

Extensive Reading and Extensive Listening: Practical ideas for the classroom



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“ER is based on the well-established principle that we learn to read by reading” (Day, 2015, p. 10).

“...we can also say that listening is best learned through listening” (Renandya, 2011, p. 31).



The Podclass: Improving listening skills in the digital age*

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* This is an abridged version of a presentation I gave a few years ago.

Listening class:

- One semester
- 29 students (second year economics majors)
- No textbook
- Students listened to podcasts of their choice each week for homework
- Worked with a partner to make a podcast listening activity for the class at the end of the semester (final project)

End of semester project:

- Students were assigned partners.
- Given two weeks to find a podcast and create a listening task for the class.
- Were responsible for making copies of handouts for class.
- Partners were given five minutes to explain/administer their activity.

Final survey results (July)

1. Do you think listening to podcasts in class and at home helped your listening skills in English?

YES – 27

No – 2

2. Do you think the class should use podcasts of a listening textbook and CD for next year?

Podcasts – 22

Textbook/CD – 0

Both – 7

3. Did you listen to any podcasts that your classmates recommended?

YES – 19

NO – 10

4. Did you enjoy making a listening activity for the class using a podcast?

YES – 23

NO – 1

SOMEWHAT - 5

Final survey results continued

5. Did you have a favorite podcast or one that you recommended to other students? What was it?

News in Easy English

The English we speak

BBC 6 Minute English

NHK World English

TOEIC presents English Upgrader

Wall Street English

Go Natural English

Extensive Listening Resources



Where do you find listening material for your classes or your own personal language learning?

Useful websites for extensive listening resources

- www.ello.org
- www.thefablecottage.com
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/features/6-minute-english>
- www.breakingnewsenglish.com
- www.audible.com

Bringing ER and EL together



- **DICTION** - Choose a short paragraph to read to your partner (about 4-6 sentences). They listen and write it. Read the paragraph three times (first normal speaking speed, then slower, and then even slower). When you finish, your partner will read it back to you as you listen and check that they got it right. Take turns.
- **DESCRIBING PHOTOS** - Describe a photo in your book to your partner (don't let them see it though). Your partner listens and draws it. When you both finish, show and compare your drawings.

Extensive Reading vs. Extensive Listening: Student perceptions and feedback



Participants and context

- Seven classes (lower-upper intermediate English)
- 109 students (all female)
- Semester one - Introduced to extensive listening
- Semester two - Introduced to extensive reading
- 109 students filled out a survey asking questions about EL/ER
- Three students participated in interviews with the instructor

Semester 1: Extensive Listening

- Students introduced to podcasts
- Given a list of recommended podcasts
- Given time in class to search for new ones and to download them
- Students encouraged to listen to as many podcasts as they could each week
- Required to write a report about one podcast every week for homework
- Began each class discussing what they listened to for homework with partners



Semester 2: Extensive Reading

- Students introduced to ER and graded readers - trip to the library
- Instructed to read books for homework and write short reports about them
- Started each class discussing what they read for homework with their partners



End of the year survey

1. Which did you think was better/more useful for learning English?

Podcast listening in semester 1

Extensive Reading in semester 2

Why?

2. Which helped you learn more English vocabulary words?

Podcast listening in semester 1

Extensive Reading in semester 2

Why?

3. Which helped you more with your English writing skills?

Podcast listening in semester 1

Extensive Reading in semester 2

Why?

4. Did you continue to listen to podcasts in semester two at home?

YES

NO

Why or why not?

5. Was it easy for you to find podcasts that were at your level of English? (Not too easy, not too difficult?)

YES

NO

6. Was it easy to find library books that were at your level of English? (Not too easy, not too difficult?)

YES

NO

1. Which did you think was better/more useful for learning English?

Podcasts - 3 1

Extensive reading - 77

Circled both - 1

- “I didn’t know about podcasts before I took this class...for me I think extensive reading was better for learning English...stories are easier to understand” - Yuka (interview)
- “With graded readers...it was easier to follow the stories.” - Chie (interview)
- “Podcasts are difficult for me. Extensive reading, I can look up words that I don’t understand accurately.” - Survey comment
- “I couldn’t really understand the podcasts.” - Survey comment
- “Podcasts is too difficult for me.” - Survey comment
- “Book’s story are shorter than podcast’s story.” - Survey comment

2. Which helped you learn more English vocabulary words?

Podcasts - 30

Extensive reading - 78

Circled both - 1

- “With podcasts, for words I didn’t know, I didn’t know how to spell them. It was different with books and I can look up the words.” - Yuka (interview)
- “With graded readers it was easy to look up words I didn’t know and it was easier to follow the stories.” - Yuri (interview)
- “When I listen to podcasts and hear words I don’t know, I don’t know how to spell them.” - Survey comment
- “There were many words I didn’t know in the podcasts.” - Survey comment

3. Which helped you more with your English writing skills?

Podcasts - 27

Extensive reading - 79

Both - 4

- “I can learn the spelling of words [with graded readers]. With podcasts, I don’t know how to spell some words.” - Survey comment
- “When we see sentences [in the book] we are able to remember them.” - Survey comment
- “It’s easier to understand the words with your eyes than your ears.” - Survey comment

4. Did you continue to listen to podcasts in semester two at home?

Yes - 20

No - 89

- “I quit listening to podcasts [after the class ended in S1]. I couldn’t concentrate when listening to them. On the train, when listening to a podcast, it’s like listening to music” - Chie (interview)
- “I didn’t have time to keep listening to them.” - Survey comment
- “Podcasts are difficult to understand and takes much time to understand.” - Survey comment

5. Was it easy for you to find podcasts that were at your level of English? (Not too easy, not too difficult?)

Yes - 19

No - 89

- “It was difficult to search for podcasts for my level.” - Yuri (interview)
- “It was hard to find podcasts at my level.” - Survey comment

6. Was it easy to find library books that were at your level of English? (Not too easy, not too difficult?)

Yes - 90

No - 18

- “The levels are clearly written on the books, so they’re easier to choose.” - Yuri (interview)

1. Which did you think was better/more useful for learning English?

Podcast listening in semester 1 - **(31)**

Extensive Reading in semester 2 - **(77)**

Circled both: **(1)**

2. Which helped you learn more English vocabulary words?

Podcast listening in semester 1 - **(30)**

Extensive Reading in semester 2 - **(78)**

Circled both - **(1)**

3. Which helped you more with your English writing skills?

Podcast listening in semester 1 - **(27)**

Extensive Reading in semester 2 - **(79)**

Circled both - **(4)**

4. Did you continue to listen to podcasts in semester two at home?

YES - **(20)**

NO - **(89)**

5. Was it easy for you to find podcasts that were at your level of English? (Not too easy, not too difficult?)

YES - **(19)**

NO - **(89)**

No answer - **(1)**

6. Was it easy to find library books that were at your level of English? (Not too easy, not too difficult?)

YES - **(90)**

NO - **(18)**

Conclusion

According to students:

1. Extensive reading was better/more useful for learning English
2. Extensive reading helped students learn more vocabulary
3. Extensive reading helped students with their English writing skills
4. The majority of students did not listen to podcasts on their own during second semester
5. Students had trouble finding podcasts to listen to in their level
6. Students found it easier to find graded readers in their level

So, basically...ER is the winner*

*(in this very specific context)

Limitations:

- All students female
- Small interview sample
- No pre/post tests for either EL or ER
- Most students were probably listening to podcasts that were too difficult for them
- Most of the data were collected from classes taught by part-timers

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Thanks for listening.

Questions? Comments?

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