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The Use of Podcasts to Develop Speaking Skills in A2 Level Students

Uso de Podcasts para desarrollar las habilidades del habla en estudiantes de nivel A2

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ABSTRACT

Speaking skills are regarded as one of the most important aspects in an ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom, even though the learning process presents challenges that teachers face when aiming to improve students' speaking abilities, such as pronunciation, fluency, and lexical resources during communication. However, teachers are continually searching for new approaches or techniques to help develop students' speaking skills. Therefore, this article aims to assess the effectiveness of podcasts as a tool to improve speaking skills in A2-level students. To achieve this goal, the author used a mixed-methods research design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative components that facilitate a better understanding of data collection, analysis, and discussion of results. This approach helps establish the relationship between the independent variable "Podcasts" and the dependent variable "speaking skills." The study aimed to determine how effective podcast activities are, assess their impact on speaking skills, and explore learner attitudes to gain a deeper understanding of speaking skill development in A2-level students using podcasts. The population consisted of 25 students selected through the systematic sampling method; their ages ranged from 11 to 12 years old, and all were at the A2 level. Data were collected using instruments such as pre- and post-surveys and pre- and post-tests for quantitative data, while the surveys also provided qualitative insights. The data were analyzed both

qualitatively and quantitatively. The results showed that the podcast sessions had a significant and positive impact on participants' speaking skills.

Keywords: podcast, speaking, english skills

RESUMEN

Las habilidades del habla son consideradas como uno de los más importantes aspectos en una clase de Inglés como Segunda lengua, aunque el proceso de aprendizaje presenta retos que los Maestros enfrentan cuando pretenden mejorar habilidades como: pronunciación, fluidez, y recurso léxico durante la comunicación. Los maestros están continuamente buscando nuevos enfoques y técnicas para desarrollar estas habilidades. Por lo tanto, este artículo evalúa la eficacia de los podcasts como herramienta para mejorar la habilidad del habla en estudiantes de nivel A2. Para lograr el objetivo, el autor utilizó un diseño de investigación de métodos mixtos, incorporando componentes cualitativos y cuantitativos facilitando la comprensión de los datos, el análisis y la discusión de los resultados. Ayudando a establecer la relación entre la variable independiente «Podcasts» y la variable dependiente «habilidades del habla». El objetivo del estudio era determinar el nivel de eficacia del uso de la herramienta podcasts, evaluar su impacto en las destrezas orales y explorar las actitudes de los alumnos para obtener una comprensión más profunda del desarrollo de dichas habilidades en alumnos de nivel A2 que utilizan podcasts. La población estaba formada por 25 estudiantes seleccionados mediante el método de muestreo sistemático; sus edades oscilaban entre los 11 y los 12 años, y cursaban el nivel A2. Se recopilaron datos cuantitativos mediante instrumentos como encuestas previas y posteriores y pruebas previas y posteriores, mientras que las encuestas también proporcionaron información cualitativa. Los datos recopilados mostraron resultados significativos e impacto positivo en las habilidades orales de los participantes.

Palabras clave: podcast, habla, habilidades del inglés

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INTRODUCTION

Educators of foreign languages around the World consider speaking an essential element of the learning process that students should master, but this is not easy and takes time because it is the first ability seen in real-life communication (Fers & Mimouni, 2022) In addition, teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language is a hard task for Learners who face many struggles when they attempt to express themselves in a second language. The objective of teaching a language to students is to enable them to use and speak fluently in different current situations. An appropriate solution for learners to overcome their speaking difficulties and improve their communication skills is to apply a process of teaching oral expression courses in EFL (English as a foreign Language) classrooms. Speaking skills are vital for effective communication in EFL, including pronunciation, fluency, and how to improve the coherent construction and appropriate contextualization. Improving these skills requires feedback and regular practice, highlighting their correlation with academic success. (Ommnia Latif, 2024)

For that reason, the objective of this research is to examine the effectiveness of podcasts as a tool to improve speaking skills in A2-level students, their develop, and impact on language learners' fluency and pronunciation to achieve the objective of this investigation, and contribute to the learning and/or improving of speaking skills, and to provide valuable insights for educators of A2-level learners. There are four main components to teaching a speaking course: the teacher, the students, the methodological activities, and the pedagogical aids. These four points enhance the student's speaking skills. According to (CEFR, 2020) "Flexibility is concerned with the ability to adapt language learned to new situations and to formulate thoughts in different ways. For this reason, teachers should stimulate meaningful and real communication by using approaches as podcasts.

Teachers spend much time doing written activities at schools; for this reason, there is little time to practice speaking or listening. Moreover, there are no personalized assessments to support the learning. Reducing Teacher talking time (TTT) in the classroom through the use of any technological approach to increase the student talking time (STT), for example, podcasting is a method for distributing digital audio and video content on the internet. These digital files are called episodes or podcasts. Teachers should take advantage of this technological tool because it could increase interest in their lessons, and in the right way, the combination of multimedia and teaching methodology attracts EFL students' attention. (Gómez & Palma, 2020).

Podcasts are known as a valuable resource used for active learning or asynchronous teaching because students are provided with alternative materials to engage with (Conroy & Kidd, 2022). Podcasts also promote deeper learning, consequently decreasing students' learning anxiety, improving the relationship between student and teacher, and ultimately, achieving better and higher grades (Konig, 2021)

Podcasts are online audio/video broadcasts distributed all around the world using online platforms; they are usually used for dissemination or entertainment purposes, discussing specific themes/topics; Reaching audiences beyond academic journals and research communities and could be helpful for young people. (Vainieri et al., 2023)

Podcasts are used as an academic tool to develop speaking skills like comprehension and oral expression, in curricular or extracurricular activities related to the content taught during the school year or another interesting topic. The use and development of different digital tools in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms, like podcasting learning to improve students' speaking skills has become one of the current tasks for teachers, who are constantly searching for new approaches and techniques. There are several advantages of podcasting as a tool for learning: firstly, it is not an expensive way to produce content; also, people do not find Podcasts difficult to use after reading or watching a tutorial before creating their content at any time and place. Secondly, it is easy to share, comment, or listen on mobile devices or listen online (Sandoval & Díaz, 2020). In addition, it is a series of digital audio files distributed over the internet through applications. It can be listened to or downloaded everywhere and every time on electronic devices such as laptops, tablets, or smartphones. (Wissam Abu & Ahmad Issa, 2022)

The investigation aimed to explore and examine the effectiveness of podcasts as a tool to improve speaking skills in A2-level students. The descriptive aspects involved a pre-survey that helped identify which topics are more engaged in or feel willing to serve as a baseline for understanding how students would feel more engaged with the investigation. The nature of the research also delved into the use of podcast sessions from the beginning of the research till the end. Furthermore, the research aimed to evaluate the impact of regular podcast-based learning on the fluency, pronunciation, and lexical resource of A2-level students, through a pre- and post-test, which, through an explanatory dimension, looks to clarify the relationship between the improvement of speaking skills and podcast as a tool application.

Research Questions

1. Which speaking aspects significantly improved? Maybe fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation.
2. How did the students perceive the application of podcasts as a digital tool?

MATERIALS Y METHODS

The study employed a mixed-methods approach that applies qualitative paradigm components in one part of the investigation, and the other part of the study has a quantitative part. (Gunasekare, 2016). The quantitative component involved pre- and post-tests to measure changes in fluency, pronunciation, and overall speaking performance after implementing Podcasts as a digital tool; on the other hand, the qualitative component included open-ended questions and interviews to gather perceptions and experiences with Podcasts as an academic tool. The

combinations allowed a deeper understanding of measurable engagement and improvement. The objective of Mixed methods research is to provide a complex understanding of data collection and analysis and/ or discuss the results. (Shannon, 2016)

The population of A2 level students at Fray Alvaro Valladares school consists of 122 students. However, once the statistical technique “Systematic sampling method” the sample was selected for this study, and it consisted of 25 students. (see Table 1.) According to (Makwana et al., 2023), this technique uses a determined interval to allow for the selection of a representative sample from a population, ensuring that each nth participant was included in the sampling.

Participants belong to the 7th grade and come from diverse social classes and family structures. This systematic sampling was selected taking into consideration the following criteria: A2 level English students, the range of age fluctuates from 11-12 years old, and most of them have access to the internet and digital devices, which facilitate the research development; The school did not provide the different means and technological resources used in the research, as it was the responsibility of the professor to obtain them and develop the investigation.

Table 1

Sample population

Participants	Sample Population	Percentage
Women	14	56%
Man	11	44%
Total	25	100%

At this point, the data collection instruments are described as follows: These were selected to align with the research objectives and also gather comprehensive data on the effectiveness of the podcast session. The pre-survey was an open-ended question designed to achieve the first secondary objective: that include open-ended questions. Their engagement and perception of speaking skills demonstrate the benefits of Podcasting. Through speaking tasks in a controlled setting, the pre- and post-test assessment was conducted. The topics for both assessments were personal information, daily routine, and hobbies. During the pre- and post-test test the participants were asked and evaluated some questions where the evaluator used a rubric to get an assessment of the progress from the beginning to the end of the research. Both tests were focused on skill fluency, pronunciation, and communication.

The research was divided into six phases: problem delimitation, theoretical review, development of instruments, conducting the investigation through the application of these instruments, data analysis and discussion, and writing the conclusions and recommendations. To define the problem, it was necessary to use an observation checklist to identify the institution's weaknesses and strengths. Considering the weaknesses as problems that have to be solved, and

consequently defining the object of the study and selecting the adequate methodology. In the second stage, Information was collected from previous studies and investigators who have worked on projects similar to the research question. The third stage was used to elaborate and submit to the students who participated in the project. In the fourth stage, the instruments were applied, including a pre-survey, which was administered at the beginning. point of this investigation, and consequently choose the topic and know about the interests of the students; there was also a pre-test that contained 10 questions that each student has to answer accordingly to the A2 level, to grade the pre-test was applied a speaking rubrics, the third day students practiced speaking skills by retelling short stories, the fourth day the Participants practiced pronunciation by repeating and learning some speaking tips such as: *ph* (sound like and f) *th* (sound like a d), etc. On the fifth day, students had to summarize a podcast episode, on the sixth day, students listened to a podcast session about daily routine, and kept on reading while they were listening to. On the seventh day, students started recording the previous daily routine, and at the end of the session, the participants listened to some recordings and gave some feedback about pronunciation or fluency. On the eighth day, there was a post-test recording where participants had to record a podcast about personal information and daily routine, which was evaluated with a speaking rubric, and finally the last day, students had to answer a post-survey at the end of the research, this instrument helped the researcher to know about their experience being part of this investigation. In the fifth stage, data was compared and analyzed with other research works to gather results that helped achieve the improvement of the students. In the sixth stage, the results, the conclusions, and recommendations were described in the document.

Validation of Instruments

The instruments were validated by experts who rigorously evaluated both the concept and the matrices of the variables. The article's tutor analyzed and assessed the proposal's design, methodology, and learning theories. The suggestions helped to improve and validate the proposal's soundness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1

Yes-No pre-survey questions

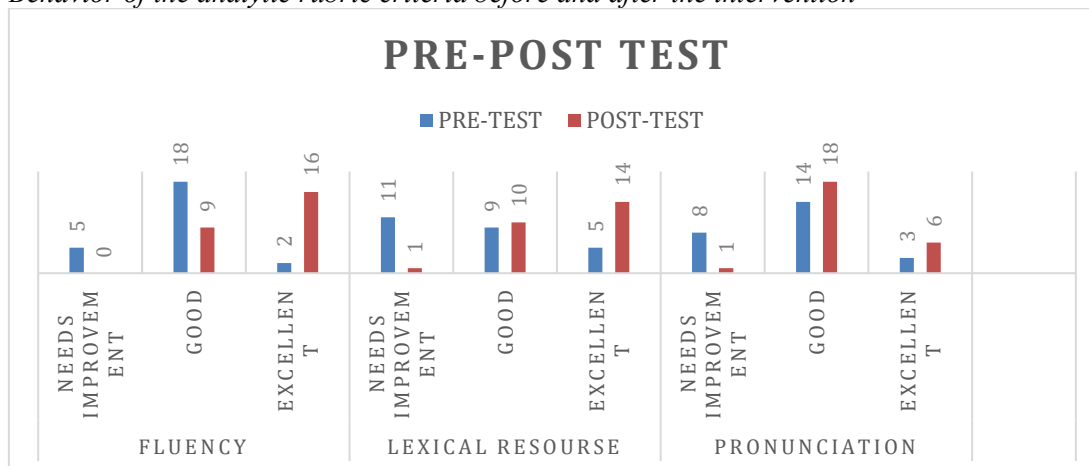


During the diagnostic phase, a pre-test with yes/no questions was administered to a group of 25 students to explore their familiarity with and attitudes toward the use of podcasts as an educational tool, in Figure 1 shows that for the first question, **"Have you ever listened to a podcast episode?"** The results were 7 students (28%) responded "yes", while 18 students (72%) indicated they had never listened to a podcast before, in response to the second question, **"Have you ever recorded a podcast?"**, all participants (100%) answered "no", revealing a complete lack of prior experience in podcast creation, becoming an issue because by using podcasts, learners listen to native speeches, and they also could achieve efficiency in speaking skills, moreover the fact that this tool could be used any time is very appreciated by most participants (Sayadi & Mashhadi Heidar, 2018)

Finally, regarding the question, **"Are you willing to spend time listening to and recording podcasts?"**, 21 students (84%) expressed willingness to engage with podcasts, while 4 students (16%) were not open to the idea; these results are supported by (Dewi et al., 2021) Those who argue that the best learning experience occurs when students feel comfortable with learning, and that the topic also affects students.

Figure 2

Behavior of the analytic rubric criteria before and after the intervention



In Figure 2 The results show noticeable improvements across all areas. In the pre-test, 5 (20%) students were classified as Needs Improvement, 18 (72%) as Good, and 2 (8%) as Excellent. Following the intervention, the post-test results revealed significant progress, with 9 (36%) students rated as Good and 16 (64%) as Excellent. No students remained in the Needs Improvement category. (Márquez, 2022) expressed in his investigation that using podcasts in the experimental group of students provides them with a meaningful learning context by developing some linguistic competencies in the EFL classroom. These results are also supported by (Koçak et al., 2021), their research, through a pre- and post-test, describes their findings on the effect of learner Podcasts on EFL speaking skills development, where the data gathered from the speaking test showed significantly development in students' speaking skills after podcasts sessions as compared to the level before the participants experience. The effectiveness of the podcast-based intervention was assessed through a pre-test and post-test using a rubric that evaluated three key speaking skills: Fluency, Lexical Resource, and Pronunciation.

Regarding **Lexical Resource**, the pre-test results showed that 11 (44%) students Needed Improvement, 9 (36%) were Good, and 5 (20%) were Excellent. In the post-test, there was a marked enhancement in vocabulary use: only 1(4%) student Needed Improvement, 10 (40%) were Good, and 14 (56%) achieved an Excellent rating. In the **pre-test** for Pronunciation, 8 (32%) students Needed Improvement, 14 (64%) were rated Good, and 3 (12%) were Excellent. The post-test outcomes demonstrated a clear advancement, with only 1 student still Needing Improvement, 18 (72%) rated as Good, and 6 (24%) as Excellent. (Chaves y Peña:, 2023) in their research analyze whether podcasts could improve the EFL linguistic competence among secondary educational students; seventy-nine students were randomly distributed between a control group, and an experimental group. These two groups performed two tests and six task in English classroom. The results obtained confirmed the hypothesis that podcasts facilitate the development of English-speaking skills in the EFL class.

These results indicate a positive impact of the podcast-based activities on students' speaking performance, with particular improvement in fluency and lexical resource, and a moderate yet significant gain in pronunciation accuracy, based on the findings in the study made by (Fitria et al., 2015)They listed some reasons that could demonstrate that podcasts could be an alternative and innovative learning tool used to improve understanding and their achievement in speaking skills.

Figure 3

Post survey results



(Shahid & Ali, 2017) claimed that in the present high-tech-ridden classroom environment, teachers and students feel more motivated toward technologies; considering that reason that generally, at the end of the research study, students agreed that working on podcast sessions was a great experience, and they said they felt comfortable improving their pronunciation and fluency while enjoying the sessions too. Finally, they believe that listening to and recording podcasts made them feel engaged. This idea is also supported by (Wulan, 2018), who stated that through the implementation of podcast sessions, the activities make students feel motivated and the classroom more challenging; consequently, it attracts attention and participation in activities.

CONCLUSION

Every day, new methods and strategies emerge in teaching and learning foreign languages, such as podcasts. Using podcasts in learning and teaching a second language, like English, offers numerous advantages. For example, podcasts allow teachers to support students in their education, making it an activity that students can enjoy even at home. It also helps students become effective learners and develop new interests. Moreover, using podcasts motivates learners to improve their speaking skills, including fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Some researchers agree that podcasts are helpful tools for general education and, in this case, for enhancing speaking skills because they encourage students to be more imaginative and expand their vocabulary during this activity. These findings show limited prior experience with podcast listeners. However, most students demonstrated a positive attitude toward incorporating this format, indicating a promising opportunity to integrate podcasts into educational practices.

Future studies might compare different types of podcasts (e.g., scripted vs. conversational, academic vs. informal) to determine which are most effective for developing specific speaking skills. Further research should examine how podcasts contribute to learner autonomy, motivation,

and confidence in language use. Understanding the psychological impact could inform better integration strategies in classrooms. Investigate Teacher Implementation Researchers should explore how teachers incorporate podcasts into their curricula and what support or training they need. This can help identify practical challenges and best practices for classroom use. Include a Wider Range of Learner Profiles is recommended that future research include students of various ages, proficiency levels, and learning backgrounds to ensure the generalizability of findings across different educational contexts.

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