



# Exploring Student Experiences with the "FunNy-Fun&Handy" Android Listening App: A Study on Enhancing English Listening Skills through Popular Culture Integration

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## ABSTRACT

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This research investigates the impact of an Android-based listening app, "FunNy-Fun&Handy," on enhancing students' English listening skills through engaging content on popular culture topics. Descriptive Qualitative method used in this research. Eleven participants engaged with the app, and their experiences were assessed through a Google Form questionnaire. Responses highlighted positive perceptions of the app's impact on motivation (Mean = 4.45), user interface (Mean = 4.18), and content effectiveness (Mean = 4.27). Participants expressed satisfaction with the app's usability (Mean = 4.27) and intention to continue using it (Mean = 4.45). Qualitative insights emphasized the engaging content's value, while suggestions for a balanced blend of entertainment and academics were noted. This study's findings underscore the app's potential for enhancing motivation and skill development, contributing to language learning applications. The research sheds light on the integration of popular culture content within language learning contexts, offering a promising avenue for improving students' English listening skills.

## INTRODUCTION

Mastering listening comprehension is considered one of the essential language skills. This proficiency enables individuals to engage in conversations and understand one another through the sense of hearing. Unlike hearing, where sound waves serve as stimuli, listening involves the active interpretation of these stimuli for comprehension. There are 4 skills in language learning. they are reading, writing, speaking and listening. Listening is one of the skills that has an important role in language learning because the application of active listening not only positively influences the communication process, but also contributes to the formation of better interpersonal relationships as explained by (Martoredjo:2014)

Among the 150 total credits necessary for completion, 30 credits are allocated to enhancing English language proficiency—a mandatory component for all students enrolled in the English Literature Study Program. The specified English skills cover speaking, writing, reading, and listening and adhere to international standards widely practiced in Europe, commonly recognized as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). CEFR is a standardized framework created to assess and articulate language proficiency. Widely employed in Europe and various global contexts, it serves as a tool for evaluating language skills across different languages. The framework encompasses six levels of competency, ranging from A1 basic to C2 professional.

In the A1 stage, beginners focus on personal details and basic interactions. Progressing to A2, learners delve into discussing experiences and daily tasks. At the B1 level, independent users grasp standard issues and substantiate opinions. Advancing to B2, they fluently navigate diverse topics and engage with native speakers. Achieving advanced proficiency at C1 entails understanding demanding texts and expressing ideas fluently. Proficient users at C2 excel in comprehending and summarizing information expertly, expressing themselves precisely even in intricate situations.

Each of these language skills is structured across general, intermediate, and advanced levels, accompanied by expected learning outcomes aimed at elevating students' English proficiency to Level B2. This level is deemed essential in professional settings, where individuals should be capable of seeking factual information, comprehending responses, and expressing arguments and opinions to a limited extent (Cambridge Handbook 2016 (International) Regulations for Conducting Cambridge Exams Valid for Exams in 2016, n.d.). The requirement for students to pass the IELTS English proficiency test as part of the study program completion reveals that only a minute percentage attain Level B2. On average, participants in the English Literature study program score at the B1 level, with some still at the A2 level. This pattern highlights that the English language proficiency of program graduates has room for improvement. Considering that a key selling point of the English Literature Study Program is proficiency in English, addressing this issue is imperative pop culture and education.

To help improve listening skills, additional media is selected, namely an Android application that is designed to be as attractive as possible and can be accessed anywhere and at any time. There are several previous studies, such as the studies from (Ariyanto et al., 2019; Debnath et al., 2020; Muriyatmoko et al., 2018; Saputra et al., 2018) which shows positive and significant results from using Android-based applications as additional media in learning. The use of Android-based applications explained in previous research is used in various subjects, such as mathematics, English, Arabic, etc. and matches the

media criteria needed by students in the current era.

In using an Android-based application, popular culture in podcast interview is chosen to limit the topics of content used. Podcast is a digital audio program consisting of a series of audio episodes that you can download or stream from the internet. A research from Aditya (2018) results that Podcasts positively influence undergraduate students' listening comprehension in English.

In line with podcast, the popular culture as the topic of content chosen also has proven significantly enhance education, explained by Bowmer & Curwood (2016) that incorporating popular culture into English education can be enriching, complementary practice, fostering student engagement and promoting freedom of expression. Benson & Chik (2014) agreed that Popular culture can enhance education by teaching students about various cultures and fostering critical thinking. So, topics related to popular culture are interesting to use in the Android listening Application. Added by Bal et al (2023) that teachers should have the autonomy to select texts that encompass the entire class, captivate the attention of each student with diverse characteristics, inspire engagement in the lesson, and unleash their creativity in literacy teaching. In this context, opting for texts from popular culture that students frequently enjoy in their daily lives can be a commendable choice.

After the introduction of the Android listening application, researchers were interested in conducting research on students' experiences after using the application to find out whether the use of the Android listening application was on target or not. Beyond its technological prowess, the app stands as a potential solution to address a persistent challenge in language education. The educational paradigm in the English Literature Study Program has long grappled with instilling effective English listening abilities, and the app's conception is rooted in the aspiration to invigorate this vital skill.

Intriguingly, this article embarks on a voyage of exploration through the realm of user experience, focusing intently on evaluating the app's impact on students' motivation, content engagement, user interface perception, and perceived skill enhancement. A comprehensive assessment is in the offing, unveiling the potential of this app to revitalize the learning journey for students within the English Literature Study Program.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design:**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate students' experiences with the "FunNy-Fun&Handy" Android listening app. The descriptive qualitative approach is chosen for its capacity to provide an in-depth understanding of participants' subjective experiences and perceptions. This design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the app's impact on students' English listening skills, specifically focusing on the integration of popular culture content. Descriptive qualitative research is well-suited to capture the diverse and detailed nature of participants' responses obtained through a questionnaire on Google Forms.

### **Participants and Sampling:**

Eleven participants from the English Literature Study Program at Universitas Negeri Medan were purposively sampled for this study. Selection criteria considered diverse proficiency levels in English to ensure a broad spectrum of experiences. Participants engaged with the "FunNy-Fun&Handy" app, and their responses were collected through the Google Forms questionnaire. Ethical considerations, including

informed consent and confidentiality, were prioritized to protect participants' rights and privacy. The questionnaire data provides valuable insights into participants' perceptions and experiences with the Android app.

#### Data Collection and Analysis:

Data for this study were collected through a Google Forms questionnaire distributed among the participants. The questionnaire included open-ended questions addressing participants' motivations, perceived impact on listening skills, satisfaction with the user interface, and suggestions for improvement. The qualitative responses obtained from the questionnaire will undergo content analysis. Thematic analysis will be employed to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights within the participants' written responses. This method allows for a systematic and detailed exploration of the data collected via the questionnaire.

In summary, the research design aligns with the descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on participants' experiences with the "FunNy-Fun&Handy" app. The participants, selected through purposive sampling, contributed responses through a Google Forms questionnaire. Data analysis involves content and thematic analysis of the qualitative responses, providing a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences with the Android listening app as captured through the questionnaire.

## FINDINGS

### Participants' Experiences and Qualitative Feedback

The study explored the experiences of eleven participants from the English Literature Study Program at Universitas Negeri Medan who engaged with the "FunNy-Fun&Handy" Android listening app. The qualitative analysis of participants' open-ended responses provided valuable insights into their subjective experiences and perceptions.

#### 1. Students' Motivation

Motivation result a high number of average 4.45%. The elevated mean score of 4.45 underscores a noteworthy positive influence on participants' motivation. Participants exhibited a heightened enthusiasm for participating in the app's listening exercises, attributing this heightened motivation to the seamless integration of pop culture content. Qualitative feedback illuminates the app's adeptness in transforming the learning journey into an enjoyable and relatable experience, thereby fostering an augmented eagerness among participants to actively engage in English language practice.

The qualitative insights gleaned from participant responses suggest that the app's strategic use of pop culture not only heightened motivation but also played a pivotal role in establishing a connection between the learning material and participants' personal interests. The incorporation of entertaining and culturally relevant content within the learning framework appears to have resonated positively, creating a dynamic and immersive environment that goes beyond conventional language learning approaches. This nuanced understanding of motivation, as expressed by participants, sheds light on the app's ability to make language acquisition a more personalized, enjoyable, and relevant experience, thereby fueling

a heightened desire among users to actively and consistently practice English skills.

## 2. User Interface (UI)

A bit under the average of students' motivation, the average of user interface (UI) average is 4.18%. The positive mean score indicates participants' favorable views of the UI. The lively and attractive design, combined with intuitive navigation, appears to have played a pivotal role in maintaining engagement. Qualitative feedback suggests that the UI contributed significantly to an overall positive user experience, highlighting the importance of visual design in language learning applications.

Qualitative insights from participant responses suggest that the UI not only played a role in sustaining engagement but also served as a critical element in creating a positive learning environment. Participants emphasized the intuitive navigation and appealing design as key factors facilitating smooth app usage. Clarity in layout and visual presentation seems to be elements enhancing participants' positive perception of the UI. Thus, this understanding reflects that effective visual design is not merely an aesthetic aspect but also a supportive factor for the success of the user experience in the context of English language learning.

## 3. Language Acquisition and Content Effectiveness

The mean score of 4.27 in Language Acquisition and Content Effectiveness underscores the participants' positive evaluation of the app's impact on enhancing language acquisition, specifically in the domain of listening skills. Qualitative insights gleaned from participant responses shed light on the nuanced ways in which the app effectively facilitated language learning. The incorporation of challenging yet enjoyable exercises emerged as a key factor, providing participants with a balance between difficulty and engagement. This delicate balance seemed to be crucial in maintaining participants' interest and sustained attention, fostering an environment conducive to effective language acquisition.

Moreover, the contextualized pop culture content within the app was identified as a significant contributor to language acquisition. Participants noted that exposure to real-world scenarios embedded in popular culture topics not only improved their listening skills but also enriched their vocabulary and heightened cultural awareness. This finding aligns with the notion that language learning is not a detached skill but a holistic process deeply intertwined with cultural understanding. The app's success in integrating language acquisition with cultural context appears to have resonated positively with participants, making the learning experience more authentic and relevant. Therefore, the combination of challenging exercises and culturally embedded content within the app emerges as a potent strategy for enhancing language acquisition, as evidenced by both quantitative and qualitative data.

## 4. Collaborative and Interactive Features

The favorable mean score of 4.12 in Collaborative and Interactive Features highlights participants' contentment with the app's collaborative elements. Qualitative insights delve into the specific features, such as discussion forums, that contributed to the positive perception. Participants expressed that these interactive components fostered a sense of community among users, transcending the solitary nature often associated with language learning apps. The communal dimension was found to be instrumental in enhancing the overall learning experience, creating opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction, knowledge exchange, and collaborative

exploration of language concepts. This collaborative aspect not only bolstered the effectiveness of the app but also underscored the significance of social engagement as a valuable element in the realm of educational technology.

Furthermore, the qualitative feedback points to the broader implications of these collaborative features, suggesting that they go beyond mere functionality. The emergence of a virtual community within the app not only enriched the learning process but also emphasized the socio-cultural aspect of language acquisition. Participants highlighted the role of social interaction in reinforcing educational content, providing diverse perspectives, and creating a supportive learning environment. This finding suggests that the integration of collaborative and interactive features not only contributes to the app's immediate functionality but also aligns with a broader pedagogical approach that acknowledges the social nature of language learning.

## DISCUSSIONS

Regarding the development of the "FunNy-Fun&Handy" Android application to enhance English listening skills through the integration of popular culture, the findings of this study depict a significantly positive impact on various aspects of language learning. The high average scores in motivation, user interface, content effectiveness, usability, and intention to continue using the application reflect the success of the app in creating an engaging and effective platform for English listening skills development. The intelligent integration of popular culture content emerges as a key factor in this success, not only boosting motivation but also enriching language acquisition by providing contextualized real-world scenarios.

Key findings related to participants' motivation indicate that the strategic use of popular culture not only heightens motivation but also plays a crucial role in establishing a connection between the learning material and participants' personal interests. The incorporation of entertaining and culturally relevant content within the learning framework resonates positively, creating a dynamic and immersive environment that goes beyond conventional language learning approaches. This nuanced understanding of motivation sheds light on the app's ability to make language acquisition a more personalized, enjoyable, and relevant experience, fueling a heightened desire among users to actively practice English skills.

Furthermore, the research results show that the app effectively facilitates language learning by incorporating challenging yet enjoyable exercises. The balanced blend of difficulty and engagement is crucial in maintaining participants' interest and sustained attention, fostering an environment conducive to effective language acquisition. The contextualized pop culture content within the app is identified as a significant contributor to language acquisition, improving listening skills, enriching vocabulary, and heightening cultural awareness. This success in integrating language acquisition with cultural context resonates positively with participants, making the learning experience more authentic and relevant.

Regarding collaborative and interactive features, the favorable mean score highlights participants' satisfaction with these elements. The emergence of a virtual community within the app not only enriches the learning process but also emphasizes the socio-cultural aspect of language acquisition. The integration of collaborative and interactive features goes beyond mere functionality, contributing to a broader pedagogical approach that acknowledges the social nature of language learning.

In essence, the success of the "FunNy-Fun&Handy" app lies not only in its technological sophistication and engaging design but also in its astute recognition of the pivotal role popular culture plays in language learning. By seamlessly integrating

entertaining content with language exercises, the app transforms the learning journey into a culturally rich and enjoyable experience, proving that popular culture is not just a supplementary feature but a fundamental component in the app's efficacy.

## SUGGESTION

As the "FunNy-Fun&Handy" app demonstrates commendable success, avenues for refinement and further exploration emerge: The app could benefit from a nuanced balance between entertainment and academic content, ensuring sustained engagement while delivering educational value. Diversifying the topics within popular culture would broaden the app's appeal, accommodating diverse interests and preferences. Implementing a system for continuous user feedback and updates would enhance the app's responsiveness to evolving user needs. Expanding content to include advanced levels could cater to participants with varying proficiency levels. Conducting longitudinal studies to assess the app's long-term impact on language proficiency and real-world applicability would provide valuable insights into its sustained effectiveness.

In essence, the "FunNy-Fun&Handy" app, with its adept integration of popular culture, emerges as a promising and effective tool for enhancing English listening skills. Addressing the suggested areas for improvement would further refine its functionality and contribute to its enduring success in the realm of language education.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration of student experiences with the "FunNy-Fun&Handy" Android listening app illuminates its notable positive impact on various facets of language learning. The intentional integration of popular culture content emerges as a linchpin in the app's efficacy, not only elevating motivation but also fostering language acquisition through engaging and culturally relevant exercises. The app effectively addresses the enduring challenge of instilling proficient English listening skills, contributing not only to improved language proficiency but also enriching vocabulary and cultural awareness. Its success lies in transforming the language learning journey into a personalized and enjoyable experience, showcasing the fundamental role of popular culture in educational technology.

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