

The Effect of Podcasting on Iranian EFL Learners' Motivation and Attitude

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Abstract—The objective of this study was to identify the effect of podcasting on Iranian learner's motivation and attitude. The participants consisted of 60 male students including 30 participants for the experimental group and 30 for the control group. All of them were studying in the second junior high school in Shahed school in Semnan, Iran. Their age ranged from 13 to 14. The researchers randomly selected Shahed school from a list of all junior high schools in Semnan province. In addition, data were collected by using a questionnaire and an interview. In the present study, the researchers used Nelson's proficiency test for homogenizing the learners. Moreover, the researchers collected the data through one questionnaire and an interview as data gathering instruments and podcasts and 'Prospect 2' book as instructional materials. A 46-item motivation questionnaire focused on evaluating English learners' beliefs and attitudes in Iran. A 7-item researcher-made interview was conducted with 10 participants. The main purpose of this interview was to investigate the effect of podcasting on the learners' attitude. The results of data analysis revealed that the application of podcasts as a motivational teaching strategy significantly benefited the experimental group to show a higher mean on classroom motivation. It also revealed that the application of podcast changes the learners' motivation positively.

Index Terms—podcast, motivation, attitude, EFL learners

I. INTRODUCTION

Podcasting's soul is about creating audio content for those that want to listen where they want, when they want, and how they want. Instead of a central audio stream from a web site, podcasting sends audio content directly to an iPod or MP3 player. Podcast is considered to be digital media file which has been distributed over personal computers and the internet. According to Fetaji and Fetaji (2008), a podcast is a specific type of webcast which can mean either the content itself or the method by which it is syndicated; the latter is also termed podcasting.

As Kaplan-Leiserson (2005), indicate the term 'podcast' is a composition of the name of Apple's portable music player, the iPod, and broadcast; a pod adverts to a receptacle of some sort and the idea of broadcasting to a container. A podcast is identified from other digital media formats by its ability to be downloaded automatically, using software such as RSS or Atom. In addition, there is a need for more reachable classroom syllabus for students absent from the classroom setting. During the school year many students miss classes due to extra-curricular activities, illness, or family events. Podcasting can give students the opportunity to stay current in their classes, even when they are not present. Moreover, the districts look for cost effective ways to implement technology into the content curriculum.

According to Abdous, Facer, and Yen (2012), the convergence of telecommunications and hardware technologies is reshaping the higher education information technology landscape. Indeed, the proliferation of the so-called mobile supercomputers powerful of performing drastic computational programs such as real time speech recognition and augmented reality, while providing high-bandwidth access to social networking sites, is transforming students' ownership and use of technology. Second and foreign language motivation, based on Kormos and Csizér (2008), has been researched in different language learning grounds in the past decades.

Fernandez, Simo, and Sallan (2009) consider video podcasts and enhanced podcasts as two frequent types. The enhanced podcast is similar to traditional podcasts. Actually this podcast contains multimedia information such as images, slides, short videos, pictures, and photographs that help users increase their perception about the topic.

On the other hand, recent works on motivation theory includes the process model of motivation (Dörnyei, 2000, 2001; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998), which counting for the dynamic and temporally changing nature of L2 motivation and Dörnyei's (2005) theory of the motivational self-system. This theory endeavors to argue about the challenge that the changing world of the 21st century alleges for the Gardnerian concept of integrativeness, the notion of the native speaker, and learners' identification with native speakers. Dörnyei's theory of the motivational self-system is about the psychological theory of self-discrepancy and carries out important contents such as learning experiences and intrinsic and extrinsic language learning goals previously identified in the L2 field by Ushioda (2001) and Noels (2003).

As Dörnyei (2001) argues, the teachers' use of motivational strategies is generally believed to enhance student motivation. Research on 19 motivational strategies held in Madrid in 2002, used by teachers in different classrooms in Spain revealed that the use of audiovisual resources and new technologies is one of the most influential motivational tools available for teachers to motivate English learners. The teacher of English language, therefore, needs to utilize different motivational strategies. Podcasting as a new technology in the realm of computer- and mobile-assisted language learning can provide a great tool to motivate language learners in the classrooms.

If we want our students to develop educational motivation needed for learning and mastering English as a foreign language, we need to find appropriate ways of teaching so that students sustain the lengthy process of learning a foreign language (Dörnyei, 2001). For sure, learners come to the classroom with varying degrees of motivation; however, the teacher, having different motivational strategies available, can make sure learners get motivated more and more. Considering the significance of motivation and motivational strategies, however, few studies have been conducted to investigate whether the strategies are actually working. Even in these few studies, the researchers have investigated a host of different strategies altogether (an exceptional study, for example is Madrid in 2002). However, the current study tried to find out whether one single strategy, namely using audiovisual resources and new technologies, specifically using podcasts could motivate Iranian EFL learners of English or not. Yet, a further significance of the current study is an investigation of the learners' attitude towards the adaptation of such a recent CALL phenomenon, podcasting, in Iranian context of language learning.

Review of the Literature

Combining computer networks and telecommunication had inspired a new application class focused on group activities support. William and McMinn (2008), such an application may be used by individuals in order to mediate their interactions in performing collaborative actions. Designers are faced with new challenges: no space borders, teams' activities coordination, providing common view of shared sensitive information for an entire team. As a lot of these requirements are generic to any collaborative activity, it is natural to define basic generic services and building blocks in order to quickly develop specific solutions covering a given area. Stanley (2005) asserts that the main feature of a collaborative aspiration consists of many players who commit a suit of transactions in order to perform some common objectives. In this kind of approach, each player shares its own experience, information, documents, databases, different computer application and so on (Stanley, 2005).

Podcasting

As Mack and Ratcliffe (2007) argue that a podcast is an audio recording delivered via a static URL containing a Real Simple Syndication (RSS) feed. Podcast users can easily and lightly download and install the iTunes software program on their computers or smart phones in order to access and download podcasts through internet or portable devices such as MP3 players or iPods. Three types of podcasts being produced and used: audio-podcast, enhanced podcasts, and video podcasts. Audio-podcasts include audio only and need a relatively small storage space (Mack & Ratcliffe, 2007).

Motivation

Second language motivation research was known by a well-articulated and theoretically explicit position right from the start, as represented by the influential work of Lambert, Gardner, Clement, and their associates in Canada. According to Dörnyei (1998), this position was hugely grounded in social psychology, which licensed the researchers to track a range of well-researched terms and metaphors to describe L2 motivation, and to reconcile the mature quantitative research collection of social psychological measurement to the needs of L2 motivation testing. As a result, L2 motivation research soon protected a special data-based research tradition in which the various theoretical offers were explicitly operationalized and empirically tested.

Attitude

Baker (1992, p.10) defines attitudes as "a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behavior". Ajzen (1988, p.4) considers attitudes as "a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event".

Gardner (as cited in Baker, 1992) defines attitudes as elements of motivation in language learning. According to Gardner, "motivation ... refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language" (p. 10). However, Wenden (1987) offered a wider definition of the concept 'attitudes'. He argues that the term attitude includes three components namely, cognitive, affective and behavioral. A cognitive component is made up of the beliefs and opinions or ideas about the object of the attitude. The affective one refers to the feeling and emotions that one has towards an object, 'likes' or 'dislikes', 'with' or 'against'. At the end, the behavioral component refers to one's consisting actions or behavioral attempts towards the object (Khodashenas et.al, 2013). From another portion, McGuire (as cited in Al-Tamimi and Shuib, 2009) argues that it is

possible that the three components are so closely interrelated, that theorists who insist on distinguishing them should bear the burden of providing that the distinction is worthwhile.

Research Questions

Considering the aforesaid problems, the current study is an attempt to provide plausible answers to the following research questions:

- 1) Does the application of podcasts as a motivational teaching strategy affect the students' classroom motivation?
- 2) Does podcasting affect the attitudes of Iranian EFL learners?

Research Hypotheses

Regarding the research questions, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

- 1) The application of podcasts as a motivational teaching strategy does not affect the students' speaking motivation.
- 2) Podcasting does not affect the attitudes of Iranian EFL learners.

II. METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 60 male students including 30 participants for the experimental and 30 for the control groups. All of them were studying in the second junior high school in Shahed school in Semnan, Iran. Their age ranged from 13 to 14. The researchers selected Shahed school randomly from a list of all junior high schools in Semnan, Iran. In this study, the researchers used Nelson's proficiency test for homogenizing the learners. And two classes were selected according to Nelson's proficiency test.

Instrumentation

The instruments used to collect the data were one questionnaire and an interview as data gathering instruments and podcasts and the book 'Prospect2' as instructional materials.

Nelson's Proficiency Test

This test had fifty items and was used in order to select the participants as the first section of the battery for homogenizing the students regarding their proficiency level prior to the treatment. The test was administered to the participants so as to decide their overall English language proficiency. The test was administered to a pilot group. The reliability of the test was numerated using KR-21 formula as 0.82. Scores within the range of ± 1 SD above and below the mean were considered mid-level. Scores ranged below and above mid-level were considered low and advanced, respectively.

Questionnaire

A 46-item motivation questionnaire focused on evaluating English learners' beliefs and attitudes in Iran. It is originated from Dörnyei (2009). It included items about their personal information, age, gender, previous experience, too. The items in this questionnaire were divided into different parts. The questionnaire included six items for criterion measures, five items about ideal L2 self, seven items for ought to L2 self, five items for family influence, seven items for instrumentality (promotion), five items for instrumentality (prevention), four items about attitude to learning English, three items related to cultural interest, and four items about attitudes to L2 community. The items included 6 point Likert scale, ranging from very completely disagrees to completely agree. A questionnaire translated before by Azarnoosh (2014), was used for the current study by the researchers. For ensuring the reliability and validity of the test and the questionnaire, the researchers ran a pilot test on 25 students. Cronbach alpha for the questionnaire showed that the questionnaire was reliable because alpha was 0.867.

Interview

A 7-item researcher-made interview was conducted with 10 participants. The time of this interview was about five minutes. The main purpose of this interview was to investigate the effects of podcasting on their attitude. The interview was recorded and transcribed. Then the answers were coded. Moreover, an MP3 and a notebook were used to record the interviewees while paying attention to the ethical issues.

Piloting Procedure

First of all, piloting was done to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, and to understand the time of the study and reliability and validity of the procedure. For ensuring about the reliability and validity of procedure in piloting, podcasting was applied on 25 students asking them to give feedback about this treatment. Twenty five students were chosen randomly for administering the questionnaire and ten students for administering the interview. In order to collect data for the study, at first, the questionnaire was administered among the experimental and control groups. The researchers asked them to complete these questionnaires in appropriate time. To ensure the content validity of the instruments, the researchers asked the pilot samples to underline any ambiguous part and to write their comments on the questionnaire. To further ensure the validity, the researchers asked two university professors to review the content of the questionnaire. After collecting all these comments from those professors, some items of questionnaire were modified, and in some cases changes were made to fit the purpose of the study. For ensuring the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, the researchers ran a pilot on 25 students. The Cronbach's alpha reliability index for the classroom motivation questionnaire was .93.

Main Procedure

A Nelson's proficiency test (Fowler & Coe, 1976) was administrated to ensure the learners' homogeneity in the two groups. The scores which ranged below and above mid-level were regarded as low and advanced proficiency level, respectively.

Then, the researchers provided the motivation questionnaire and asked the students to fill it out personally. In the experimental group in each two sessions the teacher asked the learners to speak 5 sentences for each point which he taught during the two previous sessions in the classroom in isolation according to podcast. Then the learners presented their opinions about podcasts and their opinions were collected and brought back to the teacher in order to be corrected indirectly. In the following sessions the teacher played recording tapes and asked students to correct their mistakes by themselves. At the beginning of the third, fifth, seventh, ninth, eleventh sessions, the teacher brought back the corrected speeches and explained their errors explicitly or implicitly. The learners' second speaking was done based on the new taught points in the third and the fourth sessions. Again they had to speak five sentences for each specific point according to previous podcast. This procedure was repeated for the experimental group in the mentioned sessions. But the procedure for the control group was different from the experimental group. All the activities were based on the book. The teacher only taught according to book activities and specified students' errors. Finally, few days later after the last session, the teacher conducted the posttest for the two groups to measure their differences in their scores. But the important point is that podcasting was replaced with normal activities in 'Prospect 2' in the experimental group. Actually in the control group the teacher worked on activities according to the guide book but in the experimental group the teacher worked on podcasts that were downloaded based on the topics and syllabus of 'Prospect 2'.

Last, the researchers gave the questionnaire to students to fill it in. Then the interview was held with students. Their answers were recorded and transcribed. The researchers investigated the changes of students' attitudes about the effect of podcasting in English language learning.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed through independent t-test for the questionnaire and ANCOVA for pre-test and post-test by using SPSS software.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

With regard to the first research question, "Does the application of podcasts as a motivational teaching strategy significantly affect the students' classroom motivation?", An independent t-test was run to compare the experimental and control groups' means on the classroom motivation in order to probe the effect of podcast on the improvement of their motivation. As displayed in Table 1, the experimental (M=245.97, SD=18.72) had a higher mean on the classroom motivation than the control group (M=196.60, SD=26.72).

TABLE 1:
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF TESTING NORMALITY ASSUMPTION

Group		N	Skewness			Kurtosis		
			Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio
Experimental	Motivation	30	-.764	.427	-1.79	-.302	.833	-0.36
	Pre	30	-.809	.427	-1.89	-.134	.833	-0.16
	Post	30	-.622	.427	-1.46	-.530	.833	-0.64
Control	Motivation	30	-.595	.427	-1.39	.506	.833	0.61
	Pre	30	.092	.427	0.22	-.764	.833	-0.92
	Post	30	.177	.427	0.41	-1.032	.833	-1.24

The results of independent t-test ($t(58)=8.28, p<.05, r=.73$ representing a large effect size) indicated that there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups' means on the classroom motivation. Thus the first null-hypothesis was rejected. That is to say that the application of podcasts as a motivational teaching strategy significantly benefited the experimental group to show a higher mean on classroom motivation.

TABLE 2:
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TEST OF CLASSROOM MOTIVATION BY GROUPS

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	2.751	.103	8.287	58	.000	49.367	5.957	37.443	61.291
Equal variances not assumed			8.287	51.943	.000	49.367	5.957	37.413	61.320

It should be mentioned that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met (Levene's $F=2.75, p>.05$.That is why the first row of Table 2, i.e. "Equal variances assumed" was reported.

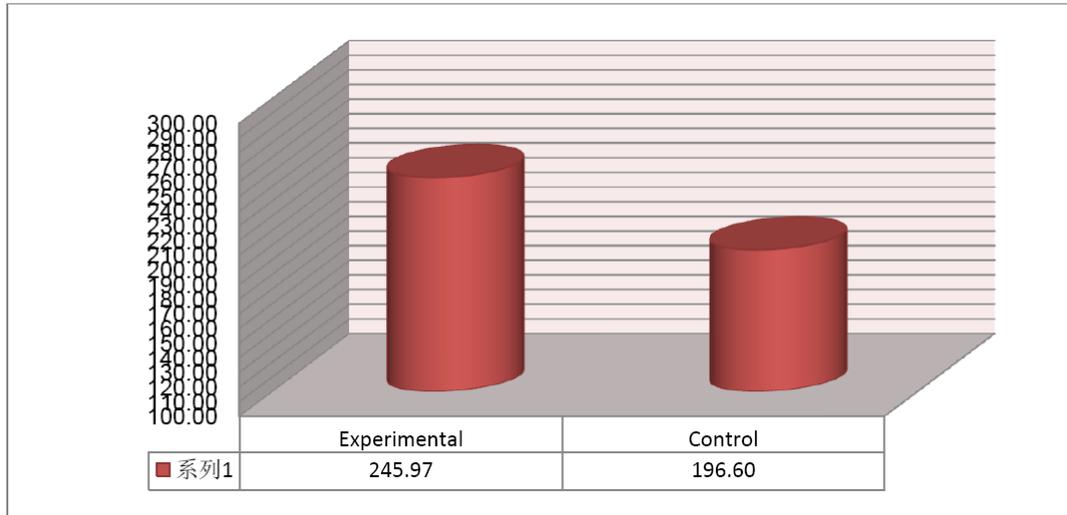


Figure 1: Classroom Motivation by Groups

Considering the aforementioned results, it is now possible to consider the first research question in light of empirical evidence and compare or contrast the present study in this phase with the similar ones to make the results more meaningful. Regarding the first research question, analysis of the data revealed the significant role of podcasts as a motivational teaching strategy in the students' speaking motivation. This finding can be closely related to Dörnyei (2001). His study on 19 motivational strategies used by the teacher in the different classrooms in Spain revealed that the use of audiovisual resources and new technologies is one of the most influential motivational tools available for teachers to motivate English learners. Although his study concentrated on motivational strategies, it was also revealed that audiovisual resources can motivate students.

Oliver's (2005) findings can also be comparable to this study. He asserts that podcasting leads to student learning by increasing student motivation and engagement. This perspective is confirming by the findings of Fernandez, Simo, and Sallan (2009) who suggest that podcasting contributes to students' motivation. Actually, these authors note that motivation was students' most highlighted appearance of their podcasting use.

It needs to be added that higher motivation of students can be a function of the newness of podcasts. As Heilesen (2010) truly states that podcasting has a "positive impact on the academic environment." According to Heilsen, podcasting opens up chances for faculty to experiment with new forms of teaching while it provides students with a new tool to use in order to complement their study activities.

With regards to the second Research question, "Does podcasting affect the attitudes of Iranian EFL learners?", according to collecting data, tables, and samples' answers in interview as an instrument, Table 3 represents that 70% enjoyed learning English very much and 30% enjoyed it moderately. Moreover, based on the Table 3, about 80% of learners wanted to learn English in institutes and 20% wanted to learn English at their schools.

TABLE 3:
LEARNERS' ATTITUDE ABOUT LEARNING ENGLISH

	Answers	Frequency	Percent
Enjoyed learning English	Very much	7	70
	Moderately	3	30
Interested in further English study in...	institute	8	80
	school	2	20

On the other hand, according to the Table 4, about 50% of learners did not worry about making mistakes in speaking English and 30% of learners had a little fear and 20% of them were worried about making mistakes in speaking English. And about self-confidence, 50% of learners had much confidence, 30% of them had moderate confidence and 20% of them have not enough.

TABLE 4:
FEARING AND SELF CONFIDENCE

	Answers	Frequency	Percent
Fear about making mistakes	No worry	5	50
	A little	3	30
	Worry	2	20
Self confidence	Moderate	3	30
	A little	2	20

Fortunately, on the other hand, according to the Table 5, 80% of learners believed that podcasting change their attitude to learning English positively. According to the participants' answers to sixth question in the interview, 80% wanted to know about culture of English-speaking countries. On the other hand, 80% of learners believed that becoming professional in English has a positive influence on their social class. The findings indicated that podcasts changed student's attitude positively. Thus the second null-hypothesis was rejected.

TABLE 5:
INTEREST IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CULTURE AND SOCIAL CLASS

	Answers	Frequency	Percent
Interest in learning more about English culture	Very much	8	80
	Moderately	1	10
	A little	1	10
Increase social class	Yes	8	80
	No	2	20

The role of motivation in students' academic achievement has been emphasized in all educational fields; however, more specifically in the thread of foreign and second language (L2) learning, motivation has long been recognized as one of the main perspectives that determine L2 achievement and attainment. As Khatib, Najafi, and Hamidi (2012) finely confirm the claim, motivation serves as the primary drive to generate learning and later functions as an ongoing driving force that helps to sustain the extensive and usually painstaking journey of acquiring a foreign language.

Motivated students' better performance in this study may be the result of better use of strategies. As Boulos, Maramba, and Wheeler (2006) claim, podcasting may also embed a wide variety of learning strategies for students. While some students learn most effectively by taking notes during reviewing and a lecture in their own study time, others learn more effectively by active listening without taking notes.

Regarding the role of motivation in students' performance, one point needs to be born in mind. As Gardner (2000) suggest, better performance of the students might be achieved when motivation is accompanied by good attitudes. This means that motivated students' better performance may not be the direct result of motivation, but the result of collaboration between attitude and motivation.

Considering the aforementioned results, it is now possible to consider the second research question in light of empirical evidence and compare or contrast the present study in this phase with the similar ones to make the results more meaningful. Regarding the second research question, analysis of the data revealed the important role of podcasting on students' attitudes. The participants in the study found that podcasts improved both their results and their feelings (attitudes) about their learning. This means that podcasts influenced students' attitudes. This finding of the present study is closely comparable to Francom, Ryan, and Kariuki (2011) who after giving podcasts to students concluded that students' attitude changed and improved. The more important point about similarity of the two studies is that they used the same instruments as the present study, namely a questionnaire and an interview.

This finding supports the work of Mount and Chambers (2008) who found that podcasting improves learner cognition. In Lyles, Robertson, Mangino, and Cox's (2007) study the participants said things such as "the availability of the audio podcasts and lecture notes fit my personal learning style". This shows that in their study too, the participants' attitude was influenced by podcasts. However, it needs to be added that opposite to the present study in which the participants were mostly teenagers, their study recruited university students. Age differences might have its own effect.

Another study which was similar to the present study in terms of participants' age, was conducted by Wilczak (2013). However, there were some conceptual differences between the two studies. Unlike the present study which investigated the effects of podcasting on participants' attitude, his study investigated the effects of podcasting, as well as blogging on participants' attitudes. His research indicated that blogging and podcasting foster a positive student attitude.

Findings of this study support Gardner (1985, 2001), who described integrativeness of motivation as a bosomed construct made up of the following variables: interest in integrative orientation, foreign languages, and attitudes toward the learning situation. In other words, this means that motivation is a function of three factors from which one is *attitude*. Based on this claim, motivation and attitude must support each other and be in parallel. Our findings support this point.

Computer technology holds promise for improving students' achievement in any educational programs at all levels. The extent to which foreign language vocabulary instruction using computer-assisted language learning software as a tool can facilitate vocabulary learning. Several studies have emphasized the important role of podcasting for second language students to make them pay attention to listening. All of these researchers asserted that podcasting has an effect directly on learner's listening. However, the researchers had paid scarce attention to students' attitude and motivation since motivation and attitude are the element which students need to sustain in the lengthy process of learning a foreign language (Dornyei, 2001). This gap in the literature compelled the researcher to conduct the study.

IV. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study indicated that podcasting as a new technology in the realm of computer- and mobile-assisted language learning provides a great tool to motivate language learners in the classrooms. Based on the results reported

above and the conclusions drawn from the results, some pedagogical implications can be made for material developers, curriculum developers, and teachers as the following:

- Curriculum developers and teachers can incorporate podcasts as a tool into the books and curriculums in order to make students more motivated, confident, cooperative, and autonomous. The students may not have a good attitude toward peer assessment tasks right from the beginning; however, they gradually would grow more optimistic views towards it.

- Material developers can also make use of podcasts as a task to improve students' learning. Podcasts can be provided at the beginning, in the center, or at the end of units, in the electronic version of the books, in order to make the students more motivated about the topic and language learning and a learning task by itself. However, in the early sessions students may feel uncertain about it.

- Studies have indicated that the use of technology in educational context may result in their isolation from peers. In order for the learners to connect with peers, instructors may consider providing an option for students to communicate with classmates by producing and sharing their own podcasts with groups of students or the entire class (Bolliger, Supanakorn, & Boggs, 2010).

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