

LUYỆN TẬP NÓI TIẾNG ANH QUA TẠO PODCAST: THÁI ĐỘ, KHÓ KHĂN VÀ GIẢI PHÁP CỦA SINH VIÊN LHU

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TÓM TẮT

Podcast ngày càng phổ biến với người học tiếng Anh nhờ khả năng cải thiện kỹ năng nghe, phát âm và từ vựng. Tại Việt Nam, sinh viên đại học, thường gặp khó khăn khi nói tiếng Anh do thiếu cơ hội giao tiếp với người bản ngữ và giáo viên. Do đó, việc luyện nói qua tạo podcast đã được áp dụng trong lớp học nhằm thúc đẩy khả năng tự học. Nghiên cứu này khảo sát sự khác biệt về thái độ giữa sinh viên chuyên và không chuyên Anh, đồng thời tìm hiểu khó khăn và giải pháp khi tự luyện nói qua tạo podcast. Dữ liệu được thu thập từ 216 sinh viên Đại học Lạc Hồng qua bảng hỏi gồm trắc nghiệm và câu hỏi mở. Với phương pháp nghiên cứu hỗn hợp, phần trắc nghiệm được xử lý bằng SPSS, phần câu hỏi mở được phân tích định tính. Kết quả cho thấy cả hai nhóm đều có thái độ tích cực với hoạt động này, dù có khác biệt nhỏ. Sinh viên gặp trở ngại về cảm xúc, chuẩn bị nội dung, và ngôn ngữ như từ vựng, ngữ pháp, phát âm, v.v. Các giải pháp được đề xuất bao gồm luyện nói thường xuyên, sử dụng apps học tiếng Anh trực tuyến; tuy nhiên, sinh viên đánh giá cao việc luyện nói trực tiếp với đối tác, xem đây là cách hỗ trợ hiệu quả nhất để nâng cao kỹ năng nói.

TỪ KHÓA

Sinh viên chuyên Anh;
Sinh viên không chuyên;
Tạo podcast;
Kỹ năng nói;
Thái độ.

PRACTICE ENGLISH SPEAKING THROUGH PODCAST PRODUCTION: ATTITUDES, DIFFICULTIES AND SOLUTIONS FROM LHU STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Podcasts have been considered quite popular for those who study English as a foreign language (EFL) when they help improve learners' listening, pronunciation and vocabulary. In Vietnam, students, especially at the tertiary level, face difficulties in English speaking skills due to the lack of opportunities to interact with native English speakers and English language teachers regularly. Therefore, practicing speaking skills via podcast production (voice recordings or videos) has been somewhat applied in English language classrooms for developing autonomous English language learning. This study aims to examine the differences in non-English majors' and English majors' attitudes towards practicing English speaking skills via podcast production for their autonomous learning and explore their difficulties and practical solutions they have used to deal with such difficulties. To collect data, online close-ended and open-ended questionnaires were distributed to 216 students (both English and non-English majors) from Lac Hong University, Vietnam. With a mixed-methods approach, the data from close-ended questions was quantitatively analyzed via SPSS, and the open-ended questions were analysed and described comprehensively. The findings showed that there were slight differences between English majors and non-English majors, but all participants had positive attitudes toward practicing speaking through podcast production. They faced difficulties in producing podcasts including emotional barriers, preparation issues, linguistic issues (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation), etc. Finally, their practical solutions of regular speaking practice and the integration of online English applications have been suggested; however, all participants highly appreciated face-to-face communication with real partners as the most effective factor in improving their speaking skill.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, the recent advancements of technology have brought numerous benefits for human life, especially in English language education. Technology encouraged learners to be more active in their learning since they can have great control of their language learning process. [1] emphasised the importance of learner autonomy since it provides learners with choices over what they learn and how they learn. In addition, in English language learning, learner autonomy plays a really important role and is directly connected with English proficiency.

For those who learn English as a foreign language (EFL), independent learning plays a really crucial role besides studying in official English classes. As a result, there have been numerous technological innovations with the purpose of developing English language learning and teaching, especially for enhancing learner autonomy. Among online apps like dictionaries, English language learning websites, English language learning apps assisted by AI, blogs, Grammarly, online games, chatbots, podcasts has been so popular and can be easily found in online platforms. Moreover, podcasts have been diverse in forms of digital audios and videos with various topics, frequently updated on the internet and can be downloaded. They still play their role in English language learning process, especially in improving listening skills since they allow learners to listen to a foreign language contextually and authentically. Podcasts supply a flexible and enjoyable approach to practising their listening skills, building vocabulary, and improving pronunciation to learners [2]. For speaking skills, podcasts have various contents and topics, help develop students' pronunciation, vocabulary.

Therefore, there have been quite a lot of studies on the effectiveness of using podcasts in English classrooms to improve listening and speaking skills. However, there has been few research on podcast production as a way of practicing speaking skills around the world, and especially in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, university students at all levels, while learning EFL, encounter challenges, due to limitation of instruction time. One of the challenges is the lack of English language speaking practice with native English teachers and their local English teachers. Giving individual, pair work or groupwork speaking assignments for students to practice speaking outside classrooms have been quite popular for both English majors and non-English majors. They can easily practice their speaking via voice recordings or videos (podcast production) thanks to the assistance of technological tools.

Recognizing the value of out-of-class speaking practice, this study investigates LHU English and non-English majors' attitudes toward podcast production as a tool for autonomous speaking practice where they were encouraged to create podcasts autonomously, with flexibility in selecting topics and formats (audio or video), though guided by general instructions on content and length to ensure relevance to their learning objectives, along with their difficulties and solutions.

2. CONTENT

2.1 The role of podcasts in English language teaching and learning

[3] pointed out that podcasts are not just listening activities for EFL and English as second language students to improve their conversation skills; they also provide valuable English language lessons for learners and teachers of English at all levels. In addition, according to [4], for both students and educators, podcasting provides opportunities to enhance learning via hands-on experiences, develop better communication among students and between students and teachers as well as enrich students' extracurricular learning activities. It is also beneficial for teachers as podcasting allows the transformation of traditional classrooms into flipped learning environments, enabling a greater concentration on practical learning activities during class sessions.

For students, podcasts provide learners with up-to-date materials for effective listening practice, which improve listening skills, vocabulary and pronunciation. Furthermore, [5] noted that allowing students to select materials that align with their individualized content strategies enhances the value of podcasts for self-regulated learning. Based on [6], this approach enhances learners' engagement with language learning as they interact with a broad range of resources. [7] emphasised the importance and the potential of podcasts for replacing traditional language teaching resources such as laboratories, CDs, DVDs, or cassettes due to the convergence of e-learning audio, video and text files in podcasting.

2.2 Previous studies about the role of podcast in teaching and learning speaking skills

In his study, [8] explored the effects of using authentic materials (including podcasts) and task-based learning approaches in developing students' language skills and motivation. The results of the research revealed the significant improvements in the students' language skills and motivation, supporting the fact of using authentic materials and task-based learning methods for English language acquisition.

In addition, in terms of attitudes and perception toward using podcast for language learning, especially for improving listening and vocabulary skills, there have been quite a lot of studies such as [7, 9-10]. Specifically, most previous studies are about the effectiveness of using how it assists students in improving listening skills. For example, [7], after conducting their study on the impact of English songs and podcasts on EFL learners' listening abilities, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation skills, they emphasised the effectiveness of both songs and podcasts in improving pronunciation, listening skills, expanding students' vocabulary and suggested incorporating these tools in EFL classrooms to enhance language proficiency and learner autonomy. [9] emphasized the importance of using the EILLO English learning Podcast Application in improving English listening skills of seventh grade students at MTS Darul Ilmi Pangkalan Brandan. [10] conducted the experimental research of using podcasts for English majored students at

FPT University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and the findings proved the crucial role of podcasts in improving students' listening skills.

Nevertheless, there have been a few studies which investigated the role of podcasts in fostering students' speaking skills through active podcast production.

[11] explored the use of podcasts on students' language learning and change of students' self-efficacy in using podcasts among upper-intermediate ESL class at one university in Midwest United States. The author used a pre-test, a post-test, the note-taking quizzes with two sections to collect quantitative data, pre-questionnaires and post questionnaires to identify the students' change in their self-efficacy. In addition, by observing and interviewing six students and two lecturers, and doing the podcast evaluation survey, he could collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Accordingly, the results corroborated the existing fact of recognizing podcasts as effective supplementary learning materials for enhancing students' language skills, including listening, speaking, pronunciation, note-taking, and vocabulary acquisition and developing students' learning habits through important factors of self-efficacy and motivation. Moreover, he suggested the integration of podcasts into language teaching and encouraged students to engage with podcasts outside the classroom through their personal devices to enhance their confidence.

[12], with theoretical and research literatures on podcast, described different aspects of speaking skills such as grammar, fluency, accuracy, vocabulary and pronunciation, pointed out practical problems faced by EFL students in Indonesia, that is, making some mistakes in basic grammatical error and vocabulary use and analysed the advantages and disadvantages of using podcasts. Finally, he gave an insight and steps to implementing podcasts as authentic teaching and learning materials in the class and outside classroom to promote student's speaking skills. Accordingly, in the class, teachers, as facilitators, provide podcasts as authentic materials and guide students to listen to the podcasts, ask students to discuss the questions related to the podcasts, then one of them present the result in front of other students. In that way, teachers can evaluate students' speaking performance related vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy. After class, teachers can assign students to choose the topic from the podcasts, based on the podcast transcript to select the suitable content, practice listening to the podcast until they get accuracy and fluency and reading the transcript while listening, then make a presentation from the topic. Gradually, the students can improve their speaking skills, be more motivated and confident in practicing speaking skills autonomously and independently.

In their study, [13] investigated 120 non-English students' background knowledge and their perception in terms of intonation before and after utilizing podcast in a listening – speaking course at a Vietnamese University. Via the data which is gathered through pre- and post-intervention questionnaires to assess changes in their attitudes toward English intonation and the usage of podcasts, the findings indicate that, prior to the intervention, students had a limited comprehension of

intonation. However, participants demonstrated positive attitudes and significant improvements in their understanding of English intonation, underscoring the potential of incorporating podcasts as a supplementary resource in English instruction after the intervention. Additionally, the study recommended that future research be conducted to examine the long-term effects of podcasts on language development, particularly concerning speaking skills.

[14] conducted a study on the role of podcasts in developing EFL students' speaking skills among the intermediate learners of English at Al-Ameed Private Institute for Learning Languages in Mila City, Algeria. In their study, they aimed to explore both teachers' and students' perceptions on the effectiveness of using podcast to improve students' speaking skills and point out the key challenges they faced while applying online audio podcasts in their classrooms. Through questions delivered to fifty students and interviews with two teachers, the researchers found that most students perceived the benefits of podcasts in enhancing their fluency, facilitating vocabulary acquisition, and improving their pronunciation; they encountered the primary challenges in sustaining focus, understanding complex language structures, adapting to various accents, and managing the pace of speech. Meanwhile, the teachers acknowledged the importance of integrating both podcasts into a comprehensive learning approach, underscoring the necessity for a range of authentic audio and audio-visual listening materials and structured activities to optimize their effectiveness.

[15] conducted an investigation on tenth-grade vocational students' perception of using podcasting to improve English communication and the challenges they faced at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Malang, a vocational school in Indonesia. By qualitative research with a narrative inquiry approach via narrative frames and semi-structured interviews, the findings indicated that podcasting has been positively perceived by all students as an effective means of enhancing communication skills, particularly in public speaking and English language usage. This approach has been associated with increased confidence, improved speaking ability, and heightened motivation to pursue further learning. However, the findings also figured out four key challenges students encountered such as difficulties in scripting and content planning, issues with pronunciation and memorization of scripts, concerns regarding confidence and anxiety, and a lack of prior experience. As a result, the investigation raised the educators' awareness in developing podcasting as an instructional tool aiming to enhance students' communication skills.

However, there is limited research on the role of creating podcast as an efficient way of improving EFL students' speaking skills.

With the purpose of investigate students' attitudes toward podcast production as a medium for practicing speaking in autonomous learning contexts, as well as the challenges they encounter during the podcast creation process, [16] employed a descriptive qualitative design, with data collected through questionnaires with the participation of 28 students from English Education

Department at a public Islamic institution in Central Java, and semi-structured interviews with 4 selected students. Although the students from different semesters, the findings indicated that most of them express their positive attitude on engaging in podcast production as a means of enhancing their speaking skills from various aspects. Specifically, affective aspects revealed that students were enthusiastic about the process, and behaviourally, they felt motivated to prepare their materials for their own podcasts thoroughly. Cognitively, students perceived podcast production as an effective activity for beginners, enabling them to practice speaking autonomously without a partner, which facilitated self-assessment of their speaking abilities, particularly in pronunciation. However, students faced numerous challenges, including speaking anxiety, complex preparation requirements, and the inconvenience associated with making repeated recordings.

Involving three students at Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University, Indonesia, who learned speaking through podcasts, [17] aimed to see how students perceive the use of podcast media to improve their speaking skills and the factors that influence their perceptions. Accordingly, they listened to the podcasts, paid attention to linguistic characteristics (vocabulary and pronunciation), discussed the information in the podcasts in English, created and practiced podcast themes, made presentations and answered the questions in front of the class. The students' performance was carefully assessed based on five elements of speaking: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, accuracy. Podcast production was also applied outside classroom where they created a presentation based on the podcast theme, chose podcast content supported by transcripts and then practiced the podcast in front of the class accurately and smoothly. By using data collected via semi-structured interviews and observations, the findings proved that the students positively perceived podcasts as an interesting medium in learning English speaking skills and could enhance their public speaking skills, vocabulary and pronunciation by listening to native speakers.

Similarly, adopting a project-based learning framework integrated with learner-generated podcasts, [18] conducted an action research study on the role of learner-generated podcasts in supporting EFL learning among 31 college students from Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the writer gathered quantitative and qualitative data through a podcast perception questionnaire, podcast scripts, Instagram screenshots, learning logs, and reflective essays to assess students' perception and experiences. The findings revealed that EFL learners generally hold a positive view of podcast creation, recognizing it as a valuable instrument for self-directed learning. The participants reported benefits of podcast production, consisting of increasing motivation, self-confidence, pleasure, improved metacognitive strategies, enhanced language production skills, and greater technological proficiency. Additionally, the study emphasized that aligning themes with learners' academic subjects and personal interests could significantly enhance their participation in language learning. He finally offered practical recommendations for educators seeking to

integrate learner-generated podcasts into curricula to promote autonomous learning and cultivate positive attitudes and motivation in EFL college settings.

Recently, to investigate the effectiveness of the use of voice recordings in the development of speaking fluency among a group of college-level EFL students, [19] did research on EFL students who were asked to record a minimum of a two-minute speech per week after class over the course of 28 weeks by using their mobile devices. After the analysis of the speech data and students' perceptions of and experiences with the weekly speaking journal assignment, the results showed the students' development in fluency and their acknowledgement on the advantages of oral practice in enhancing their self-confidence and reducing speaking anxiety. The results also gave valuable implications for both language learners and teachers and emphasized the productive effects of weekly oral practice via mobile devices on increasing speaking fluency.

This research builds on prior work by examining how podcast creation enhances autonomous speaking practice among EFL learners. Specifically, it aims to examine the attitude of both English majors and non-English majors in podcast production via mobile devices as a practice to develop their autonomous learning of speaking skills and point out the difficulties they face while making their own podcasts. It also explores specific solutions they have already used to deal with such difficulties.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Research design

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining a descriptive method to explore students' attitudes, difficulties and solutions in podcast production with a quantitative method to statistically validate differences between English and non-English majors.

The descriptive approach analyses qualitative data from two open-ended questions (Questions 21 and 22), while the quantitative approach processes Likert-scale responses (from Questions 1-20) using SPSS to statistically validate differences in attitudes and difficulties between English and non-English majors. The survey questionnaire consisted of 22 questions: 20 close-ended Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) adapted from [16], to measure attitudes and difficulties, and two open-ended questions (Questions 21: "*What are your difficulties in practicing speaking skills through podcast production?*" and 22: "*What solutions do you propose to overcome challenges in producing podcasts?*") designed by the researcher, to explore difficulties and solutions. All 216 participants completed the close-ended questions, while 145 (67.12%) and 135 (62.5%) responded to the open-ended questions on difficulties and solutions, respectively. Missing responses to open-ended questions were excluded from the qualitative analysis, and no imputation was applied due to the descriptive nature of the study.

2.3.2 Research questions

1. What are the differences between English majors' and non-English majors' attitude on producing podcasts as a medium for autonomous speaking practice?
2. What are the difficulties faced by students in practicing speaking skills through podcast production?
3. What solutions do students propose to overcome challenges in producing podcasts?

2.3.3 Research settings and participants

The participants of the study were 216 students, both English - majors and non-English majors, from different cohorts at LHU. The majority of them are first-year, second-year students, with different English proficiency levels. However, speaking skills is one of the crucial skills for those who are currently studying English at Lac Hong University.

For English majors, they have more opportunities to regularly use English – their target language almost every day.

Meanwhile, for non-English majors, they had taken VSTEP tests as a placement test at the beginning of 1st semester, then learn General English 180 minutes weekly over 11 weeks per semester for communicative purpose and aiming for obtaining VSTEP (Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency) certification. Accordingly, they can take VSTEP tests (computer-based tests), including Listening, Reading, Writing. After 4 semesters, non-English majors must take VSTEP tests as the achievement test at the end of 4th semester to check whether they can achieve Level 3 (with the overall score of 4.0).

More importantly, both English majors and non-English ones had experience with podcast production that aligns with VSTEP speaking requirements by encouraging students to practice fluency, pronunciation, and coherent content delivery, which are assessed in the VSTEP speaking test. In addition, they are equipped with AI-assisted English learning tools (premium accounts on Englishcentral.com) for the 1st, 2nd and 4th semesters for practicing English after class.

2.3.4 Instruments and procedures

Besides questions to collect demographic information of the participants, the frequency of podcast production in learning English language, types of podcasts they make, the research questionnaires employed in the study (questions 1 -20 in the form of five Likert-scale items) were adapted from the questionnaires utilized in [16] research to measure the attitudes and difficulties in practicing speaking skills via making podcast, and 2 open-ended questions (questions 21 and 22) were composed by the researcher to explore difficulties and solutions from the participants.

Prior to distributing the questionnaires to the participants, the researcher had introduced the importance of practicing English via voice and video recordings and encouraged students to practice speaking skills by making their own podcasts via mobile devices as their homework assignments.

For non-English majors, with the purpose of getting familiar with the real VSTEP speaking test in which students must record their speaking performance, every week, they are mostly assigned to make their own voice or video recordings for specific topics (in the alignment with VSTEP speaking tests) mostly individually or sometimes making voice recordings in pairs, video recordings in groups. Accordingly, students were assigned to create individual podcasts as homework, with flexibility to choose topics (e.g., daily life, academic topics) and formats (audio or video), producing recordings of 2–5 minutes. Guidelines also emphasized clear pronunciation, coherent content, and appropriate vocabulary, but no formal evaluation was applied. Then students sent their recordings via LEARN (an internal website at Lac Hong University for uploading assignments & self-study).

For English majors, they are encouraged to practice speaking via podcast production such as making voice-overs for short films, making videos as group assignments. Guidelines also emphasized clear pronunciation, coherent content, and appropriate vocabulary, but formal evaluation was applied.

At the time of doing the survey, students were encouraged to answer the online survey. For questions 1-20, participants are asked to rate their responses on a scale of 1 to 5, that is, 1 for Strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for Neutral, 4 for Agree and 5 for Strongly agree and answer two open-ended questions regarding their practical problems and solutions while practicing speaking via podcast production.

After that, the close-ended responses were quantitatively analysed by using SPSS to calculate mean scores to determine whether differences in mean scores between English and non-English majors were statistically significant. Likert-scale means were interpreted as follows: 1.00–1.49 (Strongly Disagree), 1.50–2.49 (Disagree), 2.5–3.49 (Neutral), 3.5–4.49 (Agree), and 4.5–5.00 (Strongly Agree). Meanwhile, open-ended responses were carefully analysed qualitatively, using thematic analysis, following the framework in [16] and [20], then discussed comprehensively based on recurring themes, such as emotional barriers and linguistic challenges, and subsequently practical recommendations from the participants were presented.

2.4 Results and discussion

2.4.1 Demographic data

The following table, Table 1, displays the demographic information of 216 students who participated in the online survey. Out of the total responders, 86 are English majors, while the rest are non-English majors.

Table 1. Demographic background of respondents

Category	Sub-category	Percentage (%)	Number of respondents (N)
Major	English	39.81	86
	Non-English	60.19	130

2.4.2 Students' frequency of making English podcasts for their self-study

The data from Figure 1 reveals that among the participants, the majority of both English and non-English majors reported only occasional experience in podcast production for practice English speaking. 43 (only 32 non-English majors and 11 English majors) claimed they made podcasts frequently, 51 selected "rarely", and very few students (6 from each group) admitted to practice speaking via podcasts daily. Typically, the majority of non-English majors had a tendency to produce English podcasts regularly during their English language learning classes. This suggests that while podcasting was not entirely new to students, it was not a regular routine for most and tended to be used occasionally or infrequently in their learning activities. These findings indicated potential for improving the employment of podcasting as a learning tool, especially in building speaking confidence and language production in a creative and engaging format.

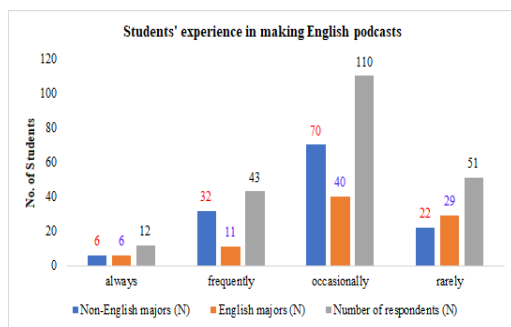


Figure 1. Students' frequency of making English podcasts

2.4.3 Students' preference of podcasts

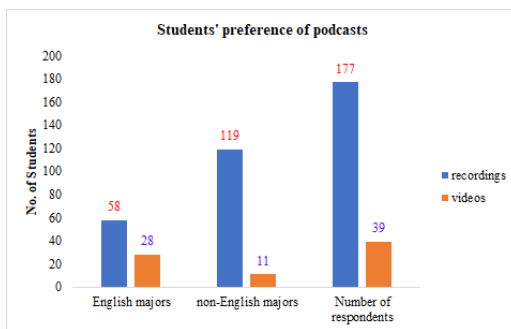


Figure 2. Students' preference for podcast production

From the two pie charts in Figure 2, it can be said that both English majors and non-English majors had a preference to voice recordings over videos. Notably, about one third of English majors chose videos as a form of practicing their English speaking skills while most of non-English majored students showed a strong preference for audio-only formats.

2.4.4 Students' attitude on composing their own podcasts for practicing speaking skills

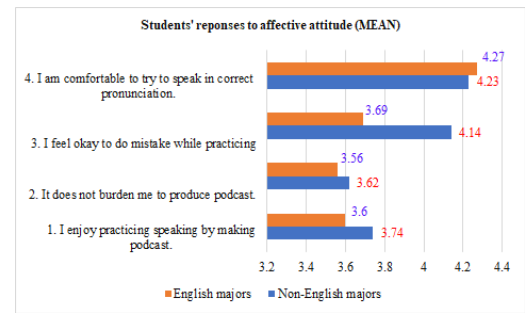


Figure 3. Students' affective attitude on podcast production (MEAN)

Figure 3 summarized the responses from the participants in terms of their affective attitude towards podcast production. Overall, both non-English and English majors express positive views; nevertheless, there was a slight difference in MEAN (M) between non-English majors' and English majors' results. For the first statement, both groups enjoyed practicing speaking through podcasting, but non-English majors showing a slightly higher mean (3.74) in comparison with English majors (M of 3.6).

Also, non-English majors did not find podcast production burdensome (M of 3.62) and felt more acceptable making mistakes while creating podcasts (M of 4.14). With mean scores of 3.56 and 3.69, English majors realized they have no pressure and accepted the fact of making mistake.

For pronunciation, both groups reached a consensus that they were willing to make an attempt at speaking English correctly (mean scores of 4.23 and 4.27 respectively), figured out a high level of motivation to improve pronunciation with podcasting.

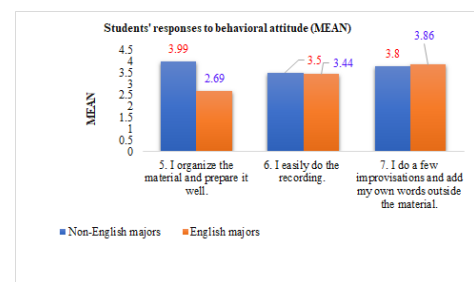


Figure 4. Students' behavioural attitude on podcast production (MEAN)

In terms of behavioural attitude, results from Figure 4 depicts that non-English majors did good preparation of what to speak before making their own recordings (with M of 3.99). This suggests non-English majors may rely more heavily on structured preparation to feel confident in their speaking. In addition, regarding ease of recording, they could easily make recordings (M of 3.5).

Meanwhile, with M of 2.69, English majors held neutral position on the fact of organizing, preparing the transcripts, and they neutrally found it easy to do the recording (M of 3.44).

However, both of English and non-English majored students showed similar attitudes when they did not completely follow their transcripts, that is, they did some

changes and adding their own words into their own recordings. However, English majors (M of 3.86) report slightly more flexibility in adding new ideas when recording themselves than non-English majors (M of 3.8). In general, all students had a positive behavioural attitude toward producing English podcast in their speaking practice.

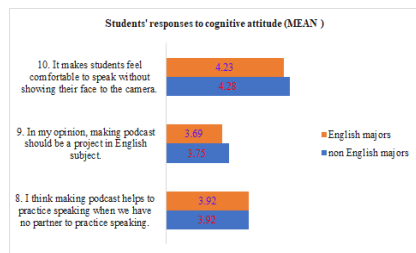


Figure 5. Students' responses on cognitive attitude (MEAN)

For the cognitive aspect, with the mean scores over 3.5 for the three statements from Figure 5, it can be concluded that all the participants had positive attitude towards podcast production. Accordingly, with the same mean score of 3.92, both English and non-English majors considered podcast production as a valuable independent speaking tool in case of having no partners.

At the same time, a large majority of participants agreed that podcast production should be a project in learning English. Non-English majors slightly favoured this idea more (M of 3.75) than English majors (M of 3.69). Especially, with the M of 4.28 (non-English majors) and 4.23 (English majors), they supported that podcast production brought comfort when not being in front of the camera.

2.4.5 Students' difficulties in practicing speaking by producing podcasts

2.4.5.1 Students' responses from close-ended questions

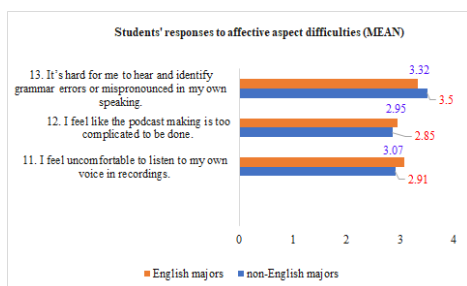


Figure 6. Students' responses on affective aspect difficulties (MEAN)

The M of 2.91 from Figure 6 reveals that non-English majors, generally, had different positions in terms of difficulties while producing podcasts. In particular, over one third (48) of them are familiar with their own voice whereas about one third of them feel unconfident. The remainders had neutral viewpoint on this statement. The similar results can be proved for English majors (with the M of 3.07), but they are slightly more comfortable listening to their own voice compared to non-English majors.

In terms of the complication of podcast production, both groups were in neutral position that podcasting was too complicated; however, English majors felt slightly

more confident. The results indicate a belief that podcasting is feasible, particularly among English majors.

Regarding identifying grammatical and pronunciation errors, non-English majors found it somewhat more difficult to recognise their own mistakes than English majors. Both groups generally agree this was a potential challenge for them when practicing speaking skills.

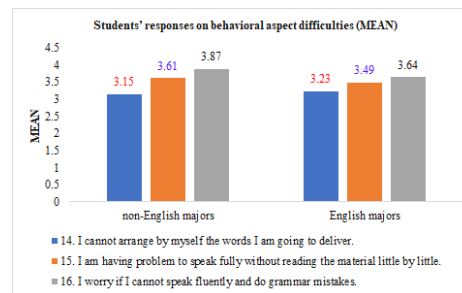


Figure 7. Students' responses on behavioural aspect difficulties (MEAN)

From Figure 7, with the M scores of 3.15 and 3.23, both groups were neutral with this statement "I cannot arrange by myself the words I am going to deliver", indicating moderate difficulty in making their own sentences when speaking. English majors reported slightly more difficulty possibly due to higher self-expectations.

For the statement "I am having problem to speak fully without reading the material little by little.", both groups tended to agree, showing that speaking spontaneously (without reading or memorizing) was such a challenge. Nevertheless, non-English majors (M of 3.61) seemed to rely more heavily on prepared transcripts when compared to English majors (M of 3.49).

"I worry if I cannot speak fluently and do grammar mistakes" said the most agreed-upon statement (the mean scores of 3.87 and 3.64). Fluency and grammatical mistakes worried both groups, particularly non-English majors. This drew attention to anxiety and perfectionism as major obstacles to the participants when making speaking podcasts.

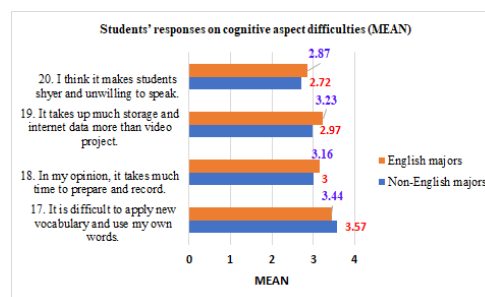


Figure 8. Students' responses on cognitive aspect difficulties (MEAN)

The results from Figure 8 showed that with M scores of 3.57 and 3.44 respectively, both non-English and English majors face challenges when applying new vocabulary and using their own words.

Moreover, time consumption is also a real concern, especially among English majors (M of 3.16), who found preparation and recording more time-consuming compared to non-English majors (M of 3.0).

While both groups were relatively neutral about storage and data use for podcast files, English majors showed slightly more concern (M of 3.23).

Interestingly, with the lowest mean scores (2.72 for non-English majors, 2.87 for English majors), both groups were neutral that podcast-making activities made them shyer or less willing to speak. In conclusion, this suggests that while there were practical problems of time consumption, storage and internet data, and psychology and linguistic challenges, students did not consider podcast production prevent their willingness to practice their speaking skills.

2.4.5.2 Students' personal difficulties in producing podcasts (from the open-ended question)

Besides closed-ended questions with five scales about the attitude and difficulties of non-English majors and English majors, the survey also designed 2 open-ended questions with the purpose of having a deep understanding of what problems they faced in producing podcasts as well as their solutions to such problems. Open-ended responses from this question were analyzed using thematic analysis, following [20] six-step framework: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Responses were coded independently by the researcher, with recurring themes (e.g., emotional barriers, linguistic challenges, technical issues) identified and cross-checked for consistency. Themes were then quantified to report the frequency of responses, ensuring a comprehensive representation of students' difficulties.

2. What are the difficulties faced by students in practicing speaking skills through podcast production?

Table 2 presents some issues non-English majors and English majors encountered while preparing their podcasts.

Table 2. Difficulties while practicing speaking via podcast production

Difficulties	Non-English Majors (N=86)	English Majors (N=59)	Total (N=145)
Pronunciation mistakes	30 (34.88%)	13 (22%)	43 (29.65%)
English vocabulary/grammar	13 (15.11%)	9 (15.25%)	22 (15.17%)
Fluency/memorising	7 (8.13%)	4 (6.77%)	11 (7.6%)
Worries about voice in the recordings	8 (9.3%)	2 (3.38%)	10 (6.9%)
Stuttering, transcript preparation, time consumption	11 (12.79%)	4 (6.77%)	15 (10.34%)
Shyness/being not confident	6 (6.97%)	3 (5%)	9 (6.2%)

Background noise	4 (4.65%)	1 (1.69%)	5 (3.44%)
No difficulties (feeling confident when practicing speaking via recordings)	2 (2.32%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.37%)
Inability to recognise /correct errors	2 (2.32%)	1 (1.69%)	3 (2%)
No chances to communicate with teachers/real partners	2 (2.32%)	6 (10.16%)	8 (5.51%)
Technical problems (unstable internet connection, mobile devices)	8 (9.3%)	2 (3.38%)	10 (6.9%)
Inability to express emotions	2 (2.32%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.37%)
No responses / having no ideas	44 (N=130) (33.84%)	27 (31.39%)	71 (32.87%)

For the question, for non-English majors, there were a lot of concerns about mispronunciation (34.88%), vocabulary and grammatical errors (15.11%), time consumption or transcript preparation (12.79%), technical issues (9.3%), voice (9.3%), fluency (8.13%), confidence, background noise, emotional barriers which affected their quality of their recordings. Two students (2.32%) express their need to communicate with real partners or teachers.

Similarly, English majored students faced with the problems of mispronouncing (22%), lacking vocabulary or grammatical errors (15.25%), being unable to interact with real partners (10.16%), being unable to speak fluently (6.77%), time consumption (6.77%), being afraid of hearing their real voice and shyness. Accordingly, English majors worried about making pronunciation, vocabulary or grammatical errors; however, they still raised their concerns over immediate feedback and motivation for recordings and expressed their need to communicate with real partners to improve their reflex when speaking English with podcasting.

In conclusion, both groups of students faced similar difficulties, including emotional aspect and linguistic challenges while non-English majors appeared to be not confident and be afraid of making mistakes. Meanwhile, English majors needed real interaction and immediate feedback as a motivation in speaking practice.

2.4.6 Students' perceived solutions to deal with difficulties in speaking practice via podcast production

What solutions do students propose to overcome challenges in producing podcasts?

Table 3. Students' proposed solutions for podcast production difficulties

Solutions	Non-English Majors (N=86)	English Majors (N=49)	Total (N=135)
Regular speaking practice	40 (46.5%)	21 (42.85%)	61 (45.18%)
Learn more vocabulary	9 (10.46%)	3 (6.12%)	12 (8.88%)
Practice pronunciation or watch videos, read books aloud to improve pronunciation	6 (6.97%)	5 (10.2%)	11 (8.14%)
Prepare transcripts	9 (10.46%)	8 (16.32%)	17 (12.6%)
Use AI apps for speaking practice & correction	7 (8.14%)	4 (8.16%)	11 (8.14%)
Practice with real partners or in front of other people	2 (2.32%)	4 (8.16%)	6 (4.44%)
Other (e.g., keep calm, reduce background noise, ask for teacher feedback, prepare a phone with large capacity, recording with materials, multiple recordings, etc.)	15 (17.44%)	7 (14.28%)	22 (16.3%)
No response or have no ideas	44 (33.84%)	37 (43.02%)	81 (37.5%)

For this question, Table 3 summarizes the solutions proposed by students to address difficulties in podcast production. Specifically, practicing speaking a lot, learn more vocabulary, practicing pronunciation, preparing transcripts, and the need of artificial intelligence applications were appreciated as popular solutions to make better recordings. Especially, regular speaking practice was the most common solution, reported by 28.24% of respondents. However, they also mentioned the role of real partners in their speaking practice, the crucial presence of English teachers as the instructors to check and correct their pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary errors.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of close-ended questions and open-ended questions, the study found that both English majors and non-English majors share similar positive attitude towards practicing speaking skills via podcast production even though there were slight differences in terms of affective attitude, behavioural attitude, and cognitive attitude. Especially, they supported the usage of podcasts

as a practical tool to improve their speaking skills, the need of podcasting in English learning process and the preferred mode of making voice recordings rather than video podcasting.

The differences between non-English and English – majors are obviously distinguished thanks to their responses towards difficulties of podcasting. Even though the results were neutral, thanks to the open-ended question regarding personal difficulties, the study found out such objective and subjective aspects of difficulties, ranging from emotional barriers (discomfort, being not confident, inability to speak fluently), linguistic obstacles (the fear of making errors in pronunciation and grammar, lack of vocabulary, arranging ideas, having no good preparation), background noise and the need of real partners or feedback from English teachers.

Finally, the study collected students' feedback on what they have done to deal with specific difficulties. Most students, both English majors and non-English ones highlighted the need for practicing speaking regularly, building more vocabulary, listening or watching English to improve pronunciation; especially, they have adopted and suggested the integration of online English apps to detect vocabulary and grammatical mistakes. Meanwhile, both English majors and non-English majors highly valued the opportunity to communicate with real partner so that they can have real environment for speaking practice. Based on the students' feedback, for better speaking practice, teachers should encourage students practice speaking with AI-assisted tools such as practicing speaking such as English Central.com (the current website with AI-assisted tool for interactive speaking practice) or Elsa Speak for pronunciation correction which can address linguistic challenges. These tools offer real-time feedback, which may complement podcast production by providing targeted corrections for pronunciation and grammar errors. In addition, teachers can design some peer podcasting projects which offer more favourable conditions for students to practice with real partners.

For non-English majors, podcast production supports VSTEP speaking objectives by fostering fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and content organization, which are critical for achieving higher scores in the VSTEP speaking test. Therefore, podcast production should be part of students' English learning process.

For future research, a study should be conducted, with experimental design, comparing one group who practices speaking skills via podcast production with a control group that use traditional speaking activities supplemented by AI-assisted tools and teacher feedback. That would thoroughly explore and provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of podcast production in improving students' speaking performance as well as its potential integration into VSTEP preparation curricula.

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