



LITERATURE REVIEW: USE OF PODCASTS IN IMPROVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract

This brief literature review summarizes and analyzes multiple findings from the past research on how podcasting affects the speaking skill development when learning English. The body part of the review looks at 1) what researchers agree on, 2) what they disagree on (contradictions) and 3) if there is a gap in the existing literature. The conclusion will summarize the main findings of the literature review.

Keywords: Language learning, English teaching, technology, podcast, speaking.

Introduction

Technology in education. In modern times, use of technology in education, both inside and outside of the classroom, is almost a commonality (Lai & Bower, 2019). Past studies have shown that technology usage in education leads to a number of positive results: specifically, enhanced learning outcomes, easier access to learning, and an increase in learner motivation (Bower, 2017). Narrowing the topic down a little, it can be seen from many studies in the past that the use of various technologies in foreign language instruction is also associated with positive learning outcomes in all the 4 skills. For example, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been shown to lead to improvements in writing (Yoon, 2008; Sauro, 2014; Soori & Kafipour, 2012; Oskoz & Elola, 2014; Zaini & Mazdayasna, 2014), speaking (Abdelmageed & El-Naggar, 2018; Tulud, 2021), listening (Blake, 2013; Barani, 2011; Nachoua, 2012) and reading (Marzban, 2011; Bhatti, 2013). The combination of CALL with



Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach has also been shown to help foreign language learners to improve their skillset (Lai & Zhao, 2006; Pellettieri, 2000; Blake, 2016; Lai, 2008). Research also says that online language teaching/learning and social learning through social software contribute to language skill development and better academic performance (Davies, 2011; Hart, 2019). There are many more examples of the positive impact of various technologies on second language acquisition in the literature.

The focus of this literature review. The original topic of the researcher was "Use of technology in developing expertise in one of the 4 skills in the English language". It was then decided to narrow down the topic by studying the impact of a specific technological tool on a specific skill. It was decided that the tool to focus on would be podcasting, whereas the skill that would be studied - speaking.

General Themes / Agreements

Even though podcasts are prominently known for helping language learners with enhancing their listening skills (Fitria, 2015; Abdulrahman, 2018; O'Bryan, 2017; Brookes, 2011), there is a great deal of research on the effect of podcasts on the speaking skill as well. Before some sources are talked about in more detail, it has to be noted that podcasts can be used to improve speaking in 2 ways: 1) by listening to podcasts; - regular listening input has been shown to help learners improve their speaking skills and 2) by podcasting; - it is when learners themselves produce podcasts or recordings and upload them to a digital portal for other learners and their instructors to listen to them. Sources discussing both of these methods and their impact on the speaking skill will be talked about down below.

Bustari et al. (2017) studied how podcasts can be helpful to language learners' speaking skills by looking at 30 students' oral fluency before and after the incorporation of a podcast in the teaching curriculum. Using statistical tools, the researchers concluded that regular listening to podcasts had a positive correlation with the students' speaking performance. A study done in 2021 (Yeh et al.) examined the effect of podcast-making on 77 Taiwanese students' speaking skills. The pre- and post- speaking test results suggested that after being instructed to produce just 2 podcasts, the participants were able to drastically improve their



speaking skills; the learners demonstrated better fluency and accuracy, they had fewer mispronounced words and pauses in their speech after the treatment. Another study (Hamzaoglu, 2016) tested the effect of regular listening input through podcasts on oral performance with 30 ninth-grade students in a Turkish high school. Consistent with previous studies in the literature, this study also reported a statistically significant positive correlation between using podcasts for language learning and the development of the speaking skill; all the students who were exposed to podcasts during the 12-week experiment demonstrated higher oral performance compared to the other group who did not use podcasts. The 2015 study by Farangi et al. looked at the relationship between podcast-production (and uploading those podcasts onto an online portal) and the speaking skill progress. 60 upper-intermediate students were divided into experimental and control groups; the former having to produce podcasts and the latter proceeding with their usual teaching curriculum. The results of the study showed that the experimental group showed higher speaking performance compared to the control group. Overall, there are a great deal of other studies agreeing that the correlation between using podcasts in the curriculum and the development of the speaking skill in language learners is statistically significantly positive (Fitria, 2015; Yoestara & Putri, 2019; Ramli & Kurniawan, 2017).

Apart from improving language learners' speaking skills directly through regular listening input and production of recordings, the incorporation of podcasts in language-learning has also been shown to help learners' speaking progress indirectly; by lowering their speaking anxiety which, in turn, leads to improvements in speaking. One study that looks at the relation between podcasting and speaking anxiety is a study done by Hamzaoglu (2016). 30 students with high levels of speaking anxiety were chosen for the study where they were instructed to produce podcasts and upload them online. After looking at the pre- and post- speaking anxiety test results, the researchers concluded that podcast-production led to a decrease in speaking anxiety levels and, consequently, better speaking performance. Another study, a qualitative one, conducted in 2020 by Saadet and Fahrettin, concluded that having students practice their speaking skills through recording podcasts led to an increase in their speaking confidence, self-esteem and, as a result, better oral performance.



Overall, there are a few other studies reporting that podcast-recording results in a decrease in speaking anxiety and a consequent improvement in the speaking skill (Yeh, 2021; Lestary, 2021) .

Contradictory points / Controversy

Even though there is a great deal of research on the positive effects of podcasting on the speaking skill, there is some controversy in the literature.

First, there are papers stating that the efficacy of podcasting in education is still doubted (Heilesen, 2010). It has to be noted however, that this paper looks at podcasts in education in general and not language learning specifically.

Secondly, there are papers questioning the efficiency of podcasting when it comes to developing one of the specific aspects of the speaking skill - pronunciation. There are many studies reporting a strong positive relation between using podcasts and pronunciation development (Dodigovic, 2018; Lord, 2008, Mbah, 2013), however there are also studies stating that the improvements in pronunciation through the use of podcasts are very insignificant (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009).

Third, there is some contradiction on how podcast-production as a speaking exercise affects language learners' speaking anxiety levels, confidence and self-esteem. As mentioned earlier, there are quite a few studies stating that podcasting actually decreases learners' speaking anxiety and increases their confidence (Hamzaoglu, 2016; Yeh, 2021; Lestary, 2021; Saadet & Fahrettin, 2020). However, the literature also has studies stating the complete opposite of that; that students' speaking anxiety can increase after the inclusion of podcast-recording (and uploading it online) in the teaching curriculum (Kemp et al., 2011; Gardner, 2005; Phillips, 2017).

Gap in the literature

As can be seen, the topic of podcasting and its effect on the development of speaking skills has been researched heavily over the years. There is one thing that has not been properly looked into however (there might be other things, this is the only gap the researcher could find though).



Much of the research done on podcasting and how it affects language learners' speaking skills mostly included participants with the language levels from beginner to upper-intermediate. There are no studies, however, examining the relation between the use of podcasts and speaking progress of advanced English speakers (C1 and C2) (this observation is also made by Yeh (2021) in the "Future Research Suggestions" section of their paper).

Therefore, it is recommended to explore this question in future research.

Conclusion

This literature review attempted to summarize and analyze findings from multiple studies on the relation between podcasting and the speaking skill. Most researchers seem to agree that the correlation between these 2 factors is positive, in that podcasting helps language learners with the improvement of their speaking skills directly through regular listening input and recording-production. There are some contradictory points in the literature as well however: 1) there are studies questioning the effectiveness of podcasts in education in general; 2) there are contradictory studies on the effect of podcasting on pronunciation development; and 3) there is contradiction on the relationship between podcasting and speaking anxiety, confidence and self-esteem. The researcher concluded by discussing the gap in the existing literature - how podcasting affects advanced students' speaking skills - and recommended exploring the question in future studies.

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