The Effect of Learner Podcasts on EFL Students' Speaking Development

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ABSTRACT

The use of podcasts in the field of language learning as instructional materials has received much attention in recent years. Podcasts enable learners to have access to authentic materials and they can be used as learning objects for independent learning. This study aims to assess the effectiveness of the use of learner podcasts in English language classes as an innovative technology-based instructional tool to develop EFL learners' speaking skills. The study investigates to what extent learner-produced podcasts help EFL students to develop their speaking skills. This study was carried out at a state university in Turkey with forty EFL learners. During the study, learners were asked to create podcasts in pairs. In the podcasts, they were encouraged to discuss critically about various topics with their partners. Each pair was also required to listen to another pair's podcast, and assess their peers' views on the relevant topic and stimulate the discussion through creating another podcast including their personal comments about their peers' viewpoints. In the study a pre-test and post-test design was used to measure the participants' English speaking performance as regards the production of learner podcasts. The data were collected through a pre-and post-speaking test administered to participants and the data gathered from the tests were analyzed quantitatively. The findings revealed that the post-training mean (M=4.57) was statistically significantly higher than the pre-training mean (M=3.37) and creating learner podcasts had a significant effect on learners' speaking skill improvement (p < .05 (p =.000), r = .81).

Today technology is an inseparable part of learners' lives as they are brought up in a technology-driven culture. They cannot imagine being able to communicate or exchange information without using technological devices such as computers, smart phones and tablets. In addition, digital media, visual culture, and youth culture are connected in such a way that each of them has an effect on others.

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Therefore, it is essential that technology be incorporated into the classes where traditional teaching methods are used (Khawlah & Omaima, 2015).

Learning a foreign language is difficult and complicated for many students. Thus, it is necessary for institutions to use time and resources effectively to provide learners with language instruction designed for students with different learning styles (Mahrooqi & Troudi, 2014). At that point, it is imperative to merge various methodologies with instructional technologies as institutions which do not use technology and move beyond traditional teaching methods "will be unable to meet the needs of knowledge based societies and as a result will not survive the change in paradigm of education" (O'Neill, Singh & O'Donoghue, 2004, p. 320).

With the effects of Information and Communication Technology development, CALL has gone further to include the Internet and web-based materials usage. Through a range of facilities offered by communication technologies and the Internet, in the 1990's, Technology Enhanced Language Learning appeared as a new approach focusing on the influence of technology on teaching and learning a second language (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007).

In the late 20th century, it was much easier to reach language materials by means of netbooks, laptops, and web-based applications. The use of portable computer supported tools leaded to "Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)" which has examined the utilization of various mobile tools: "pocket electronic dictionaries, personal digital assistants (PDAs), mobile phones, MP3 players, and most recently ultra-portable tablet PCs" (Burston, 2013, 157). Mobile learning provides learners with an interactive environment offering many contexts which use various types of applications available in the mobile devices (Bachore, 2015).

Kukulska-Hulme and Shields (2008) state that "MALL differs from CALL with its use of personal, portable devices that enables new ways of learning emphasizing continuity or spontaneity of access across different contexts of use" (p.273). The emergence of other mobile devices (OMDs) like smart phones and eBook readers gave rise to the MALL and many studies have emphasized that these mobile devises, which also contains podcasting, support language learning (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007; M'hammed et al., 2009).

Nowadays teachers are trying to incorporate what they have learnt about future trends and tools in teaching with technology into their teaching and professional development. For instance, social software computer tools such as blogs, wikis and podcasts are integrated into classrooms today and these ICT tools enable teachers to keep classroom environment stimulating (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007).

A podcast can be defined as "an audio and/or video file that is 'broadcast' via the Internet and can be downloaded to a computer or a mobile device such as an MP3 player for listening/viewing" (Harmer,2007, p.86). Dudeney and Hockly (2007) states that podcasts are regarded as a sample of social software like wikis and blogs. These three technology-based instructional tools have different features; however, as regards integrating them into the classrooms, they share certain characteristics:

- Teachers and learners can design and use these computer tools
- These tools can enable learners to make contact with other groups of learners such as a class in a different country
- The learners can plan the content and develop some ideas individually or as a group

Podcasting enables teachers to reach the latest and engaging resources for their students and motivate them to listen to audio materials whose topics appeal to their interest. It is also possible for both teachers and students to create their own podcasts. In this sense, the aim of this study is to investigate whether it is possible to improve speaking skills via creating and using learner podcasts in English language classes. This research study was designed to evaluate the effects of the use of learner podcasts as an innovative instructional tool on students' English speaking skills. It is also expected to assist EFL

teachers with necessary information to use and adapt to this instructional technology to enhance learners' speaking skills.

1.1. Literature Review

1.1.1. Podcasts in Language Teaching

Podcasting is regarded as a part of "mobile learning", which occurs "when the learner is not at a fixed, predetermined location, or when the learner 'takes advantage of the learning opportunities offered by mobile technologies'" (Kukulska-Hulme, 2005, p. 1). In addition, using podcasts provide learners with various advantageous. For example, podcasting distribute the materials in a format which is handy, easy to be carried and access. The pace of the distribution of information in podcasts can be controlled as well. Moreover, the format is interesting and encouraging. Not only it is free to access but also it offers different competently created resources that present a variety of topics.

The significance of learning and teaching language in a communicative environment through using authentic materials has been emphasized by Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories. In order to increase learners' motivation it is necessary that they receive comprehensible input in a meaningful context. Furthermore, learners' cultural competence should be developed. In this sense, podcasting assist teachers with the achievement of these primary goals of foreign language teaching. Podcasts enable learners to have access to authentic materials. These educational materials can be used by students to enhance their listening skills or they can develop their own podcasts. It takes only a few seconds to access and share podcasts by means of the World Wide Web (WWW) (Royal & Von Koss, 2008).

The taxonomy of usage of podcasts for language learning is presented by Rosell-Aguilar (2007):

Figure 1. Taxonomy of Uses of Podcasting for Language Learning (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007)

Podcasts can be integrated into language learning in two fundamental ways: using existing podcast resources or developing podcasts. Previous research in this field concentrated on techniques for producing and delivering podcasts (Diem, 2005; McCarty, 2005; Meng, 2005; Bankhofer, 2005; Stanley, 2006) rather than the assessment of podcasts resources available as instructional tools for language

learning in terms of SLA theories. Rosell-Aguilar (2007) states that podcasts offer various teaching materials and a significant input for authentic language which are based on different language learning approaches ranging from behaviorists to cognitive constructivists together with "communicative approaches, situated learning and lifelong learning".

Rosell-Aguilar (2007) emphasizes that learners should be motivated to create their own podcasts in the target language. This leads to learner production and give learners a chance to access their own performance. Learners can create and publish their own podcasts via some basic software and podcast sites such as Podomatic and Gabcast. Podcasting sites like Podomatic enable users to record, listen to and rerecord their podcasts. Thus, students have an opportunity to post their podcasts when they are satisfied with their performance in developing their own podcasts. In addition, as the recording software is integrated into the podcasts page, users do not need extra software for recording and any advanced technical knowledge to record their podcasts. After students are pleased with the quality of their own podcasts, they can be sent to the class podcasts page (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007).

Recently, there has been growing interest in podcasting that is a new technology-based instructional tool helping teachers to present instructional content and support learning out of the class. Research studies conducted on podcast applications in language learning have revealed that podcasting as a novel educational tool has a potential for language learning and it has been reported that learners' language skills, particularly listening and speaking skills, can be improved via podcasts (Ashton-Hay & Brookes, 2011; O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007). In this respect, Hasan and Hoon (2013) examined twenty journal articles to find out the effects of podcasts on ESL learners' language skills and their perceptions towards podcasts. The results of the review of related studies have indicated that in addition to helping learners to enhance their listening and speaking skills, podcasts enable learners to develop other language skills and such language areas as vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation (Hasan and Hoon, 2013).

1.1.2. The Role of Podcasts in Improving Foreign Language Learners' Speaking Skills

It is essential that good speaking activities attract students' attention. Students greatly enjoy the speaking activities prepared by the teacher correctly and encouraging full participation of students. Thornbury (2005) suggests that in order to teach speaking, it is necessary to have 'talking classrooms' in which the speaking activation should be an indispensable element of the class. Therefore, students will enhance their speaking skills and have increasing confidence in speaking in the target language.

Previous research indicates that podcasting can influence learners' listening and speaking skills considerably (Pun, 2006; Stanley, 2006). As regards the effect of podcasting on learners' speaking skills, McQuillan (2006) suggested many tasks that focus on learners' oral production. These tasks include some speaking activities such as holding talk shows, having interviews with native speakers and using audio diaries. In these tasks learners are required to "record themselves and classmates for a classroom assignment and provide speech samples to the teacher for assessment" (p.16). Furthermore, Tavales and Skevoulis (2006) recommended that learners make a recording of native speakers or themselves and after that, they use these recordings as listening materials by paying attention to intonation, pronunciation or grammar use. In addition, Stanley (2006) underlines that it is possible for learners to develop their self-studying skills through producing and publishing materials for a real audience, which is an educational opportunity offered by podcasting.

As it was emphasized in Farangi et.al.'s (2016) study conducted on podcasts applications for developing EFL learners' speaking skills, the number of research studies which directly examine the effects of the use of podcasts as instructional tools on EFL learners' speaking skills is very limited. Only a few studies have focused on investigating whether podcasting improves learners' English speaking skills or not (Fitria et al., 2015; Farangi et.al. 2016). In the study carried out by Farangi et.al. (2016), a way of

integrating podcasts in to EFL classrooms was investigated. The study conducted with 60 upper-intermediate Iranian learners examined not only the effects of podcasts on EFL learners' level of speaking skills but also if there was a significant difference between the effects of podcasts created by learners and web-based podcasts on learners' speaking skills. The findings revealed that the use of podcasts in the language classrooms had a significant effect on the development of EFL learners' speaking skills. The results also indicated as it was hypothesized at the beginning of the study that the learners who created their own podcasts outperformed the ones who used the podcasts available on the Web. In addition, the results suggested that podcasting that was integrated into a preplanned syllabus (textbook) possibly yields better results than podcasting that is used as a main instructional tool.

In a similar vein, Jain and Hashmi (2013) assessed the advantages of using podcasts in English Language Classrooms. Jain and Hashmi (2013) states that not only teachers but also students can create their own podcasts using some websites like podomatic. Podcast websites enable students to do various listening activities which will also help to improve their oral proficiency. Thus, it is necessary to encourage learners to produce their own podcasts (Jain & Hashmi, 2013). In addition, with respect to creating learner podcasts, Jain and Hashmi (2013) suggest that learners be provided short texts which will allow them to prepare and rehearse to create their own podcasts. They emphasize that practicing podcast texts, reviewing and recording them lead to acquire greater proficiency in their speech. Similarly, in a study conducted on podcasting, Fitria et al. (2015) investigated if the use of podcasts for language teaching and learning contributed to the twelfth grade students' English listening and speaking achievements. The findings of the study pointed to the significant role of podcasts in English classrooms as an effective and new technology-based learning tool, especially for developing learners' speaking and listening skills.

Although there is not an extensive literature on the effects of podcasting on foreign language learners' speaking skills, in general the findings have showed that the use of podcasts in language classrooms can enable learners to enhance their speaking skills. (Facer et al., 2009; Fitria et al., 2015; Farangi et.al. 2016).

1.2. Statement of the Problem & Purpose of the Study

With regard to foreign language teaching, particularly in Turkish context, EFL learners generally have difficulty in improving their speaking skills as they do not have many opportunities to be exposed to the target language, English, outside the class. Therefore, they need an additional comprehensible input to be able to practice speaking English aside from the speaking tasks they carry out in English courses. In this respect, learner podcasts can enable learners to develop their communicative skills in a stress free atmosphere out of the class. Using podcasts for language learning is not only beneficial but also an enjoyable learning task for students (Fitria et al., 2015). It also allows shy students, who are reluctant to speak in class, to communicate with their friends outside the class without suffering from high level of speaking anxiety. In addition, in podcasting pedagogy, producing something can motivate students for learning (Stanley, 2006). Accordingly, learner podcasts can serve to develop their speaking skills as an effective educational medium through encouraging students' interaction.

As regards the learner profile and generation in foreign language classes, it is necessary to be familiar with the term "digital native" introduced by Prensky (2001). People who are born in digital age such as Generation X and younger are called as 'digital native'. Learners who were born in and after 1980's are considered to be Digital Natives and the older generations are regarded as Digital Immigrants. It is notable that today in educational institutions, a vast majority of learners are "secondary digital natives" born after 1990 and exposed to Web 2.0 during the process of their growing up (Helsper & Enyon, 2010). Therefore, their interests, needs, and expectations should be taken into consideration

(Yaman, 2016). Using podcasting and especially learner podcasts in foreign language education as an innovative instructional tool is important in the context of fulfilling Digital Native's increasing expectations.

However, few studies have concentrated on assessing the influence of podcasts on developing learners' speaking skills in foreign language instruction (Facer et. al., 2009; Farangi et.al. 2016; Fitria et al., 2015) and there is still a need for further research on this subject (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). In spite of the potential benefits of using podcasts in language instruction, one of the major drawbacks to using podcasts for language teaching and learning is that there is still considerable ambiguity with regard to pedagogical design of podcasts used for language learning, particularly for developing speaking skills. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate whether it is possible to improve learners' speaking skills through producing and using learner podcasts in English language classes.

1.3. Research Questions

To what extent does creating and using learner podcasts help EFL students to develop their speaking skills?

1.4. Limitations of The Study

This research study was carried out for just two months. In School of Foreign Languages where the study was conducted, the educational process included four different quarters and each quarter consisted of eight weeks. In addition, the students' classes and teachers were changed for each quarter. Therefore, the podcast tasks designed to develop students' speaking skills had to be completed in eight weeks. If the duration of each quarter had been longer, the variety of podcast activities could have been increased.

2. Method

In this research study a pre-test and post-test design was used to measure the degree of change in the participants' English speaking skills as a result of producing learner podcasts.

2.1. Setting and Participants

The present study was undertaken at the School of Foreign Languages in the preparatory department at Hacettepe University. English preparatory education program aims to broaden freshman students' academic language skills and help them to complete their undergraduate courses in their own departments in which the medium of instruction is partialy (30%) or entirely (100%) English. The primary mission of Hacettepe University, School of Foreign Languages, is to give an excellent all-round education and create stimulating learning environments which will help its students to acquire the language skills they will need to communicate effectively not only in their academic society but also in the international arena and in different fields of life in which it is necessary to know a foreign language. In the department of Basic English, students attend English courses for at least 20 hours per week in order to reach the required level. According to the results of proficiency exam students take at the beginning of the each academic year, they are placed in classes considering their English proficiency level.

The participants in this study are 40 students at the Preparatory School at Hacettepe University. The participants are aged between 17 and 20 and they are at B1 level. They will take an undergraduate

degree in various departments ranging from Medical Sciences to International Relations. For this research study, the students who were willing to take part in podcasting activities were chosen.

The main reason for choosing these students as participants for the study is that the students have not had any information about what a learner podcast is and how they can be used to develop their English speaking skills. In addition, they have not created learner podcasts before. This study helped them to get experience in producing learner podcasts. It is obvious that students that have an advanced knowledge of the English language are much more likely to advance their careers. In this respect, it is absolutely necessary for these students to enhance their English speaking skills to become highly successful in their own professions; therefore, these 40 students are considered to need to possess more improved speaking skills.

It was also thought that the findings of the study about the effectiveness of podcast-based speaking tasks might provide information about how to integrate learner podcasts in to the curriculum of speaking courses at tertiary level.

2.2. Data Collection Instruments

First of all, a podcast page for the class podcast project was set up by using a free podcast site 'podOmatic' (www.podomatic.com). Moreover, a pre-test and post-test were used to see whether creating and using learner podcasts help EFL learners to develop their speaking skills.

2.2.1. A Pre-Test and Post-Test To Assess Students' Speaking Skills

Students' speaking performance was assessed via a pre-test and post-test. BTCE (The British Test Centre for English) exam was used to get data about to what extent creating and using learner podcasts contributes to developing EFL students' speaking skills. BTCE exam was decided to be used to assess students' speaking skills for this study as it is an international standardized test, and so it has validity and reliability (BTCE exam pretest and posttest questions are shown in Appendix I and Appendix II). In addition, to evaluate the validity of speaking test items, they were checked by five English instructors giving various courses in the department of Basic English at the School of Foreign Languages at Hacettepe University. With regard to the purpose of this research study and the learner profile of the participants, it was thought that the tests were valid as they could allow measuring accurately the students' speaking performance. Both in pre-test and post-test, six instructors (including the researcher) who are working in the Preparatory School at Hacettepe University tested the participants. Instructors' year of experience in teaching ranges from eight to ten years. Each student was assessed by a group of instructors (three instructors) in the speaking tests. The students were tested by the same teachers during the pre-test and post-test. The background information with regard to the instructors' education degree is presented in Table 1 and Table 2 and the distribution of the instructors according to year of experience are shown in Table 3.

Table 1
Academic Degrees of the Instructors

Academic Degree	F	P
BA	1	16.6 %
MA	5	83.3 %
Ph. D.	-	-
Total	6	100%

Note: Number of participants =6
F: Frequency, P: Percentage

Table 2
Information About the Instructors' Educational Background

Number of Participants	University	Departments
3	METU	English Language Teaching
1	Boğaziçi University	Translation and Interpreting
1	Hacettepe University	English Language Teaching
1	Hacettepe University	Linguistics

Note: Number of participants =6

Table 3
The Distribution of Instructors According to Year of Experience

Number of Years	*F*	*P*
8	3	50%
10	3	50%

Note: Number of participants =6
F: Frequency, P: Percentage

As can be seen in Table 1 and Table 2, most of the instructors taking part in the pretest and posttest speaking exams as interviewers (83.3%) have a MA degree. In addition, a vast majority of the participants are the graduates of department of English Language Teaching (66.6%). The other instructors, who are not the graduates of department of English Language Teaching, also received pedagogical formation training during their undergraduate education. In addition, as shown in Table 3, instructors' year of experience in teaching English is between eight and ten years.

The main reason for choosing these instructors for the study is that they have been teaching English as a foreign language for more than seven years. In addition, these instructors have been giving speaking courses in the Preparatory School at Hacettepe University. Therefore, they have not only relevant but also previous experience of assessing EFL learners' speaking skills through speaking exams.

2.3. Procedures for Data Collection

In order to carry out the study, the researcher received the formal permission for data collection from the Hacettepe University Ethical Committee and then the administration of School of Foreign Language at Hacettepe University.

The present study was conducted for eight weeks. In the first week of the study, after a class podcast page was built by the teacher (the researcher) via a free podcast site 'podOmatic' (www.podomatic.com)", the participants were provided with detailed information about the study and making learner podcasts to develop their English speaking skills. They are also given technical instructions on the procedure to be followed to create their own podcasts and post them to the class podcast page (The class podcast site is shown in Figure 1).
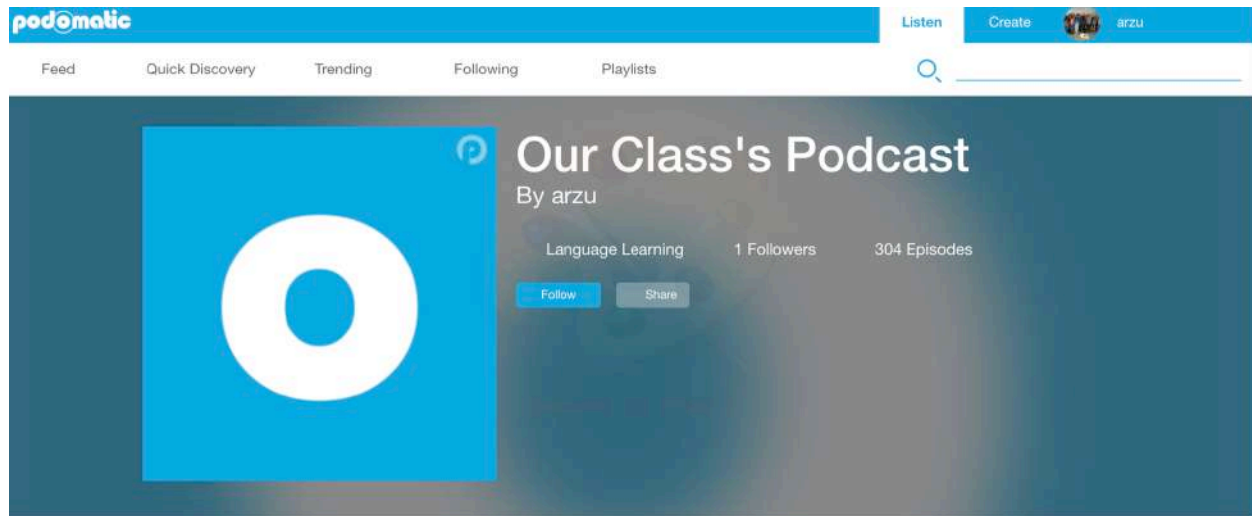
Figure 1. The class podcast page designed for the study

In addition, a pre-test was administered by the participants to get information about students' level of speaking abilities. BTCE (The British Test Centre for English) exam was used to test learners' English speaking skills. The pre-test exam was carried out for a week and it took nearly ten hours. During the pre-test, forty students were tested. Both in pre-and post speaking tests, students' performance was assessed according to BTCE exam rubric including 9-band scoring system (shown in Appendix III). In addition, students were video recorded during the speaking tests

During the study, learners were asked to create podcasts in pairs. Only the first podcast was made individually by the participants. In this podcast task participants were required to give personal information about themselves (name, age, likes & dislikes). In this way, they had a trial with learner podcasts. In the following podcasts, they were encouraged to discuss critically about various topics with their partners. Each pair was also required to listen to another pair's podcast, and assess their peers' views on the relevant topic and stimulate the discussion through creating another podcast including their personal comments about their peers' viewpoints. All of the podcast speaking tasks used in the study were designed by the researcher and checked by two English instructors working at the School of Foreign Languages at Hacettepe University. The length of the audio files in the podcasts was between 3 and 5 minutes. The learners produced learner podcasts outside the class and they had almost a week to complete the podcast task. Learners were also given a list of speaking expressions (e.g. asking for an opinion, giving your opinion, agreeing with an opinion, etc.) (shown in Appendix IV) and while they were discussing on the given topic in podcasts, they were asked to integrate some of these speaking expressions into their speech. In addition, as a whole class activity, some podcasts created by participants were listened in the class and held a general discussion on the relevant topic.

After students created various learner podcasts, at the end of the study a post-test was administered by students to get data about to what extent creating and using learner podcasts helps EFL students to improve their speaking skills.

As regards the study, the summary of the procedure is as follows:

Week 1: Orientation and the administration of pre-test

Week 2 (podcast task 1): personal information (name, age, likes & dislikes) (The podcasts will be created individually)

Week 3 (podcast task 2): Some of the learner podcasts were listened in the class and students were given the second podcast task : discussing about a specific topic (e.g. online dating) with a partner (The podcasts were created in pairs).

Week 4: Some of the students' podcasts were listened in the class and students discussed about the topic (online dating) as a whole class (for a short time). Then, the third task was given to the students. For the third podcast task, students were required to work in pairs. The pairs were matched with each other. They listened to another pair's podcast and created a new podcast in pairs by making comments on the ideas discussed by their friends in the podcast.

Week 5: Some of the students' podcasts were listened in the class. Then, the fourth task was given to the students: Discussing on a specific topic with a partner (e.g. gossip) (The podcasts were created in pairs)

Week 6: Some of the students' podcasts were listened in the class and students discussed about the topic (gossip)as a whole class (for a short time). Then, the fifth task was given to the students (Task 5: With your partner listen to another pair's podcast, create a new podcast in pairs by making comments on the ideas discussed by your friends on the given topics in the podcast.)

Week 7: At the beginning of the course, some students' podcasts were listened and students discussed about their classmates' views on the topic (gossip) presented in the podcasts.

Week 8: the administration of post-test

2.4. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the study were analyzed quantitatively using Statistical Packages in Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20. To find out whether creating and using learner podcasts has a reliable effect on the development of students 'speaking skills, a paired-samples t-test was used to assess the data gathered from pre-test and post-test. Moreover, the effect size was calculated to see the role of learner podcasts in developing EFL learners 'speaking skills.

3. Findings

The research question has focused on investigating whether using and creating learner podcasts enables EFL students to improve their speaking skills or not. A pre-test and post-test design was used in order to provide a satisfactory answer to this research question. At the beginning of the study, before students experienced creating and using learner podcasts, a pre- speaking test was administered to get information about the participants' current level of English speaking skills. After a period of eight week in which students were required to produce podcasts on various topics, the post-speaking test was conducted to measure the improvement of students' speaking skills as a result of the experience of making podcasts and to analyze the efficiency of using learner podcasts in foreign language instruction as an innovative instructional tool to enhance learners' speaking skills.

A dependent samples t-test was performed to compare and analyze the results of pre-and post-tests. Before conducting the analysis, the assumption of normally distributed difference scores was examined. A Shapiro Wilks test (p > .05) and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the exam scores were approximately normally distributed for pre- and post-test, with a skewness of 1.036 (SE=.374) and a kurtosis of 1.326 (SE=.733) for the pre-test and a skewness of .497 (SE=.374) and a kurtosis of .367 (SE=.733) for the post-test. The assumption was thought to be satisfied as the skew and kurtosis levels were respectively between the maximum acceptable values for a test (skewness and kurtosis are between -2.0 and +2.0, George, D., & Mallery, M., 2010; between +1.5 and -1.5, Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). This indicates that the data are normally distributed. Therefore, a dependent samples t-test was used to test the effectiveness of the use of podcasts created by students to enhance their English speaking skills.

The post-training mean (M=4.57) was statistically significantly higher than the pre-training mean (M=3.37). Pearson's r was estimated at .81 which is a large effect based on Pearson's (1901) guidelines. It tells us the strength of the relationship between the two variables, indicating a perfect positive linear

relation between the pre-test and post-test scores. A graphical representation of the means and adjusted 95% confidence intervals (Loftus& Masson, 1994) is shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Pre-Test & Post-Test Results

	Speaking Tests						95% CI for Mean Difference		
	Pre-test			Post-test					
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n		t	df
EFL Learners' speaking skills	3.37	1.44	40	4.57	1.51	40	-1.205	-2.072	39

The results of the paired-samples t-test indicated that on average, participants significantly developed their English speaking skills after they created learner podcasts (M = 3.37, SE = 1.44), as compared to their level of speaking skills before they experienced developing learner podcasts (M = 4.57, SE =1.51, t(39) = -12.072, p < .05 (p =.000), r = .81). The results show that the difference in means is statistically significant. Therefore, the overall results obtained from the paired-samples t-test demonstrated that creating and using learner podcasts has contributed enormously to the development of EFL learners 'speaking skills, as shown in Figure 2.
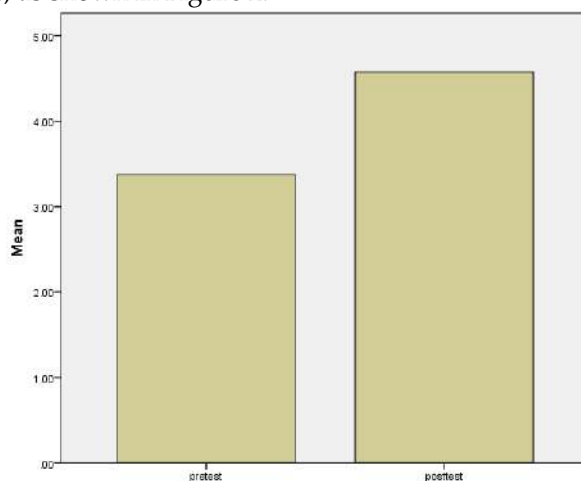
Figure 2. pre-test & post-test results

4. Conclusions and Discussion

In this study learner podcasts were used as an innovative supplementary instructional tool to help students to develop their speaking skills. Students' performance was assessed through a pre-and post-speaking test. The data gathered from the speaking tests revealed that students who took part in the study significantly developed their English speaking skills after they created learner podcasts as compared to their level of speaking skills before they experienced developing learner podcasts. This finding indicates a potential benefit of student-made podcasts for EFL students' speaking skills in that the use of learner podcasts as a technology-based supplementary teaching tool enabled learners to develop their speaking skills. Previous research on podcasting pedagogy has also suggested that podcast is a useful educational tool which helps EFL learners to improve their speaking skills (Fitria et al., 2015; Farangi et.al. 2016).

On the other hand, according to Stockwell (2010), despite the fact that podcasting provides language learners with various audiovisual resources; it does not offer an opportunity for interaction which is an inseparable part of language instruction. However, Rosell-Aguiler (2013) claims that it is possible to create learning environments where students get considerable opportunities to interact with each other by incorporating podcasting into language learning. Rosell-Aguiler (2013) suggests that using podcasting in pair or group work tasks, inside or outside the class, can encourage student interaction. In this respect, in this research study, learner podcasts serve a useful function as an interactive instructional tool.

In this study, the researcher aimed at integrating podcasts into the foreign language instruction to help students to improve their speaking skills. Therefore, students were required to produce their own podcasts on specific topics, mostly through working in pairs. Thus, in this study, learner podcasts provided a direct input that leads to interaction among students. This finding of the study suggests that learner podcasts, podcasts made by language learners, can be regarded as an invaluable source which promotes an increase in learner interaction as also indicated by previous research in the field (Ducate and Lomicka, 2009 & Rosell-Aguilar, 2013).

In addition, in this study, learner podcasts were integrated into English language instruction as an innovative supplementary instructional tool rather than a main educational tool to help EFL learners to develop their speaking skills. The findings of the study concerning the effect of learner podcasts on developing learners' speaking skills revealed that learner-made podcasts used as a supplementary learning tool are highly effective in enhancing EFL learners' speaking skills. Previous research also confirms this important research finding of the study through demonstrating that podcasting can best serves to foster teaching process as a complementary material instead of the main tool presenting the content of language instruction (Bennett, 2008; Heilesen, 2010; Lee & Chan, 2007).

5. Pedagogical Implications

With regard to problems with teaching and learning English in Turkish EFL context, as reviewed by Akalin and Zengin (2007), Büyükyavuz and İnal (2008), and Solak (2015), it is seen that English courses mostly focus on grammar instruction compared to other skills. In addition, unfortunately, the speaking tasks used in the English classroom to foster learners speaking skills seem not to be effective enough to help students to improve their speaking skills. In general, Turkish EFL students mention that: "I can understand English, but I cannot talk". In Turkey, students start to learn English at the fourth grade in the primary education, and today, in private education institutions, children learn English even at the kindergarten. Although students take English courses for a long time during their learning process (nearly 8-10 years till higher education), they still have difficulty in speaking.

This suggests that, in Turkish EFL context, it is necessary to employ new methods and instructional tools to allow students to enhance their speaking skills. It is also vital that speaking activities used for language instruction appeal to learners' interests and attract their attention. Today, we have digital natives in our classrooms, so it is necessary to integrate technology into foreign language instruction to keep and increase our students' engagement in language learning. Therefore, learner podcasts can be integrated into English curriculum as an alternative technology-based instructional tool. Students-made podcasts can be used either as a supplementary tool to support students' language learning or perhaps, a separate course can be designed for EFL learners in which they are required to carry out podcast projects through creating podcasts individually, in pairs and groups.

With respect to integrating learner podcasts into foreign language instruction, a key point is that a good instructional design is needed to be able to benefit from podcasting effectively for language learning and teaching. As regards podcasting pedagogy, Rosell-Aguilar (2007) emphasizes that two important

factors should be taken into consideration to use podcasts in language instruction: "design and pedagogy". In order to integrate learner podcasts into the EFL classroom, it is essential to determine learners' needs; accordingly, set goals by considering students profile and decide on the types of podcast tasks that will be produced by students to allow them to develop their language skills. In addition, teachers need a training to be able to use learner podcasts effectively to foster learners' speaking skills. They should be informed about what a podcasts is and how it can be efficiently integrated into language classes as an instructional tool for learners' speaking skill improvement.

6. Suggestions for Further Study

This study assessed the use of learner podcasts to develop EFL learners' speaking skills. A suggestion for further research is that this study was conducted at a university setting. Therefore, this study may be carried out in a secondary education institution to evaluate the effect of learner podcasts on EFL learners' speaking skills through a pre-and post-test research design. This kind of a study may also create an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of learner podcasts usage in improving language learners' speaking skills through comparing speaking performance of EFL learners who have different learner profiles.

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APPENDIX A. PRE-TEST QESTIONS
BTCE Speaking Test

Part 1: Introduction / Breaking the Ice (2-3 minutes)

[Examiner introduces himself/herself and checks candidate's identification. Candidate is asked general questions on familiar topics.]

- Where do you live?
- What do you like or dislike about living there?
- What do you usually do in your free time?
- What are your plans for the future?

Part 2: Individual Extended Talk (4-5 minutes)

[Examiner gives the candidate a printed task card.]

> **Candidate Task Card**
>
> Describe something you own which is very useful to you
>
> You should say: what it is
> how long you have owned it
> what you do with it
> and explain why it is so useful

You will have to talk about the topic for 1 to 2 minutes.

You have one minute to think about what you're going to say.

You can make some notes to help you if you wish.

Concluding questions:

How often do you use it?

What would you do if you lost or broke it?

How has this object changed your life?

Part 3 : Interactive Discussion (4-5 minutes)

[Examiner has an interactive discussion with the candidate. Candidate is given the opportunity to elaborate on a topic, and is urged to use more detail.]

What is your favourite TV programme?

What role does technology play in our lives?

Why do you think social networking sites have become so popular?

Do you think advertising influences what we buy?

BTCE Speaking Test

Part 1: Introduction / Breaking the Ice (2-3 minutes) [Examiner introduces himself/herself and checks candidate's identification. Candidate is asked general questions on familiar topics.]

- What do you enjoy doing at weekends?
- What do you do to keep fit and healthy?
- Why are you studying English?
- If you were given the opportunity to travel abroad, where would you go and why?

Part 2: Individual Extended Talk (4-5 minutes)

[Examiner gives the candidate a printed task card.]

> ## Candidate Task Card
>
> Describe a memorable place that you have visited
> You should say: where it is
> who you went there with
> what you did there
> and explain why other people should visit this

You will have to talk about the topic for 1 to 2 minutes.
You have one minute to think about what you're going to say.
You can make some notes to help you if you wish.

Concluding questions:
- Would you like to go there again? Why (not)?
- How did this place make you feel?
- Who would you like to go there with next time?

Part 3 : Interactive Discussion (4-5 minutes)

[Examiner has an interactive discussion with the candidate. Candidate is given the opportunity to elaborate on a topic, and is urged to go into greater detail.]
- Would you like to take a year off to travel and see the world? Why (not)?
- What preparations would somebody need to make before travelling round the world?
- How important do you think it is for people to visit different places?
- How do you think tourism changes local communities?

BTCE Speaking Test

Part 1: Introduction / Breaking the Ice (2-3 minutes) [Examiner introduces himself/herself and checks candidate's identification. Candidate is asked general questions on familiar topics.]
- Tell us about your family.
- What do you usually do when you are on holiday?
- What's your favourite season of the year?
- Which famous person would you most like to meet? Why?

Part 2: Individual Extended Talk (4-5 minutes) [Examiner gives the candidate a printed task card.]

> ## Candidate Task Card
>
> Describe an important decision you had to make in your life.
>
> You should say: when you had to make this decision
> why you considered it important
> whether it turned out to be the right one
> and explain how you felt after you made this decision

You will have to talk about the topic for 1 to 2 minutes.
You have one minute to think about what you're going to say.
You can make some notes to help you if you wish.

Concluding questions:
- Were there other options available to you when you made this decision?

    –   What would have happened if you had made a different decision?

    –   Were you influenced by anyone else when you made the decision?

    –   How have other people been affected by it?

Part 3: Interactive Discussion (4-5 minutes) [Examiner has an interactive discussion with the candidate. Candidate is given the opportunity to elaborate on a topic, and is urged to go into greater detail.]

    –   Is it wise to ask others for advice when you have to make important decisions? Why (not)?

    –   Why do you think some people are better at making decisions thanothers?

    –   Is there anything that you regret doing or not doing in your life?

    –   Are some decisions more important than others? Why (not)?

APPENDIX B. POST-TEST QESTIONS
BTCE Speaking Test

PART 1

Please come in and sit down - over here. First, let me take a look at your identity card.... it's for security purposes only.

Thank you. My name is (interviewer's name). What is your name? What shall I call you?

How are you?

How old are you?

Where do you come from?

Where do you live now?

What kind of place do you live in (a house or a flat?)

Describe the neighbourhood tha you live in at the moment?

What is your favourite pastime? Why do you enjoy doing this?

Do you prefer indoor or outdoor activities? Why?

Now move on to Speaking Test Part 2.

BTCE Speaking Test Part 2

Thank you. Now please take this card.I want you to speak for one or two minutes

about the topic written on this card. Follow the instructions on the card. You have one

minute of preparation time before you give your talk.

Describe a place that you would like to travel to.

You should say:

- Where the place is
- What you can see and do there
- Why you would like to go to this place
- With whom you would like to go

You will have to talk about the topics for 1 or 2 minutes.

You've one minute to think about what you're going to say.

You can make some notes to help you if you wish.

Now move on to Speaking Test Part 3.

BTCE Speaking Test Part 3

Dou you like travelling why?

How do you usually travel?

What kind of places do you like to travel to?

Do you like travelling alone or with other people?

What things do you take with you when you travel?

Where have you travelled lately?

What's the best place you've ever visited?

What was special about this place?

That's the end of BTCE Speaking Test

BTCE Speaking Test Part 1

Please come in and sit down - over here. First, let me take a look at your identity card.

it's for security purposes only.

Thank you. My name is (interviewer's name). What is your name?

What shall I call you?

How are you?

How old are you?

Where do you come from?

Can you describe your hometown?

Have you got any relatives there?

> *Follow-up: Who are they?*

Do you like basketball?

> *Follow-up: Why? / Why not?*

Now move on to Speaking Test Part 2.

BTCE Speaking Test Part 2

Thank you. Now, please take this card. I want you to speak for one or two minutes about the topic written on this card. Follow the instructions on the card. You have one minute of preparation time before you give your talk.

Describe a company that you would like to work for. You should say:

- What its main business is
- Why you would like to work for it
- What benefits it offers
- How you get paid

You will have to talk about the topic for 1 to 2 minutes.

You have one minute to think about what you're going to say.

You can make some notes to help you if you wish.

Now move on to Speaking Test Part 3.

BTCE Speaking Test Part 3

Do you have many friends?

Are they casual acquaintances or close friends?

Do you prefer to stay with your family or with your friends? Do you prefer one or two close friends or many friends?

Can you talk about your best friend?

How do you think one can make friends? What do you usually do with your friends?

Is the time you spend with your friends as much as that you spend with your family?

That's the end of BTCE Speaking Test.

APPENDIX C. SPEAKING TEST RUBRIC

◆BTCE
THE BRITISH TEST
CENTRE FOR ENGLISH

Band	Fluency and Coherence	Lexical Resource	Lexical Resource	Pronunciation
9	☐ speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar ☐ speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features ☐ develops topics fully and appropriately	☐ uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics ☐ uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately	☐ uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately ☐ produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech	☐ uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety ☐ sustains flexible use of features throughout ☐ is effortless to understand
8	☐ speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language ☐ develops topics coherently and	☐ uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning ☐ uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skilfully, with occasional inaccuracies ☐ uses paraphrase effectively as required	☐ uses a wide range of structures flexibly ☐ produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors	☐ uses a wide range of pronunciation features ☐ sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses ☐ is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility
7	☐ speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence ☐ may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction ☐ uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with	☐ uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics ☐ uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices ☐ uses paraphrase effectively	☐ uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility ☐ frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist	☐ shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8
6	☐ is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation ☐ uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately	☐ has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies ☐ generally paraphrases successfully	☐ uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility ☐ may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems	☐ uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control ☐ shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained ☐ can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times

5	☐ usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going ☐ may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers ☐ produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems	☐ manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility ☐ attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success	☐ produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy ☐ uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems	☐ shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6
4	☐ cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction ☐ links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence	☐ is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice ☐ rarely attempts paraphrase	☐ produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare ☐ errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding	☐ uses a limited range of pronunciation features ☐ attempts to control features but lapses are frequent ☐ mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener
3	☐ speaks with long pauses ☐ has limited ability to link simple sentences ☐ gives only simple responses and is frequently	☐ uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information ☐ has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics	☐ attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances ☐ makes numerous errors except in memorised	☐ shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4
2	☐ pauses lengthily before most words ☐ little communication possible	☐ only produces isolated words or memorised utterances	☐ cannot produce basic sentence forms	☐ speech is often unintelligible
1	☐ no communication possible ☐ no rateable language			
0	☐ does not attend			

APPENDIX D. SPEAKING EXPRESSIONS

Opening a Discussion

To begin with,

We need to discuss …

Let's start by (V ing)

We'll start by (V ing)

The problem/question/issue here is

The important thing (here) is…

The main thing we need to discuss is…

Let's look at…

It looks like…

It appears that…

Asking for Input

What do you think?

How about you?

How do you feel about that?

Any ideas on that?

Responding

That sounds like a good ides.

Sounds good.

The problem with that is …

Giving Opinions

I think we should get a new car.

I don't think we need one.

I believe (that) smoking should be outlawed.

I don't believe (that) it should be illegal.

I feel that it's the right thing to do.

I don't feel that it's such a good idea.

Asking for Opinions

What do you think?

What's your opinion?

What are your ideas?

Do you have any thoughts on that?

How do you feel about that?

Asking for support or details

Why do you think that?

Could you elaborate?

Could you give (me) an example?

Can you illustrate that?

What evidence do you have?

Could you explain it in more detail?

Could you provide some details?

Supporting your opinions

Let me illustrate?

For example,

For instance,

To give you an example,

Let me give you an example,

To elaborate,

First, (second), etc.

(These phrases can be followed by details,

In my opinion, *Gone with the Breeze* is the best movie ever made.

examples, elaboration, or a summary of your main points.

Agreeing

I agree.
You're right.

That's right.

I think that's a good idea

Good idea

Disagreeing

I disagree.
I don't think so.

(No) That's not right.

(I'm sorry, but) I don't agree

Yes, but …