

# Improving TEFL Majors' Personality Skills via Podcasting

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**Abstract:** Many prominent problems arise in the learning process as a result of certain reasons, one of which is the huge increase in population and knowledge. The large numbers of potential learners and the rapid flow of new information at a very short period of time makes it necessary to find other solutions in or outside classes. Nowadays there is an urgent need to replace the traditional approaches seeking the new technological implementations among which is podcasting. This study tries to find out the effectiveness of using self-made and ready-made podcasting in improving students' personality skills. To achieve this aim the researchers interviewed 25 male and female fourth year university students at Al-Quds Open University, Tulkarm branch. Results showed big roles of podcasting on improving personality skills parallel to speaking skills. Based on these results, the researchers recommended the inclusion of podcasting in the syllabus and in the curriculum as both a teaching strategy and learning style.

**Keywords:** podcasting, authentic podcast, learners made podcast, personality skills, independent learning.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The ultimate goal of the educational process is to equip learners with personality skills which will prepare them for the practical life after graduation, and will help them gain competence in different language skills. In the Palestinian context where the complications of life might occur suddenly due to the Israeli occupation, universities or schools might not be reached, the researchers thought of one of the technological implementations that help learners receive their education which is podcasting. Raba' (2017). We are as Palestinians in a situation we need independent learning and decision making more than other nations. The researchers thought that podcasting might be suitable in such concept. Thorne and Payne (2005). Research studies on technology and its implementations such as podcasting have showed that technology can positively affect personality skills parallel to other language skills. Ashton-Hay & Brookes, (2011); Affouneh and Raba' (2017 and 2018).

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the role of self-made and ready-made podcasts in developing personality skills and language proficiency, and to assert the urgent need of these techniques in the Palestinian context.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

For the sake of clarity and easiness, the researchers arranged this section topically; the following subtitles are covered: Studies about that the definition of podcast; studies about podcasts in language teaching and learning and studies about personality skills via podcasting.

### Studies that handle the definition of podcast

Podcast is a blend of two words Apple iPod and broadcast. (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2007). Podcasts are series of digital audio and video recordings uploaded on the web with the aid of Rapid Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds (Lafferty & Walch, 2006). RSS feeds enables users to download the desired podcasts by using podcaster software like iTunes. There are huge collections of podcasts on iTunes stores which listener can find, thus there is no need to visit the websites frequently for new podcasts episodes.

Television podcasts, radio podcasts, classroom podcasts, and individual or group podcasts are different types of podcasts on the internet. VOA (Voice of America) created useful tools for improving learners' oral proficiency such as television podcasts, radio podcasts and classroom podcasts including storytelling are existing programs and lectures which are turned into podcasts.

### Studies on podcasts in language learning and language teaching

There are several studies in language learning which provided evidence that podcasting enhances learners' language skills such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, speaking and many other learning activities. (Chan, Chi & Lin, 2011; Kaplan-Leiserson, 2005). In addition, podcasting can be used as a tool to develop learners' pronunciation. Ducate and Lomicka (2009).

Since most traditional classrooms do not focus on listening activities, podcasting challenges the traditional ways of teaching and learning, and facilitates language learning as well. (Lee & Chan, 2007). Podcasts also contributes in developing learners' proficiency in English through using it as a supporting material

along with the course materials. (Istanto, 2011; Lee & Chan, 2007). In his study Abdous (2009), asserted that the use of mobile technology in ESL contexts has become popular in many secondary and higher secondary institutions. He added that incorporating podcasts into the curriculum has huge academic benefits much greater than using them as tools for reviewing.

#### **Studies about personality skills via podcasting**

Building learners' personality skills is considered the ultimate goal of education, which enables learners to contribute effectively in their societies. Such skills are communication skills and generic skills. In this respect, Lawlor & Donnelly (2010), expressed the significant role of podcasting on developing generic skills and communication skills for science and engineering PhD research students. Generic skills such as: research skills and awareness of the problem, Ethics and social understanding as for, Communication skills, Personal effectiveness or development, Team-work, leadership and Career management among others. Furthermore, Croft K., Maxwell J. and Scopes M. (2011) showed that podcasting can develop learners' personality skills and study skills that include Academic writing, time management, group skills, reflection and how to do research . The researchers used eight podcasts for approximately 302 hours of listening. The results were worthwhile and useful, the podcasts were being well used by students, so further podcasts will be recorded in addition to students' discussion recording will be included.

To raise motivation at learners to learn outside the class enhances creativity for them, and podcasting is an effective tool in fulfilling this aim. McMinn S. (2008) concluded at the end of his study that using podcasting as a tool to be integrated into the language learning curriculum, and providing them with both authentic and simulated environments, will raise their motivation to learn and to be more responsible for their own work. Rostami M., Azarnoosh M. and Abdolmanafi-Rokni S. (2017) asserted that using podcasts in classrooms increased students' motivation and attitudes positively which was the purpose of the study. The researchers recommended to incorporate podcasting into the curriculum as a tool of learning, or to be used in the form of tasks at different phases of the curriculum. Finally the study recommended to encourage team work in the process of producing the podcasts. Francom J., Ryan T. and Kariuki M. (2011) used in their study weekly podcasts summaries posted on an Internet website in Windows Media format and downloaded by college students. The results showed that using weekly podcasts summaries affected positively learners' outcomes and improved their attitudes towards the process of evaluation and their overall comprehension of the course content. In a study of( Khoo E., Forbes D. and Johnson E., 2013) emphasized that using podcasts was useful in developing technological skills and students' confidence, podcasting also strengthened learners' relations through the collaborative work.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

This section covers the study method, population and sample, in addition to the tool, procedures and statistical processes. Descriptive and analytic method was used for its suitability for the study purposes.

#### **Study Population and Sample**

The study population consists of English major students in their fourth year, at Al-Quds Open University in Tulkarm city branch in the academic year (2018-2019), who are 120 male/female students. The sample consisted of 25 male/female learners who were selected semi randomly, and a semi-structured interview was employed to serve the purposes of the study.

#### **Procedure**

Each member of the sample was asked (8) open ended questions individually, and were interviewed by the researchers personally after getting the permission from the university to conduct the interview. 20 out of 25 learners fully responded to the interview questions.

### **IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This study sought to investigate the role of self-made and ready-made podcasts in developing personality skills and language proficiency, and to assert the urgent need of these techniques in the Palestinian context. In the fourth coming paragraphs the researchers showed the participants' responses to the interviews questions.

#### **1. What is podcasting from your own point of view and what are its types?**

The first question of the interview deals with the aim to identify the perception of learners toward podcasts and their types. All the sample participants identified podcasts as audio or video files that can be freely downloaded from the web on computers or on smart devices. Learners were also familiar with two types of podcasts. Meanwhile the researchers discovered that the interviewees were to some extent familiar with the different types of podcasting which indicate their literacy and awareness of this type of technological implementation in teaching and learning. 2 out of 20 showed inadequate literacy mainly the second one which is self-made podcasting.

## **2. Which type you are familiar with and prefer to use?**

One of the students said: "To me, I really liked to listen to ready-made podcasts because it gave me the chance to choose the podcast that suits my goals the most, and a wide range of interested and rich topics. I really got new and useful ideas out of them".

15 out of 20 learners agreed with the above mentioned opinion saying that they preferred to use ready-made podcast. It seems that most learners even in the open learning system tend to use the easier way of podcast because the second one which is self-made requires more time and effort in choosing the material and recording it. They said that in just a tap we reach the material we want, we download it and use it anytime we want. Five respondents, on the other hand, preferred self-made podcast justifying their preference to a number of returns they gain via the process. They assured some of the returns beginning with the freedom in choosing the candid material, preparation procedures, the recording experience passing through the reviewing process. All these personal skills can help them become more autonomous, have more ability to sustain knowledge and have more confidence in themselves.

## **3. My effectiveness as a student could be improved with the integrating of podcasting into college curriculum. What do you think?**

One of the students responded: "Podcasts were useful and helped me in my study. My test grades improved greatly, I will absolutely use this type of podcasting (self-made) in many areas of the curriculum".

As showed in answering the second question of the interview, 15 respondents preferred ready podcasting ;still, when asked about the effective type to be included in the curriculum, all of them have consensus about the inclusion all types of podcast in general and self-made podcast in particular. The interviewees showed enthusiasm towards the implementation of this type of technology as they referred to the material and prepare activities in their own learning at their own pace and time.

## **4. Does podcasting improve autonomous learning?**

One of the answers was:" at first I used to enjoy using ready-made podcasts but after the experience of producing self-made podcasts I changed my mind. My studying habits developed greatly, as I feel more responsible towards my education and my life as a whole".

Regardless of the type of podcast, almost all learners have Learners positive attitude towards this technology implementation. They showed that self-made podcast is more powerful than other types in improving autonomous learning. The respondents' answers showed that self-made podcast can help them be independent in their learning, it made them more responsible for the type of learning they receive in addition to managing time and distributing it among the different learning activities. [ using both types of podcasts, but they preferred using self-made podcasts. Autonomy was developed through the use of this type, by autonomy we mean independence in learning. Learners learnt to be responsible for their own learning and to choose the appropriate time and speed in learning the material.

## **5. Were learners' problem solving skill and critical thinking improved through the use of podcasts?**

Learners developed critical thinking as they faced problems at different stages of preparing the podcasts. As they worked in groups and individually, they were able to understand and evaluate the selected material. They were also able to be self-critical about their own understanding, interpretation and evaluation. Learners could identify the problem and the context in which it occurred, then suggest effective solutions and formulate alternative solutions. Followed by monitoring the whole situation of implementation and the difficulties they may encounter. In other respect, podcasts prompted collaboration between learners through sharing ideas, suggestions, brain storming and other skills alike.

## **6. What was the result of using podcasting on learners' language fluency?**

Besides personality skills which learners developed through the use of podcasts, such as independency, group work, leadership characteristics and other skills, learners' speaking fluency improved greatly. Learners' communicative skills improved greatly, each learner has the opportunity to take part in producing the podcast. Learners speak and discuss with each other the material to be recorded, this helps learners to feel less embarrassed and stressed to speak in front of others. Pronunciation, grammar and new vocabulary were also positively improved through the use of podcasting, which raised their enthusiasm and motivation for future use of podcasts. In addition to developing learners' interpersonal engagement as a student or as a team to speak and to listen, then to give and receive feedback.

## **7. Are there any problems that encountered by learners when using the podcasts ?**

One of the participants answered, "I don't like the sound of my taped voice, so I prefer to use others' podcasts or ready-made ones".

While another one answered, "It is difficult to decide what material to choose and record, besides the time and effort that we spent in recording the first podcast. Later recordings were much faster and less confusing".

Learners encountered several common problems, starting from technical challenges due to the use of technology devices or the internet access difficulties. This was mitigated by the availability of technical support. Some learners found it a little nervy to listen to their own taped voices. Students, however, appreciated that their

speaking skills developed through podcasting might in turn influence their willingness to explore new teaching possibilities involving a range of technologies in their own classrooms. There were also problems in respect to the choice of the appropriate material to be recorded, problems in organizing and distribution the work between them. They developed strategies in this respect by scripting their ideas, typing up notes and practicing trial recordings of podcasts. Authentic material in ready-made podcasts constituted another challenge for learners, it contained many new vocabulary, the speed and accent of the speaker also made it hard for listeners to follow and understand every mentioned information.

#### **8. Will learners continue to listen to podcasting in the future? Discuss.**

Most of the student answered the following way, " we will definitely use podcasts in our next courses, and we are now more open to explore any new technology in teaching and learning". This shows willingness and improvement in learners' attitudes towards the embedding of technology, especially podcasts in the learning process. 17 out of 20 respondents were ready to use podcasts in the future and to adopt it as a method of studying language. They justified their answers that podcasts offered them an opportunity to be responsible for their own learning at their appropriate time and speed. They also found that using podcasts prompt them to extend their technical skills, and to alleviate their worries from using new technology as a part of their education system.

### **V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In conclusion, language learners were positive towards using podcast technology, and they were interested to use podcast technology into their language learning processes and into developing different personality skills. Some of the reasons for the positive perceptions included the opportunity for students to learn at their own time, and to listen to specific materials that they miss or do not understand multiple times. Effects, attitudes, and perceptions towards podcasts have been investigated and in most cases, positive effects and attitudes towards podcasting are documented.

One major difference between the present study and the previous studies is that it overemphasizes self-made podcasting when compared with readymade podcasting. So, based on the specialty of the Palestinian contexts, resulting from the unexpected flying checkpoints and the sudden changes in events and circumstances in the Palestinian areas (Affouneh and Raba, 2017 and 2018), the researchers recommended using self-made podcasting as an alternative solution for such circumstances. The researchers recommended for conducting further studies that could emphasize the necessity of integrating podcasts in the education process on one hand, and for preserving and showing one's culture to the outside world on the other.

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