Ain Shams University
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The Effectiveness of Using Podcasting in Enhancing Speaking Skills for Adult Learners of English as a Foreign Language

A Thesis

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Abstract

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The present study aimed at improving EFL adult learners' speaking skills through listening to different podcasts related to the program they are having. To achieve this aim, a podcasting program of instruction was developed. The program integrated listening, speaking and technology. This program was used to guide the instruction of the proposed podcasting activities according to its stages and sub-stage. Different listening and speaking techniques such as weblogs, listening tracks, multimedia reflective activities, etc. were incorporated in the program. The study adopted the quasi experimental design using one group. This group consisted of 37 (15 females and 22 males) Adult EFL learners aged from 18 to 28 years old. The program lasted for 4 weeks (5 sessions per week, three-hour each). The time of each phase was left to the instructor's estimation. The findings of the study indicated that there were statistically significant differences at 0.000 level between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the pre- and post-application of the Speaking skills test (SST) in favor of the post one. In the light of the results of the study, the researcher recommended that the proposed podcasting program proved to be effective in developing EFL adult learners' speaking skills. The researcher also suggested designing other podcasting content programs for developing other language skills other than speaking.

Keywords: Podcasting, EFL adult learners, MALL technology, listening and speaking skills.

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List of Abbreviations

ALEFL - Adult Learner of English as a Foreign Language

CALL - Computer-assisted language learning

IELTS - International English Language Testing System

MALL - Mobile Assisted Language Learning

MP3 - MPEG layer 3 Audio

MP4 - MPEG Layer-4 Audio

PDA - Personal Digital Assistant

TOEFL - Testing of English as a Foreign Language

Chapter One

Introduction and Background

- Introduction
- Background and the Problem
- Context of the Problem
- The Pilot Study
- Statement of the Problem
- Questions of the Study
- Hypothesis of the Study
- Significance of the Study
- Delimitations of the Study
- Definition of Terms
- Procedures of the Study

Chapter 1

Background of the Problem

The world of constantly emerging new technologies challenges the field of education. At the same time it presents exciting opportunities. Strategic use of new educational technologies can enhance learning and teaching. In order to be effective, new educational technologies need to be supported by innovative pedagogical approaches that in its turn enable collaboration, communication and mobility. Such educational technologies emerging include virtual worlds, wireless technology and the increasing use of mobile devices (Lin, Zimmer & lee 2013).

Diversity in instructional techniques has been established as a prerequisite of effective teaching in EFL contexts to meet students' varied learning styles and strategies. According to Fenstermacher (1983) "Students vary widely in their cognitive styles yet few teachers consider this variable when planning instruction"(p. 83).

Keefe, 1987 said that:

> If we wish students to have optimum learning in our schools, we must change the way we deliver instruction. If a student continues to fail to respond to changed instruction then we must retrain his or her cognitive styles to make school success possible (p. 37).

Such a prespective is in accordance with recent theories and approaches in language teaching. Like the tenets "We must rediscover

and promote the vast range of capabilities that have a value in life and then set about valuing people for who they are, what they can be, and helping them to grow and fulfill their potential" Chapman & Freeman (2009).

Recently the advent of modern technology and its educational applications have been the focus of research in EFL. Research has been conducted on the efficacy of various tools such as the internet, multimedia in teaching English.

One of such approaches that help in using technology in teaching is Mobile Assisted Language Learning "MALL". This approach is creating the same drone in the new millennium that Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) created in the 1990's (Eaton, 2008).Technologies, mobile or otherwise, can be instrumental in language instruction. Rather, they are instructional tools (Gromik, 2012). Thus, it should be emphasized that the effective use of such tools in language learning requires the thoughtful application of second language pedagogy. A good example of such applications is the use of iPods in teaching listening as O'Brien & Hegelheimer (2007) discussed in their research entitled The Role of Podcasting in an ESL Listening Strategic Course.

Since the beginnings of the era of technology, specially the appearance of MALL technology such as personal multimedia players, cell phones, and handheld devices like MP3, MP4 and IPod practitioners

have attempted using them in teaching. An example of this what Pamela & Kemp (2010) have done in their research which was about Student perceptions and the effectiveness of podcasting in an Associate Degree Nursing program.

According to Newton, (2009) to achieve this purpose teachers introduced the content they teach in a digital form. They used MALL devices to enhance students' learning experience in different skills of language particularly listening which is considered an input process and speaking, which is considered an output process.

It has been claimed that over 50 percent of the time that students spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening (Nunan, 1998). Listening is the way of learning the language. It gives the learner information from which to build up the knowledge necessary for using the language. When this knowledge is built up, the learner can begin to speak. The listening-only period is a time of observation and learning Newton (2009). Listening to a second language (L2) has been regarded as the most widely used language skill in normal daily life Morley (2001).

Researchers in the field of education have proved that there is an enormous number of sub-skills, which make up the overall skill of speaking. According to Field (2003) most education experts distinguish between 'bottom-up ' skills, which involve recognizing small bits of

language, such as sounds and words, and 'top-down' skills, which involve using larger-scale clues, such as knowledge of the topic a speaker is taking or the gesture he or she makes (P.21).

Ellis (1992) mentioned that students who learn English as a second language have many problems especially with the listening and speaking skills. These problems may vary according to many circumstances like trying to understand every word, not knowing the most important words, getting left behind trying to work out what a previous word meant, can't tell the difference between the different sounds. (P. 92)

In fact, technologies have never been as much in the forefront of language learning as they are now. They have admittedly played an ever increasing role ever since the introduction of audio-lingual methods. Today, educators are truly witnessing a technological explosion in the field, with a host of new developments such as web-basedlearning platforms, computer-mediated communication, blogs, wikis, whiteboards and the use of mobile devices such as IPods, PDAs and mobile phones. Balacheff, Ludvigsen, De Jong, Lazonder, & Barnes (2009).

According to Novak (1998) technology integration involves establishing the best ways to incorporate educational technologies in the curriculum as teaching tools. Further, it refers to the different ways that technology tools can be used to support students as they construct their