Beyond the classroom: Fostering English communication skills in vocational education through podcasting and radio broadcasting

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ABSTRACT
Addressing the challenge of developing effective English communication skills in vocational education, this study explores the integration of podcasting and radio broadcasting as an alternative to traditional classrooms. The goal is to provide vocational students with a more immersive and practical learning experience in line with communicative language teaching principles. Putra Rifara Vocational School initiated a Radio Podcast program, emphasizing technological proficiency. A seminar, "Hosting Podcast in English," was conducted to train students in podcasting and radio broadcasting. Practical exercises were included to enhance language skills, including articulation, opinion expression, and real-time dialogues. A needs analysis revealed students' interest in podcasts as learning material, with challenges related to internet limitations. The initiative positively impacted students' attitudes, behaviors, linguistic proficiency, and soft skills development. Ongoing training and mentorship are recommended to empower students in confidently hosting English podcasts. This initiative demonstrates the potential of podcasting and radio broadcasting to enrich English language learning in vocational education, contributing to linguistic proficiency and soft skills development within the educational environment. Considerations for improving internet accessibility and guiding podcast selection are recommended for future implementations.

Keywords: English; podcasting; radio broadcasting; vocational school

INTRODUCTION
In the ever-evolving landscape of education, fostering effective English communication skills among vocational education students stands as a paramount challenge. The conventional classroom setting, though fundamental, may fall short in preparing students for the dynamic demands of real-world communication. As an alternative avenue for language acquisition, this article explores the innovative integration of podcasting and radio broadcasting in vocational education, aiming to transcend traditional boundaries and cultivate a more immersive and practical learning experience (Yim & Warschauer, 2016). However, English communication
skills have become integral in the global job market, particularly for vocational graduates entering professions that demand effective intercultural communication. Recognizing this, the integration of podcasting and radio broadcasting serves as a dynamic strategy to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. This approach not only aligns with the principles of communicative language teaching but also empowers students to engage with language in authentic contexts (Celce-Murcia, 2014).

Podcasting, with its on-demand accessibility, and radio broadcasting, with its live and spontaneous nature, provide unique platforms for students to hone their English communication skills. These mediums encourage students to articulate thoughts, express opinions, and engage in real-time dialogues, thereby cultivating fluency, spontaneity, and adaptability in communication (Levy, 2009). In addition, the integration of podcasting and radio broadcasting not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also nurtures a range of soft skills crucial for vocational success. Students develop teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills as they collaboratively produce content and respond to diverse audience feedback, mirroring the challenges they will encounter in professional settings (Shulman, 1987).

In alignment with the above explanation, Putra Rifara Vocational School in Kabupaten Tangerang, housing four distinct departments Multimedia, Computer Network Engineering (TKJ), Accounting, and Office Administration—has successfully implemented innovative strategies that significantly contribute to the advancement of learning technology. Notably, the school has pioneered the establishment of a Radio Podcast program, a creative initiative aimed at enhancing students' technological proficiency. The school principal emphasizes the program's potential to provide students with unique technological experiences within the school environment.

The Podcast program, in its initial stages of implementation, is currently broadcasted during school breaks, featuring two adept hosts who, akin to traditional radio shows, engage listeners by extending greetings and disseminating the latest updates from the school. One notable aspect is the interactive nature of the program, wherein students, as avid listeners, can actively participate by requesting their favourite songs from the podcast hosts. The principal anticipates that this platform not only facilitates technological exposure but also serves as a catalyst for the development of students' self-confidence.

This pioneering initiative aligns with the insights of Campbell (2005), who highlights the diverse opportunities that podcasts present within educational settings. Campbell asserts that the integration of podcasts into students' daily lives allows for exploration of exciting possibilities. These range from the convenience of listening to class lectures on-the-go to the discovery of new leisure-time entertainment, offering a distinctive and adaptable learning experience.

Furthermore, Campbell (2005) enumerates various benefits associated with the use of podcast media in education, underscoring its potential to revolutionize traditional learning environments. The first benefit is to improve listening skills: Listening is an activity, and podcasts allow students to listen again and again, in
whole or in part, to grow more practiced in effective listening. And the second if for the better conversation: Podcasting can help education realize one of its noblest goals: to make a better conversation out of the thing we call civilization.

Based on the findings derived from the needs analysis, along with observations and interviews conducted with the principal of Putra Rifara Vocational School regarding the podcast program, the Lecturer and Student Team of the Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Syekh-Yusuf Islamic University specifically, the English Language Education Department was approached for assistance in ensuring the seamless implementation of the podcast initiative. In response to this request, our facilitator team provided valuable insights by organizing training sessions and offering mentorship opportunities to students, aimed at enhancing their English language proficiency through the hosting of podcasts. This initiative received positive feedback from both the principal and English teachers at Putra Rifara Vocational School.

The principal, along with the English teachers, expressed enthusiasm for the program, recognizing its potential to address the identified gaps in the students’ speaking and listening competence in English expressions and vocabulary. The analysis results indicate that students at Putra Rifara Vocational School currently lack a clear understanding of how they can develop these crucial language skills through radio podcasts. In fact, according to Novianti et al., (2019), podcasts as a learning medium can provide significant benefits in improving students’ pronunciation skills in English.

Based on the findings of the needs analysis, it was discovered that a significant number of students at Putra Rifara Vocational School expressed a lack of interest in assuming the role of Podcast Hosts in an English context (17 respondents), despite their engagement with English podcasts through social media platforms (13 respondents). The graphical representation of the needs analysis is presented in the realization activities section. Consequently, providing training and support in hosting English-language radio podcasts is deemed essential. Such initiatives aim not only to bolster their enthusiasm but also to enhance their English vocabulary and expressions. This proficiency is invaluable for effectively hosting radio podcasts at Putra Rifara Vocational School.

Several studies have been conducted on the implementation of podcast media in improving students’ language skills. A study conducted by Nadlifah, (2022) indicates that the use of podcast media has significantly influenced the increase in listening skills of the seventh semester student. It was also helpful in improving the students’ pronunciation words, adding new vocabulary, and improving students’ English grammar. Another study by Suvarnaphaet & Suvarnaphaet (2023) demonstrated that podcasts can be used as an alternate media to effectively help students improve their skills in spoken English. Most importantly, Liu (2023) indicate the strong potential value of academic podcasts to EAP (English for Academic Purposes) pedagogy, as they create rich opportunities for students to encounter both core academic and discipline-specific vocabulary in use in authentic contexts. Thus, to efficiently use podcast media for English learning, a community service program was held in giving insight to
students for how podcasting radio in English to improve their communication skills outside the classroom.

Based on the discussion between the school principal and the facilitation team regarding the existence of podcast activities or programs in the school, the school as a community service partner outlines several requests to accompany their students in becoming hosts on radio podcasts, especially using the English language. In this regard, the use of radio podcasts can be utilized as a technology tool in English language learning, specifically focusing on listening and speaking skills.

Subsequently, based on the needs analysis related to the podcast program in the school, it was also found that there is still limited student input regarding hosting podcasts in English, lack of student knowledge about expressions commonly used in hosting English-language podcasts, lack of confidence among students in speaking English through the Podcast Radio program. It is also found that there is the need for good communication skills in hosting English-language podcasts since the Podcast Radio program can be used as an active English language learning medium for students of SMK Putra Rifara, Kabupaten Tangerang.

Therefore, our facilitation team of lecturers and students from the English Language Education study program, Faculty of Education, Universitas Islam Syekh-Yusuf, Kota Tangerang, provides training and assistance to students of SMK Putra Rifara to become podcast hosts using the English language. The activities include providing materials related to Podcasting in English, Phrases and Expressions used in hosting an English Podcast, followed by practical sessions conducted by some students of Putra Rifara in the podcast room.

METHOD

This community service is conducted at SMK Putra Rifara, Kabupaten Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia. The activity is specifically dedicated to active students from grades 10 to 12 who participate in the radio podcast program at SMK Putra Rifara. The stages of community service are explained as follows:

This community service initiative employs the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. The PAR approach encompasses three interconnected elements-participation, research, and action that are closely linked. It emphasizes the integration of research into practical action. Throughout the coordination process, facilitators, the team, and students of SMK Putra Rifara collaborate to hold an effective and active workshop of podcasting and radio broadcasting in English. More specifically, the focus is on Fostering English Communication Skills in Vocational Education through Podcasting and Radio Broadcasting.

PAR involves a collaborative effort between researchers or facilitators and the community to jointly conduct research or community service activities. It involves problem formulation, action planning, and ongoing, sustainable implementation. The goal of PAR is to conceptualize and instigate meaningful change. The researchers and the team aspire to foster English Communication
Skills in Vocational Education through Podcasting and Radio Broadcasting, recognizing it as an alternative media to help students how to communicate well and correctly in everyday English (Ilyas et al., 2024).

To enhance the focus of this Community Service activity, the facilitator employs a blend of theoretical concepts and practical application methods. Broadly speaking, the activity progresses through three key stages: (1) the planning stage (plan), (2) the implementation stage (do), and (3) the reflection stage. The job descriptions and roles of the proposing team are delineated as follows:

In the initial planning stage, we organized Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the principal, vice principals, and the person in charge (PIC) of the Podcast Program at SMK Putra Rifara to establish a range of activity plans. This collaborative effort will guide the development of a comprehensive set of activities and materials to be utilized during the training session. Additionally, we will design a questionnaire consisting of ten targeted questions to gather feedback from participants who will be undergoing the English Podcast training. This preparatory work aims to ensure that the training is well-structured and meets the educational needs of the participants.

In the implementation stage, we conducted a training seminar that covers various aspects of podcasting, beginning with an introduction to the concept of podcasts and the specific expressions commonly used in English podcasts. The seminar will include strategies for building confidence in hosting an English podcast radio show, supported by practical examples of English podcasts. Participants engaged in exercises to practice uttering English expressions for the opening segments of a podcast and conduct simple English conversations suitable for podcasting. Additionally, there were discussions focused on techniques for gaining confidence in speaking and effectively communicating in an English podcast setting.

The last stage is reflection and evaluation. Reflecting on the activities is essential to assess the results and impacts of the implemented English expressions in hosting podcast and radio broadcasting. The facilitator team administers questionnaires to participants to gauge their understanding of the English podcast concept to foster their communication skills. This process helps evaluate the alignment between the activity plan and its execution. Below is the program cycle.
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In accordance with the planned stages outlined in the method implementation, the outcomes derived from this community service initiative can be summarized as follows:

The first step we took was planning, which involved discussions with the principal of SMK Putra Rifara and the Podcast in Charge (PIC) before conducting the training for hosting podcasts in English. During the discussion, we also planned several activities that could be carried out during the training and student mentoring, one of which was direct practice in the podcast room.

This discussion took place during our visit to the school for the commencement of practical field experience (PPL) activities organized by the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Syekh-Yusuf Islamic University. As a team consisting of both lecturers and students serving as facilitators, we were briefed on Putra Rifara School’s recent launch of their Radio Podcast Program. The school principal personally communicated this information, seeking our input and support for the podcast program. Given our affiliation with the English language education study program, we suggested helping enhance students’ speaking skills through the utilization of radio podcast media.

The principal had earlier mentioned a lack of enthusiasm among students, particularly those in grades 10 and 11, to actively participate in podcasting at Putra Rifara Vocational School. In response, we proposed assisting these students to encourage their active engagement in the podcast program. However, we focused to assist students and hold an interactive training for improving their English communication skills through podcast radio.

Next, we composed a set of ten questions for the questionnaires to be distributed to respondents during the workshop. These questions are designed to gauge participants’ perceptions of hosting a podcast radio show in English. The statements included in the questionnaires are: (1) “I am interested and enthusiastic about the radio podcast program at Putra Rifara Vocational School,” (2) “I am interested and excited to be the host of podcast activities at Putra Rifara Vocational School,” (3) “I like listening to podcasts via social media,” (4) “I once listened to an English podcast,” (5) “I’m interested in hosting a podcast in English,” (6) “I am interested in being a guest on a podcast,” (7) “I am interested in hosting a podcast with a guest,” (8) “I am interested in hosting a podcast with a guest from a different country,” (9) “I am interested in hosting a podcast with a guest from a different culture,” (10) “I am interested in hosting a podcast with a guest from a different language.”
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(6) “Hosting a podcast can increase my self-confidence,” (7) “Through English podcasts I can improve my English skills,” (8) “Hosting an English podcast, I can improve my English-speaking skills.” (9) “Listening to podcasts in English, can improve my English listening skills,” (10) “The material in today’s seminar is very useful and beneficial for the podcast program at Putra Rifara Vocational School.”

The statements from numbers 1 to 9 pertain to students’ understanding of podcasting or hosting podcasts in English, whereas the final statement is intended for the evaluation of the seminar or training conducted by the facilitators. The questionnaire results are presented below and will be further elaborated upon in the discussion section.

![Figure 3. The result of podcast talk questionnaire](image)

Unfortunately, according to the provided data, a significant number of seminar participants at Putra Rifara school expressed disinterest in hosting the podcast program. Only four participants showed interest in hosting podcasts in both Indonesian and English. Consequently, the seminar content remains pertinent to address students’ perceptions concerning their hesitancy to become hosts. One of the materials covered in the seminar offers tips on building confidence as a radio podcast host. Despite this, sixteen participants acknowledged that listening to English podcasts could enhance their listening skills.

![Figure 4. Podcast talk seminar situation](image)
During the implementation phase, a seminar titled "Hosting Podcast in English" was conducted. Throughout the seminar, participants were provided with insights into the concept of a podcast, particularly in the English language. The session covered guidelines on initiating a sample podcast using English expressions, along with references to simple native English podcast.

During the seminar presentation, 20 students from SMK Putra Rifara participated, representing diverse vocations such as Office Administration, Multimedia, Computer Network Engineering, and the Accounting Department. These students displayed enthusiasm and keen interest in absorbing the presented material, actively engaging in discussions, and posing questions related to podcasts and the process of becoming an English podcast host.

Following the presentation in the auditorium, we proceeded to the podcast room for hands-on practice. A student from the accounting department took on the role of the representative podcast host during this session. It was an enriching experience for us, as the students had earlier been exposed to explanations and materials regarding suitable English expressions for podcast hosting.

![Figure 5. Podcast talk practice at the studio](image)

The image above captures a live practice session in the podcast room. Despite the room's modest size and minimalist setup, the practical exercise for hosting podcasts in English was highly successful. Various expressions were directly applied, such as the introduction "Hi, I'm Shinta, and you're listening to Putra Rifara Podcast Show." This serves as an example of a straightforward English opening for podcast hosting. Subsequently, a female student serving as the host added, "...and here with me in the studio is Ms. Syifa, the English Lecturer at Syekh-Yusuf Islamic University, Tangerang." The hands-on session also involved question-and-answer interactions, incorporating bilingualism with both Indonesian and English. This is a common practice as students at Putra Rifara Vocational School are still in the process of learning how to host podcasts in the English language.
The head of SMK Putra Rifara expressed sincere appreciation and provided positive feedback regarding the Podcast Talk seminar, specifically addressing the guidance on becoming a Podcast Host using the English language. He mentioned that this marked the inception of the first English-language podcast program at the school. The English podcast hosting initiative is planned to be an ongoing interactive learning medium for students. As facilitators, we also acknowledged that the presented material was effectively communicated to the 20 participants present, evidenced by its successful application during a practical session where a female student represented as a podcast host using English.

The images displayed depict seminar attendees, including the principal, deputy principal for student affairs, the facilitator team, and various vocational English teachers who participated in the Podcast Talk seminar. They expressed positive appreciation and provided support for the community service event. This seminar marks the initiation of a groundbreaking activity – a radio podcast at Putra Rifara Vocational School with an English theme. The aim is for the Podcast Talk seminar to inspire both students and teachers to enhance the quality of their educational activities, particularly in improving language skills. This includes the development of English proficiency through the practice of hosting podcasts in English.
Based on the feedback gathered through questionnaires administered at the conclusion of the seminar session, participants conveyed that the content covered in the Podcast Talk seminar was highly valuable and advantageous for the continuity of the radio podcast program at Putra Rifara Vocational School. Essentially, the reflections on the seminar activities focused on hosting podcasts in English were affirmative and well-received by the participants. Additionally, the school proposed an evaluation recommending the establishment of a sustainability or mentoring program for students at Putra Rifara Vocational School who express interest in hosting English podcasts. We acknowledge and accept this suggestion, taking into account various considerations. In the future, there is a possibility of organizing seminars or extended training sessions for all students at Putra Rifara Vocational School to enhance their communication and speaking skills in English within the school environment.

Based on the results provided above, it is evident that the podcast program at Putra Rifara Vocational School serves as an extracurricular activity aimed at enhancing students’ language proficiency. Participating in a podcast hosting training program in English can significantly boost students’ listening and speaking skills in the language. Initially, during the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), the English teacher noted that students showed minimal interest in learning English in class and had relatively low proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Additionally, engaging in extracurricular activities like the podcast program is an effective method to improve students’ English skills outside the traditional classroom setting (Fadhilah Hamid et al., 2022).

However, according to the questionnaire results from the Hosting Podcast in English training, 14 participants, or 70% of Putra Rifara Vocational School students, listen to podcasts via social media for entertainment. This aligns with the findings of Craig et al., (2023) which identified three primary motivations for podcast usage: entertainment, escapism, and information. Moreover, entertainment was a strong predictor of podcast listening, with both entertainment and escapism being predictors of favorable attitudes towards podcasts. While students at Putra Rifara Vocational School currently use podcasts more for entertainment than learning, hosting podcasts in English can transform them into valuable learning tools. (Bettahar & Raba, 2022) also highlighted that podcasts, as an ICT tool, have proven effective in teaching English, particularly in enhancing speaking performance. The study showed that both students and teachers had positive attitudes toward using podcasts to improve EFL students’ speaking skills. Indeed, podcasts are beneficial for enriching communication in speaking classes.

Thus, during the English podcast hosting training, we, as facilitators, provided tips and tricks to boost confidence in speaking English. We also emphasized the importance of good public speaking and enhancing communication skills. This is supported by (Hamid et al., 2023), It emphasized the vital role of public speaking as a soft skill in preparing the younger generation for the demands of Society 5.0. Additionally, it underscores the need for such training to provide individuals with the confidence and capability to communicate and
collaborate effectively in both personal and professional contexts. Consequently, there is hope that this podcast program will enhance students’ communication skills, particularly in English.

Additionally, during the implementation stage, particularly in the practice sessions at the podcast radio, we incorporated code-mixing between English and Indonesian. This approach was used because participants are still learning to host podcasts in English. We stressed the importance of starting the podcast with a good opening in English, after which they could continue using a mix of Bahasa and English. According to Isnaniah et al., (2023) using digital storytelling with code-mixing (English-Indonesian) can enhance speaking skills. Moreover, it can encourage Indonesian students to learn and practice language, particularly in speaking and listening skills. Students show interest in using podcasts for English language learning, and podcasts can be easily integrated into the curriculum. Once the content is deemed suitable, podcasts can improve student performance (Indahsari, 2020).

Indeed, the result of the questionnaire also shows 70% of the participants very agree that through English podcast, they can increase their English skills. Learning English will include learning the vocabulary as well. Additionally, (Nurmukhamedov & Sharakhimov, 2023) believe that there is pedagogical implications for teaching and learning vocabulary through podcasts. By listening to English podcast or practicing hosting a podcast in English will improve students’ vocabulary. Furthermore, there are 80% from the participants who agreed that by listening to an English podcast, they can improve their listening English skill. This result is also supported by (Alfa, 2020) who revealed that podcasts offer advantages suited to EFL speaking improvement. Using podcasts, teachers provide authentic classroom materials to enhance students’ speaking performance. Additionally, teachers can assign podcast activities outside the classroom, allowing students to improve their speaking skills independently and autonomously.

Likewise, 85% of the participants were interested in hosting podcast in English. This result shows that students were motivated to enhance their English skills, particularly in listening and speaking, through technology-based experiences. They received diverse instructions and enjoyed an engaging learning environment. Podcasts offered a wide range of topics and activities, allowing teachers and students to broaden their knowledge and improve their skills for educational purposes. (Ramli & Kurniawan, 2018). Hence, this community service activity showed that podcasts reflect the function of supplementary and complementary digital learning material in EFL classrooms. Finally, this program followed by suggestions for the English teacher to improve the teaching and learning process using digital material (Yasmiatun, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the questionnaire, 90% of the participants agree that the material in the training session is very useful and beneficial for the podcast program at Putra Rifara Vocational School. Thus, the conclusion of the findings from the implementation of training and mentoring for students at Putra Rifara.
Vocational School, Tangerang Regency in improving their English speaking and communication skills through the radio Podcast program at school is positive, where student respondents who came to the workshop were able to practice directly English expressions that can be used when hosting radio podcasts. The training atmosphere was also quite conducive because the students were enthusiastic about taking part in training related to this podcast.

With this community service activity, we recommend that schools can motivate students to be able to practice their English-speaking skills on the radio podcast program that has been provided. We also highly recommend that the podcast program can be used as a medium for learning not only English. Furthermore, we recommend that community service facilitators, both lecturers and students, be able to organize more practice-based training to improve language skills through Podcast media, for example at the High School (SMA) and Middle School levels to develop student competence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors extend their heartfelt gratitude to various entities that have played pivotal roles in the successful execution of this program. The entire team and facilitators express sincere appreciation to all individuals who contributed to the triumph of this initiative. Universitas Islam Syekh-Yusuf Tangerang, particularly the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, along with the English Language Education Department, provided unwavering support and facilitation, crucial for the seamless execution of this activity. The principal, teachers, and students of SMK Putra Rifara, Kabupaten Tangerang, graciously partnered with us, and we sincerely hope that this collaborative effort proves beneficial to the school, enhancing the educational experience for all involved. Additionally, the dedicated 5th-semester college students of the English Department offered valuable assistance that was instrumental in the successful implementation of this community service activity. Each of these contributors has played a significant role, and their support has been instrumental in the positive outcome of this endeavor.

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