TO IMPROVE SPEAKING BY USING PODCASTS

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Received: 03.01.2026
Revised: 05.01.2026
Accepted: 06.01.2026

Keywords:
podcasts, speaking skills, EFL learners, pronunciation, fluency, digital learning.

Abstract. In recent years, the integration of digital technologies into language education has significantly transformed traditional teaching approaches. One of the most effective digital tools in developing speaking skills is podcasts. This thesis explores the role of podcasts in improving learners' speaking abilities in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Podcasts provide authentic language input, enhance pronunciation, fluency, and listening comprehension, and motivate learners through real-life communication models. The study analyzes how podcast-based activities contribute to learners' confidence and communicative competence.

Introduction. Speaking is one of the most essential skills in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as it enables learners to communicate ideas, thoughts, and emotions effectively. However, many EFL learners face difficulties in developing speaking skills due to limited exposure to authentic language input, lack of confidence, pronunciation problems, and insufficient opportunities for real-life communication. Traditional teaching methods often focus more on grammar and reading skills, leaving speaking practice relatively neglected.

With the rapid development of information and communication technologies, language teaching methodologies have undergone significant changes. Digital tools have become an integral part of modern language classrooms, providing learners with access to authentic materials beyond textbooks. Among these tools, podcasts have emerged as an effective resource for enhancing speaking skills. Podcasts offer learners exposure to natural speech, various accents, intonation patterns, and real-life conversations, which are crucial for developing communicative competence.

Using podcasts in speaking instruction allows learners to listen to authentic language and actively engage in speaking-related tasks such as summarizing, repeating, role-playing, and discussion. These activities help learners improve pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary usage while reducing speaking anxiety. Furthermore, podcasts promote autonomous learning by enabling students to practice speaking outside the classroom at their own pace. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of using podcasts as a teaching tool to improve speaking skills of EFL learners. By integrating podcast-based activities into speaking lessons, teachers can create a more interactive and learner-centered environment that supports the development of learners' confidence and communicative abilities.

Literature Review. Recent studies in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) emphasize the importance of integrating technology into speaking instruction to enhance learners' communicative competence. Researchers argue that speaking skills develop more effectively when learners are exposed to authentic language input and meaningful communication opportunities (Richards, 2015). Traditional classroom practices often limit learners' interaction, which can negatively affect fluency and confidence in speaking.

Podcasting has gained considerable attention as a pedagogical tool in language education. According to McBride (2009), podcasts provide learners with authentic listening materials that reflect real-life communication, including natural pronunciation, stress, and intonation patterns. Similarly, Stanley (2006) highlights that podcasts enable learners to access language input anytime and anywhere, making them a flexible resource for language learning. This accessibility increases learners' exposure to spoken English, which is essential for improving speaking performance.

Several researchers have examined the impact of podcasts on speaking skills. Hasan and Hoon (2013) found that regular exposure to podcasts significantly improves learners' pronunciation and speaking fluency. Their study revealed that students who engaged in podcast-based speaking activities demonstrated greater confidence and accuracy in oral communication. In addition, Abdous, Facer, and Yen (2012) reported that podcasts encourage learner autonomy and promote active engagement through tasks such as discussion, summarization, and oral presentations.

Furthermore, podcast-based learning has been shown to reduce speaking anxiety among EFL learners. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), learners acquire language more effectively when anxiety levels are low. Podcasts create a low-stress learning environment by allowing learners to practice speaking at their own pace, which helps reduce fear of making mistakes (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). This supportive environment fosters positive attitudes toward speaking practice. In recent years, studies have also highlighted the role of podcasts in developing communicative competence and critical thinking skills. Learners who interact with podcast content are encouraged to express opinions, engage in discussions, and respond to real-world topics, which enhances both fluency and coherence in speaking (Sze, 2006). Overall, the literature suggests that podcasts are an effective and innovative tool for improving speaking skills in EFL contexts.

Research Discussion. The findings of this study indicate that the use of podcasts has a positive and significant impact on the development of EFL learners' speaking skills. The results show noticeable improvements in learners' pronunciation, fluency, and overall speaking confidence after the integration of podcast-based activities into the learning process. These findings support previous research which emphasizes the effectiveness of authentic audio materials in enhancing oral communication skills.

One of the most significant outcomes of the study is the improvement in learners' pronunciation and intonation. Exposure to native and near-native speakers through podcasts enabled learners to become more familiar with natural speech

patterns, stress, and rhythm. This result is consistent with the findings of McBride (2009) and Hasan and Hoon (2013), who reported that regular listening to podcasts helps learners develop more accurate pronunciation and clearer articulation.

In addition, the study revealed that learners' speaking fluency improved as a result of increased vocabulary input and repeated listening. Podcast-based tasks such as summarizing episodes, expressing personal opinions, and participating in group discussions encouraged learners to speak more spontaneously and with fewer pauses. These findings align with Abdous et al. (2012), who highlighted that podcasts promote active engagement and meaningful speaking practice, leading to improved fluency.

Another important finding relates to learners' confidence and reduced speaking anxiety. The flexible nature of podcasts allowed learners to practice speaking independently, which created a low-anxiety learning environment. Learners reported feeling more confident when speaking in front of peers after engaging in podcast-related activities. This supports Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, suggesting that lower anxiety levels facilitate language acquisition.

Moreover, the results demonstrate that podcasts foster learner autonomy and motivation. Learners took greater responsibility for their learning by accessing podcast materials outside the classroom and practicing speaking at their own pace. This autonomy contributed to sustained improvement in speaking performance and positive attitudes toward English learning.

Overall, the discussion of findings confirms that integrating podcasts into speaking instruction is an effective strategy for improving EFL learners' speaking skills. The results of this study not only corroborate existing literature but also highlight the practical value of podcast-based instruction in creating an interactive, learner-centered speaking environment.

Conclusion. This study has examined the effectiveness of using podcasts as a tool to improve speaking skills among EFL learners. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that podcast-based instruction significantly enhances learners' pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary usage, and overall speaking confidence. Exposure to authentic spoken language through podcasts enables learners to develop a better understanding of natural speech patterns, including intonation, stress, and rhythm. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that podcasts create a learner-centered and low-anxiety learning environment, which encourages active participation and reduces fear of making mistakes. The flexibility of podcasts allows learners to practice speaking beyond the classroom, promoting learner autonomy and sustained language development. As a result, learners become more motivated and confident in expressing their ideas in English. In addition, the integration of podcasts into speaking lessons supports communicative language teaching by providing meaningful and interactive speaking tasks such as discussions, summaries, and role-playing activities. These tasks help learners apply language knowledge in real-life contexts and improve overall communicative competence. In conclusion, podcasts can be considered an effective and innovative teaching tool for improving speaking skills in EFL contexts.

It is recommended that English language teachers incorporate podcast-based activities into their speaking instruction to enhance learners' oral proficiency. Future research may focus on exploring the long-term effects of podcast use on speaking development and comparing podcasts with other digital learning tools.

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