. Podcasts

are also compatible with chunking theory in that individual podcasts are associated with particular themes (such as the environment, or Chicago, or music) and students can link the vocabulary taught in that podcast to that particular theme. In summary, podcasts seem to be powerful because they provide access to large amounts of authentic materials, and because students have control over the materials they listen to. These factors are very motivating.

But almost no applied linguistic research has been conducted to assess the effectiveness. In an important study, Lauer (2009) surveyed the opinions of 83 Japanese university freshmen who listened to a variety of English-learning podcasts which are available online. According to the questionnaire, which was conducted in Japanese, an amazing 90% of students rated the podcasts they listened to as being either very good or good. Specifically, 36% of all students rated them as *very good*, and 54% of all students rated them *good*.

In another study, Lauer (2008) evaluated 77 English-learning podcast sites. He determined that the best podcasts for intermediate-level Japanese learners of English were: Weblish: メディア英会話, the Daily English Show, 英会話 e-chat Vancouver, English Journal, ECC 英会話 Podcasting, Voice of America Special English, and the Nikkei Weekly Interview. The best podcasts were said to have Japanese support, full transcripts, comprehension exercises, longer files, and rich archives. Video podcasts received some of the highest scores in the study. In another study, Yao and Nan (2009) found that using Voice of America Special English in classes improved Chinese students' English speaking and writing abilities.

The aim of the present study is to determine if listening to podcasts improves students' English listening abilities.

METHOD, AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Nine students (five females) took part in most of the experiment. At the beginning of the study, they filled out a questionnaire, in Japanese, describing their backgrounds and English abilities. Those self-descriptions are summarized below, with the students ranked by their personal highest TOEIC scores, from highest to lowest.

- 1) Ayami—TOEIC=850. Passed Eiken- Pre-1st Level. Said that she was pretty good at listening, reading, and writing, but was bad at speaking.
- 2) Takahiro—TOEIC=730. Passed Eiken 2nd Level. Said that he was relatively good in daily conversation, but was weak in vocabulary.
- 3) Shiho—TOEIC=640. TOEFL Computer=168. Said that she was good at speaking and listening to daily conversation materials, but was weak at vocabulary.
- 4) Yuki—TOEIC=600. Passed Eiken Pre-2nd Level. Said that she was good at reading, but got frustrated when listening to things that she did not understand.
- 5) Yasuhiro—TOEIC=510. Passed Eiken 2nd Level. TOEFL Computer = 140. Said that he was good at reading, but bad at listening.
- 6) Masayuki—TOEIC=500. Passed Eiken Pre-2nd Level. Said that he was good at grammar and reading, but was bad at listening and speaking.
- 7) Yuka—TOEIC=450. Passed Eiken 3rd Level. Said that she was relatively good at

listening, but was weak in reading and vocabulary ability.

8) Nami—TOEIC=410. Said that she was relatively outgoing, not afraid to talk to foreigners, but was weak in reading ability and vocabulary.

9) Chizoko—TOEIC=385. Passed Eiken Pre-2nd Level. Said that she lacked determination.

All of the students were quite motivated to learn English, as evidenced by their rather high TOEIC scores (average=564, SD=155) and willingness to join the study. Four of the students had spent an average of three weeks abroad; plus, Shiho had lived in Germany for two years, and Nami had been in England for four months. The students were aged 19-22, except for Chizoko who was 60 years old, and Yasuhiro who was 34. Yasuhiro was the only graduate student. They were studying in a wide range of faculties. Only one of the students (Takahiro) said that he had ever used podcasts to study English before the experiment began, and that experience was not extensive.

The students volunteered for the longitudinal study because they were told it would be a chance for them to improve their English skills, and because they would be given 90 minutes of free private English-conversation lessons after the study. Seven of the nine students (except for Yasuhiro and Takahiro) were involved in other English courses during the study. Eight of the students volunteered for the study after seeing announcements posted on bulletin boards; the ninth student, Nami, was in one of the researcher's courses. At the beginning of the study, the students were given a brief introduction to podcasts, and were given a list of about 50 podcasting sites available for free on Internet, which they could listen to if they wished; but they were not limited to those sites.

At the beginning of the experiment, the students were encouraged to listen to their favorite podcasts "as much as possible." But during the experiment, each week, the researchers purposely did not encourage the students to work hard, because the researchers wanted to monitor students who were not being encouraged by outside people. In other words, an attempt was made to measure the progress of students who were only self-motivated.

Every week the students were asked to send a short e-mail to the researchers, describing, in Japanese, the names of the podcasts they had listened to, how long they had listened to them, and whether they were using a portable device or a desktop computer. The students were very diligent in sending the weekly reports, and the reports provided valuable information in the study.

To assess their listening skills, the students were given three listening tests: Test 1 in early May, Test 2 in October when the students were told that the experiment was basically finished and they did not need to send in any more reports, and Test 3 in December. Importantly, each test was composed of 20 TOEFL-like Part A questions (each valued at 2 points), 20 TOEIC-like Part 2 questions (each valued at 2 points), and a 20-item fill-in-the-blank dictation quiz (each word blank valued at 1 point). Thus, 40% of each test was TOEFL-like, 40% was TOEIC-like, and 20% assessed dictation abilities. TOEFL, TOEIC, and dictation scores are all thought to correlate with English listening abilities (e.g., Tanaka, 2005; Brown & Hudson, 2002). In this study, the test instructions were written in Japanese, and the instructions and example questions

were provided in English on the audio recordings. For an exact citation of the sources for the three tests, see Appendix 2.

Tests 1 and 2 can be said to be exactly parallel, because they contained the exact same questions, with only the order of the questions in each part changed. For Test 2, it can be argued that the students did NOT learn from Test 1 because the students were given no answers after Test 1, the Test 1 question sheets were immediately collected from the students, and, of course, they were not told that Test 2 would be very similar to Test 1. Five months then passed in which the students probably forgot the questions. Finally, to evaluate “test backwash” (ie., learning from the previous test), at the end of Test 2 students were given a survey in Japanese asking if they thought the two tests contained the same questions, and 6 of the 9 answered that they thought the tests were totally different.

The researchers also made an effort to maintain and to test the similarity between Test 1-2 and Test 3. First, the two groups of test questions were randomly chosen from the same books, thus probably insuring the same level of difficulty. And to test the similarity between Test 1-2 and Test 3, a side-experiment was conducted. Forty-three university students with very similar TOEIC scores enrolled in an “English Reading Course” were randomly divided into two groups in a CALL room, with half of the students taking Test 1 and the other half taking Test 3 on the same day. The students averaged 54.8 % correct (SD=9.2) on Test 1, and 49.9% correct (SD=8.1) on Test 3, indicating that Test 3 seems to have been a little more difficult. Also, as will be explained later, 7 of the 10 hardest questions appeared on Test 3.

Finally and importantly, this research contained a control group to see if students who are probably not listening to podcasts but are enrolled in other English courses (as seven of our nine students were) also improved their listening skills during the longitudinal study. Similar to our podcast subjects, the control group students were motivated learners (enrolled in Hiroshima University’s special Tokutei English Program) with quite high TOEIC scores (Average=702 (SD=112)). A total of 19 students from two of these courses (an oral presentation course and a reading course) took Test 1 at the beginning of the course, and Test 2 three months later. The students averaged 59.2% correct on Test 1 (SD=10.7), and 64.2% correct on Test 2 (SD=9.8). This indicates that students who were not engaged in the podcast project seem to have improved their listening scores slightly, but not significantly over several months.

PODCAST STUDENTS’ RESULTS, AND DISCUSSION

As can be seen from Table 1, the nine podcast students improved, on average, only 3.6% between the pre-test in early May and the post-test in October. This rate of improvement was very similar to that of the control group. Furthermore, the students’ abilities, as a group, basically stayed the same on the follow-up test given in December. When analyzing the table, it should be remembered that the December test was slightly more difficult than the other tests. Thus, students’ listening abilities in December probably improved slightly more than the numbers indicate.

Table 1: Student Scores during the Longitudinal Study.

Name	Pre-Test Correct (May)	Post-Test Correct (Oct.)	Follow-up Test Correct (Dec.)
Ayami	79%	72%	x
Takahiro	63%	55%	61%
Shiho	62%	x	70%
Yuki	65%	59%	x
Yasuhiro	50%	53%	46%
Masayuki	42%	56%	53%
Yuka	50%	56%	59%
Nami	42%	62%	50%
Chizoko	34%	40%	38%
Averages	53%*	56.62%*	54.75%**

*Ignores Shiho's scores **Includes filling in the Post-Test Scores for 2 students, and ignores Shiho's scores. x = Data not available.

These results seem to indicate one of two things: Either 1) Listening to podcasts is not really related to significant improvements in English listening skills over the course of a few months, or 2) The skills learned in listening to English podcasts are not very closely related to the skills needed for taking a TOEIC-TOEFL-Dictation-type listening test. Needless-to-say, the authors hope, and believe, that the second conclusion is probably more justifiable.

Importantly, this study found that almost all of the TOEFL-TOEIC-type listening structures which were difficult for students on Test 1 were also difficult for the students on Test 2. (As stated above, the two tests were identical, except for the question order.) In fact, for 39 of the 40 questions, no more than two of the eight students who took both tests showed improvement on any particular question. This provides evidence that the students showed no significant improvement with those structures by listening to podcasts during the five-month period.

Only on one question, Question 29 on Test 2, did students show significant improvement. On the pre-test, 1 student got it correct, but on the post-test 5 students got it correct. The question asks, "Who should get a copy of this letter?" On the pre-test, 6 of the 9 students incorrectly chose "I put it in the mailbox." But on the post-test, 5 of the 8 students correctly chose "Everyone who was at the meeting." It is difficult to assume why they improved with this question.

Alas, this sign of improvement is countered by two questions from Test 2 with which students did significantly worse on the post-test: Questions 14 and 36. The first item saw a drop from 4 students to 1 student getting it correct between the two tests, and the second item saw a drop from 6 students to 1 student. It is probably impossible to explain why.

On dictation, however, significant improvement was noticed ($p < .05$). Students got a total of 63% correct on Test 1, but improved to 76% on Test 2. They had a total of 59 dictation errors on Test 1, but only 39 errors on Test 2. Of the 39 errors, 32 also occurred on Test 1, indicating that those 32 words were not learned during the longitudinal study. No pattern could be determined as to which type of words they improved on. The control group, meanwhile, got 76% of the dictation words correct on Test 1, and improved to 79% on Test 2.

Individually, Chizoko said that she often practiced dictation, and Yuki, Masayuki and Nami reported that they occasionally did some dictation practice with podcasts. Alas, Chizoko did not improve on her dictation scores between Test 1 and Test 2, getting 8 words wrong on each test. But the other three students remarkably improved from an average of 55% correct to 75% correct between the two tests ($p < .05$).

Another important finding in this study concerns how the students listened to podcasts from May to October. The descriptions are summarized as follows:

- 1) Ayami— The student with the highest TOEIC score very regularly spent 80 minutes per week listening to ESL Podcast. She almost always listened to the 15-minute podcast about 5 times, while glancing over the accompanying script and concentrating on new vocabulary. She used only a PC.
- 2) Takahiro— The student with the second-highest TOEIC score had the weakest podcast-listening habits. During the beginning of the study, he listened a little to the podcasts ECC 英会話 Podcasting, BBC Global News, and Dogwhisperer, but during most of the study he did not listen to any podcasts, he said, because he was busy preparing to enter graduate school in the near future. But he did participate in the three tests.
- 3) Shiho— This student very regularly listened to podcasts an average of 2.5 hours per week. But for one month during the summer she did not listen to any podcasts at all. She fairly-equally listened to ECC 英会話 Podcasting and Hiroshima University Podcast. In addition to just listening, she often did shadowing (repeating the utterances in a loud voice). She sometimes used an iPod and sometimes used a PC to listen to them.
- 4) Yuki— The student with the fourth-best TOEIC score listened to podcasts about 3 hours per week, with the amount ranging from 9 hours to nothing in a given week. He listened to ECC 英会話 Podcasting, ポッドキャスト英会話, and CNN Student News. He mostly just listened, but sometimes did shadowing and even dictation. He used both a PC and an iPod.
- 5) Yasuhiro— The only graduate student listened to podcasts for about 1 hour during most weeks, but during a few weeks he did not listen to them at all. During the first couple of weeks, he tried out about six different podcast sites, but after that he narrowed it down to mostly Hiroshima University English Podcast, and sometimes VOA, Weblish, or The Daily English Show. He sometimes did shadowing. He used only a PC.
- 6) Masayuki— This student consistently listened to podcasts an average of 2 hours per week (ranging from 1 to 3 hours). He rotated between three podcast sites: ECC 英会話 Podcasting, 英語をモノにするポッドキャスト, and 毎日ちこっとリスニング特訓. He sometimes took dictation and often did shadowing. He used only an iPod.
- 7) Yuka— She averaged about 5 hours of podcast listening per week, listening for over 10 hours on some weeks but not listening at all during a few other weeks. She listened to Global News and CBeebies Best Bits, using only an iPod. Notably, she was one of the few students who did not report doing shadowing.
- 8) Nami— She averaged about 1 hour per week, listening during most weeks. She used a

wide variety of materials: ESL, Hiroshima University Podcast, TOEIC完全攻略, 単語工場, and English Café. She often studied the scripts while listening, and sometimes took notes. She used only an iPod.

- 9) Chizoko—The student with the weakest TOEIC score, and the only “senior citizen” in the group, was the most diligent, listening about one to two hours on most days, averaging about 8 hours per week. She mostly used ESL-Aloud, ESL-Pod, and English Café. She repeatedly reviewed, did a lot of shadowing, and often took dictation. Mostly she used a PC, but sometimes she used an iPod.

In summary, most students listened to podcasts only 1 to 3 hours per week. Ironically, two of the weaker TOEIC students (Chizoko and Yuka) used podcasts the most, while one of the stronger TOEIC students (Takahiro) used them the least. Interestingly, the listening scores of Chizoko and Yuka went up a bit during this longitudinal study, while Takahiro’s score went down a bit.

The students who seemed to improve their listening scores the most during the study were Masayuki, Nami, and Yuka. Two of the students (Masayuki and Nami) did not spend a tremendous amount of time listening to podcasts, averaging only one or two hours per week.

But when they did listen, they seemed to be “active listeners”, often doing either shadowing or note-taking. The third student (Yuka) listened fairly often, averaging about 5 hours per week.

The one senior citizen in the study, Chizoko, aged 60, listened very diligently, but seemed to fail in significantly raising her listening scores.

Importantly, this study identified 10 listening structures which were hard for students. The following questions were each answered correctly by no more than two students. (The three Test 2 problems can be found in their entirety in Appendix 1. T3 means the Post-post Test, and those questions can be seen in their entirety by looking at the reference sources in Appendix 2.)

- ☆ T2#1—Involves Conditional Past Tense “If”. Key line: “If the computers hadn’t gone on sale, then I couldn’t have afforded to buy one.” Students need to be able to assume that she did buy one. Most students chose A or B, assuming that she did not buy one.
- ☆ T2#10—Most students did not know that “must be accurate” is similar to “are most probably correct.” Several students incorrectly chose A, assuming that “must be accurate” is similar to “are unconfirmed.”
- ☆ T2#20—Involves a passive voice restatement, and understanding the vocabulary item “courier.”
- ☆ T3#3—Involves the word “(bank) checks.” Sentence: “I’ve written checks for rent and electricity...” Question: What is the man most likely doing?
- ☆ T3#14—Involves the expression “a solar eclipse” and knowing that this involves “an astronomer.”
- ☆ T3#18—Involves understanding the word “barely.”
- ☆ T3#23—Reason for difficulty is hard to assume. Question: “Why weren’t you at the going-away party?” Answer: “I had to do the books.” Six students chose “When I saw him last.”
- ☆ T3#24—Involves the word “typist” and making an explanatory response. Question:

“Do you have a typist?” Answer: “No, I do everything myself.” Four students chose “Yes, I’ll have some.”

☆ T3#36—Involves a very indirect response (i.e., not yes or no), and knowing that it is an either-or question. Question: “Is the lawyer going to meet us here or at his office?” Answer: “I thought he’d let us know.” Five students chose “No, but he will by Friday.”

☆ T3#40—Involves a subtle difference between “before” and “until.” Question: “How soon can you have the documents translated?” Answer: “Not before the 1st of the month.” Three students incorrectly chose “Until Thursday probably,” and three chose “For a few weeks.”

In summary, the students mostly failed to learn the above listening structures by listening to podcasts. So the question is, “Why?” The most obvious answer seems to be that most of the above questions involve restatements of difficult grammar patterns and vocabulary items, and these are probably rarely found in podcasts. For example, Conditional Past Tense “If”, and the expressions “(bank) checks”, “solar eclipse” and “barely” are hard for Japanese students of English. Another probable reason why the students did not improve much is that most of the students did not listen to podcasts very much each week, only averaging a couple of hours.

CONCLUSIONS

This longitudinal study did not detect significant improvement in the overall English listening skills of most students. But students did significantly improve on the skill of dictation.

One likely reason for the lack of progress on the TOEFL-TOEIC sections of the test is that those types of questions do not seem to correspond to skills learned in podcasts. Another reason why most of the students probably did not improve much is that most of them only chose to listen to English podcasts a couple of hours per week. The students must have had other interests and obligations in their lives.

But, some students did seem to improve overall. For example, Nami recorded a remarkable 20% improvement between Test 1 and Test 2. And Masayuki improved 14% between the same two extremely parallel tests. In the future, applied linguists should make further efforts to determine if listening to English podcasts correlates with improved listening skills.

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APPENDIX 1

Test 1 and Test 2.

(Note: The two tests were identical, except for the question order in each part being randomly different. Below is Test 2. The correct answers are underlined.)

Part A—(Instructions and example question omitted here.)

- M: Were you able to get a new computer?

W: If the computers hadn't gone on sale, then I just couldn't have afforded to buy one.

M: What does the woman imply?

(A) She couldn't afford a new computer.

(B) The computers were not on sale.

(C) She was unable to get a new computer.

(D) She bought a new computer.
- W: Would you like to stop in here for a few minutes for a snack or a drink?

M: That sounds like a good idea. I certainly am thirsty.

M: What does the man mean?

(A) It's a good idea to be thrifty.

(B) He's feeling a little dirty.

(C) He'd like something to drink.

(D) Stopping for 30 minutes is a good idea.
- W: Have you met the new neighbors yet?

M: No, I haven't. Why don't we go call on them?

M: What does the man mean?

(A) They should call out to their neighbors.

(B) They should visit their neighbors.

(C) They should phone their neighbors.

(D) They should look over their neighbors.

4. W: Do you know when you're going to be ready to leave?
M: I hope we can go a bit later in the evening. I'd like to get a little rest before we go out.
M: What does the man want to do?
(A) Take a short nap.
(B) Go out now.
(C) Enjoy the rest of the evening.
(D) Have a little snack before going out.
5. M: I'm going to stop in at this shop and get a couple of magazines to read.
W: But the plane is taking off soon.
M: What does the woman mean?
(A) A flight is departing in the near future.
(B) The plane is taking off early.
(C) The man needs to make plans soon.
(D) The plane is taking up space.
6. W: Can you take a shot of this?
M: Yes, I can. There's still a little film left in the camera.
M: What is the man most likely doing?
(A) Watching a movie.
(B) Hunting.
(C) Buying film.
(D) Taking photos.
7. W: Do you get to many of the university's football games?
M: Only rarely.
M: What does the man mean?
(A) He has never gone to any games.
(B) It is rare for the football team to win.
(C) He doesn't go to games often.
(D) It is rare for the university team to have a game.
8. M: I'm going to work really hard this year and see if I can graduate in June.
W: It doesn't sound easy, but I don't think it's an unreachable goal.
M: What does the woman think?
(A) That the man should not reach out so far.
(B) That the man can accomplish what he wants.
(C) That the man will be unable to graduate.
(D) That the man cannot score a goal.

9. M: How did Ana react to the situation?
W: She couldn't have been more delighted.
M: How did Ana feel about the situation?
(A) She was less than delighted.
(B) She was quite pleased.
(C) She was unable to accept it.
(D) She wished she could have been more delighted.
10. W: The results have been confirmed by several independent researchers.
M: Then they must be accurate.
M: What does the man say about the results?
(A) They are unconfirmed.
(B) They are dependent on future research.
(C) They are most probably correct.
(D) They are independent of the researchers' ideas.
11. W: That musical production was truly magnificent.
M: I'll say!
M: What does the man mean?
(A) He's going to say something in the theater.
(B) What the woman said was magnified out of proportion.
(C) The size of the theater was magnificent.
(D) He shares the woman's opinion.
12. M: It's an awfully long walk home, and I'm more than a little tired.
W: Let's take the bus instead of walking. Then you'll be able to get home quickly and get some sleep.
M: What does the woman suggest?
(A) Going home on the bus.
(B) Sleeping on the bus.
(C) Taking a quick walk.
(D) Getting some sleep before going home.
13. W: Doesn't Kathy have to work tonight?
M: Luckily, she was able to persuade her roommate to take her shift.
M: What does the man say about Kathy?
(A) She must work tonight.
(B) The shift in her plans is unlikely.
(C) Her roommate is persuasive.
(D) Her roommate will work in her place.

14. M: Did you enjoy the theater performance last night?
W: It wasn't all I had hoped for.
M: What does the woman say about the performance?
(A) It met her expectations.
(B) It was rather mediocre.
(C) It was what she had hoped to see.
(D) It was the last performance.
15. M: Can I have an ashtray please?
W: Oh, smoking isn't permitted here. You'll have to extinguish your cigarette.
M: What does the woman ask the man to do with the cigarette?
(A) Put it away.
(B) Put it off.
(C) Put it out.
(D) Put it down.
16. M: Can you tell me about any previous office experience you have?
W: I've worked as a receptionist in a doctor's office for a year and a half.
M: What is the woman probably doing?
(A) Visiting a doctor.
(B) Attending a reception.
(C) Applying to medical school.
(D) Interviewing for a job.
17. W: Will Doctor Burton be the speaker at tonight's conference?
M: As far as I know.
M: What can be inferred about the man?
(A) He will be far from the conference tonight.
(B) He's not quite sure who the speaker will be.
(C) He knows Dr. Burton well.
(D) He knows that Dr. Burton will be speaking.
18. W: What do you think of this accounting report?
M: It doesn't seem to have been done very carefully.
M: What does the man imply about the report?
(A) It is not done yet.
(B) It was not done carelessly.
(C) It does not seem to have been done by the accountant.
(D) It contains a lot of errors.

19. M: Do you think you'll be able to find someone else to head this committee?

W: No problem! You're off the hook!

M: What does the woman mean?

- (A) The phone is off the hook.
- (B) The man will head the committee.
- (C) The man is no longer responsible.
- (D) The committee meeting has been put off.

20. M: Has the lawyer received the letter yet?

W: The letter was delivered to the lawyer's office by courier just this morning.

M: What does the woman mean?

- (A) The lawyer delivered the letter this morning.
- (B) The courier has already made the delivery.
- (C) The letter to the courier has already been received.
- (D) The lawyer's office does not have the letter.

Part B— (Instructions and example question omitted here.)

21. Where is your boss spending his winter vacation?

- (A) It's too cold in January.
- (B) He's planning to ski in the Alps.
- (C) About \$1,000 a week.

22. How did you decide to start manufacturing abroad?

- (A) We ship the goods.
- (B) Yes, it was a timely decision.
- (C) It costs less.

23. Have you lost weight?

- (A) No, it must be my new hairstyle.
- (B) Yes, I do.
- (C) I have a small suitcase.

24. Are you hiring in the design department?

- (A) We're looking for two replacements.
- (B) The windows should be lowered.
- (C) The decorator chose the furniture.

25. You've handed in the file draft, haven't you?
(A) Yes, it's cold in here.
(B) I have to proofread it again.
(C) No, I went to the playoffs last week.
26. Who paid for your relocation expenses?
(A) The apartment they found is too small.
(B) Thank goodness the company did.
(C) Because we're moving to Berlin.
27. Would you rather drive or go by bus?
(A) Either way is fine.
(B) You need tokens for the subway.
(C) I'll take both.
28. Is there a gas station open at this hour?
(A) There's one on Second Avenue.
(B) Before 10 p.m.
(C) They all change tires.
29. Who should get a copy of this letter?
(A) I put it in the mailbox.
(B) Everyone who was at the meeting.
(C) The stamp machine is broken.
30. What time is the conference call?
(A) In the Smith Room.
(B) At noon on the dot.
(C) Mr. Johnson asked to have one.
31. How long have you worked in Singapore?
(A) The weather is wonderful.
(B) Seven weeks ago.
(C) Just about six months.
32. Don't you ever wish you had taken the other job offer?
(A) I must have sent in the form.
(B) I try not to think about it.
(C) Tell him I'll see him later.

33. How do you know who to tip in this country?
(A) I checked my guidebook.
(B) About 15 or 20 percent.
(C) There are lots of tourists.
34. Who's in charge of office supplies?
(A) I'll pay for them later.
(B) We just got a new copier.
(C) It's Gloria on the first floor.
35. Could we stay in our room after check out?
(A) Check out is at 1:00.
(B) No, cancellations must be made 24 hours in advance.
(C) We'll have to charge you for another day.
36. That's the Federal Reserve Bank, right?
(A) I'm pretty sure it is.
(B) No, I use a local bank.
(C) Yes, I left my money in the room.
37. What did you think of the president's memo?
(A) All deliveries are at 5.
(B) I thought it was today.
(C) I'm not sure what the point was.
38. Have you ever played tennis on grass courts?
(A) My serve is getting better.
(B) No, but I'd like to try.
(C) The basketball court has plenty of seating.
39. Do I have to exchange my ticket at the airport?
(A) No, these are train tickets.
(B) Actually, you can do it by phone.
(C) I'll recommend taking a taxi.
40. How often do you check your e-mail?
(A) No, I don't.
(B) For six months.
(C) Every morning.

Part C— Dictation (Sample question omitted here.)

- 41) The (fire) (is) out of control.
- 42) The (rain) (in) Spain falls mainly on the plain.
- 43) France (beat) (Denmark) in the tournament.
- 44) You (drive) (very) well.
- 45) You (mean) (it's) snowing outside?
- 46) (Bill) (lost) his wallet.
- 47) A (good) (telephone) communication system is needed.
- 48) Elephants can (kill) (lions).
- 49) I like Thousand (Island) (Dressing) best.
- 50) He got (sick) ('cause) he drank too much.

APPENDIX 2

Reference Sources for the three tests.

Tests 1 and 2: Questions 1-20 from Phillips (2003): TOEFL Part A, Test 4, pp. 458-459. Questions 21-40 from Steinberg (1999): TOEIC Part 2, Test 3, p. 144. Dictation Questions 41-50 from Lauer (2001): p. 34, #5, #7; p. 36 #8, #10; p. 38 #4, #5, #7; p. 40, #1, #3, #4.

Test 3: Questions 1-20 from Phillips (2003): TOEFL Part A, Test 2, pp. 406-407. Questions 21-40 from Steinberg (1999): TOEIC Part 2, Test 2, p. 94. Dictation Questions 41-50 from Lauer (2001): p. 34, #9, #10; p. 36 #7, #9; p. 38 #1, #2, #3; p. 40, #5, #6, #7.

要 約

ポッドキャストを利用した英語学習の効果に関する縦断研究

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英語学習用ポッドキャストの聴取により TOEFL・TOEIC 形式、およびディクテーションのテストのスコアが向上するかどうかを測定するため、縦断研究を行った。実験対象は英語学習に意欲的な日本の大学生9名で、その TOEIC 平均スコアは564 ($SD = 155$) である。彼らは5ヵ月間にわたり、好きな時間に好きな英語学習用ポッドキャストを聴取し、その番組名、聴取時間、学習方法を記した短いレポートを毎週メールで提出した。実験開始時および5ヵ月後の終了時にリスニング第1ポストテスト、さらにその2ヵ月後に第2ポストテストを実施し、学習した知識が保持されているかどうかを測定した。あわせて統制群へのテスト、および上記の3テストがパラレルなものであるかどうかを検証するテストも実施した。

調査の結果、実験対象の9名のスコアは5ヵ月間で平均3.6%の上昇に留まり、総合的なリスニング能力の顕著な向上は見られなかった。わずかに上昇あるいは下降した者もいた中、大幅に上昇した学生も数名いた。一方、ディクテーション能力はグループとして有意に上昇した ($p < .05$)。

総合的なリスニング能力が有意に上昇しなかった理由としては、週の平均聴取時間が2~3時間と少なかったからと考えられる。本論考ではこの他にも、毎週のレポートから読み取れる様々な興味深い情報や、さらに仮定法過去のような文法項目や、“barely”や“(bank) checks”といった単語など、対象学生にとって聞き取りが困難だった10のポイントを挙げた。