

Podcasts as Teaching Tools: Investigating the Impact of Learners' Transportable Identities on Their Speaking Proficiency

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Abstract : In the tertiary level Indian ELT classrooms, learners from regional language medium schools find it difficult to cope with English though they excel in other subjects. One of the most important factors that affect the learning process is the 'baggage' that they bring into the language classroom. Identities that are very personal to the learners and are related to their social, religious, or cultural experience - termed as transportable identities (TI) have an impact on the learners in being involved in the cognitive processes related to language learning. Considering this, it is important to investigate how such transportable identities could be exploited in a language classroom to develop the speaking capabilities of the learners. The present study attempts to investigate how podcasts that match the transportable identities of learners could assist them in developing their speaking proficiency. Though largely designed as a qualitative study, a quantitative approach is used to establish inter-rater reliability of the pre-test and the

post-test. The subjects of the study are four first-year engineering undergraduate learners from National Institute of Technology-Tiruchirappalli, India. Data was collected using discussion, pre- and post-tests and feedback. To triangulate data and understand the change in language use and identify learner perceptions, one-to-one interview was also conducted. The present study traces the changes in the learners' speaking proficiency and states the implications of using podcasts as speaking enhancement tools for communicative English classrooms.

Keywords: Speaking Skills, Podcast, Transportable Identities, Motivation, Learner Perceptions

1. Introduction

The language plurality of India demands a common language to communicate, and owing to the colonial past, English operates as the common language for over 129 million people of this country (Timalsina, 2021). Perceiving this importance of English, it is made a compulsory part of the syllabus from the school level, though it is many a time taught and treated as a 'subject' rather than a language especially in schools where instruction is largely provided in the regional languages. Based on the economic stability of the parents, the children access education from Government-run English medium schools, Government-run regional language medium schools, aided (collectively governed by private-

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public administration) English medium schools and unaided (managed by private administration) English medium schools (Khaitan, 2020), which succinctly has an impact on their English language proficiency. Since they do not have to pay fees like in other types of educational institutions, students from rural India, especially those from economically disadvantaged sectors, depend on regional language medium government schools. Thus, their accessibility to English medium schools largely defines their opportunities to use English. It is ironic but factual to state that in a country where English is the lingua franca, opportunities to use the language have to be consciously created or facilitated if it is a rural Indian context. The urban and semi-urban regions usually provide some opportunities to use English owing to the multicultural nature of the contexts. However, learners who are from regional language medium schools generally have limited opportunities to speak in English within the classroom as the medium of instruction will always be their first language, and many a time, "English subject is taught in their mother tongue" as stated by a teacher in a teacher-training workshop conducted by one of the authors.

Even after English being taught as a compulsory 'subject' or as the 'first language' (beginning with the Three Language Formula during the Nehruvian ministry), learners do not acquire proficiency to communicate effortlessly in English, especially spoken communication. They encounter difficulties when they reach tertiary level, where the medium of instruction is English. At this level, the different types of learners shaped by their linguistic capital, economic factors and social status of their parents merge into one heterogeneous group and thus, they find it difficult to cope with the challenges posed by their lack of language proficiency especially when many of their peers are proficient in English owing to their educational and cultural backgrounds. These less proficient learners encounter challenges as English is the medium of teaching, assessment and classroom transactions. This does not indicate that learners from regional language medium backgrounds or rural areas of India are intellectually inferior to their urban peers. Informal conversations with tertiary-level teachers asserted that the subject-specific knowledge of the lower proficiency learners was as good and sometimes better than that of their urban peers who received education from English-medium schools. However, the lack of competency to communicate in English impedes their learning and has implications on their grades.

This issue of the divide between subject-specific knowledge and English language proficiency has greater implications in engineering education. Indian higher education institutes of national importance have many meritorious students lacking the linguistic capital in terms of English. Highly talented students who excel in the common engineering entrance examinations are undoubtedly excellent in their subject knowledge and skills related to science, technology, mathematics and engineering. However, those students who previously attended regional language schools find it challenging to communicate since they are unfamiliar with an English-speaking setting. In multicultural and multilingual campuses like institutes of national importance, one must use English to function efficiently. Globalisation and industrialisation exposed the students to vivid career opportunities, and English functions as a means to access those opportunities. Each of these career roles demands a certain level of proficiency in English, and according to the 2013 report by employability solutions firm *Aspiring Minds*, around 47 per cent of Indian graduates are not eligible to be employed in any industrial role. Almost 90 per cent of graduates did not have the required proficiency in English communication (Jain, 2019).

Speaking is challenging for learners as it is spontaneous and for learners from less privileged backgrounds, this causes anxiety that negatively affects their confidence (Karthika, 2021). Speaking proficiency is a crucial determiner in competing for employment opportunities as it is a critical criterion for working overseas and getting admission to foreign universities (Das, 2019). Despite being proficient in using technology, if candidates fail to articulate themselves during interviews or at the workplace, it can lead to the job prospects being diminished. Therefore, it is essential for engineers to practise good speaking in order to fully benefit from global opportunities (Marina & Rajprasad, 2016). English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses designed for engineering students incorporate aspects that need to be addressed in preparing learners for the industry and all professional communication scenarios. However, there are challenges existing in the classroom context for both learners and teachers.

To identify ways in which speaking skills can be enhanced, it is important to understand the underlying issues Indian learners encounter while learning to speak English. Every English classroom is a melting pot of various interests, diverse levels of proficiency,

and different learning styles. However, factors like overcrowded classrooms, fear, anxiety and low motivation are barriers in acquiring speaking skills (Kakepoto et al., 2013; Richards, 2015a). Therefore, individualised learning methods are required. Primarily, learners and their identities must be acknowledged and valued. In this digital era, integrating technology into language learning can solve many challenges confronted by learners. The inescapable and faster-developing technology can provide new tools and options for language learners that are accessible to them to enhance language learning (Reinders & White, 2016). Thus, technology blurs the boundaries of the classroom and has taken language learning beyond it (Richards, 2015b). Many tools like Blogs, Wikis, podcasting, online dictionaries, English movies, and spell-checkers operate as digital tools for language learning (Thomas et al., 2014).

This paper investigates the possibility of using podcasts to develop English speaking skills of engineering students. The rationale for choosing podcasts was based on the idea that podcasts can be personalised to mitigate the individual differences of language learners, thereby increasing the effectiveness of podcasts in developing speaking proficiency. Personalisation in podcasting can be created by understanding the identities of learners. This study juxtaposes the concept of transportable identities as propounded by Zimmerman (1998), later introduced into language learning by Richards (2006) to further individualise the experience for learners. According to Zimmerman (1998), the idea of transportable identities refers to "particular characteristics of individuals, such as age, sex and race, that are potentially usable across all social situations." Through technology, language learning possibilities attain higher levels by incorporating the learner's identity into the learning activity. This will take language learning beyond the classroom boundaries and restricted learning time (Aldrich et al., 2006; Richards, 2015b), thereby expanding learning possibilities to new levels. During the pandemic, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore rightly pointed out, "Under the shadow of COVID-19, the lives of millions of children have temporarily shrunk to just their homes and their screens. We must help them navigate this new reality." According to him, technology must play a significant role and bring revolutionary changes in language learning (UNICEF, 2020). In these challenging times, more

than 1.5 billion students in 190 countries are physically limited from attending schools, and digital tools can help learners bridge this gap (UNICEF, 2020). This paper further explores these new prospects by analysing the language-enhancing powers of podcasts that match tertiary-level learners' transportable identities.

2. Literature Review

A. Importance of Speaking for Engineers

As per the National Skill Report – 2019, English language skills occupy a quarter of the total weightage when hiring professionals (Wheebox, 2019). According to Riemer (2002), lack of language proficiency can undermine all other skill sets the learners have acquired. Many multinational companies (MNCs) plan to adopt English as the 'official' workplace language to increase productivity and unify the workers' thoughts (Lonsmann, 2017; Welch et al., 2005). However, technical universities have always focused more on STEM (science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects, leading to the language deficiency of engineering students (Kakepoto et al., 2013). Even in the curriculum, courses offering language skills are very few, and as a result, students do not give much attention to English (Bucur & Ban, 2019).

Literature available in the field of language needs of engineering students has consistently highlighted the importance of speaking skills for engineering students (Kassim & Ali, 2010; Riemer, 2002). Good speaking skills help demonstrate someone's proficiency in English and help convey their opinions to others (Luoma, 2004). It is often the primary skill through which people judge others, and mastering it indicates that the person has mastered the language (Brown & Yule, 1983; Fauzan, 2014). However, Indian students are seldom confident enough to speak in English, while their proficiency in writing is better than that in speaking, owing to both the spontaneous nature of speaking and the limited opportunities to speak in English (Karthika, 2020). The lack of focus on speaking skills needs to be addressed as the primary issue here. In a study conducted in Pakistan, educators mainly pointed out listening and reading in English as the most substantial skills for learners' academic achievement (Kakepoto et al., 2013). In contrast, learners stressed the significance of listening and speaking (Gözüyeşil, 2014).

B. Challenges in Teaching Speaking Skills

In the Indian scenario, it is challenging for teachers, especially language teachers, to cater to every learner's language demands in a classroom (Helfrich & Bosh, 2011). The learners who are struggling with the language may not find the standard curriculum advantageous for them. Therefore, to cultivate equitable growth, teachers must use techniques and methods that accelerate students' academic achievements (Banks, 2004). Furthermore, Schulz (2009) speculates that English language learners should not be treated as homogeneous as their academic abilities differ. She posits that a good language teacher should understand the considerable differences among individual learners' academic performance and should address their needs.

Affective factors often interfere with the speaking proficiency of the learners. Fauzan (2014) identifies affective factors such as shyness, reluctance, hesitation, and lack of appropriate vocabulary as problems students encounter in mastering speaking skills. Lack of motivation can also be a major hindrance in language education (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010). Therefore, this study proposes to address and resolve these issues using podcasts that focus more on the learners' identities and needs.

C. Podcasting and Learners' Transportable Identities

Rivers (1964) recognised the importance of personality in second language learning. She states that motivation acts as a mediating variable while facilitating language learning. She asserts that the personality of the individual can link motivation and language learning. The idea recognised by Rivers (1964) connects strongly with the concept of transportable identity formulated by Zimmerman (1998) in his model of discourse and social identities. Keiths (2006) and later Ushioda (2011) discussed the role of transportable identities (TI) in language learning. According to Ushioda (2011), engaging learners' transportable identities (e.g., as a cricket fan or movie lover) in language learning can promote greater personal involvement from learners and improve the effort and time they invest in the activity. Most of the studies related to TI have focused on the utilisation of TI in the classroom (Keiths, 2006; Richards, 2006; Ushioda, 2011), whereas this study further develops the prospects of TI in the realms of language learning and technology, thereby facilitating

a personalised experience for language learners who can meet their own language-learning needs.

The present study is important because it analyses the use of podcasts catering to the learner's TI in enhancing the speaking skills of language learners. Although studies have discussed the importance of podcasts in second language learning (Carlisle et al., 2016; Celaya et al., 2020; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007), they have not examined the possibility and efficacy of using TI-based podcasts. Rosell-Aguilar (2007) has revealed the utility of podcasts as a pedagogic tool and coined the term "podagogy". Kidd (2012) also expanded the pedagogical possibilities of podcasts. Some other articles have also explored the offshoots of EFL podcast duration, repetitive listening and type of podcasts that can maximise the impact (Kelly & Klein, 2016; Popova & Edirisingha, 2010; Sendal et al., 2018). When studies attempt to understand how theories help in developing more comprehensive podcasts for learners (McNamara & Drew, 2019), the present study endeavours to fill this gap by analysing the importance of personalised content as input for language learners.

3. Methodology

A. Assumptions

This study assumes that podcasts are effective tools to enhance learners' speaking proficiency and the podcasts that address the learners' transportable identities assist them in achieving this proficiency. Furthermore, it assumes that learners develop positive attitudes towards learning when they use podcasts that align with their transportable identities as learning tools.

B. Research Questions

How can podcasts that belong to the transportable identities of the learners help them in developing speaking proficiency?

1. What aspects of learners' speaking will be impacted by podcasts?
2. What are the learner's attitudes towards incorporating podcasts matching their transportable identities?

C. Research Design

The study was conducted over a period of two weeks. Four undergraduate learners who wished to improve their speaking skills voluntarily participated in this study. An initial discussion was conducted to identify the transportable identities of the learners and based on the input; the researchers identified podcasts that matched each learner's TI. Each learner was provided with ten podcasts that the researchers identified from Google Podcasts. The researchers chose the first five, and the participants selected the rest. All participants listened to and took notes of the podcasts and even searched on the internet for difficult words after they listened to the podcasts. There were daily discussions after the learners listened to the podcast and these discussions revealed the idiosyncratic strategies the learners employed while listening. These discussions were audio-recorded. Daily discussion audios were 2 – 3 minutes long. These audios were examined before providing feedback to them on their speeches, modifying the activity, thereby making it more suitable for the learners.

D. Participants of the Study

Four first-year undergraduate engineering male students from the National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli, India, volunteered to be the participants of this study. They all came from different villages across various states, and the local language they learned in school served as their medium of education. All students were pursuing their tertiary level education and expressed their difficulty in English language communication. Ten podcasts were given to them which were relevant to the participants' interests. Short responses on each podcast by the learners were recorded and analysed to provide remarks and positive reinforcement.

E. Data Collection Tools

Chiefly designed as a qualitative study, the present

Table 1 : Data Collection Tools and Codes

Tools	Codes
Background discussion	Bd
Pre-test	Pt1
Cue-cards	Cc
Audios of daily discussion	Dd
Post-test	Pt2
Informal feedback	If

study also uses quantitative analysis to triangulate the data. To establish inter-rater reliability of the pre test and the post-test, Spearman-rank-order correlation (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991) was undertaken. The study was conducted over a period of 15 days.

F. Procedure

The following steps illustrate how the research was conducted and how data was collected.

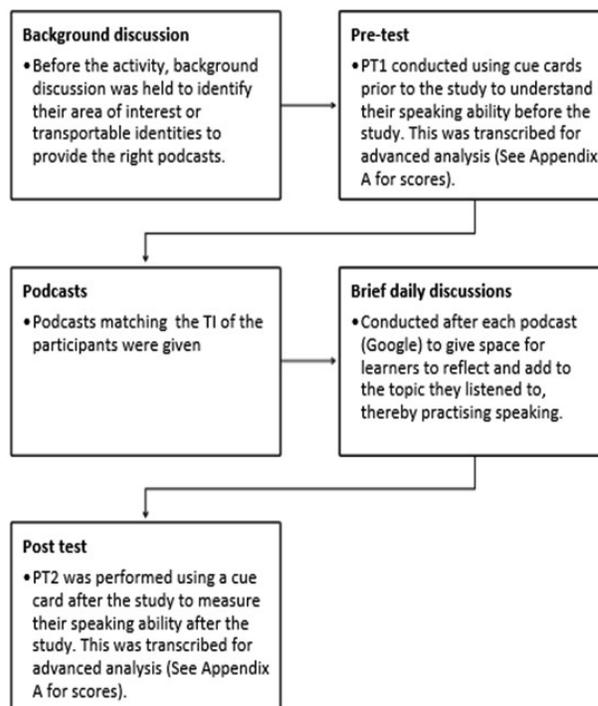


Fig. 1 : Data Collection Procedures

4. Data Analysis

As this study is largely qualitative, quantitative elements were used only to confirm the qualitative data. The data analysis for this study consisted of transcription of learners' discussion audios, pre-and post-test audio recordings, and thematic analysis of the improvements obtained through the introduction of podcasts that matched their transportable identities. The feedback given to the learners was analysed. This analysis provided valuable insights into the nature of influence that TI-based podcasts had on the learners' speaking proficiency. The learners' scores were quantitatively measured using a modified Luoma scale by two raters (for pre and post-tests) (Refer Appendix B) and were compared using Spearman-rank-order correlation.

A. Qualitative Analysis

1. Increase in Confidence

It was observed in the cases of Participants 1 (P1) and 2 (P2) that the length of their daily podcasts gradually increased, indicating a loss of reluctance or an improvement in speaking confidence. Participant 2 commented that, for the first few podcasts, responses were given based on notes made during podcasts, and gradually the participant started speaking without any notes. Participant 2 also added that,

"I got self-confidence while speaking and lot of new words, have learned." (IF) [sic].

Also, it was observed that there was a gradual change in the duration P2 spoke. P2's pre-test contained his speech which lasted only for 41 seconds (containing three sentences with long pauses), and the post-test response indicated his speeches lasted for 1.21 minutes (more than five sentences without pauses) which was a notable change compared to the pre-test. When asked about this extended duration of their speech, the participants stated that they were more confident as the content of the speech was related to their interests and, therefore, they could make better connections.

2. Enjoyable and Knowledgeable Language Learning

The participants of the study mentioned that the topics were very insightful and new to them, and they appreciated the new information provided by the podcasts. It was observed that the rise in interest in the topic was reflected in the discussion, and they were more involved in the task. The students noted even the minute details if the topic was of their interest. For example, P3 was more into technology and automobiles, and one of the podcasts dealt with BMW cars; while discussing, he talked about how the engine capacity was changed from 6 litres to 4 litres and so on. Daily discussions showed that participants had this eye for detail if it was a topic they enjoyed and could be related to their transportable identities. P2's comment also shows their attitude towards these topics:

"The last one, which was on the topic of improving conversation skills. I found it very interesting because, in this talk, the speaker told ten rules to keep

in mind while having a conversation, and I feel those ten rules will be very helpful." (IF) [sic].

The informal feedback after the post-test shows that all participants found this activity interesting and stated that they would continue using podcasts for both language learning and knowledge. The interest kindled by the topics had impacted their listening skills also. Two students, who primarily had the issue of comprehending the content because of the speaker's pace, commented that they did not have to slow down the pace of the podcasts after some audios, which substantiated that they could understand better and were eventually becoming effective and active listeners. Also, during the preliminary discussion, P3 and P4 repetitively requested repetition as they had difficulty in comprehension. However, by the end of the activity, it was noted that they understood the content of the podcast without the need for repetition.

3. Improved Accuracy and Vocabulary

The aspects that were remarkably improved by this activity were accuracy and vocabulary. P2, who made long pauses in between sentences in search of words, was able to speak without pauses in the post-test, which was a notable change. For example, in the pre-test, he took several pauses in between these two sentences (3 dots signifying short pause and 5 dots conveying long pauses)

"My... most important decision which I took ...till now is that to take a drop year after 12th... to improve my JEE rank.....I took this decision after my 12th board..... It was a...good... decision". (PT2) [sic].

Whereas in the post-test as seen below, pauses particularly the long pauses reduced.

"I would like to talk about my childhood friend Alex who is very brave and courageous. He is like my brother... There are many incidents of his bravery. But at this point of time, I remember... one incident... Me Alex and two more friends were in a road trip and Alex was driving" (PT2) [sic].

Fluency and accuracy improved as they acquired the appropriate vocabulary. P1 was also able to perform without any grammar mistakes in his post-test. P3 also learned to connect sentences and structure them with linking words which is a great difference as, during the pre-test, he could not structure sentences or

use linkers. His sentences were disconnected and lacked logical coherence. At the same time, the post-test showed that he could convey his idea though there were grammatical errors. (Sample of PT1 & PT2 given)

"The special... that I want to buy is ...my parents ...-parents the difference... an...d home... for better for me and and this is... is special for me" (PT1).

"His house is located at 50 metres far from my house, so he came almost daily, and we play together". (PT2) [sic].

P1, P2 and P3 showed improvement in overall speaking skills, whereas not many notable changes were observed in the speech of P4. One of the reasons observed was that all other students engaged in active listening by writing down difficult words, and phrases, self-talking about the podcasts and discussing the topics heard in the podcast. In contrast, P4 depended entirely on the podcasts and did not engage in related tasks, unlike his peers.

4. Learners' Attitude Towards Podcasts

Podcasts were new to the participants, and they stated that they had never listened to them before although had heard the term 'podcasts'. In an informal feedback session, they stated that it was a new experience for them, and they enjoyed it. They also said that they liked it and would continue using it. The following were the different comments received.

P1: "I got many new words; I will use them,"

P2: "I learned more words... and pronunciation from podcasts, and I am able to talk more"

P3: "My listening skill and grammar improved."

P4: "I understand English... better ...before accent, I didn't understand at all" [sic]

These comments proved that they had perceived the use of podcasts positively.

5. Podcasts As Language Enhancing Tools, Not Language Enabling Tools

The analysis of data confirmed the efficacy of podcasts as language-enhancing tools though they

could not be used as language-enabling tools. Table 1.2 shows that P1 and P2 had scored much better than P3 and P4 in the pre-test, which indicated that they had better language proficiency than P3 and P4. The concerns identified regarding P1 and P2's language proficiency were fear of speaking, lack of vocabulary and grammatical mistakes which were addressed by the podcast and ensuing activities. In comparison, P3 and P4 were having difficulties with fundamental grammar and sentence structure. P3 and P4 needed support from the basic grammatical structures. As their listening skills were observed to be lower than P1 and P2's it resulted in poor comprehension of podcasts. The podcasts failed to provide them with considerable language input resulting in lower performance of the two.

Therefore, it was concluded that P1 and P2 benefitted more from the activity because podcasts acted as a language enhancement tool and P3 and P4 benefitted less because podcasts did not act as an enabling tool.

6. Small Gains

Accuracy and self-efficacy are the other features that were reported to have increased. During the background conversation (BG), P2 pointed out his lack of enthusiasm to learn and his lack of confidence in himself:

"Day by day, my confidence level ...is..decrease and I'm beginning to doubt my capacity to succeed." [sic]

Initially P2 was losing self-belief and doubted his language learning ability. P4 stated that he tried different methods to learn English, and he could not feel any visible changes in his language skills. However, during the period of this study, according to the statements given by P4, he gradually developed confidence. P4 commented:

"It used to be tough to speak to people without stammering, but now... I think I'm getting better...The anxieties are subsiding, and I believe...uh... I could improve even more." [sic]

P4 and P2 added that the researchers' encouraging comments during the study helped regain their confidence and made them feel at ease with the language. P4 commented:

"Your feedback made me comfortable and felt like me doing better. The Sir in the Institute was rude and said I make lot of mistakes". [sic].

Thus, it can be observed that the researcher's encouragement also contributed to the learner's improvement in speaking self-efficacy. The feedback from the learners demonstrated that they liked the activity very much.

7. Challenges

The participants found it difficult to understand foreign accents or sometimes certain phrases of native speakers. P2's statement perfectly summed up the issue encountered by all participants.

"The accent was quite difficult to understand but no issues. I'll get used to it in some days" (P2)[sic].

Each participant confronted this problem differently. One participant asked for podcasts with Indian speakers as he had difficulty understanding the foreign accent, whereas the other participants took this as an opportunity to learn something new. Most of them took notes of difficult terms and searched for their meanings; sometimes, they asked the teacher-researchers for clarification for better understanding.

The pace at which the speaker delivered the podcasts troubled participants' comprehension. Two participants had decreased the pace of the podcast to understand the speaker. One student who was accustomed to the process slowly shifted to listening to the speech at a normal pace. This could also be considered as an indication of improvement in listening skills.

Another major challenge was the heavy mother tongue influence. The pronunciation of the words learned from the podcast was affected by their first language. Although mispronunciation was indicated by the researchers while giving feedback, repetition of these mispronounced words was observed. Therefore, speaking practice is recommended to retain and enhance the returns resulting from these activities.

B. Quantitative Analysis

A pre-test and a post-test were conducted to measure the changes in speaking skills. Each dimension in the scale had a maximum of two points with a total score of 10 points. Two evaluators

assessed the pre-test and post-test responses. Then Spearman rank-order correlation was used to ensure inter-rater reliability among evaluators (See Appendix A for the scores given by assessors). The correlation values for both pre-test and post-test are given in Table 2. Higher correlation scores indicate better inter-rater reliability.

Table 2: Rank Order Correlation for Pre-test and Post-test

Pre-test	Post-test
.949	.949

The average scores given by both assessors for each student in pre-test and post-test are given below, in Table 3, along with the change in scores in each candidate before and after the activity.

Table 3: Average marks of Pre-test & Post-test

Participant	Pre - test (/10)	Post - test (/10)	Change
P1	5.375	7	1.625
P2	4.875	7.5	2.625
P3	3.25	4.625	1.375
P4	4.625	4.75	.125

5. Findings

The first research question tried to investigate the effect of implementing podcasting tasks for language learning in first-year undergraduate engineering male students. To answer the questions qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The analysis of the qualitative data revealed that using podcasts had an impact on all elements of speaking, especially vocabulary. Learner's improvement in confidence was reflected in the accuracy and fluency of the learners. Stammering and stuttering were found to be greatly reduced and learners began to speak for longer periods of time compared to the first feedback. For example, P2's daily discussion time with researchers gradually increased from 41 seconds (containing three sentences with long pauses), to 1.21 minutes (more than five sentences without pauses) which is a considerable change. Similar changes were noted in L1 also. Findings from the quantitative tests also indicated that vocabulary of the learners was impacted the most (Refer Appendix A). As a result, the qualitative findings are supported by the quantitative pretest and post-test scores.

The learner's perspectives regarding adding podcasts that reflect their transportable identities were the subject of the second research question. Regarding the use of podcasts that they found captivating all four students provided constructive feedback. P4 commented:

"I love history but...studies so hectic. Don't get time for it alone. But these podcasts helped me learn lot in history. I was learning language with history. Was fun [sic].

P3 who liked technology and automobiles was provided podcasts on that subject. This not only increased his enthusiasm but led him to speak on the topic.

"I like cars and so audios on cars were interesting.... I could learn a lot of new things ...um and also get words to explain this in English" [sic]

The selection of the appropriate podcasts for students, which kept them interested and engaged, was made possible by an understanding of the transportable identities of the learners. Learners frequently drop focus when listening to monotonous audios. An effective solution for this problem may involve understanding the learners' TI and offering suitable content. Further studies regarding different strategies to understand the TI of the learners will be helpful in implementing this method.

6. Discussion

This study examined how using podcasts which matched learners' transportable identities impacted learners from rural India. As all learners studied and lived in communities where only their mother tongue was spoken, they experienced linguistic barriers. This study found that the podcasts targeted at their TI made learners interested in their learning and this consequently resulted in better language learning. The results of this study also indicate that listening to podcasts can enhance speaking skills and confidence if they are followed by carefully chosen activities. Similar to the results of this study Kelly and Klein's (2016) study on incorporating podcasts for Chinese language learners also found a significant positive association between speaking skills and confidence. Hamzaoglu and Kocoglu (2016) also discussed the relationship between oral communication skills and podcast and their connection with affective factors.

This study explores and exemplifies the challenges met by academically remarkable students hailing from rural areas of India. All the students have entered NIT by clearing one of the most challenging examinations in the country, i.e., Joint Entrance Examination – Mains (JEE Mains). Therefore, their underdeveloped speaking proficiency is not a result of their inadequate cognitive ability but a result of certain sociological factors. They have no or few opportunities to speak in English. Their surroundings are dominated by people who speak only regional languages. So, the best way of enhancing the speaking skills of such students is by immersing them in an English-speaking atmosphere. Podcasts have tried to engage the students in English conversations to get them familiarised with the English language and aspects of speaking. This interaction with spoken language can be provided to learners by using other tools like YouTube videos and English movies, which can also help them identify the gestures. Although videos can be useful for language learning, this study has used podcasting as all learners chosen for the study belonged to rural areas where internet connectivity was minimal. Also, asthenopia, commonly called the eye strain is also another subsequent effect of digital classes and this has become a major concern in the current scenario. Students are strained mentally and emotionally by the computer screen (Ganne et al., 2020) so podcasts can be a relief from the digital screen.

The data collected in this study contributes to a clearer understanding of what aspects of speaking are more impacted while using podcasts. The study also throws light into the nature of task difficulty and the choice of podcast that differs from one learner to the other. The study clarifies that podcasting cannot be beneficial for all learners; instead, it should focus on those learners who have intermediate proficiency in English but negatively influenced by accuracy related issues. Therefore, one of the limitations of this study is that it cannot cater to novice English language learners' speaking proficiency. This study is particularly beneficial for intermediate English language learners who struggle with vocabulary and lack of confidence. As Hamzaoglu and Koçoğlu (2016), in their study, found that, by using podcasts as language learning tools, learners' listening skills, pronunciation, and accuracy in speech improve. Therefore, in future, more large-scale studies need to be done to affirm the improvements in learners.

This study tries to suggest a positive relationship between transportable identities (TI) and podcasting, which carries much potential in the field of motivational research and language teaching with technological assistance. Indian students are slowly being enticed by digital tools, and podcasting can hold a future for potential engineers if used in the right way. 2020 reports of The Media and Entertainment Outlook by PwC state that India has arisen as the third-largest podcast listening market globally, with 57.6 million monthly listeners (Sudevan, 2021). These reports suggest great yet unexplored potential in our educational industry that needs more focus.

The findings of this study hold importance for learners who enter eminent institutions without proper speaking skills in English. Enhancing their English language skills can help these students exhibit all other skill sets and subject mastery and obtain a good job in future. However, the reliability of the findings of this study is limited as it was done on a small scale with only four students for a short duration. Further research is required to understand the possibilities of using podcasts that match the learners' TI for developing speaking proficiency in English. The applicability of podcasts' ranges from personal classes to classrooms with a large number of students. In larger classrooms, it is suggested that teachers organise students into groups based on shared interests before implementing podcasts. Podcasts can keep students interested in the material and promote language learning in the classroom. Activities can be designed by teachers based on the podcasts given to learners.

7. Conclusion

The oral communication challenges of Engineering students can be tackled only by addressing the specific language needs of these learners. This study examines and illustrates the difficulties faced by talented learners from rural India. It is evident from the outcomes of the study that learners who used the podcasts have improved their speaking skills, especially their vocabulary and confidence to speak English. This study examined the benefits of using podcasts that correspond to students' transportable identities for language learning, specifically speaking. The study succeeded in involving the learners in the language learning process by providing interesting content. It was found in the course of the study that the results can be maximised, if other linguistic and communicative

activities like discussion and self-talk based on each podcast are incorporated.

The study revealed that podcasts function efficiently as a language enhancement tool rather than a language enabling tool. This may contribute to designing enhanced language pedagogy and improving engineering students' English language proficiency, which definitely has an implication on the career and academic prospects of future engineers.

8. Appendices

APPENDIX A (Detailed Scores – Pre-test and Post-test)

POST-TEST SCORES

RATER – 1

Name	Fluency /2	Accuracy /2	Vocabulary /2	Pronunciation /2	Task Response /2	Total /10
P1	1.5	1.25	1.5	1.25	1.5	7
P2	1.75	1.5	1.25	1.5	1.5	7.5
P3	1	1	1	1	1	4.5
P4	1	.75	1	.75	1	4.5

RATER - 2

Name	Fluency /2	Accuracy /2	Vocabulary /2	Pronunciation /2	Task Response /2	Total /10
P1	1.5	1.5	1.5	1	1.5	7
P2	1.75	1.5	1.25	1.25	1.75	7.5
P3	1.25	1	.75	.75	1	4.75
P4	1	1	1	.75	1.25	5

PRE-TEST SCORES

RATER – 1

Name	Fluency /2	Accuracy /2	Vocabulary /2	Pronunciation /2	Task Response /2	Total /10
P1	1	1	1	1.25	1	5.25
P2	.75	1	1	1.25	.75	4.75
P3	.5	.5	.75	.75	.75	3.25
P4	1	.75	.75	.5	1.25	4.25

RATER – 2

Name	Fluency /2	Accuracy /2	Vocabulary /2	Pronunciation /2	Task Response /2	Total /10
P1	1.25	1	1.25	1	1	5.5
P2	0.75	1	1	1.25	1	5
P3	.75	.75	.5	.5	.75	3.25
P4	1	1	1	.75	1.25	5

APPENDIX – B

(Speaking Scale Used in the Study)

Vocabulary	Produces isolates word Produces memorized	Produces simple vocabulary related to familiar topics No idioms, phrases Cannot paraphrase	Produces beginner level vocabulary effortlessly Manages to speak well about familiar topics but struggles in the case of unfamiliar topics Uses some phrases in connection with the topic Tries to paraphrase with synonyms but not with ease	Uses a wide range of vocabulary Produces advanced level vocabulary with a little difficulty Uses collocations, idioms and phrases at times with errors Uses paraphrase successfully	Uses a wide range of vocabulary flexibly to convey the meaning with precision Uses paraphrase skilfully when required Uses collocations, phrases, and idioms with precision Uses advanced level vocabulary in connection with the topic
	Lack of clarity Mispronunciation of words	Lack of clarity Heavy L1 accent which may hinder comprehension	L1 accent which may hinder comprehension Attempts to control but lapses are very frequent	Utter words clearly with limited words influenced by L1 Can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times	Clear utterances with no L1 accent Words are uttered with ease and clarity
	Not able to respond to the topic Makes only disconnected sentences distantly related to the topic	Produces rehearsed sentences related to the topic with effort Not able to talk about other points which may enrich the speech Tries to link one's own knowledge with the given topic but sometimes results in vagueness	Effortlessly talk about the topic with the help of sub questions Produces examples to enrich content Tries to link one's own knowledge with the given topic but sometimes results in vagueness	Use sub questions to begin the speech but later manages to talk about other related points Produce examples Uses knowledge of own experience to develop content but not always successful	May use sub questions to begin the speech but clearly articulate other relevant facts effortlessly Produces relevant examples to support the statement Use one's own knowledge properly to substantiate points

	0	0.5	1	1.5	2
Fluency	Long pauses Hesitations Meaning is not conveyed Not able to link simple sentences	Responds with pauses Hesitations Manages to construct simple sentences Repetitions with very few corrections	Manages the flow of speech Connects simple sentences Uses repetition and uses self-correction Manages framing simple sentences though Problem arises when complex sentences are dealt with Repeats certain discourse markers and connectives	Uses language with occasional repetition and self-correction Uses discourse markers though not always correctly Speaks at length but occasionally searching for correct language Links sentences properly to make the intended meaning clear	Speaks with ease Uses a range of discourse markers correctly Repetitions are not very common Self-corrections are made with ease Flow of ideas/sentences is remarkably good and coherent Seldom pauses due to hesitation or hardly hesitates to say the next sentences.
	Accuracy	Produces very basic sentences with a number of errors Tries to speak but meaning is not conveyed due to erroneous grammar	Produces very basic sentences with some mistakes Frequent errors which at times lead to misunderstanding Tries to produce complex sentences but with many errors	Produces basic sentences with reasonable accuracy Produces complex sentences with errors Errors in complex sentences usually leads to Comprehension problems	Produces basic sentences with limited errors Produces complex sentences which may contain errors, but this does not impede comprehension

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