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USING PODCAST IN TURKISH LANGUAGE LESSONS TO IMPROVE NATIVE LANGUAGE SKILLS

Research article

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Abstract

The needs of human beings for comprehension and expression are met in various ways through the innovations of the age. Technological innovations are occupying a larger space in our lives day by day, expanding their influence and meeting our needs through tools produced using these innovations. "Podcasts," which share similar features and functions with radio broadcasts that were popular in the past, serve the purpose of obtaining news and information as well as providing entertainment, and they are currently attracting significant interest. A podcast can be defined as an audio diary or a digital product in which a distinct topic is covered in each episode. It is evident that audio content has established its place among educational tools, especially in recent years, leading to an increase in research on this subject. This study delves into the utilization of podcasts, a contemporary technological tool, in Turkish language lessons as digital materials to enhance native language skills. The use of podcasts in developing students' language skills and enriching their vocabulary, along with the criteria that teachers should consider when creating and selecting podcasts, is discussed in accordance with existing literature.

Keywords: Turkish language education, podcast, digital materials, native language skills

1. Introduction

Although the term "podcast," a fusion of the English words "pod" referring to 'pocket,' and "broadcast" indicating 'live transmission,' has been referred to as "dinleç," "sesli bloglama," and "sesli metin" in Turkish, a universally accepted and commonly used Turkish nomenclature has not yet emerged.

The term "podcast" was initially coined on February 12, 2004, by Ben Hammersley, a British journalist. This occurred within the context of his article titled "Audio Revolution," which was part of a larger piece titled "Television Industry" published in *The Guardian* (Kovtun, Harmash, & Khaidari, 2019, p. 102).

Lazzari (2009) outlines the factors to be taken into account in podcast production as follows:

1. Quality of recording and editing (production environment)
2. Quality of content and communication format (product)
3. Quality of the distribution environment

According to this categorization, the initial element pertains to technological infrastructure and technical processes, whereas the concluding element pertains to promotional and marketing

procedures. Although these two aspects are discussed within context of this research, the primary focus of this study lies in highlighting content and communication style.

Podcasts represent a contemporary advancement within the realm of literature, effectively amalgamating the domains of language proficiency and artistic aesthetics. The objectives that prominently emerge in the creation of audio content, encompassing communication, information dissemination, and entertainment, possess the capacity to yield a literary creation through adept manipulation of language in an aesthetically pleasing manner. This phenomenon evokes parallels with the historical production and dissemination of oral texts in the Turkish tradition, spanning over centuries. In the context of the digital innovations ushered in by the modern age, podcasts can be construed as the modern conduit for the circulation of oral literary works. Nevertheless, it is evident that podcasts have progressively solidified their position within educational resources, particularly in recent times, prompting a surge in dedicated research on this subject matter.

This study is organized around the role of podcasts in endeavors focused on enhancing native language proficiency. It delves into the utilization of podcasts across diverse target demographics within educational settings, along with the pivotal role that podcast adoption assumes within the learning journey, as illuminated by existing scholarly investigations. Furthermore, the study delves into the intricate domains of podcast creation and curation tailored to children, investigating how audio content contributes to augmenting their vocabulary and refining language aptitude. In addition, the research encompasses a survey of readily accessible, complimentary podcast platforms in Turkey, accentuating their educational significance.

2. The Use of Podcasts in Education

Cebeci and Tekdal (2006) underscore that not all podcast productions inherently function as learning objects. They emphasize that podcasts crafted with methodologies, techniques, and content tailored for educational aims hold potential value within academic pursuits.

Today, podcasts have garnered substantial traction, particularly within foreign language education, serving as a cornerstone for both classroom and extracurricular learning (Chan et al., 2011). This ascendancy has been mirrored across a diverse array of disciplines within the educational domain, signifying the proliferation of online learning platforms.

In the context of higher education, podcasts have emerged prominently as tools for conducting and bolstering educational and training endeavors in recent years. Heilesen (2010), in his exploration of research investigating the viability of integrating podcasts into higher education curriculum, brings to light the lack of studies examining students' academic performance during the period from 2004 to 2009. It can be argued that this dearth of data, a result of the newly emerging state of podcast adoption at that time, is unsurprising. Today, longitudinal studies have the potential to furnish concrete insights into students' academic progress.

Heilesen (2010) further reports that podcasts have garnered favor within academic circles, inducing students to incorporate podcasts into their study environments as tools for both teaching and learning. Likewise, a study conducted during 2008-2009 to assess the impact of audio materials on student motivation within online learning contexts (Bolliger et al., 2010) divulged that the introduction of podcasts to the study cohort moderately influenced their motivation to learn. Additionally, the study illuminated numerous positive outcomes, including heightened attention, engrossment in the material, and a constructive approach. Furthermore,

the study underscores that prior exposure to technological educational resources facilitates access to and effective utilization of podcasts.

When faculty members incorporate podcasts into course design, catering to both in-person and distance learners, the incorporation of audio, and at times video, is intended to cultivate a sense of closeness within the learning environment. Augmenting text-based resources with pertinent inquiries and meticulous content curation stands as a pivotal factor determining the efficacy of podcasts (Brown et al., 2009, p. 370).

In parallel to the findings in higher education research, podcasts have demonstrated a favorable impact on learning motivation within educational contexts geared towards younger students. An illustrative instance can be observed in a study encompassing Portuguese and Belgian secondary school students, undertaken to scrutinize the role of podcasts in pedagogical and learning undertakings. The research yielded a resounding conclusion: students exhibited a positive disposition toward the incorporation of podcasts within the classroom (Moura & Carvalho, 2006).

Educational endeavors fundamentally aim to progressively prepare students for subsequent educational stages and to equip them for real-world challenges (Göçer, 2010, pp. 341-342). In order to infuse educational processes with engagement, the incorporation of diverse stimuli assumes significance. Particularly within the domain of native language lessons, the use of art and technology not only enriches the presentation of textual material but also diversifies the range of materials foundational to the lessons (Sever, 2018). The cultivation of multisensory learning experiences can be accomplished through Turkish language lessons, integrating various stimuli and technological resources (Hasırıcı, 2018; Karakuş Aktan, 2018).

Podcasts offer an avenue for diverse text types to be explored within the classroom, facilitated by technological support, and contribute to the enhancement of comprehension skills through suitable activities. Jobbings (2005) outlines the domains in which podcasts can wield influence, spanning curricular engagements, educational processes, and individualized learning. Chan et al. (2011), on the other hand, list potential factors that influence student attitudes toward podcast integration within courses, as well as students' assessments of podcast quality. These factors encompass the alignment between students' learning motivation and podcast objectives, the design of podcasts and its alignment with student expectations, the preparatory measures undertaken by students and the motivation fostered by instructors, and lastly, students' familiarity with mobile learning experiences.

Evidently, both the creation and consumption of podcasts yield favorable outcomes on academic accomplishments, fostering improved grasp of theoretical concepts as well as developing practical proficiencies. Students have attested to podcasts serving as a bridge to meld technology into conventional lecture formats, supplementing the educational material through podcast productions (Lazzari, 2009). Proficiency in computer skills and familiarity with audio content further amplify the efficacy of incorporating audio texts into lessons (O'Bannon et al., 2011).

On the other hand, certain studies assessing the impact of podcast integration on academic achievement have yielded results indicating insignificant effects. For instance, in a study conducted by O'Bannon et al. (2011) comparing the outcomes of traditional teaching methods against the incorporation of podcasts, no substantial disparity in achievement was observed among pre-service teachers between these two methodologies. Furthermore, their individual study habits exhibited negligible variation. Despite acknowledging the convenience of appropriately timed podcast episodes for learning, the participants still expressed a preference for traditional classroom methods. In light of such findings, it prompts reflection on the need to

update instructor competencies within educational environments. Moreover, O'Bannon (2011, p. 1886) sheds light on certain negative aspects of podcast adoption in his research. The challenges encountered in employing audio texts for academic purposes encompass the following impediments (Bell, Cockburn, Wingkvist & Green, 2007; Edirisingha & Salmon, 2007; Lane, 2006; Ogawa & Nickels, 2006; Tynan & Colbran, 2006, as cited in O'Bannon et al.).

- Students' unfamiliarity with this new material,
- Failure to make a connection between the way of learning and what is learned,
- Technical problems with access and permanent download,
- The problem of interaction,
- Students' reluctance to participate in the learning process

Moreover, research indicates that providing students with access to both audio and video texts, such as video podcasts, during their leisure time significantly enhances the efficacy of educational endeavors. For example, Hill & Nelson (2011) underscore the significance of video and audio texts as pivotal teaching and learning resources within in-person classes. These resources not only reinforce learned material but also aid in information retention. Moreover, they furnish a means for review, enabling learners to identify and assess gaps in their comprehension by leveraging the auditory and visual components. Nonetheless, Hill & Nelson advocate for an educational approach that prioritizes collaborative learning over individual learning experiences, aligning with contemporary and forward-looking pedagogical paradigms. While video and audio texts certainly promote metacognition when employed individually, orchestrating student environments and group sessions that facilitate incisive discussions concerning the content can markedly enhance the utility of these educational tools. Furthermore, the pervasive nature of electronic media in present times, affording users temporal and spatial flexibility (Kaya & Ata, 2022, p. 330), could potentially foster the interactive and collaborative environment as reported by Hill & Nelson (2011).

3. Podcasts and Improving Children's Native Language Skills in Turkish Lessons

People can accurately comprehend communicated messages and articulate their ideas with clarity and effectiveness when they can generate emotions and thoughts in their native language. At this juncture, it becomes evident that an underdeveloped language, characterized by a limited conceptual vocabulary, would impede an individual's capacity to freely formulate thoughts and emotions (Sever, 2013). One of the primary aims of Turkish education is to ensure that children grasp their native language, benefit from its vocabulary, and cultivate their aptitude for comprehension and expression (Temizyürek & Akyüz, 2022).

Upon completion of primary and secondary education, it is anticipated that the student will have "attained reading and listening proficiencies enabling comprehensive and accurate comprehension of spoken content; oral and written proficiencies facilitating precise articulation of emotions, desires, and information; and a vocabulary repertoire substantial enough to support these competencies" (Karadağ & Kurudayıoğlu, 2010, p. 425). The depth of a student's vocabulary assumes significance not only for their aptitude in understanding and expressing ideas but also for the advancement of their communication proficiencies (Ayan & Baş, 2015, p. 97).

Turkish education should be tailored to align with children's realm of meaning and language maturation, fostering their intuitive grasp of their native language's expressive capabilities while adhering to its rules. Within this framework, Turkish lessons ought to be fashioned with a wealth of stimuli to engender a rich learning environment (Sever, 2018, p. 120). Modern

technological advancements have substantially broadened the scope of available stimuli. Notably, Turkish lessons, which encompass the central objective of nurturing the four fundamental language skills, can effectively incorporate podcasts as a pedagogical tool. Predominantly, podcasts serve to bolster the development of listening skills. In essence, well-crafted and thoughtfully selected podcasts hold particular promise in enhancing children's listening skills. Recognizing the cascade effect of improved listening skills on speaking skills, it becomes apparent that podcasts can catalyze the advancement of various other proficiencies.

Indeed, Yoestara & Putri (2018) report that podcasts wield a positive impact on students' listening and speaking proficiencies. While their study was geared toward assessing the influence of podcasts on listening and speaking skills within the context of foreign language learning, it is possible to make inferences from their findings, suggesting that audio texts might also facilitate the implicit acquisition of unfamiliar words in context. Similarly, Yorgancı & Baş (2022), in their exploration of the relationship between language skills and students' podcast production within the context of teaching Turkish as a foreign language, ascertain that podcast production improved speaking and writing skills, accompanied by an augmented sense of self-efficacy in these competencies. Correspondingly, Alshawabkah & Abdullah (2023) also report the positive effects of podcasts in improving students' speaking abilities in language instruction. This study not only emphasizes the enhancement of students' vocabulary but also underscores the amelioration of pronunciation idiosyncrasies, the lasting assimilation of challenging-to-articulate words, the comprehension of grammatical nuances, and the alleviation of listening challenges. As a result, it underscores the importance of integrating podcasts into instructional design and their use in extracurricular learning endeavors.

Best and Clark's (2020) study, which delved into the relationship between children and podcasts amid the pandemic, put forth a noteworthy finding. It was revealed that children and adolescents who engaged with podcasts demonstrated a heightened inclination toward reading, particularly in comparison to their peers who did not listen to podcasts and engage in daily reading habits (see Figure 1).

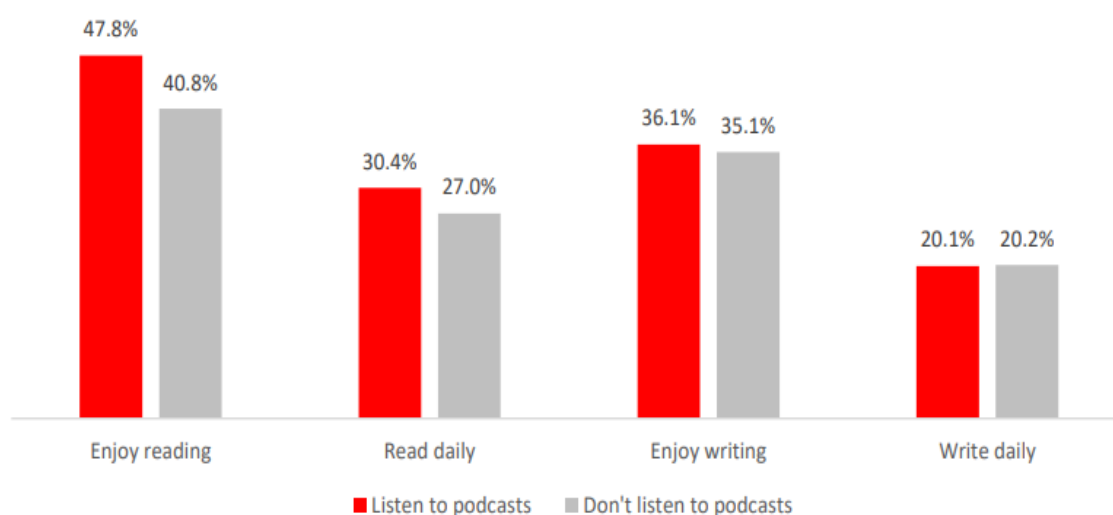


Figure 1. Outcomes of listening to podcasts, reading and writing (Best & Clark, 2020)

While certain nations' national literacy reports, such as the National Literacy Trust (<https://literacytrust.org.uk/>), have recently begun incorporating podcast consumption, it remains evident that Turkey is yet to witness a substantial volume of research in the realm of podcasting. Nonetheless, as demonstrated earlier, the effectiveness of podcasts in augmenting reading habits and affection for literature is well-established.

Insights acquired from research conducted by the National Literacy Trust (<https://literacytrust.org.uk/>; Best, 2022) underscore that children displaying diminished enthusiasm for reading and writing are prone to cultivating more favorable dispositions toward listening. Hence, the significance of furnishing children with high-quality podcasts to equip them for life and cultivate their faculties of comprehension and expression is unequivocally emphasized.

In the literature of educational studies, the role of reading in individual development cannot be denied. However, a rich and enduring educational environment necessitates the integration of both written and audio materials. In fact, when assessing studies concerning reading comprehension and listening comprehension, despite the multiplicity of sub-skills and variables at play, there is no significant difference (Clinton-Lisell, 2022).

Despite the lack of studies conducted on the use of podcasts to enhance Turkish language skills within the context of native language education, Kurt and Göçer (2021) address this gap by touching upon the conceptual underpinnings of the situation in their study.

4. Examples of Turkish Podcasts for Children

A small number of children's podcasts with different genres and features can be seen among Turkish podcasts.

Tübitak Çocuk Dergisi (<https://open.spotify.com/show/2DpOlhJQrCBLUSPAKmsWhW>) audio broadcast channel, which is among the free and open access podcasts for children, offers podcasts consisting of informative voiceovers lasting between 1-2 minutes on average. Çocuklara Masallar (<https://open.spotify.com/show/2TkBXLmfmgM06nitH2Ban9>) channel, accessible on the same platforms, publishes podcasts ranging in length from 1 minute to 15 minutes, consisting entirely of classical works. There are also channels such as Uyku Hikayeleri (<https://open.spotify.com/show/0Jg0mjlAjqZVZQpO36Z8V7>), Çocuk Hikayeleri (<https://www.trtcocuk.net.tr/trt-cocuk-kitaplik>), Masal Tüneli (<https://open.spotify.com/show/0FeBytig7hWDbkjiYjYX9k>), which are audio book podcasts for children. Turkish podcasts are more akin to audio books for children. Podcasts of the same type and addressing the same target audience vary in duration, as exemplified above. The content of the broadcasts is mostly not in the form of a new text that requires creativity, but rather comprises classical works or vocalizations of existing printed publications.

In such audio book channels, there are no statements indicating the content of the book and the age group it addresses. These free and open access podcasts contain advertisements. This problem, which can be solved with membership, is not present in TRT Çocuk Kitaplık (<https://www.trtdinle.com/genre/aile-ve-cocuk-podcast>) and TRT Aile ve Çocuk Podcast channels. TRT Çocuk Kitaplık shows features different from podcasts; it also has interactive electronic book features.

Among the podcasts aimed at young people, in addition to offering audio books similar to those for children, there are also podcasts produced by private high schools through their official websites.

In these podcasts, the content primarily consists of materials structured using a question-and-answer approach. Students can leverage these podcasts to guide their educational and training journeys, fostering their personal development. For instance, the collection of 15 podcasts provided by Çakabey Schools covers a range of topics, some of which are:

- Summer vacation tips
- Safe internet use
- What to do three days before LGS
- How to gain motivation?
- Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder
- Which subject should be studied and how? (Turkish)
- Which subject should be studied and how? (Mathematics)
- Which subject should be studied and how? (Science)
- Which subject should be studied and how? (Social Studies)
- Which subject should be studied and how? (Foreign Languages)
- Technology addiction
- Interview with Cihat Sener-1
- Interview with Cihat Sener-2
- Self-confidence in children
- Exam anxiety

Students also take part in the podcasts, which vary in duration from 5-6 minutes to 30 minutes, and provide guiding content on out-of-school learning and developing life skills.

5. Conclusion and Implications

English-language podcasts for children ("But Why?", "Brains On!", etc.) show more diversity than Turkish-language podcasts for children. In this sense, Turkish podcasts for children are insufficient in terms of number and diversity.

Today, the variety of Turkish podcasts tailored for children predominantly takes the form of audiobooks, such as the offerings from channels like Çocuklara Masallar and Masalcı Abla, which are accessible through a limited selection of applications. These podcasts largely revolve around classical works. Comparatively, a greater number of audiobooks and podcasts are created for adults. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that podcasts designed for children lack a standardized approach. Notably, podcasts targeting the same age group often exhibit substantial variations in terms of duration.

Studies show that storytelling itself effectively enhances children's attention spans (Varol et al., 2019). Given this advantage of storytelling, even in a straightforward narrative style, it is reasonable to anticipate that a meticulously crafted podcast would yield similar benefits and contribute to receptive language skills. However, achieving this requires the utilization of podcasts tailored to children's attention spans, taking into account their developmental traits.

In light of selecting high-quality content and cultivating vocabulary suitable for the child's level, the content chosen for podcast production should undergo thorough scientific examination. As of now, there is a dearth of literature encompassing Turkish content analyses of this nature.

The podcast series highlighted in this study, exemplifying Turkish podcasts and originating from high school guidance services, encompasses purpose-focused conversations. This suggests that similar endeavors could generate educational podcasts geared towards enhancing Turkish language skills, incorporating language games, and enriching vocabulary usage. For

instance, podcasts centered around proverbs, idioms, Turkish equivalents of foreign words, vocal renditions of various literary texts, and radio theater-style scripts could foster the language proficiency of middle and high school students.

In recent years, particularly in private schools, an approach channeling children towards electronic book applications and mandating electronic book engagement as extracurricular reading has become increasingly prevalent. The drawbacks of construing reading as an obligation is a subject of another study. Yet, research into these practices within school-based learning frameworks, involving homogeneous socioeconomic backgrounds wherein families with akin opportunities enroll their children, remains insufficient.

Certain applications encompass interactive fairy tales and stories with audio-supported video components. Following the realm of podcasting, wherein audio texts are consumed, the evolution of video podcasting or "vodcasting" (Brown & Green, 2007, p. 5), a more contemporary technological manifestation, should be assessed in the context of educational endeavors. Its potential use in bolstering Turkish language skills, particularly in terms of listening/ watching skills, is worth exploring. The growth of podcasts and the quality of content within these applications, akin to a form of reader interaction, and their impact on children's comprehension and narrative proficiencies could serve as fertile grounds for future research.

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