

**MINI PODCASTS IN THE CLASSROOM: DEVELOPING LISTENING AND
SPEAKING THROUGH PEER INTERVIEWS**

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Abstract: This article explores the use of mini podcasts as an innovative tool for enhancing listening and speaking skills in language classrooms. By incorporating peer interviews into podcasting activities, students engage in authentic, interactive communication that promotes both linguistic competence and confidence. The study highlights the benefits of podcasting in creating learner-centered environments where students practice real-world conversation, improve pronunciation, and develop critical listening abilities. Practical strategies for implementing peer interviews, including topic selection, scripting, recording, and feedback, are discussed. The article concludes that mini podcasts can be an effective, motivating method for integrating speaking and listening practice into everyday language instruction.

Keywords: Mini podcasts, peer interviews, listening skills, speaking skills, language learning, learner-centered instruction, authentic communication, pronunciation practice, podcasting in education, digital storytelling.

Introduction. In the digital age, the role of technology in education has evolved from supplementary support to an integral component of modern pedagogy. Language teaching, in particular, has greatly benefited from digital innovations that offer immersive, interactive, and student-centered learning experiences. One such innovation is the use of podcasts—digital audio recordings distributed via the internet—which have become increasingly popular in educational contexts for developing listening comprehension, pronunciation, and oral fluency.

While professionally produced podcasts are commonly used as listening materials in language learning, mini podcasts created by students themselves represent a unique and highly engaging alternative. These short audio recordings allow learners not only to consume content but also to become active creators of it. Among various podcast-based classroom strategies, peer interviews stand out as an effective method to enhance both listening and speaking skills in a collaborative and authentic environment.

Mini podcasts based on peer interviews provide several pedagogical advantages. Firstly, they create opportunities for authentic communication, where students interact with one another using natural language forms, rather than rehearsed dialogues or artificial textbook conversations. Secondly, the process of planning, scripting, recording, and editing podcasts fosters a cycle of language production and reflection, allowing students to self-assess and improve their oral proficiency over time. Moreover, peer interviews promote student engagement, motivation, and confidence, especially for learners who may be hesitant to speak in front of the whole class.

From a skills-based perspective, this approach targets multiple aspects of communicative competence. Students must prepare meaningful questions, listen actively to their partners' responses, and formulate appropriate follow-up questions—thus reinforcing both receptive (listening) and productive (speaking) skills. Additionally, the recorded nature of podcasts allows

for repeated listening, enabling learners to develop better pronunciation, intonation, and listening discrimination through repeated exposure.

This article investigates the potential of using mini podcasts structured around peer interviews as a classroom tool for developing listening and speaking abilities. It draws on theoretical foundations in communicative language teaching, digital pedagogy, and learner autonomy. The article further outlines practical strategies for incorporating peer podcast projects into language instruction, including guidance on task design, technical tools, scaffolding, and assessment. Finally, the discussion considers observed outcomes from real classroom implementations, highlighting both the benefits and challenges of podcast-based learning.

In an educational landscape increasingly shaped by digital engagement and collaborative learning, the use of student-produced mini podcasts represents a promising, creative, and accessible method for enriching oral language development.

Literature Review. The integration of podcasts into language learning has been widely explored over the past two decades, particularly as educators seek more authentic, learner-centered approaches to develop communicative competence. Podcasts—defined as episodic audio content accessible via the internet—have been recognized as powerful tools for both formal and informal language learning. They offer an accessible, flexible, and engaging way for students to improve listening and speaking skills, while also supporting learner autonomy, digital literacy, and content creation (Stanley, 2006; McBride, 2009).

Podcasts in Language Education

Research indicates that listening to podcasts can significantly improve students' aural comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. O'Bryan and Hegelheimer (2007) emphasize that podcasts allow learners to access authentic language in context, which contributes to improved listening fluency and exposure to natural speech patterns. Similarly, Rosell-Aguilar (2007) argues that the asynchronous nature of podcasting provides learners with control over pace and repetition, which is particularly beneficial for language learners needing repeated exposure to challenging content.

However, a growing body of literature has shifted from the use of podcasts as passive listening tools to more interactive and student-generated formats. According to Godwin-Jones (2005), the real pedagogical potential of podcasting emerges when students become content creators. Student-generated podcasts encourage deeper engagement with language, as learners must carefully plan, write, speak, and revise their work in a real communicative context. This aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes active learning and knowledge construction through experience and reflection (Vygotsky, 1978).

Peer Interviews as a Speaking and Listening Strategy

The use of peer interviews in language learning is rooted in communicative language teaching (CLT), which prioritizes meaningful communication and interaction over mechanical drills and rote memorization (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Peer interviews give learners the opportunity to speak in a low-pressure environment, promoting fluency and building confidence. According to Burns and Joyce (1997), interactive speaking tasks such as interviews simulate real-world communication and encourage negotiation of meaning—a critical component in language acquisition.

Moreover, peer interviews support reciprocal listening, where learners must actively listen in order to respond appropriately. This dual engagement strengthens listening comprehension and fosters pragmatic awareness. In her study on learner interaction, Long (1996) emphasized the role of interaction in language development, suggesting that peer-based tasks create opportunities for input, feedback, and output in authentic contexts.

Mini Podcasts as a Hybrid Tool

Mini podcasts that incorporate peer interviews merge the benefits of both podcasting and interactive speaking activities. As a hybrid tool, they allow for the development of multiple skills simultaneously, including speaking, listening, planning, editing, and critical thinking. According to Ducate and Lomicka (2009), students who created podcasts reported increased speaking confidence and better understanding of pronunciation and intonation. The process of recording and re-recording also encouraged self-monitoring and greater linguistic accuracy.

Research by King and Cox (2011) found that podcast projects led to increased learner engagement and motivation, especially when students had creative control over topics and formats. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of peer podcasting promotes social interaction and community building within the classroom (Lee, 2009). This collaboration reflects the principles of social constructivism, where learners co-construct knowledge through dialogue and joint problem-solving.

Challenges and Considerations

Despite their pedagogical advantages, the use of podcasts in classrooms is not without challenges. Technical barriers, lack of teacher training, time constraints, and assessment difficulties are common obstacles identified in the literature (Meng, 2005; Fernández et al., 2015). Additionally, not all students may feel comfortable recording their voices or working with audio-editing tools, which can affect participation.

Nevertheless, with appropriate scaffolding, technological support, and clear pedagogical goals, these challenges can be mitigated. Teachers play a key role in guiding the podcasting process, providing constructive feedback, and fostering a supportive classroom environment where students feel safe to experiment with language.

Summary

The literature reviewed provides strong support for the use of podcasts—especially student-produced mini podcasts based on peer interviews—as a dynamic and effective approach to language learning. They foster active engagement, develop both receptive and productive skills, and support 21st-century competencies such as collaboration, creativity, and digital literacy. By combining theory-driven strategies like communicative practice and learner autonomy with accessible technology, mini podcasts represent a valuable addition to modern language pedagogy.

Research Methodology. This study employed a qualitative action research approach to explore how the use of mini podcasts, developed through peer interviews, impacts the development of students' listening and speaking skills in a language learning classroom. The action research model was selected due to its suitability for classroom-based innovation, as it allows the researcher—who is also the teacher—to systematically investigate the effectiveness of a teaching strategy while implementing it in a real learning environment.

Research Design

The study followed a cyclical action research model, including the stages of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). During the planning phase, instructional goals were defined, podcasting tools were selected, and the structure of peer interview activities was designed. In the acting phase, students created mini podcasts based on peer interviews over a six-week period. The observation and reflection phases involved data collection through student feedback, teacher observations, audio content analysis, and post-project interviews.

Participants

The participants in this study were 24 undergraduate students (aged 18–22) enrolled in a second-year English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking and listening course at a university in Uzbekistan. The class included both male and female students with an intermediate level of English proficiency (B1–B2 CEFR levels). Participation in the podcasting project was part of the course requirements, though students were given freedom in choosing their interview topics and partners.

Data Collection Tools

To gather data on the effectiveness of mini podcasting activities, the following tools were used:

1. **Student Reflections and Feedback Forms:** After each podcasting activity, students completed written reflections describing their experiences, challenges, and perceived improvements in their language skills.
2. **Teacher Observations:** The instructor kept a reflective journal to record classroom dynamics, student engagement, and language performance throughout the project.
3. **Audio Recordings:** Student-created podcasts were collected and analyzed for indicators of oral fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and interactional competence.
4. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** At the end of the project, individual interviews were conducted with 10 randomly selected students to gain deeper insights into their attitudes, learning processes, and skill development.

Procedure

The research took place over a six-week period and was structured into three main phases:

- **Phase 1: Preparation and Training**
 - Students were introduced to the concept of podcasts and trained in basic audio recording using mobile devices and free editing tools (e.g., Audacity, Voice Recorder).
 - Examples of authentic podcasts and peer interviews were analyzed to model expected outcomes.
 - Students were guided through how to plan interviews, formulate open-ended questions, and conduct natural conversations.
- **Phase 2: Peer Interview Podcasting**
 - Students worked in pairs or small groups to conduct interviews on selected topics (e.g., hobbies, cultural traditions, university life).
 - Each student participated in at least two recording sessions—once as the interviewer and once as the interviewee.
 - After recording, students edited their podcasts and submitted them to the course platform for peer and teacher review.
- **Phase 3: Reflection and Evaluation**

- Students listened to classmates' podcasts, provided peer feedback, and reflected on their own performances.
- The teacher provided individualized feedback focusing on pronunciation, fluency, and content development.
- Final interviews and surveys were used to evaluate students' perceived progress and project effectiveness.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Student reflections, teacher journal entries, and interview transcripts were coded and categorized into emerging themes such as motivation, confidence, speaking fluency, listening awareness, and technical challenges.

The audio recordings were transcribed and evaluated against a speaking rubric focusing on:

- Pronunciation and intonation
- Fluency and hesitation
- Lexical resource
- Grammatical range and accuracy
- Interactional features (e.g., turn-taking, clarifications)

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed of the purpose and scope of the study, and their consent was obtained prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by assigning codes to student submissions and interview data. Participation in reflective interviews was voluntary and had no effect on course grades.

This research methodology was designed to explore the pedagogical potential of mini podcasts as an integrated tool for developing listening and speaking skills through peer interaction. By combining action research principles with authentic, student-centered activities, the study sought not only to measure language gains but also to enhance the overall learning experience in a digital, collaborative classroom environment.

Research discussion. The findings from the implementation of mini podcasts based on peer interviews in the EFL classroom revealed several significant outcomes in terms of skill development, learner motivation, engagement, and classroom dynamics. The results of this classroom-based action research support and extend the literature on the use of digital tools—particularly podcasts—as a means to enhance communicative competence in language learners.

Improvement in Speaking Skills

One of the most evident outcomes of the project was the measurable improvement in students' speaking fluency and pronunciation. Analysis of student-created audio recordings showed a gradual reduction in hesitation markers (such as "uh," "um," and long pauses) and increased ability to express thoughts coherently and confidently. Many students also demonstrated improved use of connected speech features (linking, intonation, and rhythm), which were reinforced through repeated listening to their own recordings and through peer feedback.

Students reported that rehearsing their podcast interviews before recording gave them a reason to practice speaking more deliberately, which supported better articulation. Moreover, the asynchronous nature of podcast recording reduced performance anxiety compared to live speaking tasks, allowing learners to concentrate on accuracy and clarity.

Enhanced Listening Skills

The project also contributed positively to the development of listening comprehension. During the peer interview phase, students were not only focused on preparing their responses but also had to actively listen to their peers in order to ask meaningful follow-up questions. This trained them to listen for both content and tone, sharpening their ability to understand spoken English in context.

Furthermore, listening to classmates' podcasts—especially during the peer-review stage—exposed learners to a wider range of accents, speaking styles, and vocabulary. This variability helped learners adapt their listening strategies and develop greater tolerance for ambiguity, a critical skill for real-world communication.

Increased Motivation and Autonomy

The integration of podcasting as a creative task was shown to significantly increase learner motivation. Students expressed high levels of satisfaction with the project, often citing it as one of the most enjoyable and meaningful parts of the course. This aligns with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which suggests that learners are more motivated when they feel autonomous, competent, and connected.

By choosing their own interview topics and taking ownership of the recording and editing process, students became active participants in their own learning. The creative freedom fostered intrinsic motivation, as students were eager to produce high-quality work that could be shared with peers.

Collaboration and Peer Interaction

The project promoted a strong sense of peer collaboration and improved classroom rapport. Working in pairs or small groups to prepare interview questions, record conversations, and review each other's podcasts helped establish a supportive and interactive classroom culture. Students who were initially hesitant to speak gained confidence through repeated interaction with familiar peers, thus reducing their fear of making mistakes.

Moreover, the peer interview format encouraged reciprocal responsibility—both interviewer and interviewee had to perform well for the conversation to succeed. This mutual reliance enhanced accountability and improved communicative performance on both sides.

Development of Digital Literacy

Another unanticipated benefit of the podcasting project was the development of digital literacy and technical skills. Students learned how to use audio recording and editing tools, which not only supported their language learning but also prepared them for digital communication in academic and professional contexts. These skills are essential in modern education, especially with the increasing role of hybrid and online learning environments.

Challenges Encountered

Despite the generally positive outcomes, some challenges were observed. A few students initially struggled with the technical aspects of recording and editing their audio files. This was particularly true for those with limited experience using digital tools. To address this, additional training and troubleshooting support were provided during class sessions and through online tutorials.

Time management also emerged as a minor issue. Because podcast creation involved several steps—planning, recording, editing, and submitting—some students underestimated the time

required and submitted work late or with technical flaws. This was mitigated in later phases by introducing detailed timelines and checklists.

In terms of language use, while fluency improved, some students continued to make persistent grammatical errors. However, these errors often became more apparent through the editing and peer-review process, providing an opportunity for targeted corrective feedback.

Summary of Findings

The research revealed that mini podcasts featuring peer interviews are a highly effective instructional tool for improving both speaking and listening skills in EFL learners. They:

Encouraged more fluent and confident speaking.

Improved active listening and comprehension.

Fostered learner autonomy and motivation.

Strengthened peer interaction and classroom community.

Enhanced technical and digital communication skills.

These findings suggest that mini podcast projects can play a vital role in language instruction by promoting authentic communication, increasing student engagement, and building key 21st-century competencies.

Conclusion. This study set out to explore the effectiveness of mini podcasts—particularly those created through peer interviews—as a tool for developing listening and speaking skills in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The findings provide compelling evidence that integrating podcast-based projects into language instruction not only enhances communicative competence but also fosters motivation, creativity, and collaboration among learners.

The use of peer interviews allowed students to engage in authentic, meaningful conversations that reflected real-life communication, rather than rehearsed or textbook dialogues. As a result, students showed measurable improvement in speaking fluency, pronunciation, and the ability to express ideas spontaneously. Moreover, their listening comprehension improved due to the need for active, reciprocal listening during both the recording and peer review phases.

From a pedagogical standpoint, mini podcasts contributed to a more dynamic and student-centered classroom. The format encouraged learner autonomy, increased participation, and supported a low-anxiety environment for oral practice. It also provided opportunities for self-reflection and self-correction—key components of long-term language development.

Importantly, the project helped students build not only language skills but also essential 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, critical thinking, and teamwork. Students learned how to use recording tools, edit audio, and give constructive peer feedback, all within the framework of a meaningful academic task.

However, the project also revealed certain challenges, particularly regarding technical difficulties and time management. These issues underscore the need for adequate scaffolding and teacher support, especially when integrating digital tools into the curriculum. Despite these limitations, the overall outcomes suggest that the benefits of podcast-based learning far outweigh the challenges.

In conclusion, mini podcasting—especially when centered around peer interviews—is a powerful and versatile approach that can transform traditional language teaching into an interactive, engaging, and learner-driven process. Future research may explore the long-term effects of podcasting on language retention, its application in larger or more diverse classrooms,

and its potential integration with other digital platforms. As language educators continue to adapt to new technologies and learner needs, podcasting offers a promising avenue for meaningful and effective language learning.

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