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The Impact of Vlogging and Podcasting on Iraqi EFL Learners' Oral Proficiency and Willingness to Communicate

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Abstract

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The current study probed the effect of podcasting and vlogging on Iraqi EFL learners' oral proficiency and willingness to communicate (WTC). In so doing, the participants' perceptions concerning the efficacy of these technological resources for improving their spoken proficiency and WTC were also explored. Forty-five learners (in three intact classes) were selected from a language institute in Iraq through convenience sampling to conduct the study. Successive to administering the oral proficiency and WTC scales, the researchers initiated the intervention, which lasted for 14 sessions, with the classes being held twice a week. After holding the posttest, and at the culmination of quantitative phase of the study, 14 participants (seven students from each experimental group) were selected to take part in a semi-structured interview. The data collected for the quantitative phase were analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and as regards the qualitative phase, thematic analysis was employed. The results demonstrated that both podcasting and vlogging groups gained better speaking scores on the posttest and exhibited higher degrees of WTC in comparison to the control group. The qualitative analysis indicated that the participants had positive attitudes toward using podcasting and vlogging to improve their oral proficiency. The findings are thought to have practical implications for teachers, learners, and other educational stakeholders in the context of Iraqi institutes, particularly as regards the proper integration of technology into language learning process.

Keywords: Iraqi EFL learners, oral proficiency, podcasting, vlogging, willingness to communicate

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1. Introduction

A crucial factor that can determine learning success is the learners' inclination or readiness to engage in communication, or what is known as the degree of their willingness to communicate (WTC). According to Burns (2012), individuals' WTC is reflected in the extent to which they are self-reliant and believe in their capability to accomplish a task. Learners who exhibit a high level of willingness to communicate do not feel petrified to commit mistakes during the learning process and are capable of actualizing their capacities in the most optimum manner. As an instance, students who possess confidence are more likely to exhibit a lack of fear when speaking in front of the class or expressing their opinions, which ultimately leads to a better performance compared to students with a lower degree of willingness to communicate. Therefore, the learners' WTC acts as a key determiner of their success in the process of learning and attaining pedagogical objectives.

Furthermore, the integration of technology into teaching and learning activities in the recent decades has paved the way for gaining better educational outcomes (e.g., Kashanizadeh et al. 2024; Taheri et al., 2024). Though a double-edged sword, technology has mostly aided the teachers and learners to make the most of educational opportunities, and turn the dry class atmosphere into a more intriguing milieu. Ramirez and Li (2009), for instance, assert that technology has the potential to shift students from passive recipients of information to active participants in the learning process, resulting in increased engagement. The proper implementation of technology in the learning contexts can act as a prominent stimulus for learners to attain heightened levels of willingness to communicate. Among the prevailing technological devices which may prove beneficial in augmenting their willingness to communicate mention can be made of video blogs and podcasts. As regards the efficacy of video blogs (vlogs) for enhancing learner involvement, Considine et al. (2009) underscore the contribution of vlogging as a powerful learning tool, particularly for the current generation of learners who are considered digital natives. Podcasting, as another recent technological advancement in English language teaching, has emerged as a valuable tool for assisting learners in developing their speaking abilities. Podcasts are audio files that are distributed via the Internet, offering teachers a means to support learners in their speaking skill development (Chan et al., 2011; Kaplan-Leiserson, 2005). They serve as a valuable resource for learners to improve their overall language proficiency through engaging with authentic audio contents.

It is worth noting that like most other EFL learners who are deprived of appropriate contact with the target language in natural encounters with natives, Iraqi EFL learners also face unique challenges in the process of learning that can influence their language acquisition process. Factors such as cultural background, educational settings, and restricted exposure to authentic

English-speaking contexts may affect their speaking skill and WTC in English. While video blogs and podcasts have gained recognition as valuable digital resources in language learning, their effectiveness in addressing the specific needs of Iraqi intermediate EFL learners has not been sufficiently explored. Also, as regards the potential efficacy of vlogs and podcasts for improving Iraqi EFL learners' oral proficiency and WTC, no research, to the best of the current researchers' knowledge, has sought to address the issue. Thus, understanding the potential impact of video blogs and podcasts on Iraqi intermediate EFL learners' WTC is vital for the development of appropriate and effective pedagogical practices. By examining the use of these digital tools, language teachers in the Iraqi EFL context may gain insights into how to better support Iraqi learners in improving their speaking skills, and fostering a communicative language learning environment.

2. Literature Review

A key factor that contributes to learning success is the degree of learners' inclination for using the language for communication with others, or to be more specific the amount of their willingness to communicate in the target language. Though communication in the language has always been a significant determiner of English language proficiency (e.g., Kang, 2005; Swain, 2000), the resurgence of attention to the concept gained more momentum mainly in 1970s out of the attempts made by the pioneers of communicative approach to teaching. The learners' WTC is inextricably intertwined with their motivation, in a way that each of the two concepts affects and is affected by the other in a sort of mutual relationship. As Kang (2005) argues, learners' WTC can determine the extent to which they have a proclivity to engage in learning activities, use the target language appropriately in real-life interaction, and develop a sense of autonomy in generating and expanding the learning opportunities.

Vlogging is characterized as the practice of producing and sharing video material via employing web-based platforms (Goh et al., 2012). This process enables the learners to generate personalized audiovisual material and utilize them to engender communication. In addition to their potential for facilitating communication and enhancing oral proficiency in learners (e.g., Hung, 2011; Mogallapu, 2011; Rakhmanina & Kusumaningrum, 2017), Vlogs can also prove useful in boosting their WTC. Though Vlogging, as an innovative technological tool, has facilitated communication to a great extent, its potential in renovating pedagogical practices to spark more interest and fostering language abilities has gone partly unnoticed (Baran, 2007; Sanad, 2021).

Another highly valuable technological device that can upgrade learning conditions and produce better learning outcomes is podcasting, which provides

adequate exposure for learners to authentic language in a variety of genres and topics. Though podcasts have proven to be highly efficacious for varied aspects of learning enhancement, their contribution to oral proficiency development is more prominent (e.g., Gromik, 2008; Sloan, 2005). Furthermore, despite the fact that podcasts can help learners in different learning contexts, more benefits can be reaped from them on the part of learners who are learning English or any other languages in a foreign language context, in which there is restricted exposure to the authentic use of language by natives (Constantine, 2007).

As regards the effect of vlogging on bettering EFL learners' motivation and oral communication ability, Sanad (2021) embarked on experimental research with 166 university EFL learners. In line with the obtained findings, it was claimed that though the application of vlogs led to heightened levels of motivation in learners and better oral communication, the influence of vlogging on learners' motivation and oral proficiency was not so significant.

In the same vein, Devana and Afifah (2021) probed into the contribution of vlogging for learners' motivation and speaking ability. To conduct the study, they selected a sample of 36 university EFL learners, from whom they collected the data by means of a speaking test and a motivation questionnaire. The results indicated that learners' motivation and oral proficiency went through a significant degree of betterment as a consequence of being engaged with the practice of vlogging.

One of the postulations in the current study is that the integration of technology into learning may bring about achieving higher levels of willingness to communicate. Though increased WTC levels have been associated with variables like emotional intelligence (e.g., Alavinia & Agha Alikhani, 2014), increased L2 proficiency development (e.g., Pawlak et al., 2016), augmented language use in the classroom (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015), heightened levels of motivation (e.g., Elahi Shirvan et al., 2019), and lowered degree of cultural alienation and anxiety (e.g., MacIntyre & Ayers-Glassey, 2020), the role of technology in fostering learners' WTC seems not to have been sufficiently explored. Thus, informed by the paucity of research on the role of involvement with technology in furthering learners' WTC and enhancing their oral proficiency, the researchers in the current investigation intended to address this underresearched area. In what follows, some other probes addressing the contribution of technology to learners' perceptions, WTC and oral proficiency are reviewed.

Concerning the influence of technology-enhanced instruction on reshaping learners' perceptions, Rostami et al. (2017) surveyed the way in which engagement with podcasts might lead to instilling more positive attitudes in learners toward the process of acquiring a foreign language. Choosing a sample of 60 Iranian junior high school students within the age

range of 13 to 14, they made use of questionnaire and interview to collect data regarding the efficacy of employing podcasts for learning. Moreover, to analyze the influence of podcasting on learners' motivation, they administered a motivation questionnaire to the participants. The results pointed toward a significant increase in the experimental group participants' motivation resulting from the use of podcasts as a learning tool.

In another study, Yeh et al. (2021) gauged the impact of using podcasts in the academic context on students' oral proficiency development. Conducted with a cohort of 77 freshman college students in the Taiwanese context of higher education, the study focused on the enhancement of students' speaking proficiency via the practice of podcast making. To measure the students' speaking ability prior and successive to treatment with podcasts, they employed test of English for international communication (TOEIC), as well as podcast recordings and reflective essays. The findings pointed toward the efficacy of podcast-making practice for improving the students' spoken proficiency in terms of both fluency and accuracy.

Finally, in a more recent investigation, Lee and Liu (2024) set out with the aim of scrutinizing the changes occurring in EFL learners' willingness to communicate in the process of online learning. Using a sample of seven university students, they tried to measure the fluctuations occurring in the students' WTC. To elicit the degree of learners' willingness after each online session, they utilized a recorded video of the students' performance as a prompt for stimulated recall. Semi-structured interviews were also employed as a means of gaining better insights into the changes in their WTC. In accordance with the obtained findings, it was concluded that students' WTC has a dynamic nature, and changes as a result of both trait-like and state-like factors during online practice of learning.

As the review of related literature in this section helped reveal, though manifold studies have been conducted on WTC, as well as podcasts and vlogging, few investigations, if any, have striven to make a comprehensive study of these variables in a single research paradigm. Moreover, as regards the Iraqi context of learning, very scant research seems to have been conducted on these highly significant issues. Thus, identifying this gap in the literature, the researchers in the current probe sought to gauge the effect of podcasting and vlogging experience on Iraqi EFL learners' oral proficiency and WTC. In accordance with the study objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Is there any significant difference between the effect of video blogging and podcasting on Iraqi intermediate EFL learners' oral proficiency?

2. Is there any significant difference between the effect of video blogging and podcasting on Iraqi intermediate EFL learners' willingness to communicate?
3. What are the attitudes of Iraqi intermediate EFL learners regarding the efficacy of podcasting and video blogging as regards their oral proficiency and willingness to communicate?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Forty-five intermediate Iraqi EFL learners participated in this mixed-methods study. The selection of participants followed a convenience sampling approach, chosen for its practicality within the constraints of the specific educational context. It must also be noted that to include students with identical levels of proficiency, Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (Allan, 2004) was initially administered to all participants and based on the results, only those with intermediate level of proficiency were kept for the study. The demographic composition of the participant pool reflects a diverse cross-section of intermediate Iraqi EFL learners. The age range spanned from 18 to 25 ensuring a representation of various age groups within the intermediate level of proficiency. The gender distribution was fairly balanced, with an approximately equal distribution of male and female participants. Additional relevant demographic details, such as educational backgrounds and prior experience with language learning technologies, were also considered to provide a comprehensive overview of the participants' profile. As the demographic data indicated, most of the participants held a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in English language teaching, and a few came from other majors. Furthermore, most of them reported that their familiarity with and application of technologies for language teaching was at a moderate level.

3.2. Materials and Instruments

As mentioned in the previous section, at the outset of the study, OPT was administered with the aim of homogenizing all the participants in terms of their level of English proficiency. Next, the IELTS speaking test was employed to check for participants' oral proficiency prior and successive to the treatment. It is worth noting that the IELTS speaking test is composed of three major sections, each with some questions. After the test-takers introduced themselves to the examiner (the first researcher in the current study), they were asked some questions on general topics, such as work, studies, home, family, and interests. Then, the test-takers were given a task card about a particular topic. It must be noted that the oral proficiency test was held for each participant in isolation, and each individual was given one minute to prepare a monologue on the given topic. Then, the test-takers would return the task card to the examiner and start

talking about the topic for two minutes. The third section involved a discussion between the examiner and the test-taker, generally on questions relating to the theme which they had already talked about in Section 2.

Moreover, to measure the students' WTC, an adapted version of the scales devised by Lan et al. (2021) and Nikitina et al. (2022) was applied. While adapting the scale for appropriating it for the current study purposes, the items from the two aforesaid scales were merged, a few irrelevant items were eliminated and slight changes were made based on the research context. The scale comprised a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (definitely not willing) to 7 (definitely willing). Though the current researchers are aware of the fact that the use of a 7-point Likert scale, which is less common than 5-point scales, might influence the precision of the results obtained, they decided not to change the format of the original scales based on which the current questionnaire was adapted. A higher score on this scale would signify that the respondent possessed a greater inclination to engage in communication. It must be mentioned that in an attempt to take care of reliability and validity considerations, the questionnaire was piloted prior to the main phase of data collection. The Cronbach Alpha calculated for the questionnaire was .75, which was a satisfactory index of reliability. Moreover, the interview questions went through expert validation before their administration to the participants.

3.3. Procedure

To conduct the study, initially the selected participants took OPT as the proficiency test intended to ensure their homogeneity. Subsequently, a pretest was administered to evaluate their oral proficiency. In order to confirm that all three groups were homogeneous in terms of their speaking ability at the beginning of the study, IELTS speaking test was administered to them as pretest. On the subsequent session, the participants were given the WTC measure.

Following this, a 14-session treatment was held, with the class meeting twice a week. A total of 14 topics for discussion were also selected from (Richard et al. 2002). Then, the treatments were performed in two distinct ways for the vlogging and podcasting groups. For the vlog class, the instructor (the first author in the current research) commenced by thoroughly explaining vlogs, their requirements, procedures, and functionalities. Real-life native videos from YouTube illustrated the mechanics of creating a YouTube channel. In each session, students underwent three cycles: introduction of the topic, discussion and practice in groups, and individual expression of ideas, including recording, editing, and uploading personal videos.

Similarly, the Podcast class began with the instructor's overview of podcasts, distinguishing them from vlogs. Podcasts related to the chosen topics were played from various sources like the British Council and YouTube. The

class followed three sequences: questioning and explaining new words, discussing and practicing in pairs with instructor supervision, and individual expression on the topic with feedback on pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and accuracy. The final step involved recording, editing, and uploading personal podcasts.

The control group, however, went through the conventional teaching procedure stipulated by the institute where they were studying. The main activities with which they were engaged included asking and answering questions, listening to audios, engaging in group discussions, and receiving feedback. Indeed, the only distinction between the control group and the experimental ones was the application of vlogs versus podcasts in the experimental groups. At the culmination of the treatment sessions, a posttest was administered to all the participants to compare the oral proficiency differences among the three groups. Finally, the WTC scale was given to the participants once more on the posttest, to analyze the potential differences in their willingness to communicate resulting from their exposure to treatments via vlogging and podcasting.

Successive to the completion of the quantitative phase, the participants were invited to take part in the interview part of the study. As the selection for the interview phase was performed based on voluntary participation, only 14 participants (seven students from each experimental group) voiced their consent to sit the interview session. The semi-structured interview utilized in the current investigation comprised 4 questions asking the participants to express their perceptions regarding the efficacy of the employed treatments by means of podcasts and vlogs for enhancing their WTC and oral proficiency. Also, their impressions concerning the reasons underlying the efficacy of these technological devices were probed through the interviews. Each interview took approximately 10 minutes and prior to the initiation of interview phase, the participants were reassured regarding the researchers' commitment to anonymity and confidentiality conditions.

3.4. Data Analysis

To analyze the data for the quantitative phase of the study, SPSS 24 was used. Thus, successive to running the test of normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test), and substantiating the normal distribution of data, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to compare the means of the three groups on pretests and posttests of oral proficiency and WTC. In other words, the same type of statistical analysis was implemented for research questions one and two, in an attempt to gauge the effect of vlogging and podcasting on the participants' enhancement in terms of oral proficiency and WTC. However, in analyzing research question three, which was qualitative in nature, theme analysis was performed. The process of theme analysis mainly relied on

inductive, data-driven, and hence bottom-up coding (e.g., Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022). To ensure the accuracy and reliability of coding procedure, the coding was done independently by two coders and the coders came together to analyze the codes to cater for intercoder reliability.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Results of Quantitative Analysis

As stated earlier, after ensuring the normal distribution of scores through Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, one-way ANOVA was employed for comparing the means of the three groups on pretest and posttest. Table 1 presents the results of Kolmogrov-Smirnov test of normality for the pretest scores.

Table 1

Kolmogrov-Smirnov Test of Normality for Pretest Scores

	N	Mean	SD	Statistics	Sig
Control	15	26.2	5.63	.122	.200
Podcasting	15	24.5	5.84	.198	.200
Vlogging	15	25.32	5.38	.173	.200

As is seen in Table 1, the mean score for the control group and podcasting and vlogging groups equals 26.20, 24.59, and 25.32, respectively. Furthermore, the standard deviation for the three groups is found to be 5.63, 5.84, and 5.38, respectively. Also, based on the observed p -values, it can be concluded that the data enjoy normal distribution ($p = .200 > .05$). In view of the normal distribution of data, the parametric statistics, i.e. one-way ANOVA, was run to compare the group means. Table 2 shows the results of one-way ANOVA for the pretest scores of oral proficiency.

Table 2

One-way ANOVA for the Pretest Speaking Scores

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pretest	Between Groups	32.61	2	15.71	1.25	.28
	Within Groups	818.53	44	11.59		
	Total	850.18	42			

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference among the pretest scores of the control and experimental groups ($p = .28 > .05$), suggesting that all groups had similar levels of speaking ability at the outset of the study. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics obtained for the learners' WTC prior to treatment.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for WTC

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	KS Sig.
WTC	1.36	5	3.72	0.91	0.07

As is evident from Table 3, the value obtained for Kolmogorov-Smirnov test equals 0.07, which illustrates the normality of distribution for the collected data. Hence, to compare the means of the three groups on WTC scale administered for pretest, one-way ANOVA was again employed. Table 4 depicts the results of one-way ANOVA for WTC on the pretest.

Table 4

One-way ANOVA for the Pretest of WTC

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pretest	Between Groups	28.33	2	17.39	1.73	.31
	Within Groups	715.61	44	12.22		
	Total	792.13	42			

Based on what is displayed in Table 4, no significant difference is observed in the mean WTC level of participants in the three groups ($p = .31 > .05$). After ensuring the similar status of the three groups in terms of oral proficiency and WTC, the researchers went on to compare the group means gained for these three variables on the posttest. In so doing, one-way ANOVA was again run as the main statistical analysis. The descriptive statistics for the three groups are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for the Participants' Posttest Speaking Scores

	N	Mean	SD
Control	15	26.20	6.48
Podcasting	15	24.59	4.32
Vlogging	15	25.32	3.42

As can be seen, the calculated mean and standard deviation values for podcasting, vlogging and control group were 24.59, 25.32, and 26.20, respectively. Also, the standard deviations calculated for the three groups were 4.32, 3.42, and 6.48. Table 6 reports the results of one-way ANOVA for the posttest scores of oral proficiency.

Table 6*One-way ANOVA for the Posttest Speaking Scores*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Post-test	Between Groups	1342.59	2	582.91	24.52	.03
	Within Groups	1572.85	44	26.30		
	Total	2632.60	42			

Table 6 demonstrates a statistically significant difference ($p = .03 < .05$) between the experimental and control groups on the posttest. Also, to observe the changes occurring in the participants' WTC resulting from treatment via podcasting and vlogging, another one-way ANOVA was run, the results of which are shown in Table 7.

Table 7*One-way ANOVA for the Posttest of WTC*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Post-test	Between Groups	1292.41	2	591.27	25.11	.03
	Within Groups	1512.23	44	27.42		
	Total	2746.53	42			

Finally, Tukey tests were run to investigate the distinctions among the three groups in terms of their speaking ability and WTC on the posttest. Table 8 depicts the results of Tukey test for the speaking posttest results.

Table 8*Tukey Test for the Speaking Posttest Results*

Group	Test	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Podcasting	Vlog	-.850	1.566	.82
	Control	8.700	1.566	.001
Vlog	Podcasting	.900	1.566	.82
	Control	9.750	1.566	.002

In accordance with the data reported in Table 8, a statistically significant difference exists among the three groups, as evidenced by the computed p -value between podcasting and control groups ($p = .001$) as well as between vlogging and control groups ($p = .002$). However, the difference between the performance of the two experimental groups is statistically non-significant and hence negligible ($p = .82 > .05$). In simpler terms, the treatments through podcasting and vlogging have been beneficial in augmenting the experimental group participants' speaking ability in a significant way. Table 9 shows the results of Tukey test for WTC posttest results.

Table 9

Tukey Test for the WTC Posttest Results

Group	Test	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Podcasting	Vlog	-.890	1.233	.56
	Control	8.200	1.233	.007
Vlog	Podcasting	.800	1.233	.56
	Control	8.250	1.233	.009

Based on the data reported in the table above, there is a statistically significant difference among the three groups, mainly between podcasting and control groups ($p = .007$) and vlogging and control groups ($p = .009$). However, the difference between the performance of the two experimental groups is statistically not significant ($p = .56 > .05$). That is to say, the treatments through podcasting and vlogging have been efficacious in upgrading the experimental group participants' WTC in a notable manner.

4.1.2. Results of Qualitative Analysis

Finally, the analysis of the findings obtained via interviews resulted in the identification of some themes concerning the efficacy of podcasting and vlogging in improving learners' oral proficiency, as well as their WTC. Based on the participants' responses to the interview questions, it was found that the majority of learners had judged the experience of employing podcasts and vlogs as quite effective for improving their oral proficiency and WTC. In what follows, the themes elicited from interview analysis are presented with regard to the effects of podcasting and vlogging on bettering learners' oral proficiency and WTC.

Theme 1: Versatility of Topics

One of the themes extracted from the participants' responses was the potential of podcasting for presenting *a variety of topics* for learning which in turn helped learners improve their speaking ability about different issues. In this regard, one of the learners uttered:

Extract 1

I think listening to podcasts in English can help me improve my speaking and comprehension skills. It exposes me to different accents and vocabulary that I might not encounter in my regular English classes.

Theme 2: Genuine Input

Another theme emerging out of the analysis of interview data was the *exposure to genuine input* that was created by podcasts, which as they maintained, provided them with the incentive to speak better. As an instance, one of the learners expressed her viewpoint about this issue in the following manner:

Extract 2

Thanks to podcasts, I can pick up on the natural pronunciation and intonation, the way used by natives, and this can help me sound more natural.

Theme 3: Generating Confidence

The other theme arising out of the learners' interview data was the role of podcasts in *generating confidence* in learners and hence bringing about more willingness to communicate. In this respect, one of the participants stated:

Extract 3

I feel like my exposure to podcasts has helped me boost my confidence in communicating in English.

Theme 4: Sense of Autonomy

Another theme which emerged from their responses was the efficacy of vlogging for instilling a *higher sense of autonomy* in them, and hence improving their speaking skills. One of the participants put this issue in the following manner:

Extract 4

After the experience of using vlogs, I felt more independent in using English and my speaking became better.

Theme 5: Interactivity

Finally, the last major theme drawn from the interview data was the *interactive nature* of vlogs which rendered them as proper tools for augmenting

learners' willingness to communicate. As an instance of the way vlogs, as interactive resources, might help increase learners' WTC, reference can be made to the following extract from one of the participants:

Extract 5

I think vlogs are so interactive in nature, and when I watch them, I feel like I'm in a foreign country and use English with the native speakers.

4.2. Discussion

The present study investigated the impact of podcasts and vlogs on the oral proficiency and WTC level of Iraqi EFL learners. The results indicated that both experimental groups attained significantly higher scores than the control group on the posttests of spoken proficiency and WTC. It can be hence argued that the significant outperformance of the participants in the two experimental groups can be ascribed to the effect of the treatments via podcasting and vlogging. The finding obtained for the first research question as to the efficacy of podcasting and vlogging for enhancing learners' oral proficiency is comparable with the one reported in Faramarzi et al.'s (2019) research. However, it must be noted that unlike the present study that focused on the effect of podcasting and vlogging on speaking ability of the learners, the investigation conducted by Faramarzi et al. probed the efficacy of podcasts and vlogs for enhancing the learners' listening comprehension. Though both speaking and listening fall under the category of communicative skills, the focus of the two studies is not totally identical.

This finding might also resonate with the claim made by Hsu et al. (2008), in that they also confirmed the effectiveness of podcasts and vlogs in enhancing the speaking skills in learners. The reason they provide for the impact of these tools on learners' speaking betterment is the accessibility of podcasts and vlogs for both individual and public use, and their approachability for multiple and relentless use whenever desired. The finding is also corroborated by Hung (2011) Mogallapu (2011) and Rakhmanina and Kusumaningrum (2017), all of whom confirm the significant effect of vlogging on expanding the learners' oral proficiency. Further evidence for the verity of this finding can be obtained from reviewing the investigations performed by Gromik (2008) and Sloan (2005) both of whom emphasize the notable effect of podcasting on learners' oral proficiency advancement. Likewise, Constantine (2007) draws attention towards the practicality of podcasting in EFL contexts, and underscores its significant impact on learners' progress in terms of oral skills. This finding gains further advocacy from the investigation conducted by Yeh et al. (2021) that revealed podcasting can result in learners' oral proficiency amelioration. Though the two studies were carried out in different contexts (this study being done at the institute and theirs at the academic settings), the findings obtained in both investigations are

comparable, as both confirmed the influence of podcasting on enhancement in learners' oral proficiency. The finding obtained for the first research question is also in compliance with the one declared by Sanad (2021) confirming the effectiveness of vlogging in promoting learners' oral communication skill. The finding also confirms the result of Devana and Afifah's (2021) research, in which, akin to the current investigation, vlogging was said to have a significant impact on augmenting learners' speaking proficiency.

The second research question of the study sought to probe the effect of podcasting and vlogging on Iraqi intermediate EFL learners' willingness to communicate. The finding for this research question demonstrated that participants' WTC went through a significant degree of betterment as a result of exposure to treatment via podcasting and vlogging. This finding is in accordance with the claim made by Faramarzi et al. (2019), positing that the utilization of podcasts and blogs may provide EFL learners with the opportunity to benefit more from the learning process and experience a higher degree of engagement and hence willingness to learn and communicate through the language. This result is also congruent with the finding of Lee and Liu's (2024) research which pointed toward the efficacy of technology in improving learners' WTC. Though their sample also consisted of EFL learners, there were some differences between this study and theirs, for instance, in terms of research context and the participants' age and proficiency level. For example, while the present investigation was performed on institute learners, theirs was implemented in a university context. Additionally, differences in terms of instrumentation are also worth noting. While the current study relied on questionnaires, tests, and interviews, their research made use of stimulated recall and semi-structured interview for gathering data.

The third research question tapped into the learners' attitudes towards the impact of podcasting and vlogging on enhancing their oral proficiency and willingness to communicate. Based on the finding attained for this research question, it was concluded that vlogging can prove helpful in enhancing learners' oral proficiency and WTC. The participants were of the view that the variety of topics entailed in the podcasts provided them with the motive to speak better about different topics. The other way in which podcasting was said to bring about learners' improved speaking was its potential to provide them with genuine and authentic input. The contribution of podcasting to the gain in learners' oral proficiency is congruent with the findings of Gromik (2008) and Sloan (2005), both of whom underscore the key role of podcasting in elevating learners' oral proficiency. The finding in this regard also buttresses the result attained by Yeh et al. (2021) where they proclaimed that podcasting practice can bring about oral proficiency amelioration in learners. The participants also contended that podcasts could help give them more confidence in using the language, and hence led to increased levels of WTC

for them. In this respect, the obtained finding provides support for Faramarzi et al.'s (2019) investigation which confirms the effect of podcasting on learners' WTC. Additional support for this finding can ensue from the studies conducted by Hung (2011) Mogallapu (2011) and Rakhmanina and Kusumaningrum (2017), all of which underscore the effectiveness of vlogging practice for bettering learners' speaking skill and WTC. Finally, concerning the effect of vlogs on bettering learners' WTC due to the interactive nature of these technological devices, the finding of the investigation carried out by Han et al. (2024) is in line with the result reported by the participants in the qualitative part of the current study. As they also contended, learner engagement in digital communication helps foster learners' WTC and speaking proficiency. It is worth noting that Han et al.'s study was also done in an EFL context (in China) and with intermediate learners. All in all, the results of the current study point toward the practicality of podcasts and vlogs for bettering learners' speaking skill and willingness to communicate.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The current study set off with the aim of probing the effectiveness of podcasts and vlogs in developing Iraqi EFL learners' oral proficiency and WTC. The results indicated that the podcasting and vlog groups outperformed the members of control group in terms of spoken proficiency and willingness to communicate. In addition, the qualitative data gathered through interview divulged that the participants had positive impressions about the efficacy of podcasting and vlogging in their progress in speaking and WTC. The findings thus obtained are thought to have a number of implications and applications for different educational stakeholders, particularly in the language schools (institutes) within the Iraqi context of learning. Among the principal implications drawn from the findings of the current study mention can be made of the contribution they might make to informing and enlightening the instructional and administrative bodies in Iraqi institutes concerning the beneficial role of technology, in general, and podcasting and vlogging, in particular, for enriching the learning context and coming up with improved learning outcomes. The integration of technological resources into teaching and learning process is postulated to provide the teachers with more motivating and engaging means of conducting their classes. Learners will also benefit immensely from the versatility of the topics and the captivating nature of the technology-enhanced material, and will hence get more enthralled to use the language in a more appropriate way for real-life communication. The accessibility of podcasts and vlogs, as Hsu et al. (2008) put it, and the potential of these resources to provide choice of a variety of topics for learners can bring about a higher sense of autonomy as well as self-confidence in learners, which will in turn, give rise to augmented levels of willingness to communicate. In

addition, as the results of the qualitative phase of the current study, akin to the research by Han et al. (2024), indicated, the technological resources like vlogs have the potential to bring about more learner engagement and willingness to communicate. Thus, inspired by this finding, the educational administrators in Iraq's learning context must try to prepare the infrastructures in a better way to help integrate technology into learning.

Like all other investigations, however, the current research is not void of limitations. Among the seminal limitations restricting the generalizability of the findings, the current researchers tend to refer to the comparatively low number of participants. As is the case with all similar studies focusing on experimentation and treatment, the researchers in this study also experienced hardships in convincing the institutional authorities and the learners in the research venue of the fact that the data were merely gathered for research purposes, and that the findings would not have any adverse ramifications for their instructional trajectory. Owing to this factor and a host of other reasons, the learners didn't willfully appeal to take part in the study, and hence the number of participants was lower than expected by the researchers. Informed by this limitation, therefore, the future researchers are recommended to opt for a larger sample of participants.

Additionally, the sampling method used in the current study was based on convenience of the researcher and availability of the participants, which may restrain the generalizability of the findings. Hence, the researchers who might intend to replicate the current study are suggested to use randomized methods of sampling to cater for the representativeness of the participants. Interested researchers are also recommended to try to choose the participants from a wider geographical range, gathering the data from different institutes and, if possible, from a variety of regions. It must also be noted that the researchers in the present study merely implemented tests, questionnaires and interviews to gather the data. However, to triangulate the data and to come up with more reliable findings, the prospective investigators may decide to make use of other instruments such as observation, narrative inquiry, journals, think-aloud, retrospective measures and self-report data, among other data collection means. Furthermore, the progress in learners' performance ensuing from the given treatment was simply scrutinized in terms of their spoken proficiency and WTC, and hence the other aspects of learners' educational outcomes or the possible changes in the other learner traits were not the focus of the present study. Thus, future researchers may choose to survey the effect of these technological resources on other aspects of learners' performance, including other language skills and components. After all, it is hoped that through the findings of the current study, new horizons are going to be opened as regards the positive effects of integrating technology into learning.

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