Teaching English Using podcasts

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ABSTRACT: *The paper shows a new method of improving listening skills through podcasts. According to the experiment made at Caucasus International University, Georgia and the project completed in Denver, Colorado USA (Bridge Education Group) it became obvious that a student creating their own podcast is getting increasingly motivated to take their listening skills to the next level. The feedback of the activity showed that before making a podcast a student can be given some vocabulary for building their story or they can search for the vocabulary themselves. In both case they have to create a plot. The process takes a lot time energy and a great many procedures. The final step demonstrated that the experiment should be introduced into the teaching plans on a regular basis.*

KEYWORDS: listening, podcast, YouTube, recording, plot

INTRODUCTION

One of the best advantages of the approach presented in the paper - activating the previous knowledge which starts from short analysis of a *podcast's* definition. The tactic helps raise interest in the audience; the students become more involved and motivated. After explaining some tips orally, it seems absolutely productive to have students created audio files but **WHY**? After introducing the new approach, it is totally important to prove it on practice.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Creating is something that makes people believe in their abilities. Designing and constructing is a way to prove yourself that you are able to achieve something, something new and difficult. When creating a plot a student feels himself or herself as a screenwriter. Designing something new and challenging makes a student pretty sure of themselves. Succeeding in something is extremely good

for their confidence. In a combination with language learning activities, they produce a product that can be presented, shared, assessed and even criticized- that simple feeling of creating something. This can be classed as a psychological approach/method- everyone enjoys to be a pioneer creating something radically different they have not made before. The podcast activity is one of them. Through the process they are not just screenwriters but "cast", "directors" and "winners".

Learning through creating is a promising and challenging method when mastering a language. One can never forget the words, the pronunciation tips, the mistakes made. After having the product ready they have a chance of listening to the recording several times and detect the pronunciation problems at once. That means in the process of creating they "produce" real Language, the one without mistakes. As to the teacher's approval of their work at the end of the lesson- it's a real "box office success".The podcast based activity described above is absolutely effective as the product uploaded on the YouTube is a real one created by my students. The focus group consisted of 15 students. The native language of the students: Georgian, Persian, Azerbaijani and Armenian. Proficiency of English level- B1.

The methods used in the research paper are an experiment, case study and a focus group in order to take listening skills to the next level.

RESULTS

The goal of the paper is promoting listening skills using various activities. One of which is a podcast activity. Adapting to new unexpected rules in due time (reading skills) and identifying goals and responsibilities, summarizing ideas, outlining a plan, constructing a plot and designing a performance in English in a timely manner (speaking& writing skills). The paper will help ESL teachers around the world conduct joyful and productive lessons. A teacher will help students improve their English listening skills (through categorizing recording based tasks e.g. formulating the questions and gap fill activities). It is vitally important to criticize and assess in English (admitting their own mistakes; detecting others).

At first stage, a teacher should elaborate the technique in order to introduce podcast related learning into the classroom. Teachers ask some relevant question before a lessons starts. There are three important stages included in the plan: **stage objectives, interaction: patter and timing, procedures.**

Stage objective are
1.   What a podcast is [the conversation takes 600 seconds]
2.   Meeting the rules for creating a podcast; [takes 300 seconds]

3.　　Working on a plot, making a dialogue, creating tasks, making a recording, cover, uploading [takes 35 minutes]
4.　　Handing out activities, presenting, checking answers [300 seconds]

The first experiment started with warm-up activities:

What is a podcast?
1.　　Warm-up:
The first sentence of a teacher started with the question:
Teacher: What does a podcast mean?
Students had some time for giving possible answers. (The question made them more and more involved. They discussed all possible options)
Student 1: a kind of listening. I mean something we can listen to.
Teacher: Could you be a bit specific?
Student 2: There are a lot of podcasts on the internet [the student was beating around the bush, that means they were not pretty sure].
Teacher: Could you name one?
Student: Youtube videos can be classed as podcasts also.
Teacher: Not really (as it's a commonly made mistake) I try to give a brief.
It's a digital audio file made available on the internet. [This conversation took 10 minutes].
After giving the definition, students we content with their involvement and were extremely eager to keep on working. Then they did know what they were facing up to.

Then the experiment went on as follows:
-Student: what is the purpose of a podcast then?
-Teacher: Podcast listeners might have one of several reasons to subscribe to a podcast, such as to: hear updates and breakdowns of current events. Learn about a new topic or industry [https://riverside.fm/blog/what-is-a-podcast]
The teacher provided them with podcast related materials in order to get acquainted with the problem. The focus group was getting more and more involved
-Student: But… erm… could you name an example of podcast?
- Teacher: An episodic series of digital audio, for instance.
As the students are the ones striving for learning they might ask some challenging questions:
•　　Possible question: How is it related to English Language course?
•　　Teacher: Good question! It's a nice way of improving your listening skills.
•　　Possible question: But, we watch some movies on a daily basis and I personally find it absolutely productive.
•　　Teacher: I couldn't agree more. They are really productive but they contain visual clues which mean they can't be that helpful when, for example, facing up to a telephone conversation.

You can't see the person's gestures, mimes or facial expression. The only thing you hear is a voice. In a nutshell, you don't have to be addicted to movies aiming at improving your listening, a podcast is way more productive and exciting. After sharing some tips with my students, they made some notes and gradually made up their mind but they still did not know how to use the platform. The teacher should offer them to download some applications on their IOS or Android systems.

Trying to rocket students' involvement the teacher started with the question: **What do you think about the advantages or disadvantages of podcast activities?**
Logically, the conversation went on as expected:
Focusing on the details gave me the full picture of how perfect the students were at analyzing the case.
- Teacher: After activating our previous knowledge it seems appropriate to start. So, let's get started.
Activity # 1 (Teacher's exclusively created activity rules).
Step one: meeting the rules for creating a podcast
15 students will be divided into 5 groups (3 students in each). Each group should have a name. Group members have to work with each other till the end of the term. That means they have to respect each other, which in turns, means all responsibilities have to be divided equally. The group must have a captain (leader) named by the teacher. A member who avoids doing tasks /collaborating leaves the group or will be excluded by the members though voting.

-Student 1. : you mean kind of benefit in education, don't you?
-Teacher: absolutely.
-Student: as an advantage, I guess it builds confidence and literacy… also we have a broad array of narrative types and subject matter.
-Student 2. : a lack of students' involvement
-Teacher: why is that?
-Student 2.: it's a little bit boring. Just siting and listening all the time.
-Teacher: Agree! But, what about creating your own podcast?
-Student 2. : I'm not a podcaster. Why should I do this?
-Teacher: In order to master not just listening but speaking, writing and reading skills also.
(the student seemed a bit confused)
-Student 2: could be a bit more specific

Step two: working on a plot, making a dialogue, creating tasks, making a recording, cover, uploading
Vocabulary building- students will be provided with specific vocabulary in an envelope (nouns, adjectives, verbs adverbs and etc) .They have to check the meaning and pronunciation of each single word.

Vocabulary:	
• Snob	
• Contemptuous	
Superior	
• High opinion	
• Conceited	
• Boast	
• Vain	
• Thick skinned	

Step three:
Plot/Scenario

Speaking &Writing skills - students should create a story or a dialogue based on the vocabulary given. This will do increase their motivation. Each group member knows their part in the dialogue/sketch.

Step four:
Students make a recording (they are taught to record, edit, make a cover and upload on the Youtube). They are provided with specific youtube links.
• https://www.podcastinsights.com/best-podcast-recording-software/
• https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/19/learning/lesson-plans/project-audio-teaching-students-how-to-produce-their-own-podcasts.html
• https://www.npr.org/2018/11/15/662116901/teaching-podcasting-a-curriculum-guide-for-educators The students are supposed to create 2 types of tasks: 1- multiple choice questions; 2- gap fill activity.

Step five:
They hand out the activities and share the recording with the rest (3 groups). But, before sharing the recording, the group makes some **pre-listening activities,** throughout the listening the group continues with **during listening activities** and after having the recording completed and tasks done **- post-listening activities [source: Bridge Education Group].**
The   final   touch   is   the   product   created   by   the   students:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfcxCbJ_xPg
The group presented the recording with accompanied activities to their peers. The groups shared their products among themselves (learning and teaching strategy)

Handing out activities, presenting, checking answers
Task 1.

You will hear some friends talking about a girl named Helen. Answer the questions one to three. You can't hear the recording for the second time:

According to the conversation Helen is among the guys:
1.   True
2.   False
3.   Not given

According to the recording the guys are judging Helen:
1.   True
2.   False
3.   Not given

According to the recording
1.   Helen thinks she is better than others
2.   Helen thinks she is worse than others
3.   Helen is a friendly girl

Task 2. Fill in the empty gap:

A: Who does she think she is?
B: She thinks she is **……………**, high class
C: A real **……………** Who is always very proud of herself
A: and very **……………**of others, erm… ordinary people
B: Ouh, I've heard her **……………** to neighbors about her lovely house
C: She is pretty **……………**A: Helen is always admiring herself in the mirror
B: Shut the front door! She is not an absolute looker at all
C: Don't say so! Helen has **a ……………**of herself
A: Is she that **……………**?
B: She fakes it before she makes it
C: I don't think she will make it
A: Totally **……………**one!
B: Remember! Pride comes before a fall!

All groups shared their products. Students correct and assess each other before the final- Teacher's Assessment.

These sort of activities motivate students go in for a competition, study hard and enjoy a lot.

CONCLUSION

The experiment demonstrated that upon completion 13 out 15 students excelled which means approximately 86%. The experiment has been a success. Apart from listening to audio tasks, students are aiming at categorizing vocabulary, checking definition and pronunciation. After that they are fully involved into making a plot. They use the vocabulary given above but besides they use all grammar tenses, prepositions, idioms or phrasal verbs. Upon creating the scenario, they record their voices. It should be noted that, if a student makes a mistake when recording their voices, the other group might not catch the missed word since it was incorrectly pronounced. It can be named as a double responsibility in podcast related activities. The experiment showed that this sort of activity should be introduced into a teaching plan or regular basis. They are getting accustomed to distinguish the intonations and accents of native and non-native speakers (their peers from various countries).

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