



Integrating MALL into the Classroom: The Cultural and Pedagogical Impact of Authentic Podcasts on FFL Learners' Listening and Speaking Skills

Leili Kassaie^{1a}, Hamid Reza Shairi^{2a}, Mahmoud Reza Gashmardi^{3a}

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Abstract

One way to develop language skills in FFL (French as a foreign language) learners is to surround them with authentic materials. This study aimed at enhancing the listening and speaking skills of Iranian FFL learners through the integration of MALL (Mobile-assisted language learning) in the form of podcasts into FFL courses. The main advantage of integrating authentic podcasts as an educational instrument lies in the variety, accessibility, and the rich content it provides. Repeated measure analysis of variances was administered to find out any significant change in the level of listening and speaking skills of the participants throughout five sessions. At the end of each session, a self-evaluation survey was implemented to evaluate the participants' perception of such integration and that of their own speaking performances. The findings indicated that the listening and speaking skills of the participants developed significantly through the integration of podcasts. The findings of the self-evaluation survey also showed that the participants' attitudes and evaluation of their speaking performances were positive.

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¹ PhD Candidate, Email: l.kassaie@gmail.com

² Professor, Email: shairi@modares.ac.ir (Corresponding Author)
Tel: +98-912-3320166

³ Associate Professor, Email: m.gashmardi@modares.ac.ir

^a Tarbiat Modares University, Iran

1. Introduction

Smartphones have become an inseparable part of modern daily life. The young spend the majority of their time on their phones, to surf the Internet and social media, check their email messages, have access to unlimited information, shop online, listen to music, play games, and most importantly, for the purpose of connectivity smartphones can provide. You can contact anyone in the world, anytime you decide to very quickly. Thus, this handy and compact device can help make our lives more comfortable and hassle-free. According to a study, the average number of hours college students spend on their smartphones each day is nine hours – that is more than half of their daily waking hours (Roberts, Yaya, & Manolis, 2014). Consequently, it seems only logical to take advantage of its benefits in educational settings, too, since it can provide students with a lot more information related to their education quickly. But despite a widespread abundance of software and mobile applications, the purposeful and effective integration of MALL into study programs, more precisely language learning programs for this specific research, remains at the very early stages. There are numerous mobile applications that enhance foreign language learning inside and outside the classroom, and podcast applications, a new technique of delivering audio files via the Internet into the classroom, seem to be one of the most promising amongst them.

In the field of learning a foreign language, numerous studies have explored the ways in which podcasting can be used in the classroom for listening and speaking practices (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007), but an evaluation of language learners' perception towards podcasting, their expectation of such integration in the classroom and the actual impact of using podcasts as a language learning tool on FFL students' speaking skill have not been undertaken yet. Thus, the main question in this inquiry lies in the perception of Iranian intermediate FFL students on a podcast implemented course and the effects of such implementation on learners' language skills. Therefore, we should first emphasize the students' attitude regarding the integration of such a pedagogical tool and, furthermore, on the evaluation of the learning output according to the various ways in which

each language material is presented and used in the classroom. Therefore, this study primarily explores the language learners' reaction to their experience of using podcasts as an educational material regarding the Iranian culture of learning and what progress they expect to be making in learning their target language via this medium. This question matters a lot since we suppose that a positive attitude regarding such implementation could clearly stimulate their interest, augment their motivation, and eliminate their anxiety and resistance in participating in-class activities. It could help us understand its applications and effectiveness in learning French as a foreign language. The correlation between listening and speaking skills in learning a foreign language is undeniable. According to Pinem (2020), the correlation of listening as the independent variable with speaking as the dependent variable is positive. According to her study, with a unit of treatment given toward listening activity, significant improvement (3.134 times) in speaking can be achieved vis-à-vis the previous speaking assessment of the same sample. Therefore, our hypothesis is that if we incorporate authentic podcasts into our language classes in a consecutive manner on a particular topic that strongly interests the students, it will have a positive and effective influence on their listening comprehension and speaking skills in the long haul.

2. Theoretical Framework

Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) is the process of learning a second or foreign language, assisted or enhanced through the use of mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, or laptops, and it is undergoing rapid evolution. The main characteristic of MALL is that it makes the learning process more personalized, spontaneous, informal, and ubiquitous. Mobile learning can be considered as the next generation of e-learning, and although it is not meant to be a substitute for existing learning devices, it can definitely be served as an extension for learning a foreign language in a new environment. We may all agree that not every classroom can provide laptops or computers for every student, but a smartphone can play a vital role in delivering information to all students. Therefore, a lot of teachers have started to incorporate various mobile applications into their lesson plans to promote

teaching and learning and to create a more productive learning environment. In this regard, podcasts are considered to be one type of MALL that has been proposed as a pedagogical tool to improve foreign language learners' listening and speaking skills (O'Brien & Hegelheimer, 2007).

Podcasting is a portmanteau word derived from iPod and broadcasting and means the diffusion of audio contents via the Internet. A podcast is a series of episodic audio files on a particular theme or topic. Its audio content is a great advantage because it can educate you, inspire you, or entertain you in the background of other activities, like when you are driving or doing your chores. In brief, you can easily download the podcast that interests you and listen to it anywhere and at any time. There are many advantages to podcasting as an educational tool. The variety of the podcasts available on the Internet ensures that our language learners can have constant access to valuable, authentic listening resources so as to practice to a greater extent on the topic at hand, to listen to each audio file as many times as they see fit based on their needs and level and to go forward with the learning process at their own pace outside the classroom (Copley, 2007). In brief, the main advantage of podcasting is its audio content syndication, meaning they are automatically distributed over the Web, and they can be easily transferred as teaching material from one individual to another (from the teacher to the students or from one student to another) using any messaging application. This also eliminates the more traditional presentation of materials (such as books, copies, printed materials, etc.) that are not remotely environmentally-friendly anymore. Accordingly, many teachers and researchers advocate using audio podcasts for practicing listening and speaking and tend to integrate them with e-learning models since this form of education offers more choices in learning a foreign language and a faster supply of knowledge and information (Cebeci & Tekdal, 2006). This is one of the reasons why podcasting has recently become so popular among teachers to support learning in higher education (Lee, McLoughlin, & Chan, 2008; Mikat, Martinez, & Jorstad, 2007).

By using podcasts in the classroom, we are not at all looking to push students towards pure autonomy in learning a foreign language or

eliminate all together with the element of interaction. We still highly value the interaction between teachers and students as an important aspect of the language learning process. Therefore, this form of blended learning is a combination of interpersonal instructions in the classroom integrated with an online component, and we are trying to provide language learners a setting in which they can practice the target language with authentic material (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). According to (Tschirner, 2001), the issue of authenticity of the podcasts is of great importance here because authentic language provides input that is rich enough for foreign language acquisition to occur. It is crystal clear that learning French in an FFL setting requires a great deal of effort and persistence due to the lack of opportunity to use the target language and, more importantly, because the students have no exposure to it in their daily social interactions. Thus, this approach could allow language learners to explore, discuss, interact, and construct meaningful concepts in contexts that revolve around real-world problems and situations that are also relevant to the learners. Therefore, authentic podcasts seem like the perfect material for this purpose since they are not created for intentional use in a language classroom, and they can make the learning process more engaging, imaginative, creative, and motivating for the language learners.

However, the availability of significant educational resources does not necessarily equal enhanced learning (Wiebe & Kabata, 2010). As stated by Garton and Graves (2014), the teachers' purpose is not to teach materials at all; the purpose is to teach the learners, and the materials are there to serve the purpose. Therefore, the way these materials are chosen and presented to students is of great importance. An important part of this involves awareness on the part of the teacher-designer of socio-cultural appropriacy of things such as the teacher's own style of choosing the materials, presenting them, and so on. In addition, according to Howard and Major (2004), it is required that teachers know exactly how language learners are going to use podcasts as a pedagogical tool for language learning. Students have to be given guidelines to know how to approach podcasts, how podcasts could contribute to their learning, and how to make the most of this new learning material. As with

any other type of extra-curricular teaching material, all podcasts recommended by the teachers should be reviewed carefully before being adopted in the classroom. Teachers need to make sure if the content of the podcast is appropriate and creative enough to attract learners' attention and if the speaker's speed and accent are comprehensible for their level because we are definitely not looking to overwhelm the students with materials that could restrain their participation in-class activities. The length of podcasts is also of great importance since there is a good chance of student's losing their focus if it is too long. It should be long enough to provide enough rich content on a particular subject but not too long for students to lose track of the presented arguments in the podcast.

The main purpose of this inquiry is the evaluation of students' listening and speaking skills based on the podcast instruction. Listening is generally regarded as an important skill that enables learners to receive language input and facilitates the emergence of other language skills (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Therefore, it is an active process in which the learners tend to absorb and interpret auditory and sometimes visual content in order to define and understand what the speakers intend to express, which could eventually help them to express themselves in return; that is why these two competences are often taught and practiced together. There are many types of listening activities, but those that don't require learners to produce language in response are obviously easier than those that do. In this particular study, it was even a rather more difficult process since there was a question of authentic teaching materials, and the students were not offered the chance or the means to slow down the real spoken language in order to break it down into more manageable and understandable chunks and had to go with the flow. We assumed, once they get used to the native speakers' speed and accent, this would eventually work to their advantage, and they would feel more confident managing themselves in real-life situations when interacting in the target language is required. According to Buck (2001) and Vandergrift and Goh (2012), the only empirically tested predictors of listening comprehension are vocabulary, syntax, and speech rate. According to Stæhr (2009), advanced learners' vocabulary

knowledge is significantly correlated with their listening comprehension skills. Therefore, in developing the listening comprehension questionnaires, we mainly focused on questions that could clearly demonstrate the extent of students' understanding of the content.

The problem emerges, though, during the process of students' speaking performance assessment, because good communication skill is clearly the ultimate objective of any language learning, meaning that the learners of any foreign language are able to understand and interpret what is being said and are able to express themselves in return. According to Urrutia Leó and Vega Cely (2010), lack of vocabulary, diffidence, and fear of making mistakes in front of your peers, and being laughed at in the classroom are the major challenges in oral expression. Numerous studies (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Noora, 2008; Omidvar, Chan, Yap, & Bolong, 2012) have identified Iranian learners as very individualistic, preferring mainly not to express themselves orally in front of their classmates and having strong tendencies towards written form of expression in the classroom. According to Omidvar et al. (2012), such tendencies are probably due to the educational system of language learning assigned by the Ministry of Education, which served as the learning material in junior and senior high school classes for more than 25 years in Iran. Therefore, we assume that the participants chosen for this research project are more accustomed to the individualistic system of language learning in Iran, which focuses mainly on grammar-translation in the examination system (Zarei, 2012). Consequently, language learners are naturally accustomed to study only in order to pass the final exam. Such tendencies among Iranian learners are perhaps one of the major reasons that although the foreign language teaching methods are currently based on communicative language teaching (CLT), and task-based teaching and learning, French language teachers still tend to spend most of their time on activities that enhance reading and writing skills, while speaking and listening are almost ignored. Therefore, it is vital to examine students' reactions to a more modern technique of teaching to see how this new approach could influence the traditional culture of learning among Iranian students. On the other hand, in order to assess their speaking performances

from a functional point of view, we need to explore how well the students use syntax and vocabulary and pay attention to their coherence and fluency and assess their ability to think and respond in the target language. Thus, in this study, we tried to measure FFL learners' speaking performances based on linguistic features of the spoken language (e.g., fluency) and their overall effects on the listeners (e.g., comprehensibility, intelligibility, and the coherence of the content).

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Participants in this study were a convenience sample of 12 intermediate FFL learners enrolled in an intensive French program at a language school in Tehran (Andisheh Parsian). There were two intact classes randomly assigned into either an experimental group (where the students were given the podcast activity with strategy instruction), or a comparison group (where the students followed the ordinary course of the institution, focusing mainly on the lesson plan provided by their student book; Alter Ego+). The participants in this inquiry were between ages 18-25 with mean age \pm *STD* (20.83 \pm 2.48), that is (21.17 \pm 2.78) for our experimental group and (21.83 \pm 2.40) for our control group. They were all university students in different majors and their motivation to take the evening French courses came from job requirements, immigration plans, or a desire for self-improvement. In other words, they all had a specific motivation for learning French as a foreign language and that is why they were chosen as our research participants. Positive, motivated learners could offer more valuable feedback to improve the instructor's teaching method in the classroom. None of the participants in this study had hearing or speaking disabilities or any other learning difficulties for that matter.

3.2. Instruments

The treatment lasted for five consecutive weeks during one standard term. Each student in the experimental group completed three listening tasks integrated with a speaking activity at the end of each session where the students were asked to create their own productive podcasts, answering the question at hand; whereas the comparison group only received the ordinary

course of action of the class and completed a speaking task at the end of each session (without the use of podcasts as a pedagogical tool).

In addition, the experimental group participants were asked to fill out a listening log, a Likert questionnaire on their perception of podcasting, and a self-evaluation questionnaire on their own oral production at the end of each session to let us study their perspective on the integration of authentic podcasts as an educational instrument in the classroom and to further investigate the developmental trends in their listening comprehension and speaking skills.

The listening log's principal focus was to examine the students' approach to listening, the number of times they listened to the podcast, the comprehension of the main idea of the podcast, three detailed aspects of the audio content, and the inference statements that helped them reach the answers they had given to the questions asked.

The questions in the self-evaluation questionnaire mainly focused on their perception of their own statements, the coherence, intelligibility, speed, and comprehensibility of their utterances. The learners' self-reflective assignment provided valuable qualitative data on their personal difficulties and expectations. Their comments were used to help the researcher pick the following podcasts and to provide new insights into their validity.

The course context for this inquiry was environmental education. The podcasts chosen for this inquiry were on the subject of current environmental issues, more specifically those with which students were faced on a daily basis in their hometown, such as pollution, water shortage, climate change, global warming, and protection of endangered species. We assumed students could relate more easily to these subjects and could potentially have more to say on the subject since they were constantly struggling with the aforementioned issues in their everyday life. For this research, quantitative data were collected as well.

At the end of each session, the students were asked whether the podcast taught in class interested them and what the main factors that contributed to this perception were because the problem is that the integration of MALL even in well-equipped settings and by highly-trained

instructors is often incomplete and haphazard and usually lags behind the more traditional methods language learners are used to and feel more comfortable with. Thus, it is the responsibility of language teachers to perfectly understand students' opinion on such integration and to try to create a positive attitude among learners toward it before any expectations of its effectiveness on language skills can be articulated.

3.3. Procedure

One of the researchers developed the instruments, questionnaires, and the podcast materials based on the language level of the students, their needs, and their goals. The researcher was also the instructor in both the experimental and the comparison groups. She was also one of the three examiners to evaluate the students' listening and speaking skills.

Podcasting was used for five consecutive weeks, and the class met twice a week for four hours. At first, the concept of podcasting and the course of action during these five weeks were fully explained to the students. They were briefed about the podcasts: what they were and how they were going to be used in learning. Subsequently, the main phase of practice was conducted, which involved the use of actual podcast materials. During the first session of each week, the students were introduced to a new authentic podcast on the subject of an environmental crisis. The podcasts presented to our participants also contained a video or animation that facilitated students' understanding of the audio content and increased the effectiveness of mobile-assisted language teaching. They listened to each podcast twice. Following the first time, they were asked to answer some general listening comprehension questions. The questions prepared for the second round of listening were more detailed and specific to ensure the result of the analysis of the listening comprehension part.

For the speaking activity, the students were asked an open-ended question on the subject at hand, to which each student had to respond based on their personal opinion. Each response was then recorded and labeled by the instructor. At the end of the first session of the week, the students were offered a few questionnaires to take home: a listening log (with questions containing the podcast information, the main idea, three specific details, and the inference statements), a Likert questionnaire (to examine their perspective and opinion on each podcast) and a self-evaluation questionnaire on their own oral production. The instructor also sent the personal podcast produced by the students to each of them so that they could listen to it at home before filling out the self-evaluation questionnaire. The students had to give back the questionnaires to the instructor the following session.

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design. The data obtained from the questionnaires and evaluation charts were analyzed to evaluate the effect of podcast activities on FFL learners' speaking skills. At the end of each session, the oral production of every student in each group was analyzed based on the speaking evaluation chart of TEF Quebec by three different examiners (two in addition to the researcher) to maximize the accuracy of the data obtained. An analysis of the evaluation results was conducted to compare the changes between the two groups.

4. Results

The participants in this study were a convenience sample of 12 intermediate FFL learners, six for each group. Mann-Whitney U Test was performed to indicate whether there was any age difference between the groups. Mann-Whitney U Test revealed that the participants did not have any statistically significant age difference (Table 1).

Table 1
Demographic Information of Participants

	Group	N	Mean	STD	Z value	p value
age	1	6	21.17	2.79	-0.40	0.69
	2	6	21.83	2.40		

4.1. Listening Comprehension Test Results

We analyzed the results of listening comprehension questions of the students in our experimental group to explore the impact of using authentic podcasts on their listening skills. This test was only conducted for the experimental group. The control group followed the ordinary process of the class that did not necessarily contain any listening

activities. We decided to also evaluate the listening performance of the participants in our experimental group since as we stated before, a development in the listening comprehension skill could potentially lead to a better improvement in the speaking performance. In the following table (Table 2), the descriptive statistics (Mean \pm STD) are presented for the listening comprehension test. The listening scores are calculated out of 100.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Listening Comprehension Test Result

Assessment Sessions	Mean (Out of 100)	STD
1st session	71.83	1.72
2nd session	79.50	3.50
3rd session	87.50	3.39
4th session	88.50	2.66
5th session	92.50	2.73

Repeated measure analysis of variance was used to compare scores of listening comprehensions across five consecutive assessment sessions, and the means and standard deviations are presented in Table 2. Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in repeated measure analysis revealed that the sphericity assumption is met ($p = 0.67$). Therefore,

the Test of Within-Subjects Effects table tells us that there is a significant difference among the different sessions (Table 3). A repeated measures ANOVA showed that the mean of listening comprehension improved significantly across the different session [$F(4, 20) = 128.24$, $p = 0.00$].

Table 3
Tests of Within-Subjects Effects for Listening Comprehension Test

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	1638.13	4	409.53	128.24	0.00	0.96

4.2. Speaking Performance Test Results

During the next phase of analysis, we compared the speaking performances of the participants of our two groups to evaluate the effectiveness

of podcasting on learners' speaking skills. For this, we analyzed the length of the students' utterances during each session. Table 4 provides descriptive statistics for the above-mentioned speaking test.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics for Speaking Test

Utterance Length	Group			
	Experimental		Control	
	Mean	STD	Mean	STD
Session1	54.50	2.43	54.33	2.07
Session2	56.67	3.50	53.50	4.28
Session3	57.50	3.27	53.17	2.48

Session4	62.00	3.03	55.17	2.99
Session5	62.33	1.97	59.00	1.55

A mixed between-within subjects repeated measure analysis of variance was conducted to assess the impact of podcast listening on the speaking skill of the students (with and without

podcast instruction). Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in repeated measure analysis revealed that the sphericity assumption for the speaking test is met ($p = 0.49$).

Table 5
Tests of Within-Subjects Effects for Utterance's Length

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	346.90	4	86.72	15.08	.00	.60
	Greenhouse-Geisser	346.90	2.80	123.76	15.08	.00	.60
	Huynh-Feldt	346.90	4.00	86.72	15.08	.00	.60
	Lower-bound	346.90	1.00	346.90	15.08	.00	.60
time * group	Sphericity Assumed	69.10	4.00	17.27	3.00	.02	.23
	Greenhouse-Geisser	69.10	2.80	24.65	3.00	.05	.23
	Huynh-Feldt	69.10	4.00	17.27	3.00	.02	.23
	Lower-bound	69.10	1.00	69.10	3.00	.11	.23

The results which are presented in Tables 5 indicated that there is significant interaction between teaching type and training time [$F(4, 40) = 3.00, p = 0.02$]. It means that the performance of each group in the speaking test is different across different testing evaluation sessions. So, interpretation of the main effect should be carried on cautiously, although Table 7 shows a significant main effect for time [$F(4, 40) = 15.08, p = 0.00$]. Therefore, simple main effects for each group should be calculated as well. These results are presented in tables 6 and 7.

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in repeated measure analyses revealed that the sphericity assumption for speaking test for both experimental and control groups is met ($p = 0.35$ and 0.94 , respectively). Simple main effect for time in tables 6 and 7 shows significant improvement in both groups across training time, [$F(4, 20) = 11.69, p = 0.00$] for the experimental group and [$F(4, 20) = 6.09, p = 0.00$] for the control group.

Table 6
Tests of Within-Subject Effects for Utterances' Length in Experimental Group

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	283.533	4.00	70.88	11.69	.00	.70
	Greenhouse-Geisser	283.533	1.93	147.31	11.69	.00	.70
	Huynh-Feldt	283.533	3.11	91.31	11.69	.00	.70
	Lower-bound	283.533	1.00	283.53	11.69	.01	.70

Table 7*Tests of Within-Subject Effects for Utterances' Length in Control Group*

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	132.46	4.00	33.12	6.09	.00	.55
	Greenhouse-Geisser	132.46	2.89	45.90	6.09	.01	.55
	Huynh-Feldt	132.46	4.00	33.12	6.09	.00	.55
	Lower-bound	132.46	1.00	132.47	6.09	.06	.55

These findings indicate that as we went further with the treatment, the students were more comfortable expressing their opinions regarding the question at hand and were not precipitating to end their statements. The main finding of this part of the study was the effectiveness of MALL integration on changing the perception of language learners toward supporting such methods.

4.3. Developed Speaking Skills Test Results

At the next step, we compared the overall score of each student for each chosen speaking factor. A mixed between-within subjects repeated measure analysis of variance was conducted to assess the impact of two different interventions (with and without podcast instruction) for the improvement of the speaking skill of students across five consecutive assessment sessions. The evaluation was performed in eight different categories: presentation of facts, quality of argumentation, complexity of structure, lexical expansion, lexical knowledge, cohesion,

pronunciation and intonation, and rhythm and speed. The evaluation of quantitative statistical results based on mixed between-within subjects repeated measure analysis of variance for each developed skill is given below successively.

4.3.1. Presentation of Facts

A mixed between-within subjects repeated measure analysis of variance was conducted to assess the impact of podcast activity on the presentation skill of the students. Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in repeated measure analysis revealed that the sphericity assumption for the speaking test is met ($p = 0.46$). For the presentation technique, Table 8 shows that there is a significant interaction between teaching type and training time [$F(4, 40) = 3.90, p = 0.00$]. Therefore, interpreting the main effect may be misleading, and we reported the results for simple main effects test for both groups in Tables 9 and 10.

Table 8*Tests of Between-Subject Effects for Presentation Skill*

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	104.23	4.00	26.05	85.44	.00	.89
	Greenhouse-Geisser	104.23	2.77	37.60	85.44	.00	.89
	Huynh-Feldt	104.23	4.00	26.06	85.44	.00	.89
	Lower-bound	104.23	1.00	104.23	85.44	.00	.89
time * group	Sphericity Assumed	4.77	4.00	1.19	3.91	.01	.28
	Greenhouse-Geisser	4.77	2.77	1.71	3.91	.02	.28
	Huynh-Feldt	4.77	4.00	1.19	3.91	.01	.28
	Lower-bound	4.77	1.00	4.77	3.91	.08	.28

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in repeated measure analysis revealed that the sphericity assumption for the presentation of facts for both control and experimental groups is met ($p = 0.505$ and 0.845 , respectively). Simple main

effect for time in Tables 9 and 10 shows significant improvement in both groups across training time, [$F(4, 20) = 74.481, p = 0.00$] for the experimental group and [$F(4, 20) = 23.019, p = 0.00$] for the control group.

Table 9*Tests of Within-Subject Effects for Presentation Skill in Control Group*

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	32.53	4.00	8.13	23.02	.00	.82
	Greenhouse-Geisser	32.53	2.06	15.77	23.02	.00	.82
	Huynh-Feldt	32.53	3.53	9.21	23.02	.00	.82
	Lower-bound	32.53	1.00	32.53	23.02	.00	.82

Table 10*Tests of Within-Subject Effects for Presentation Skill in Experiment Group*

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	76.47	4.00	19.12	74.48	.00	.94
	Greenhouse-Geisser	76.47	2.42	31.59	74.48	.00	.94
	Huynh-Feldt	76.47	4.00	19.12	74.48	.00	.94
	Lower-bound	76.47	1.00	76.47	74.48	.00	.94

4.3.2. Quality of Argumentation

For the argumentation technique, Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in repeated measure analysis revealed that the sphericity assumption for the speaking test is met ($p = 0.79$). There was no significant interaction between teaching type and training time [$F(4, 40) = 1.27, p = 0.29$].

Although both groups show an increase in the argumentation skill (see Table 10), according to Table 11, the main effect comparing the two teaching types was significant [$F(4, 40) = 99.20, p = 0.00$], suggesting that there is a difference between the effectiveness of the two teaching approaches.

Table 11*Tests of Between-Subject Effects for Argumentation Technique*

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	83.33	4.00	20.83	99.20	.00	.91
	Greenhouse-Geisser	83.33	3.05	27.33	99.20	.00	.91
	Huynh-Feldt	83.33	4.00	20.83	99.20	.00	.91
	Lower-bound	83.33	1.00	83.33	99.20	.00	.91
time * group	Sphericity Assumed	1.07	4.00	.27	1.27	.30	.11
	Greenhouse-Geisser	1.07	3.05	.35	1.27	.30	.11
	Huynh-Feldt	1.07	4.00	.27	1.27	.30	.11
	Lower-bound	1.07	1.00	1.07	1.27	.29	.11

4.3.3. Complexity of Structure

For the complexity technique, Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in repeated measure analysis revealed that the sphericity assumption for the speaking test is met ($p = 0.05$). There was no significant interaction between teaching type and training time [$F(4, 40) = 0.67, p = 0.61$].

Although both groups show an increase in complexity technique (see Table 10), according to Table 12, the main effect comparing the two teaching types was significant [$F(4, 40) = 61.32, p = 0.00$], suggesting that there is a difference between the effectiveness of the two teaching approaches.

Table 12*Tests of Between-Subject Effects for Complexity Technique*

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	81.77	4.00	20.44	61.33	.00	.86
	Greenhouse-Geisser	81.77	2.32	35.21	61.33	.00	.86
	Huynh-Feldt	81.77	3.37	24.27	61.33	.00	.86
	Lower-bound	81.77	1.00	81.77	61.33	.00	.86
time * group	Sphericity Assumed	.90	4.00	.23	.68	.61	.06
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.90	2.32	.39	.68	.54	.06
	Huynh-Feldt	.90	3.37	.27	.68	.59	.06
	Lower-bound	.90	1.00	.90	.68	.43	.06

4.3.4. Lexical Expansion

For this factor, Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in

repeated measure analysis revealed that the sphericity assumption is met ($p = 0.156$).

Table 13*Tests of Between-Subject Effects for Lexical Expansion*

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	88.60	4.00	22.15	75.09	.00	.88
	Greenhouse-Geisser	88.60	2.57	34.51	75.09	.00	.88
	Huynh-Feldt	88.60	3.88	22.86	75.09	.00	.88
	Lower-bound	88.60	1.00	88.60	75.09	.00	.88
time * group	Sphericity Assumed	4.40	4.00	1.10	3.73	.01	.27
	Greenhouse-Geisser	4.40	2.57	1.71	3.73	.03	.27
	Huynh-Feldt	4.40	3.88	1.14	3.73	.01	.27
	Lower-bound	4.40	1.00	4.40	3.73	.08	.27

Table 13 shows that since there is a significant interaction between teaching type and training time [$F(4, 40) = 3.72, p = 0.01$], the main effect significance is not reliable. Therefore, simple main effects for experimental and control groups are reported in Tables 14 and 15.

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in repeated measure analyses revealed that the sphericity

assumption for the presentation of facts for both control and experimental groups is met ($p = 0.510$ and 0.344 , respectively). Simple main effect for time in Tables 14 and 15 shows significant improvement in both groups across training time, [$F(4, 20) = 22.47, p = 0.00$] for the experimental group and [$F(4, 20) = 59.02, p = 0.00$] for the control group

Table 14
Tests of Within-Subject Effects for Presentation Skill in Experimental Group

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
	Sphericity Assumed	28.46	4.00	7.11	22.47	.00	.82
time	Greenhouse-Geisser	28.46	2.06	13.80	22.47	.00	.82
	Huynh-Feldt	28.46	3.53	8.06	22.47	.00	.82
	Lower-bound	28.46	1.00	28.47	22.47	.00	.82

Table 15
Tests of Within-Subject Effects for Presentation Skill in Control Group

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
	Sphericity Assumed	64.53	4.00	16.13	59.02	.00	.92
time	Greenhouse-Geisser	64.53	1.76	36.60	59.02	.00	.92
	Huynh-Feldt	64.53	2.65	24.35	59.02	.00	.92
	Lower-bound	64.53	1.00	64.53	59.02	.00	.92

4.3.5. Lexical Knowledge

For the lexical knowledge category, Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in repeated measure analysis revealed that the sphericity assumption is met ($p = 0.08$). Table 16 shows that since there is

significant interaction between teaching type and training time [$F(4, 40) = 3.80, p = 0.01$], Therefore, simple main effects for experiment and control groups were calculated separately and reported in tables 17 and 18.

Table 16
Tests of Between-Subject Effects for Lexical Knowledge

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	79.23	4.00	19.81	51.67	.00	.84
	Greenhouse-Geisser	79.23	2.03	38.89	51.67	.00	.84
	Huynh-Feldt	79.23	2.82	28.10	51.67	.00	.84
	Lower-bound	79.23	1.00	79.23	51.67	.00	.84
time * group	Sphericity Assumed	5.83	4.00	1.46	3.80	.01	.28
	Greenhouse-Geisser	5.83	2.03	2.86	3.80	.04	.28
	Huynh-Feldt	5.83	2.82	2.07	3.80	.02	.28
	Lower-bound	5.83	1.00	5.83	3.80	.08	.28

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in repeated measure analyses revealed that the sphericity assumption for the presentation of facts for both control and experimental groups is met ($p = 0.33$ and 0.59 , respectively). Simple main effect

for time in Tables 17 and 18 shows significant improvement in both groups across training time [$F(4, 20) = 38.47, p = 0.00$] for the experimental group [$F(4, 20) = 16.42, p = 0.00$] and for the control group.

Table 17*Tests of Within-Subject Effects for Lexical Knowledge in Experimental Group*

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	24.53	4.00	6.13	16.43	.00	.77
	Greenhouse-Geisser	24.53	2.05	11.98	16.43	.00	.77
	Huynh-Feldt	24.53	3.49	7.08	16.43	.00	.77
	Lower-bound	24.53	1.00	24.53	16.43	.01	.77

Table 18*Tests of Within-Subject Effects for Lexical Knowledge in Control Group*

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	60.53	4.00	15.13	38.47	.00	.88
	Greenhouse-Geisser	60.53	1.65	36.53	38.47	.00	.88
	Huynh-Feldt	60.53	2.37	25.48	38.47	.00	.88
	Lower-bound	60.53	1.00	60.53	38.47	.00	.88

4.3.6. Cohesion

Regarding the cohesion of utterances, Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in repeated measure analysis revealed that the sphericity assumption is met ($p = 0.08$), and there is no significant interaction between teaching type and training time [$F(4, 40) = 0.535, p = 0.71$].

There is a substantial main effect for training time [$F(4, 40) = 41.765, p = 0.00$]. Although both groups show an increase in cohesion skill, the main effect comparing the two teaching types is significant suggesting that there is a statistically significant difference between the effectiveness of the two teaching approaches.

Table 19*Tests of Between-Subject Effects for Cohesion of Utterance*

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	52.07	4.00	13.01	41.77	.00	.81
	Greenhouse-Geisser	52.07	2.46	21.16	41.77	.00	.81
	Huynh-Feldt	52.07	3.65	14.26	41.77	.00	.81
	Lower-bound	52.07	1.00	52.07	41.77	.00	.81
time * group	Sphericity Assumed	.67	4.00	.17	.54	.71	.05
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.67	2.46	.27	.54	.63	.05
	Huynh-Feldt	.67	3.65	.18	.54	.70	.05
	Lower-bound	.67	1.00	.67	.53	.48	.05

4.3.7. Pronunciation and Intonation

For the pronunciation technique, Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in repeated measure analysis revealed that the sphericity assumption is met ($p = 0.17$). Since there is no significant interaction between teaching type and training

time [$F(4, 40) = 0.34, p = 0.84$], calculated main effect for time is reliable and there is a substantial main effect for training time [$F(4, 40) = 39.65, p = 0.00$]. It means that there is a statistically significant difference between the effectiveness of the two teaching approaches.

Table 20
Tests of Between-Subject Effects for Pronunciation Technique

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	49.17	4.00	12.29	39.65	.00	.80
	Greenhouse-Geisser	49.17	2.56	19.24	39.65	.00	.80
	Huynh-Feldt	49.17	3.85	12.77	39.65	.00	.80
	Lower-bound	49.17	1.00	49.17	39.65	.00	.80
time * group	Sphericity Assumed	.43	4.00	.10	.35	.84	.03
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.43	2.56	.17	.35	.76	.03
	Huynh-Feldt	.43	3.85	.11	.35	.84	.03
	Lower-bound	.43	1.00	.43	.35	.57	.03

4.3.8. Rhythm and Speed

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity in repeated measure analysis for rhythm and speed revealed that the sphericity assumption is met ($p = 0.24$). As far as rhythm and speed are concerned, there is no significant interaction between teaching type and training time [$F(4, 40) = 1.29, p =$

0.28], but there is a substantial main effect for training time [$F(4, 40) = 67.59, p = 0.00$]. Both groups show an increase in their rhythm and speed, but the main effect comparing the two teaching types suggests there is a difference between the effectiveness of the two teaching approaches in favor of the podcast listening approach.

Table 21
Tests of Between-Subject Effects for Rhythm and Speed

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	48.67	4.00	12.17	67.59	.00	.87
	Greenhouse-Geisser	48.67	2.57	18.92	67.59	.00	.87
	Huynh-Feldt	48.67	3.89	12.52	67.59	.00	.87
	Lower-bound	48.67	1.00	48.67	67.59	.00	.87
time * group	Sphericity Assumed	.93	4.00	.23	1.30	.29	.12
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.93	2.57	.36	1.30	.30	.12
	Huynh-Feldt	.93	3.89	.24	1.30	.29	.12
	Lower-bound	.93	1.00	.93	1.30	.28	.12

5. Discussion

Based on the data collected during our research, we found out that the participants' listening comprehension developed significantly after five sessions of podcast instruction. This was clearly due to their extended familiarity with the technical terminology related to environmental issues and the speed and accent of the speakers in the podcasts. This indicates that listening to authentic podcasts on a particular theme and subject in a consecutive fashion could make their listening competence stronger and more anchored.

We discovered that the participants of both groups were making longer statements after five consecutive sessions of speaking activity. It seems that after a few sessions, the students overcame their anxiety of making mistakes in front of their classmates and tended to make longer utterances compared to the first session. Although the mixed between-within subjects repeated measure analysis of variance was not conclusive of a significant difference between the two interventions, we can still assume that our experimental group showed a slightly better performance regarding the length of their utterances (Table 5).

Analyzing each factor of our speaking performance test results, we concluded that although the participants of both groups showed improvements in each factor, our experimental group revealed more promising results and more significant development in the following five items: quality of argumentation, complexity of structure, cohesion, pronunciation, and intonation, and finally rhythm and speed.

By comparing the overall score of the students during each session, we found out that although the participants in our comparison group tended to take part in the speaking activity with more ease and comfort and got better scores in their speaking assessments throughout this project, their speaking development was not as significant as that of their peers in our experimental group and the participants in the experimental group showed more promising results in their speaking performances.

Having analyzed each factor of our speaking evaluation chart separately for each student, we observed that the participants in our experimental group were making slower and more comprehensible statements as we went further with our approach. Although it is optimal to try to teach students to speak as close to the natural speed of a native speaker as possible, with intermediate students, a certain level of slowing down could potentially be considered as a good sign. This intentional metacognitive strategy could clearly reduce their anxiety about making syntactic and grammatical mistakes and made their statements more comprehensible and intelligible. Although there were still certain recurring errors in their utterances, generally speaking, their responses became more and more comprehensible as we advanced through with our project. Their presentations became more developed and the information presented in their speech was significantly more organized, pertinent and coherent. The students made an effort to present their arguments clearly one after another to make their reasoning more acceptable for their classmates.

At the end of the research, we realized that the students were more comfortable making much more complicated structures, and they seemed willing to gradually leave their comfort zones and use more difficult structures where there was a risk of making syntactic mistakes. They also attempted to use the new vocabulary they

had heard on the podcasts more frequently. This is probably due to the fact that the speaking task was offered to students immediately after the listening activity. This obviously extended the topic at hand further and helped the students keep the new vocabulary and expressions in their memories and eventually use them in their presentations. Although they still had a tendency towards using simple structures to avoid unforced errors, they seemed more confident using the new terminology and lexicon they had heard on the podcast, which made their language directory seem more developed and enriched.

In this study, we took into consideration a theoretical, pedagogical, methodological, and cultural point of view in order to analyze the effectiveness of podcast implementation on FFL learners' speaking skill.

Theoretically speaking, by asking students to self-evaluate their own oral production compared to those of their peers, we are tending to engage their metacognition; since in the field of foreign language learning, learners' awareness of the scope of their language knowledge could be considered a part of the metacognitive regulation (Hawkins, 1999). Metacognitive regulation refers to certain adjustments language learners make to help further control and enhance their learning, such as information management strategies, comprehension monitoring, and evaluation of their own progress and goals (Flavell, 1979; Schraw & Dennison, 1994). In this study, students tended to evaluate their production based on different factors such as comprehensibility, the accuracy of content, and the speed of speech in comparison with those of their peers. They are supposed to plan how to approach a learning goal and to use appropriate skills and strategies to achieve that goal.

Pedagogically speaking, using authentic podcasts as an instructional means could be considered a useful teaching material for all foreign language teachers. Introducing podcast activities to language learners could primarily help them be more familiar with MALL, to further extend their learning process to outside the classroom, to practice their target language anywhere, at any time and at their own pace, and more importantly to take a step toward more independent and autonomous learning. The most important aspect of this part of the

study is that it would also help language teachers examine their class activities based on their own situations and could potentially offer other instructors more examples to improve their teaching methods.

Methodologically speaking, in this study, we fully used traditional methods, multiple-choice questionnaires, and close-ended questionnaires to evaluate listening skills and standard evaluation charts and rubrics to measure the learners' speaking performances.

Culturally speaking, Iranian language learners, as stated before, are more accustomed to the written form of expression in the classroom. This is mainly because of the diffidence and anxiety of making mistakes in front of their peers. The lack of exposure to modern techniques in the educational system is probably another principal cause of their inclination towards the traditional culture of learning. The above-mentioned characteristics were followed by a course of a shift by students towards being more accepting of their anxiety and uncertainty and being more comfortable expressing themselves in front of their classmates as a result of participating in podcasting activities.

According to (Hofstede et al., 2010), culture is the programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. But such results are indicative of one simple rule that learning culture can be an evolutionary phenomenon. According to (Choudhury, 2014), culture is a fragile phenomenon that is constantly changing since it is only in our mind. Thus, it is not at all logical to assume that members of a certain community are tied to certain cultural features forevermore. Investigating the participants' answers to the Likert questionnaire was suggestive of an important issue: They considered their experience with authentic podcast instruction very innovative and interesting; therefore, the students started to be more accepting of uncertainty and more comfortable expressing themselves orally in front of their peers. While under the influence of traditional culture, less attention is paid to creative expression, the results of the present study indicate that such preferences are not at all absolute and the change in the teaching methods and techniques provides the necessary pre-requisite for shifting towards more modern ways of teaching foreign

languages. It seems that choosing the right material and educational tool could potentially lead the students towards the assimilation of a certain perception that encourages the modern techniques of learning. We assume that language skills improve in relation to how often learners practice the target language inside and outside the classroom. If we are aiming to improve students' certain skills, we need to make sure that maximum use is made of the learners' environment.

This study has introduced an innovative blended learning approach to help students improve their listening and speaking skills. It is an approach that focuses mainly on learners instead of teachers and could potentially have a great impact on students' learning experience.

Using podcasts as a pedagogical tool in the classroom helps students apply a wide range of appropriate strategies to understand authentic topics at their own pace, far from any anxiety, and to use the target language in their own productions. The authenticity and diversity of podcasts are expected to help students improve their language skills. In brief, in this research we tended to address the development of students' ability to become more autonomous and independent learners.

There were certain delimitations to this research as well. First, in realizing the study, we only focused on intermediate FFL learners and did not have the means to extend it to other levels. Second, the listening skills were measured by questionnaires focusing on the comprehension of the main idea, detailed information, and inference statements. Third, speaking skills were evaluated based on fluency, comprehensibility, language use, delivery, and content of the learners' speaking performances, and their interactional competence was not taken into consideration.

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