

The Use of Podcasts to Develop Speaking Skills in A2-Level EFL Students**Uso de podcasts para mejorar la habilidad oral en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera A2**

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Abstract

Developing speaking skills remains one of the significant challenges in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms for learners at the A2 Level. This study addresses the urgent need to apply accessible teaching strategies that foster fluency, pronunciation, and coherence in oral production. Podcasts are becoming increasingly popular as digital tools that offer exposure to authentic language, encourage repetition and reflection, and enable students to become content creators through planning, scripting, and recording. While educational technology continues to expand, few studies have focused on the impact of structured podcast-based activities on the oral performance of lower-level learners in schools with limited resources. This research aims to explore the effect of implementing speaking tasks to guide and evaluate the oral performance of A2 students using podcast production on their speaking development, using rubrics that emphasize fluency and communicative competence. The study will be conducted with students from a public high school in Guayaquil, and the results will provide insights for EFL educators seeking low-cost, practical methods to enhance speaking skills in early-stage learners using technology.

Keywords: podcasts, speaking skills, A2-level learners, EFL teaching, educational technology.

Resumen

El desarrollo de la habilidad oral en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) es uno de los mayores retos dentro de los salones de clase, especialmente en niveles básicos como el A2. Esta investigación surge de la necesidad de mejorar la fluidez, pronunciación y la coherencia en la producción oral a través de estrategias pedagógicas accesibles. En ese contexto, los podcasts han ganado atención como herramienta educativa tecnológica que promueve la exposición al lenguaje auténtico, permite la práctica repetitiva y facilita el desarrollo de competencias comunicativas mediante la producción de contenido por parte de los propios estudiantes. A pesar del crecimiento en el uso de tecnologías aplicadas a la enseñanza del inglés, existen pocas investigaciones que examinen cómo el uso estructurado de podcasts puede impactar específicamente a estudiantes A2 en instituciones educativas con recursos limitados. Este estudio propone evaluar el efecto de actividades como la planificación, redacción de guiones y grabación de episodios de podcast en la mejora del desempeño oral de los estudiantes, mediante el uso de rúbricas centradas en la fluidez y la competencia comunicativa. La muestra será tomada de una institución pública en Guayaquil. Los hallazgos buscan aportar evidencia práctica y contextualizada sobre el uso de herramientas digitales de bajo costo para el desarrollo de la producción oral en estudiantes principiantes de inglés.

Palabras clave: podcasts, expresión oral, estudiantes A2, enseñanza del inglés, tecnología educativa.

Introduction

Podcasts offer several advantages, such as ease of access, relevance, and adaptability. They have had an educational use because they enable learners to interact with authentic language and real-life situations. Through repeated listening and speaking dialogues, students can improve their pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. Moreover, by creating and recording short episodes, self-confidence is enhanced and anxiety is reduced (Mehrak, Elham, & Soleymani, 2015). On the other hand, speaking is a fundamental skill in second language acquisition, whereas receptive skills like listening and reading involve comprehension; speaking, however, requires producing language in real-time, frequently under stress and social pressure. For many learners, especially beginners, speaking a second language can cause anxiety, reduce participation, and slow their progress in communication.

In recent years, technology-enhanced language learning environments provide authentic contexts, foster learner autonomy, and accommodate different learning styles (Godwin-Jones, 2025). As a result, students become active producers, rather than passive consumers, of knowledge (Dversnes, 2023). In a classroom study, educators discovered that integrating podcasts can potentially enhance both listening and speaking skills (Sotlikova & Haerazi, 2023). Podcasts can facilitate the use of higher-level thinking skills as creators develop content, formulate scripts, and edit their final products (Dversnes, 2023).

Despite the growing interest in applying technology to language learning, few studies have explored how podcasts affect the speaking skills and confidence of A2-level learners. Most of the existing studies focus on advanced levels or other skills. A2 learners often struggle with a limited vocabulary, inadequate grammar, and poor fluency, which can weaken their communication skills and erode their confidence in speaking. These

linguistic limitations frequently contribute to speaking anxiety and a lack of confidence (Kormos, 2006)

Therefore, to address this gap, this research explores how involving and integrating structured podcast activities with low-income schools can help A2 learners develop their speaking skills. It monitored learners' progress throughout the project to determine whether creating a podcast can improve oral performance and reduce speaking anxiety. Specifically, it examines how planning, scripting, and recording podcasts influence students' enthusiasm and whether there is a change in their anxiety and confidence levels. The result aims to give a clear and practical insight for teachers interested in enhancing spoken language activities at the initial stages of English learning using low-cost and accessible technology.

A podcast is an innovative educational tool that can engage students beyond the traditional classroom. Samad et al. (2017) describe it as a digital recording containing content such as radio shows, television segments, or interviews, which learners can access on demand. In the context of language learning, podcasts provide authentic listening opportunities, repeated exposure to the target language, and the ability to practice pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. Their asynchronous nature allows students to engage with the material at their own pace, which is particularly beneficial for differentiated instruction. For these reasons, the integration of podcasts into EFL instruction aligns effectively with modern, learner-centered methodologies.

Speaking is considered one of the most vital components of language acquisition, as it involves the active use of language for real-time communication. According to Jones (1989), speaking is a form of interaction where the speaker must effectively convey their ideas in a manner that is comprehensible and meaningful to the listener. The ability to speak a second language confidently also demands social skills, cultural awareness, and practice in spontaneous expression. In classroom settings, speaking activities

encourage learners to engage in meaningful exchanges that reflect real-life communication. Developing speaking skills, therefore, goes beyond rote memorization and involves helping learners build confidence, organize their ideas logically, and express themselves clearly and persuasively in the target language.

Main Objective

To explore the effects of podcast-based speaking projects on A2-level students.

Specific Objectives

- To determine the current speaking performance in A2 EFL students.
- To implement planning, scripting, and recording podcasts on students' oral communication.
- To develop students' fluency, communicative, and confidence components as oral competencies.

Research Questions

How can speaking confidence and skills be improved in A2-level EFL students through the use of interview-style podcasts?

How did students perceive the effectiveness of podcast creation for developing their English-speaking skills?

What is the current level of speaking confidence and oral communication in A2-level EFL students?.

Methods and Materials

The research methodology in this study employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods to conduct an in-depth analysis of how

podcast-based projects influence A2-level students' speaking competence and confidence levels. The study is conducted in three phases: diagnosis, intervention, and evaluation. In the diagnostic phase, a quantitative pre-test was administered to assess the students' initial speaking ability. During the intervention phase, students scripted, planned, and produced their own podcasts, which enhanced oral production, creativity, and self-confidence, according to Dversnes (2023) and Sotlikova and Haerazi (2023).

Quantitative data were collected from rubric-based assessments of fluency, coherence, pronunciation, and communicative effectiveness both before and after the intervention. For the qualitative aspect, data were gathered from student reflections, teacher observation checklists, and short interviews that explored changes in students' anxiety and attitudes towards speaking. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to establish performance gains, while the qualitative data were interpreted through thematic analysis to reveal emerging patterns and students' perceptions.

Delimitation of Population, Sample, and Sampling

The target population for this research consists of second-year high school students enrolled at Juan Montalvo Public High School, located in the northern sector of Guayaquil, Ecuador. The school has an approximate enrollment of 1,200 students across its morning, afternoon, and evening shifts. For this study, a non-probabilistic purposive sample of 10 students from the morning shift was selected, based on the following criteria:

- Students possess an A2 level of English according to institutional assessments.
 - Participants are currently enrolled in the same English class and have the same instructor.
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- They belong to the same age group, ranging from 16 to 17 years old.
- All students attend class regularly and have access to mobile phones or basic recording devices.
- The sample includes both male and female students, maintaining a gender balance.
- The participants expressed willingness to be part of the study, and parental consent was obtained when necessary.

This purposive sample was chosen to ensure that the selected students share key characteristics that make them suitable for podcast-based instructional activities and to allow for consistent measurement of oral language development across the intervention.

Table 1.

Sample Population

	Population	Percentage
Female Students	5	50%
Male Students	5	50%
Total	10	100%

Note: Own elaboration, 2025

Research Stages

The research was developed in six structured phases to ensure a comprehensive understanding of how podcast-based instruction affects the speaking performance of A2-level EFL learners. First, the problem was delimited by identifying low fluency and weak oral production among students (Kormos, 2006). Second, a literature review was conducted to support the relevance of podcasts in language learning and their impact on speaking skills (Godwin-Jones, 2018; Dversnes, 2023). Third, instruments such as a

speaking rubric, student reflection surveys, and an observation checklist were designed and validated by expert reviewers (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

Fourth, the implementation stage involved applying pre-tests, guiding students through podcast planning and recording, and finally conducting post-tests. Fifth, the collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess oral performance and student perceptions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Lastly, a final report was compiled to present findings, pedagogical implications, and recommendations for future classroom application, particularly in resource-limited public schools.

Research Scope

This study is both descriptive and explanatory in nature. It aims to explore the effectiveness of podcast-based instruction in enhancing the speaking skills of A2-level EFL students at Juan Montalvo High School. The descriptive component assesses the students' initial oral communication performance through a pre-test. At the same time, the explanatory focus identifies how podcast creation (planning, scripting, and recording) contributes to students' development of fluency, coherence, pronunciation, grammar accuracy, and vocabulary usage. The research is applied in focus, offering practical pedagogical insights into how integrating podcasting into regular classroom instruction can boost learners' motivation and confidence in speaking. Additionally, the research seeks to provide valuable recommendations for teachers working with under-resourced classrooms in public education.

The pragmatic usefulness of this study lies in its potential to yield affordable, technology-driven solutions that can be utilized by public school educators, particularly those teaching in under-equipped schools. By utilizing podcasting as a pedagogical tool, this project aimed at bridging the gap between in-class and out-of-class use of language,

offering students real opportunities for speaking that extended beyond the typical grammar-based classroom instructions.

Type of Research

This study is a field-based experimental research project conducted in a public high school setting. The field research approach allows the collection of real-life data from learners and classrooms using direct observation, surveys, speaking tests, and podcast submissions. It involves both quantitative and qualitative data, making it a mixed-method research design. The experimental component includes a treatment group that actively participates in the podcast project and a control group that continues with regular oral activities. Both groups will be pre-tested and post-tested to compare improvements. This allows analysis of the impact of podcast creation on the development of speaking competencies.

Table 2.

Instruments Based on the Selected Research Approach

Description	Activities	Performers
Diagnosis and baseline measurement	Application of a pre-test to assess speaking skills.	<i>Researcher</i>
Literature review	Exploration of studies related to podcasts and CLT.	<i>Researcher</i>
Instrument design and validation	Rubric, survey, and observation checklist creation.	<i>Researcher</i>
Podcast project implementation	Planning, scripting, recording, editing, and submitting audio	<i>Students</i>
Guided feedback sessions	Feedback provided after each podcast episode.	<i>English teacher</i>
Post-evaluation	Final speaking test and survey reflection.	<i>Researcher</i>
Final analysis and conclusions	Data analysis and report writing.	<i>Researchers</i>

Note: Own elaboration, 2025

Description of Instruments Based on the Selected Research Approach

Student Reflection Survey (Podcast Experience)

A Likert-scale survey assesses students' perceptions, motivation, enjoyment, and sense of improvement during the podcast process. It includes both scaled and open-ended questions regarding pronunciation, fluency, confidence, collaboration, and feedback experiences. Students responded to statements such as "I feel confident speaking English in class," "I can speak without hesitation," and "Podcasting helps me improve my pronunciation." Their feedback provided a glimpse of how the podcast activities had influenced their attitude towards English learning. (Annex 1)

Speaking Performance Rubric (Pre-test and Post-test)

A teacher-scored rubric evaluates five criteria: Fluency, Pronunciation, Coherence, Vocabulary Use, and Grammar Accuracy. These oral tasks are recorded for better assessment consistency. The rubric uses a 1–5 scale. All audio recordings were carefully listened to by the researcher and rated according to the rubric descriptors. This allowed for close tracking of the students' improvement over time, and it became evident which dimensions of speaking were most affected by the podcast treatment. (Annex 2)

Observation Checklist (During Implementation)

The observation checklist was utilized during the podcast project sessions to monitor and document student engagement and classroom behavior in real-time. This instrument enabled the teacher-researcher to evaluate specific indicators, including active participation in speaking activities, rehearsal of pronunciation prior to recording, collaboration with peers during planning and scripting, and students' overall motivation levels throughout the project. This instrument was implemented discreetly during regular classroom hours to ensure natural student behavior and authentic responses. (Annex 3)

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The data collection for this research study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative instruments to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the impact of podcast-based instruction on A2-level students' speaking skills. Pre- and post-tests were applied to assess learners' oral performance before and after the podcast intervention, using a rubric focused on fluency, pronunciation, coherence, vocabulary, and grammar (Brown, 2004). Student surveys, featuring both Likert-scale and open-ended questions, were administered to gather learners' perceptions, motivation, and reflections. In parallel, teacher observation checklists were employed throughout the project to monitor student engagement and progress. Additionally, each podcast episode created by the students was archived and annotated to serve as supplementary evidence of spoken performance and improvement (Godwin-Jones, 2018).

In terms of data analysis, quantitative data from rubrics and Likert-scale surveys were entered into a digital spreadsheet for descriptive statistical analysis, including means, frequencies, and percentages (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Thematic coding was applied to open-ended responses and student reflections, focusing on recurring themes such as enjoyment, self-confidence, challenges, and perceived improvement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A comparative analysis was conducted to contrast pre- and post-test speaking scores across the experimental and control groups, aiming to evaluate the effectiveness of podcast tasks in developing oral skills. Finally, triangulation was used to cross-reference student perceptions, teacher observations, and speaking performance results, enhancing the reliability and depth of the findings (Denzin, 2012). This mixed-methods approach allowed the research to capture both measurable progress and the nuanced learner experience in a real classroom context.

Description and Analysis of the Diagnostic Stage

The diagnostic pre-test revealed that students struggle primarily with fluency and vocabulary retention. Confidence in speaking and motivation to participate orally were also low. These results highlight the need for engaging and student-centered oral activities that allow for repeated practice and creativity, such as podcasting.

Table 3.

*Diagnostic Pre-Test Results – Speaking Skills of A2-Level EFL Students
(n = 10).*

Speaking Criteria	Excellent (5)	Very Good (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Fluency	0	1	2	5	2	2.30	0.95
Vocabulary Use	1	0	3	4	2	2.40	0.97
Pronunciation	0	2	4	3	1	2.70	0.82
Motivation to Speak	0	1	2	4	3	2.10	1.10
Confidence When Speaking	0	0	3	3	4	2.00	1.05

Note: Own elaboration,2025

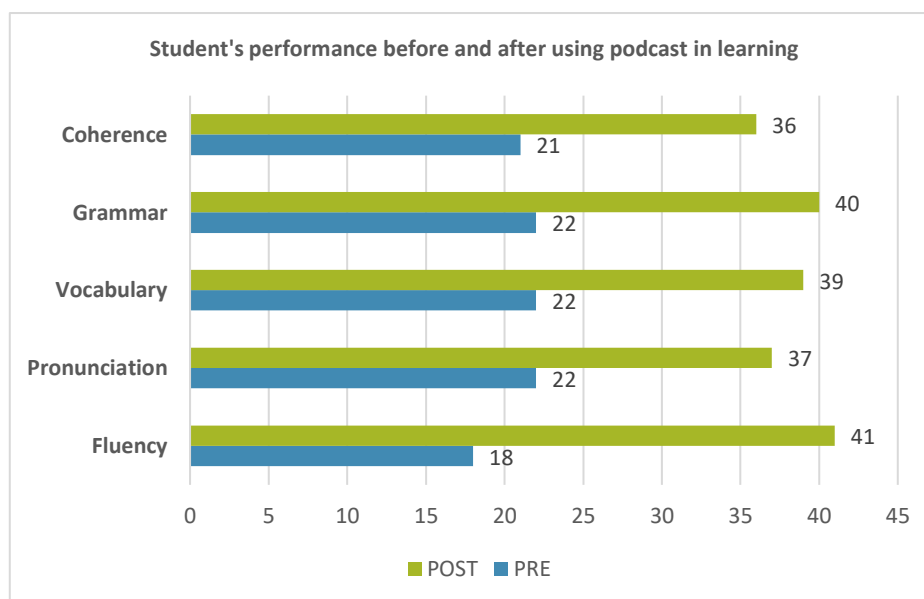
Each criterion was scored using a 5-point scale (1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent). Results reflect data from a diagnostic speaking performance rubric applied prior to the implementation of the podcast project.

Results analysis

Figure 1 illustrates a noticeable improvement in students' speaking performance after the learners used podcast-based activities in the classroom. The post-test results demonstrate noticeable improvement in fluency, pronunciation, and coherence compared to the diagnostic stage. This indicates that the podcast used by learners to practice speaking more authentically and repetitively leads to higher accuracy and confidence. By engaging in planning, scripting, and recording activities, students became more aware of their oral production and self-corrected pronunciation and vocabulary use.

Figure 1.

Comparative results of students' achievement before and after the intervention.



Note: Own elaboration, 2025

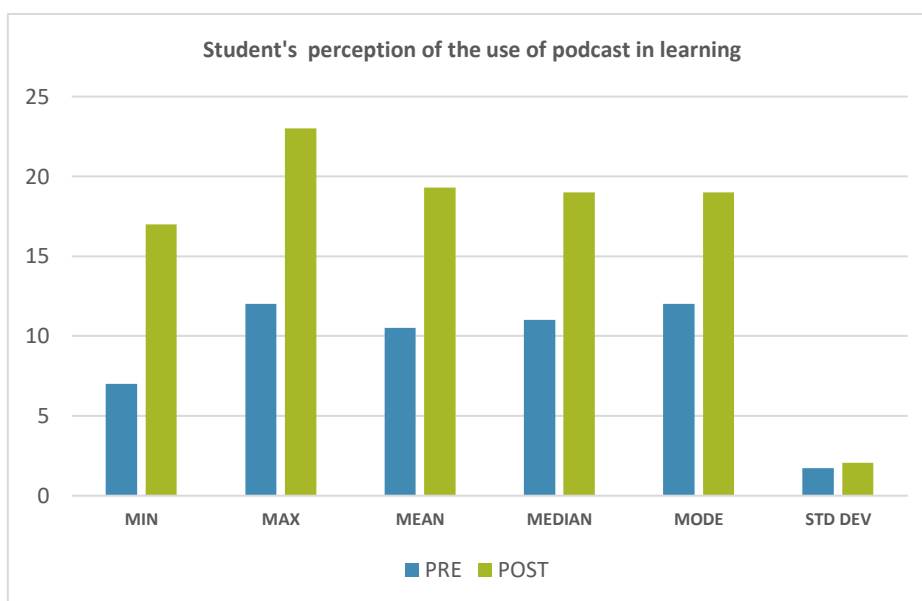
The results confirm that repetition in speaking practices, through podcasts, helped students internalize useful vocabulary and improve their rhythm and intonation. The possibility of re-recording their work encouraged self-reflection and reduced the fear of making mistakes. Moreover, teacher feedback between episodes contributed to gradual improvement, supporting the concept of formative assessment. The consistent progress observed in post-test scores highlights the pedagogical potential of podcasts as a low-cost tool that promotes autonomy, fluency, and active learning among A2-level learners in public high schools with limited access to technological resources.

On the other hand, Figure 2 presents the results of a survey conducted among students after the podcast project, which reflects their perception. The majority of participants expressed positive attitudes toward podcasting as an innovative and enjoyable means of learning English. Most students reported feeling more motivated to speak, more confident in their pronunciation, and less anxious when communicating in English. They also valued the opportunity to collaborate with classmates and use technology creatively. These findings suggest that podcast-based activities not only

improved oral performance but also fostered engagement, motivation, and self-confidence, key affective factors that support long-term language learning success.

Figure 2.

Frequency of responses in the student perception survey.



Note: Own elaboration, 2025

The survey results also revealed that students find podcasts activities to be a useful tool to support their in-class learning and real-world communication. They felt enthusiastic in producing episodes that gave them a sense of accomplishment and ownership of their learning process. This marks a transition from the traditional teacher-centered practices to a more participatory learning environment. The positive emotional responses recorded suggest that podcasting can serve as a sustainable strategy to enhance communicative competence and student motivation in EFL contexts.

Conclusions

The implementation of podcast-based speaking activities showed a very positive effect on the students' oral performance and confidence. After participating in the podcast project, students demonstrated noticeable improvements in their fluency, coherence, and pronunciation, as evident in the post-test results. The use of podcasts

permitted learners to practice speaking in a real, low-anxiety environment, where they could self-correct, rehearse, and collaborate with their classmates.

Furthermore, teacher observation and qualitative data from the reflection surveys revealed that students recognized podcasting as an enjoyable tool and a very motivating experience that permits them to increase their willingness to communicate in English. The process of planning, scripting, and recording episodes fostered creativity and ownership of learning, resulting in higher engagement and reduced speaking anxiety.

Future research could expand on this study by applying the podcast methodology to larger samples, different proficiency levels, or by involving other language skills, such as listening or pronunciation. Continued exploration of digital storytelling and student-created media can further strengthen the integration of technology in communicative English teaching.

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