

IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH PODCASTS

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Annotation: *The authors share with the experience of enhancing speaking skills using podcasts technique.*

Key words: , listening , podcasts, conversational speech, communication

Podcasts are an exceptional resource for enhancing speaking skills, offering opportunities to learn from skilled communicators, absorb diverse speech styles, and practice articulation. “Podcasting is a powerful tool for education and personal growth. It allows me to share my knowledge and experiences with others.”[1.52].Below, we explore how podcasts can help, complemented by practical examples.

1. Exposure to Diverse Vocabulary and Styles

Listening to podcasts allows individuals to encounter varied speaking styles and vocabulary. For instance, an English learner tuning into “The Daily” podcast by The New York Times might hear advanced vocabulary such as “nuanced,” “scrutinize,” or “prolific,” enhancing their language repertoire. Similarly, storytelling podcasts like “The Moth” expose listeners to creative narrative techniques.

2. Improved Pronunciation and Intonation

Podcasts with native speakers provide excellent models for pronunciation and intonation. A learner struggling with English pronunciation can benefit from podcasts like “ESLPod,” where hosts clearly enunciate each word and explain challenging sounds. Mimicking these speakers helps refine pronunciation and develop engaging intonation.

3. Contextual Understanding of Conversations

Podcasts often simulate real-life dialogues, promoting a deeper understanding of context. For example, listening to podcasts like “How I Built This” by Guy Raz offers insights into how entrepreneurs narrate their journeys, structure responses, and use anecdotes effectively, teaching listeners the art of conversational speech.

4. Confidence Building

Podcasts centered on public speaking, like “The Public Speaker’s Quick and Dirty Tips,” provide actionable strategies to overcome speaking anxieties. For example, they might suggest using pauses effectively, maintaining eye contact, and preparing cue cards—all aimed at building confidence in expressing ideas clearly.

5. Interactive Practices

Podcasts with interactive elements can be highly effective for practice. For instance, language-learning podcasts like “Coffee Break Languages” encourage listeners to repeat phrases, answer questions, and role-play scenarios, providing active speaking practice. Example phrases might include: “Can I have a coffee, please?” or “How do I get to the train station?”

Practical Tips for Using Podcasts

- Choose Relevant Content: If improving business communication is your goal, podcasts like “HBR IdeaCast” offer industry-related discussions and vocabulary.

- Active Listening: Pause episodes to jot down new words or expressions and incorporate them into your speech. For example, learning phrases like "Let's brainstorm ideas" or "Does this align with our strategy?" could be useful for workplace communication.

- Imitate and Role-Play: Shadow a speaker's voice, mimicking phrases like "Thank you for joining us today" to practice formal introductions.

Creating Podcasts

A unique way to hone speaking skills is by starting your own podcast. For example, if you're passionate about movies, creating episodes reviewing recent releases forces you to structure ideas, articulate opinions, and use descriptive language.

When we apply podcasts at the lesson we should consider culture of the target language. Podcasts reflect and celebrate the diversity of cultures around the world, often embodying the values, communication styles, and interests of their creators and audiences. Here's how they tend to vary:

- Content Focus: Different cultures emphasize unique themes in their podcasts. For instance, in Western countries, self-help and entrepreneurship podcasts like "How I Built This" are popular, while in many Asian cultures, podcasts often delve into education, family values, or societal traditions.

- Language and Tone: The way people express themselves varies widely. In English-speaking cultures, podcasts may feature a conversational tone with humor and storytelling. In contrast, Japanese podcasts might have a more formal or structured tone, reflecting cultural norms of politeness and precision.

- Storytelling Styles: Storytelling traditions shape how narratives unfold. For example, Middle Eastern podcasts may echo the region's oral storytelling heritage, weaving poetic and vivid language into their content. Meanwhile, Scandinavian podcasts often reflect minimalism, focusing on simplicity and clarity.

- Purpose and Function: In some cultures, podcasts serve educational purposes, promoting literacy or language skills. In others, they aim to preserve oral traditions or address social issues. For instance, in African countries, podcasts are often used to explore cultural identity and history.

- listener Interaction: The degree of interaction with listeners can vary too. Western podcasts might encourage audience participation through Q&A sessions or comments, while some cultures prioritize a more one-sided, lecture-style format.

Exploring podcasts from different cultures is a fascinating way to see how people worldwide share knowledge and tell stories. If you'd like, I can help you find examples of podcasts from specific cultures or regions!

From our perspectives, podcasts transform listening into a dynamic learning experience, making them invaluable for improving speaking skills. With regular engagement, you'll find yourself speaking with greater fluency, confidence, and articulation.

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ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Annotation *The article deals with the prominent roles of assessment in language acquisition. In the paper, a bunch of theories and thoughts by diverse professors and scholars were discussed. It provides a general understanding of assessing as well as qualities needed for the process. Moreover, some aspects of evaluating properly and its effects are mentioned.*

Key words: *learning language, evaluating, knowledge, valid, assignment, complex tasks, methodology, literacy, assessors, traditional testing, demonstrating knowledge.*

Assessment is one of the crucial aspects of learning languages effectively. It refers to the process of evaluating a student's understanding, skills and progress in learning. It also serves as a useful tool that allows teachers to see their students improving and gaining essential knowledge. By using evaluation tasks appropriately, both educators and learners could benefit. Namely, teaching and learning languages mainly depend on motivation and enthusiasm, therefore without them the process can have tendencies to become dull and unbearable.

As explained by Dina Tsagari, language assessment is the practice of evaluating the extent to which learning and teaching have been successful, focusing on what learners can do with the language, on their strengths rather than their weaknesses. This evaluation usually involves forms other than paper-and-pencil tests, such as portfolios (i.e., compilations of learners' essays, reports, other assignments that may have been carried out), presentations or demonstrations. Assessment works best if it is continuous (or 'on-going'), i.e., carried out throughout the entire process of teaching and learning, not just on completion of the learning/teaching process. When assessing is learner-oriented, it helps establish whether learners' learning needs and styles have been made good use of. Appropriate assessing is also very helpful for teachers because it can facilitate self-evaluation of their own pedagogical decisions. [1:184] Assessing process can benefit both learners and teachers if it is used properly. According to H. Douglas Brown "Assessment is an ongoing process that encompasses a wide range of methodological techniques." [4:3] Availability of various ways of assessing learners could enable educators to judge them effectively and fairly. Teresa McConlogue emphasizes that each learner is unique with a range of characteristics, prior learning experiences and diverse needs, and each teacher is equally unique. To investigate teaching and learning, it is important to choose a methodology that recognizes and explores this uniqueness. [6:4]

Therefore, evaluating tasks should not solely depend on facts, it is essential to take into account learners' experience and needs. Effective assessment includes providing some information to students about their understanding, however occasionally not only teachers but also pupils tend to focus on grades and numbers rather than literacy. Grant Wiggins has pointed out that "Assessments don't always provide adequate evidence regarding the most important understandings of the unit. I tend to test what is easy to test instead of assessing what is most