The Impact of Educational Podcasts on Enhancing English Students' Comprehensive Language Skills

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Abstract in English	Paper Info

The objective of this study was to ascertain if instructional podcasts may enhance the overall language proficiency of Iraqi EFL students and to examine any significant disparities in their performance at the recognition and production levels. The study used a quasi-experimental method with a group of 60 high school girls from Tikrit, Iraq. Cluster random sampling was used to choose the participants, and they were evenly split into an experimental group (n=30) and a control group (n=30). The experimental group was taught via instructional podcasts, whereas the control group was educated with more traditional ways of communicating. Both groups took a test after the study to assess how well they could utilize language in general.

The results indicated a statistically significant difference in the post-test scores, with the experimental group outperforming (t-value = 6.709). Moreover, although the experimental group demonstrated enhancement in both areas, a notable discrepancy persisted between their elevated scores in recognition tasks and their diminished scores in production tasks. Nonetheless, it underscores the enduring difficulty of cultivating productive skills and advocates for the incorporation of specific solutions to reconcile the disparity between recognition and output.
classes.

-1:Introduction

Iraqi schools teach English as a foreign language from kindergarten to college.   In high school, the national curriculum requires pupils to communicate clearly in speech and writing utilizing interpersonal, transactional, and functional texts (Kebudayaan, 2017).   Graduating students should excel in these areas. Skill levels are still low, hence this aim is not attained.

Many Iraqi students fail the National Examination because of English, according to recent data (Kebudayaan, 2017). Students have a lot of trouble understanding English when they listen. Bahasa Iraq is the main medium of instruction, which means that students don't get to practice their English very much and don't use real English materials very often. Students' auditory understanding is hindered by educators' persistent failure to utilize suitable educational methods or authentic listening materials (Huang, 2004).

Podcasts are a modern way to learn on the go. They give you digital audio or video content that you can always access on portable devices (Constantine, 2007).   Podcasts, which are a mix of "iPod" and "broadcast," offer authentic, immersive, and interesting language input that is different from other types of audio resources.   Scholars (Aguilar, 2016; Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013; Abdous & Facer, 2009; Ahmed, 2008; Blaisdell, 2006; Chinnery, 2006) contend that podcasts are effective instruments for language acquisition owing to their accessibility and relevance to everyday experiences.

Even students who have never done it before can benefit from listening to podcasts for as little as six minutes a day (Constantine, 2007). Podcasts enable focused feedback and exam preparation (Edirisingha et al., 2007), with other studies confirming their positive effects on auditory skills and comprehension (Beheler, 2007; Rizzi et al., 2007).   Although podcasts have benefits and are becoming more popular, there is still not enough study on how they are used in Iraqi high schools. The purpose of this study is to find out how Iraqi EFL students' listening comprehension is affected by podcasts and how they feel about using them as a teaching tool in listening classes.

1-1-1 Problems of the study

1. A lot of EFL students have trouble with speaking, listening, vocabulary, and general comprehension.

2. Traditional teaching methods often lack interactive and engaging strategies, which results in low student engagement and limited exposure to the language.

3   There is insufficient use of modern technological tools, such as educational podcasts, to provide authentic and accessible language input.

4   .Many EFL Students also struggle with confidence and motivation, as limited opportunities for real-life communication and feedback often make them hesitant to express themselves freely in English.

1-1-2 Aims of the Study

1. Finding out the effect of using educational podcasts on EFL school students' comprehensive language skills.

2. Finding out whether there is any significant difference between the students ' comprehensive language in the experimental groups' at the recognition and production levels of the posttest.

1-1-3 Hypotheses of the study

1- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group, who is taught comprehensive language by using educational podcasts; and that of the control group who is taught by traditional method in the posttest.

2- There is no significant difference between the experimental groups ' achievement at recognition and production levels in the posttest.

1-1-4 Values of the Study

1. Provides empirical evidence showing the effectiveness of podcasts in enhancing multilingualism in EFL contexts.

2. Offers helpful guidance to teachers on how to include podcasts in lesson plans to boost student engagement.

3. Aids in bridging the gap between traditional instruction and technology-enhanced language learning.

4. Talks about the challenges of teaching EFL in settings with evolving technological infrastructure.

1-1-5:Limit of the Study

1.The sample size and educational context may restrict the generalizability of the findings.

2. Differences in how easy it is for kids to get to technology (devices, internet) may affect how often they use podcasts.

3. The study may not be long enough to look at the long-term impact on language learning.

4. Differences in students' traits, such as their motivation, how they like to learn, and what they already know, can affect the results.

Review of Literature

2-1 Introduction

Podcasts, originally created to improve listening abilities, are now a valuable technology.   Students can choose from several genuine spoken language resources based on their interests and skill levels.   They encourage pupils to listen at their own pace and facilitate personalized learning (Kavaliauskien, 2008).

This review will evaluate how podcasts improve listening comprehension in EFL classroom. This study will explore how podcasts affect secondary school students' educational outcomes and attitudes in Iraqi EFL instruction. It will also showcase podcast successes.

2-2: Crucial Capabilities for Learning English

To become proficient in English, you need to learn a number of basic abilities that are all important for the language to thrive. These basic skills—speaking, writing, listening, reading, and grammar—are what you need to know to understand and improve your English. By focusing on these areas, students can improve their language skills in many ways.

1.Reading

Reading is an important ability for those learning English since it helps them learn more, take up new words, comprehend grammar rules, and try out different ways of writing. You can learn this skill by

reading newspapers, magazines, and books. Koran (2015)   says that reading is educational and also broadens your horizons, improves your social skills, and makes your life more interesting.

2-Speaking

Speaking is one of the best talents to acquire because it means making language on the spot. Speaking, on the other hand, needs active practice and interaction. But kids who don't reside in English-speaking areas could have a hard time learning this skill. As Feyten (2010) says, speaking is a complicated process that requires combining vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and even cultural knowledge of the language.

3. Writing

Writing is another important skill that helps students write clearly. It is very important at school and at work. Writing is the act of coming up with ideas, putting them into words and paragraphs that make sense, and carefully conveying meaning. Koran (2015) says that writing is an important aspect of studying and teaching English because it lets pupils say what they want to say in words.

4. Grammar

Grammar is a very important part of learning English, even though kids may find it hard.   You learn how to make phrases that are right and useful. Grammar is the study of how words fit together and change shape to make sentences, according to Harmer (2001). Also, says that grammar teaches kids how to use words correctly.   Knowing grammar is important for being fluent, but it takes a lot of work, practice, and mental training.

5. Listening

You need to be able to read and listen in order to communicate with other people.   Hearing noises, deducing their meaning, understanding the message, and appropriately responding are all components of

listening, according to Doyle (2022). Those students who excel at listening will have no trouble following along in conversations and understanding spoken English.

2-3 The Teaching of Listening

The key to effective communication is listening carefully to what other people are saying. The importance of hearing for improving one's language abilities is highlighted by Feyten (2010), who asserts that listening accounts for around 45% of human communication. In order to help someone learn how to accomplish something, provide them with the necessary information, and support them with their studies, teaching is described by Brown (2000, p. 7). The importance of listening as a tool for comprehending spoken language and a component of second language acquisition has only just been recognized.

If they wish to teach listening effectively, teachers should take the initiative and plan their classes thoroughly. Language input should be prepared specifically to assist individuals grasp what they hear, not provided to them beforehand, according to one of the fundamental theories underpinning teaching listening. This makes sure that children learn how to analyze sounds directly from spoken language instead of depending on textual aids. Audio-based listening activities are a good way to help students improve their listening skills in a more concentrated and meaningful way Brown (2000, p. 7).

2-4 Podcast

The Oxford Dictionary says that a podcast is an audio file that can be downloaded to a computer or portable media player or streamed online. The word "podcasting" was first used in 2004, while the idea has been around since 2000. Podcasts are a really popular way to listen to audio entertainment right now. Podcasts have also quickly become popular in schools as a useful way to study Evans (2008).

Podcasts are different from other types of media because they let students access content from anywhere and at any time. This makes the learning process much more flexible. Because of this, time and place are no longer problems for learning Brown (2000, p. 7). One of the best things about using podcasts in the classroom is how easy they make it to get educational materials. Evans (2008) says that students have to study whenever and wherever they can because of how people live today. This means that portable technology is necessary for easy access to instructional materials.

Educators all across the world are using educational podcasts more and more. Mikat et al. (2007) say that "podcasts are flexible, reusable, interesting, and motivating for today's tech-savvy students." This technology improves the learning process and has several benefits by letting students interact with the information they are studying or will study in class.

2–5 Using Podcasts to Teach English

Podcasts are digital audio or video transmissions that can be viewed and downloaded on a variety of mobile devices. By combining the terms "iPod" and "broadcast," the term "podcast" embodies its origins as a portable, on-demand listening device. Podcasts provide a greater degree of adaptability than conventional radio, enabling listeners to choose and interact with content at their own tempo and preference. Podcasts, which were initially introduced in 2004, are occasionally referred to as a type of online audio blogging or publishing that allows users to access and subscribe to automatically updated audio content that is disseminated online. The results indicated that the act of listening to podcasts improved the comprehension and confidence of learners when they were speaking English Evans (2008).

The results demonstrate that podcasts can enhance listening comprehension in EFL contexts by providing adaptable, engaging, and practical learning opportunities. Podcasts are a favored teaching and supplemental resource that enhance students' auditory comprehension and focus by employing top-down and bottom-up processing strategies. Podcasts facilitate students' comprehension of language patterns and improve their auditory comprehension, as per Istanto (2011).

2-6 Attitudes toward Language Learning

These feelings are linked to perceptions of the language's ease or difficulty, its social significance, and even one's feelings toward language users. Attitudes are crucial when learning a second or foreign language. Hogg and Vaughan (2005) define attitude as a fairly stable configuration of feelings, ideas, and behavioral tendencies toward social objects, people, events, or symbols.

Affective, cognitive, and behavioral are the three additional categories into which Mathewson (1994) divided attitudes. The affective component is a person's emotional response to the attitude object; the cognitive component is their thoughts and beliefs about the object, which could be a person, idea, or situation; and the behavioral component is how the attitude influences their behavior in specific contexts.

2-7 Motivation in EFL

The key to success in English as a foreign language (EFL) programs is a highly motivated student body. It significantly impacts the proficiency with which children acquire a new language. Memorization isn't the key to mastering a second language; practice makes perfect. According to Anne (2008), it's critical to excite pupils and urge them to practice more outside of class.

In order to motivate their pupils to study, enhance their abilities, and excel in their work, teachers must establish a conducive learning atmosphere.

Making the classroom feel like a community, providing students with ongoing support and constructive criticism, utilizing modern positive reinforcement techniques, offering a variety of teaching styles to meet the needs of different students, and providing them with interesting and relevant materials are all ways to reach this goal.

Finally, it is important to note that students' motivation greatly improves their language acquisition in EFL classes. Therefore, in order to establish and maintain high levels of motivation throughout language acquisition, teachers must first have an understanding of the primary components that impact motivation Evans (2008).

2-8 Perception Toward Podcasts

Podcasts are not just a way for students to improve their language skills, but they also want to change how students think about this unique and useful technology. Putman and Kingsley (2009) demonstrated that scientific students' perceptions of podcasts during their English studies were improved. All of the experiments showed that podcasts helped students learn more scientific words and made them want to learn more words. Similarly, Borgia (2010) and Putman and Kingsley (2012) discovered that listening enables kids to learn at their own pace, facilitating the methodical and beneficial development of their vocabulary. Cross (2014) emphasised how, when paired with regular daily teacher guidance and feedback, podcasts enhanced students' listening abilities and promoted independent learning. Kavaliauskin and Anusin (2009) demonstrated that students actively and thoughtfully listened to podcasts and showed great enthusiasm for using them in English lessons. They also demonstrated a very strong desire to download and listen to podcasts regularly for both entertainment and education.

Also, a number of studies have shown that interesting, diverse, and topic-rich content in podcasts can significantly increase students' motivation and rapid response (. Mikat et al. (2007); Fernandez et al., 2009; Evans, 2008).According to Kavaliuskin and Anusin (2009), their positive opinions of podcasts are demonstrated by the fact that they are widely used for listening practice and that they are highly valued when used in English classes.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Experimental Design

The experimental design is a common way to do quantitative research or test a hypothesis (or practice or procedure) to see how it affects an outcome or dependent variable (Creswell, 2012, p.294).

Table (1)

The Experimental Design of the Study

Groups	Independent variable	Posttest
Experimental group	Educational Podcasts	Posttest
Control group	communicative method	Posttest

3.2 Population and Sample of the Study

Population encompasses all individuals or significant units, rendering it challenging to obtain data for every individual within the population (Hanlon and Larget, 2011). The participants in this study are EFL Iraqi preparatory students from the fourth preparatory school for girls in Tikrit city, Salah Al-Deen. According to Table (2), there are 287 girls in the fourth class, and they are spread out across five preparatory schools in the center of Yathrib District.

Table (2)

The Population

No.	Preparatory School	Number
1.	Al-Bahli Preparatory School for Girls	56
2.	Yathrib Preparatory School for Girls	42
3.	Zenobia Preparatory School	48
4.	Al-Albab preparatory school	61
	Sada al-Iraq Preparatory School for Girls	80
	Total	287

The sample is a portion of the target population that the researchers aim to assess to extrapolate findings to the broader target population. Ideally, a survey is chosen to accurately reflect the entire population (Creswell, 2012).

The total population of this study comprises eighty students from Sada al-Iraq Preparatory School for Girls in Tikrit City, Salah Al-Deen, for the academic year 2023-2024. There are three groups of students: A, B, and C. Seventy-five people will be in the experimental and control groups, which are sections (A) and (B). There are thirty-seven students in section (A) and thirty-eight students in section (B). Seven students are not allowed to be in section (A), and eight students are not allowed to be in section (B). Fifteen of those students are working on the pilot study. So, thirty students from section (A) have been chosen to be in the experimental group, and thirty students from section (B) have been chosen to be in the control group. So, the total number of people in the sample is sixty, which is 80.00 percent of the original population, as shown in table (3).

Table (3)
The Population and Sample of the Study

Groups	No. of Population	No. of Pilot Students	No. of Sample Students
Experimental	42	12	30
Control	38	8	30
Total	80	20	60

3.3 Instruments of the Study

In this present study an instrument is used to achieve the aims of this study. A Comprehensive Language posttest which is developed by the researcher.

3.3.1 The Comprehensive Language Posttest

A Comprehensive Language is designed to fulfill the primary objective of this study. The 4th Preparatory students' text book by Caroline de Messires and Edward Alden is the basis for the comprehensive language test. To check that the fourth-grade students' comprehensive language is appropriate for their level and interests. These subjects are presented to the jurors within the

domain of English Language Teaching (ELT). The researcher designed this test to assess students' overall language proficiency. The test has six questions that come from the English for Iraq 4th Preparatory Students' Book.

3.4 Construction of the Achievement Posttest

The instrument incorporates the preparation of a posttest to assess the level of success of the experiment. Mcnamara (2000) explains that achievement tests only cover certain topics that are taught in a curriculum. It can help by giving a student a list of things they need to work on in the future. The main purpose of an achievement test is to see if the students learned what they were supposed to learn by the end of the course.

Davies (2000) posits that a primary factor in the success of educational research is the instrument employed for data collection. The achievement test is a type of test that shows how much progress students have made toward meeting the learning goals of a study and how well the lessons worked. An achievement test is a way to find out what a student has learned in a certain amount of time.

An achievement test has been designed by taking into account the content and behavioral objectives of the instructional material. It has six questions.

Table (4)
The Specifications of the Contents, Behavioral objectives, Bloom's Taxonomy, Items and Marks of the Posttest

Level	No. of Questions	Content	Behavioural objectives	Bloom's Taxonomy	No. of Items	Marks
Recognition	Q1	Unseen Story	To measure students' comprehension through a reading story	Classifying, Summarizing, Inferring, Comparing	6	20 M
Production	Q2	Answer the following questions	To measure students' ability in producing multi-words	Evaluation, creativity interprets	5	20 M

Recognition	Q3	Matching	Ask students to match pictures with words. To measure students' application.	Solve, apply, use, demonstrate, practice,	5	15 M
Recognition	Q4	Unscramble Pictures	Ask students to match words with the pictures. To measure student knowledge.	Defines identify, matches.	5	10 M
Production	Q5	Complete the Story	Ask students to complete story by using pictures. To evaluate students' comprehension.	Classifying, Summarizing, Inferring, Comparing	5	15 M
Production	Q6	Writing	Write story by using keywords. To evaluate the student's knowledge.	constructs, creates, synthesis	6	20 M
Total					32	100

3.5 Validity of the Achievement Posttest

Messick (1989, p.11) defines "validity as an incorporated evaluative judgment of the degree to which experimental evidence and theoretical argument assist the adequacy and suitability of inferences and actions based on scores of the test."

3.5.1 Face Validity

Face validity refers to the degree to which a test looks right and tests the knowledge and abilities it claims to test (Mousavi, 2009). Hence, validity is the degree to which the test is truly measuring what it was designed to measure.

3.5.2 Content Validity

Content validity is based on the degree to which a test sufficiently and effectively quantifies the exact skills and behavior that it plans to assess (Mousavi, 2009). The content analysis of the test items is based on Bloom's Taxonomy of cognitive domains to state the behavioral objectives. The cognitive domain begins with the lower level of cognition and ends with the higher level of cognition which is evaluation.

3.6 Reliability of the Achievement Posttest

According to Ravitch (2007, p.70), reliability is defined as "a measure of consistency in testing. "A person who took two distinct versions of the same test on two different days should have received equal results on both tests, for example. Alpha- Cronbach formula is used to measure the reliability of the posttest. The coefficient is found to be (0.93), which refers to the homogeneity of the test questions.

3.7 Analysis of the posttest Items

3.7.1 Difficulty Level of the Posttest

The most suitable test item will have item difficulty varying between 0.15 and 0.85 (Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010). It was found that the current test items' DL ranges from (0.29) to (0.71).

3.7.2 Discrimination Power of the Posttest

The results obtained indicate that the test item discrimination power ranges from (0.29) - (0.73). which is acceptable for posttest item.

3.8 Final Administration of the Posttest

After verifying the pilot administration, the validity and reliability, the posttest is administrated to two groups, experimental and control. The date of the posttest exam on five of March 2024 and the period of the exam was limited to (60) minutes to answer the test completely. The researcher has distributed the test papers to the intended testees and ask them to read the instructions of the questions carefully. At the end of that time, all the test papers have been collected to be scored according to the designed scoring scheme.

4.0 Findings and Discussion of Results

4.1 Results Related to the First Hypothesis

To find out if there is any significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and that of the control group in the posttest, all mean scores are obtained and compared.

Statistics show that "the mean scores of the experimental groups are 71.56 and that of the control group is 57.50. By using the t-test formula for two independent, the calculated t-value is found to be 6.709, while the tabulated t-value is found to be 2.00 at the degree of freedom 58 and level of significance (0.05). This means indicate that there is a significant difference between the achievement of the two groups and in favour of the experimental group." Thus, the first hypothesis which states that there is not any significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and that of the control group in the posttest is rejected, as shown in table (5).

Table (5)
Means, Standard Deviation, and t-Values of the Two Groups in the Comprehensive Language Test

Groups	No. of students	Mean	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
EG.	30	71.56	7.56	Calculated	Tabulated	58	0.05
CG.	30	57.50	8.63	6.709	2.00		

4.2 Results Related to the Second Hypothesis

In order to obtain "the mean scores of the experimental group's accomplishment at the recognition level and the production level are computed and compared to see if there is a significant difference between them. The acquired data indicate that students' mean production scores are 32.90 and their mean recognition scores are 38.66. The t-test formula is used for two paired samples, and the calculated t-value is 3.891, which is higher than tabulated t-value to be 2.04, at the degree of freedom 29 and level of significance (0.05)." This means that there is a significant difference between students' achievement at the recognition level and that at the production level and for the benefit of the recognition level. Therefore, the second hypothesis is rejected, as shown in table (6).

Table (6)
Students' Mean Scores, Standard Deviation, and T-Value of the Experimental Group Performance at the Recognition and Production Levels

Group	No. of students	Mean	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
Recognition	30	38.66	4.89	Calculated	Tabulated	29	0.05
Production	30	32.90	6.13	3.891	2.04		

4.3 Discussion of Results

The results of this study offer unequivocal and statistically significant proof on the efficacy of the instructional strategy employed with the experimental group, while simultaneously providing profound insights into the dynamics of language acquisition.

First hypothesis, that experimental and control groups' posttest mean scores were not statistically different, was disproven. An average score of 71.56 in the experimental group and 57.50 in the control group shows a performance discrepancy. This change is due to the experimental treatment, as the computed t-value of 6.709 is much higher than the crucial tabular value of 2.00.

After the educational intervention, the experimental group's language skills improved more than the control group's. Since the experimental group's performance improved considerably, the unusual tactics helped them absorb and internalize language information. As seen by the slightly smaller standard deviation (7.56 vs. 8.63 for the control group) and higher mean score, the experimental technique was more effective on average, reducing student performance variation.

Our second argument for the mismatch between student achievement recognition and productivity was likewise rejected. Recognition tasks had a statistically significant difference in average scores (38.66) from production tasks (32.90), with a t-value of 3.891, exceeding the critical value of 2.04.

This supports second language learning theories that separate receptive and productive ability. Receptive skills like passively recognising proper linguistic forms in multiple-choice or true/false questions are examples. It's a basic mental operation for many. Production requires active language acquisition, construction, and written or spoken expression. It need a deeper and more intuitive linguistic knowledge for this.

Recognition examinations outperform production tests, highlighting a frequent language learning issue: students learn faster than they can apply it. It takes more cognitive work and language ability to produce, including remembering new words, using grammar correctly, and structuring phrases syntactically. This study supports the hierarchy of language skills and emphasizes the importance of individualized teaching methods in helping students move from passive to active learning.

5. conclusion

This study yields two significant findings. The experimental teaching method greatly increased students' performance in all areas of language when compared to the traditional method. Second, the difference between receptive (or "recognition") knowledge and productive (or "output") knowledge stayed the same, even in the experimental group that did well. The second is harder for students to understand. These results have significant ramifications for educational methodologies. They support experimental pedagogy, but they tell teachers that better overall performance doesn't always mean simpler language output. Teachers need to find strategies to help students with more than just learning new words and recognizing them in order for language programs to be truly useful. The best way to reach this goal is to give kids more chances to talk and write about themselves, as well as do other activities that focus on form and meaning.

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الملخص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التأكد من قدرة البودكاست التعليمية على تعزيز الكفاءة اللغوية العامة لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية العراقيين، وفحص أي تباينات جوهرية في أدائهم على مستوى التعرّف والإنتاج. استخدمت الدراسة منهجية شبه تجريبية مع مجموعة من 60 طالبة في المرحلة الثانوية من تكريت، العراق. استُخدمت العينة العشوائية العنقودية لاختيار المشاركات، وقُسمن بالتساوي إلى مجموعة تجريبية (عددها 30 طالبة) ومجموعة ضابطة (عددها 30 طالبة). دُرّست المجموعة التجريبية عبر البودكاست التعليمية، بينما دُرّست المجموعة الضابطة بأساليب تواصل تقليدية. خضعت كلتا المجموعتين لاختبار بعد الدراسة لتقييم مدى قدرتهما على استخدام اللغة بشكل عام. أشارت النتائج إلى وجود فرق ذي دلالة إحصائية في درجات الاختبار البعدي، حيث تفوقت المجموعة التجريبية (القيمة التائية = 6.709). علاوة على ذلك، على الرغم من أن المجموعة التجريبية أظهرت تحسنًا في كلا المجالين، إلا أن هناك تباينًا ملحوظًا بين درجاتهن المرتفعة في مهام التعرّف وانخفاض درجاتهن في مهام الإنتاج. ومع ذلك، فإنها تسلط الضوء على الصعوبة الدائمة المتمثلة في تنمية المهارات الإنتاجية، وتدعو إلى دمج حلول محددة للتوفيق بين التفاوت بين الاعتراف والإنتاج.

الكلمات المفتاحية : بودكاست ، *اللغة الإنجليزية، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، فهم الاستماع*، محتوى صوتي.