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Podcasting as a form of assessment: increasing student motivation in academic English-speaking assessment

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Abstract

This research paper explores podcasting as a viable assessment technique in current academic English language teaching pedagogy. The study was done with two 3rd-year university classes who created the podcast in groups of four as an academic English-speaking exam with the goal being to enhance the student's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, through self-determination theory, to assess the students' speaking skills. Motivation is the core concept of this study, and it aligns with current trends in technology and a desire among students for speaking assignments to reflect real-world practices. Critique on the podcast as a form of academic English-speaking assessment was given in the form of questionnaire surveys and interviews with students from the selected classes, with the results presented giving evidence that podcasting is a suitable alternative method in assessing university student's academic speaking skills. It was seen to increase motivation, enhance self-efficacy, and encourage speaking in a suitably congenial environment.

Keywords: English language teaching, Assessment, Podcasts, Motivation

Introduction

Background

The purpose of this study was to increase student motivation through self-determination theory (SDT), using innovative assessment methods in academic speaking because traditional methods of academic speaking assessment are increasingly seen as outdated by students adapting to a rapidly changing technological society. The site of this study was at a university based in Tokyo, Japan, although the implications are relevant globally in the fields of English for academic purposes (EAP), English language teaching (ELT), and English as a medium of instruction (EMI) programs. The study used a third-year university seminar named "Discussion Workshop" as the site of review as academic spoken English is the main component of this class. This seminar is made up of students, from varying majors in the humanities and social sciences, who wish to gain credits on a course that creates a space for discussion in English. In previous semesters, the form of assessment used at the end of each semester was an individual presentation using PowerPoint slides in front of the class on a topic relevant to the themes covered in the

class. However, as an attempt to enhance student motivation and create a link to “real-world” technological and social practices, podcasting was introduced as the method of spoken assessment.

The framework in which this study was conducted consists of an amalgamation of recent studies conducted into learner motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Graham, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Urdan & Kaplan, 2020), with a focus on the study of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation through the SDT perspective (Ryan & Deci, 2020). This interrelation of aspects of motivation refers primarily to autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy concerns the ownership of one’s actions, competence the feeling that one can succeed and grow through mastery of something, and relatedness a sense of belonging and connection. The students combined a desire for self-improvement with fulfilling expectations made of them as they worked collaboratively on an assessment method that was new to all of them, thus making Ryan and Deci’s SDT perspective of motivation a notable framework with which to conduct this study.

Research gap

The research gaps this study aims to fill are as follows:

- i) A contribution to the field of multimedia use in ELT classrooms, with a focus on assessment methods. Whereas there has been research conducted into podcasts as a learning and teaching method, there is little research that focuses on the use of podcasting as a form of English-speaking assessment. Popular methods of spoken assessment in the English language have focused on live observation (Ginther, 2003). The recording of spoken performance for later evaluation has been less popular, but due to advances in technology and social platforms that enable peer-to-peer communication, this method has the potential to grow. While spoken assessment has traditionally sought to navigate face-to-face elicitation issues (Brown, 2010), retrospective assessment through a recording, such as a podcast, places the emphasis on peer elicitation and gives the examiner greater opportunities for reflection the spoken performance of the students.
- ii) A contribution to research conducted on motivation in ELT classrooms. While student motivation is a well-researched area, this paper expands this into the realm of assessment. The focus is on academic speaking assessment and how new methods that are aligned with current trends in technology can increase student motivation and create more accurate results that reflect a student’s true speaking abilities in an environment that reflects real-world practices.

Research questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

- i) Are podcasts a viable source for academic speaking assessment?

The validity framework I have employed to answer this question is argument based (Kane, 1992; Chapelle & Voss, 2021) with the empirical evidence gathered through

questionnaires and interviews validating the assessment method employed. The interpretations made of this qualitative data could validate the appropriateness, quality, and fairness of the assessment, concluding in whether it met the aims of enhancing student motivation. The test construct was to test speaking ability and communicative skills, with the desired test impact being an increase in motivation among the test takers, as well as assessing the validity of podcasting at evaluating speaking ability and communicative skills among the students.

- ii) To what extent is student motivation increased by creating a podcast as a form of academic speaking assessment?
- iii) What are the benefits of creating podcasts as a form of academic speaking assessment?

Literary review

Podcasting

Podcasting is a twenty-first century trend that has expanded into the realm of education as a useful tool for learning and as explored in this paper, assessment. Focusing on podcasting in ELT, digital tools and technology are now everyday components of a classroom and are used to assist in listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Research done into podcasting in education has primarily focused on using them as a teaching resource and a learning resource (Popova, Kirschner & Joiner, 2013; Gachago, Livingston, & Ivala, 2016; Hennig, 2017; Goldman, 2018; Vandenberg, 2018). Hennig (2017) reported that students enjoyed repeatedly listening to podcasts, learning something new each time, just as they would enjoy rewatching a movie or relistening to a song. She also gave examples of students creating podcast clubs as extracurricular activities, demonstrating the appeal this format has to students, thus enhancing motivation. Focusing on higher education, she reported that podcasting had proved an effective and popular method for both the enhancement of learning and reviewing of study materials in comparison with traditional lectures and textbooks. This was due to podcasts being convenient and accessible due to the ability to rewind, pause, and contemplate. Importantly, she mentions how podcasts were fun, meaning students were motivated in learning them due to an enjoyment factor. To expand this into the realm of assessment would add a dimension of enjoyment to spoken assessment seldom felt. Goldman (2018) is also assenting of podcasting in education as a teaching and learning tool. As a teaching resource, he cites “The Walking Classroom” as an example of how using podcasts in a classroom enabled students “to interact with each other as a class, learn while being active and enjoy a positive and upbeat audio learning experience” (p. 6). This contrasted with what he described as boredom and tiredness in the typical classroom. As a learning resource, he claimed podcasting encouraged learning outside of the classroom, a notable aim of using podcasting as a form of spoken assessment for the research conducted into preparing the podcast was an essential element of the assessment alongside the speaking skills. He also mentions how podcasting is a holistic form of learning in that students learn skills surrounding the recording, editing, and publishing of the podcast. In the research conducted into podcasting as a form of assessment in this paper their

numerous responses about how students reacted to practicing these skills alongside their speaking ability.

Vandenberg (2018) claims that podcasting invites more opportunities for the students to demonstrate what they know and to engage in more critical and coherent thinking. He also argues that podcasting allows the students to structure arguments and share differing perspectives, therefore offering them a space in which to freely express opinion and demonstrate their speaking skills in ways that would not have been previously explored. Popova, Kirschner, and Joiner (2013) also reported how incorporating podcasting into lectures added a new impetus for learning, which in turn enhanced motivation. Their study revealed that students were inclined to ask more questions about the subject being studied, which demonstrated how they were stimulated to engage in lectures and discussions at levels previously unseen. Gachago, Livingston, and Ivala (2016) supported research done on podcasting, which concluded that it supported deeper learning by adding another element to exploring a subject. They emphasized, however, that it was a convenient tool for a wide and diverse range of educators and learners. Their research conducted at a university in South Africa demonstrated that nontraditional learners with lower incomes for resources were able to benefit from the use of podcasting in their educative process, meaning it is socially inclusive. This inclusivity of the format would extend to using it as an assessment tool where there would be few inherent advantages for students with greater access to technology.

Regarding listening skills, Hawke (2010) developed a listening course based on podcasts and found that attention spans increased among the students. Notably, as a result of this pilot study, the test scores were increased post-course in comparison to the results pre-course. Lebron-Lozada (2014) conducted a study with the students creating their own podcast, and the results indicated that the students felt more liberated in conversing, leading to a more natural conversational style and fewer errors. As a form of assessment, podcasting has been researched in the fields of geomorphology (Kemp et al, 2012), information systems management (Fernandez et al, 2009), bioscience (Morris, 2010), performing arts (Dale & Pymm, 2009), and medical education (Jones, Doleman & Lund, 2013). In all the fields mentioned, the motivation behind the studies was to engage the learners by using a form of multimedia that the students related to, offering them more freedom of choice and ability to delve deeper into their topics of choice. Podcasting as a method of speaking assessment in ELT remains unstudied, but it is practicable if the aim is to assess students speaking ability, while encouraging critical thinking skills, deeper analysis of the subject as part of the assessment, structuring coherent arguments, using technical skills, and collaboration. What's more, the factor of enjoyment creating a podcast can be transferred to the realm of speaking assessment, thus allowing students to demonstrate their skills in a conducive environment.

Motivation

Murphy and Alexander (2000) reported 20 terms referring to motivation: orientation, mastery, performance, and work avoidance, which related to goals. Individual and situational motivation related to interest. Regarding self-schema, there was agency, attribution, self-competence, and self-efficacy. Finally, intrinsic, extrinsic related to behaviour. Since then, the terminology has been expanded, but it remains a broad field,

and focus is necessary on specific sources for student motivation. Within ELT research into student motivation, Dörnyei (1999, p. 525) states that “motivation is one of the most elusive concepts in applied linguistics and indeed in educational psychology in general.” There have been various themes focused on such as psychology (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), cognitive situated perspectives (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991), motivational strategies (Dörnyei, 2001), and the social context (Bremer et al., 2014; Block, 2003; Norton, 2000). This paper extends previous research into the realm of technology, assessment, and “real-world” trends.

Numerous models of student motivation have been created in recent decades that offer an insight into the what, how, and why of motivation. Looking at contemporary models of motivation offers us an insight into how we can assess what drives students to achieve learning outcomes through assessment. Graham (2020) focuses on the outcome and the reasons for it, which relate to ability and effort. The individual’s perceptions of these lead to enhanced or diminished self-esteem and association with specific groups within the learning environment, which can create friendship networks and enhance peer influence. Eccles and Wigfield (2020) determine that motivation is driven by ability, personal values, goals, and identity fragments, which are aligned with how they benefit the individual. Thus, expectations for success are related to confidence and personal efficacy. Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) have a more goal-oriented model that sees motivation as an individual’s expectations framed in self-efficacy. Urdan and Kaplan (2020) created a model that focused on achievement, task, learning, performance, appearance, avoidance, and approach and how these were influenced by the individual’s personality, the context, and strivings. The classroom structure is an important site in the student’s motivation in this model and how it influences student motivation.

The model of motivation research by Ryan and Deci (2020) relates to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and how each influences the individual’s motivation rather than one being more essential than the other, which is the major framework upon which this study is based. They studied motivation from the self-determination theory perspective, which is a framework for understanding factors that facilitate or undermine intrinsic motivation and autonomous extrinsic motivation in educational settings. Ryan and Deci concluded that students’ basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness were largely influenced by positive outcomes of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. Regarding how their theoretical framework influenced motivational outcomes, they explain how “SDT assumes people are inherently prone toward psychological growth and integration, and thus toward learning, mastery, and connection with others” (ibid, p. 1). SDT in education relates to how more autonomous forms of motivation will lead to an enhancement of students’ engagement, learning, and wellness. Basic psychological need support from teachers facilitates such motivation, whereas need thwarting undermines it (Ryan and Deci 2020). Thus, it was a suitable theory on which to base this study of a collaborative and innovative assessment method for speaking, where constant support and a conducive environment were the main motivating objectives.

This research aligns SDT’s influence on motivation studies with spoken assessment, revealing that enhanced intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be induced by the use of current trends in technology and social communication in a collaborative manner with

ample teacher support. There has been no research to date on podcasting as a form of academic spoken assessment, so this study can contribute to both the fields of student motivation and assessment in ELT by highlighting innovative methods of assessment in the age of multimedia-inspired educative practices.

Learning-oriented assessment and podcasting

Voss (2021) states how technology is increasingly facilitating learning-oriented language assessment, particularly by creating new forms of learning interaction. The learning interaction captured in this project focused on the reduction of stress and anxiety, to enable the students to learn through assessment in a conducive atmosphere and thus produce better results. Chan and Lee (2005) found that student anxiety was reduced, and attitudes were enhanced using podcasts as a learning resource due to the sense of belonging to a learning community. The notion of comfort is supported by Sayadi and Mashhadi Heidar (2018) claiming that students can develop their speaking abilities without the anxiety of speaking before an audience if they create a podcast as a form of speaking practice. Li (2012) concluded that students in his study believed podcasts to be a more authentic method of practicing English skills due to its relation to technology. Chung and Kim (2015) also advocate that student enthusiasm is increased when the option of using podcasts is available. The students in their study believed the language was authentic and drew them nearer to the target language, hence increasing their motivation and improving their attitudes. Increased enthusiasm and heightened motivation were also noted by Yoestara and Putri (2019), who also mentioned an increase in teacher motivation and self-confidence as a result.

Relating to motivation, Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2018) found that nonconventional forms of assessment motivate learners and give them the space to do authentic activities that reflect real-life situations. They emphasized that learning-oriented assessment and such nonconventional forms of assessment that promote authentic, performance-based tasks, such as podcasting, allow assessment and instruction to continuously interact. A clear coherence is developed between assessment and interaction, meaning the teacher can gain a deeper insight into student abilities and adapt to their diverse learning styles. The increasing digitization of education opens up podcasting as a viable source of learning and assessment. When considering technology-mediated language assessment, Sadeghi and Douglas (2023) encourage us to consider how validity, reliability, fairness, ethics, and security should be considered in the digitalization of language assessment, which are all fair observations about the process of using technology in language testing. They also suggest that technology adds to the complexity of language assessment, but they concede that it can resemble real-world authenticity.

Methodology

The research conducted in this study used mixed methods, comprising questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews. Questionnaires provide evidence of patterns among larger participant sample sizes, such as the two classes that formed the base of this study. However, qualitative interviews, conducted in support of the questionnaire, gather more in-depth insights on participant attitudes and thoughts. The quantitatively analyzed data of the questionnaires was supplemented by the qualitative data

gathered from the interviews of participants from the same classes that completed the questionnaires after having done podcasts as their academic speaking assessment. It is worth mentioning that podcasting was chosen over the creation of videos due to sensitivities over image and being recorded among the students. Podcasting offered more privacy, which was intended to enhance confidence and freedom of expression.

Conducting the assessment

Background

The study was conducted at a university in Tokyo in the elective Discussion Workshop seminar for 3rd-year students. The goal of this seminar, conducted in English, is for students to develop their proficiency in public speaking through the use of realistic and engaging real-life situational dilemmas and discussion strategies. A stated goal of the seminar is for the students to readily express themselves on complex issues with critical thinking skills. In previous semesters, the method of assessment had been to present individually on a chosen topic covered in the course using PowerPoint slides, and the decision to explore a new format in assessment was taken by the instructor, and not a university decision, although support was provided for innovation in experimenting with new methods that could aid the students. Logistically, the Discussion Workshop seminar was divided into two classes: the first of which contained 23 students and the second had 16 students. To conduct the assessment, the first class was divided into five groups of four and one group of three, while the second class was divided into four groups of four. Podcasting in groupings was used as it aligns with Ryan and Deci's claim that the individual has a need to feel related or connected to others and valued by them (2020).

Subject matter

The first five classes of the seminar had covered the themes of globalization and education, and the students were given autonomy to decide upon a podcast topic within those two broad areas. The students were majoring in a diverse range of degrees, such as linguistics, international relations, Japanese literature, and sociology. No group had students that were all from the same major, meaning compromise was essential to choosing the topic, and no groups chose a topic that was directly related to the studies of any one student. The topic decisions were made on shared interests among the students and a relatedness to what had been covered on the course. Topics chosen by the students included the following:

1. What can the Japanese education system learn from Scandinavia?
2. How can English language proficiency be improved in Japanese universities?
3. What is the relation between social media and globalization?
4. What can Japan learn from South Korean "soft power"?
5. A comparison of Japanese, Chinese, and American university entrance examinations

The topics chosen were broad, and the autonomy provided enabled students to be entirely in control of the content they would discuss in the podcast. There was teacher supervision in this process to ensure the topics were "academic" enough and relevant to the themes covered in the previous weeks; however, feedback was minimal and

restricted to suggesting sources of information and directions for prioritizing on what to include in the time-limited podcast.

Timeline

Four 90-min classes were dedicated to preparation for the podcasts:

- Week 1: Topic selection and research
- Week 2: Research and rehearsal
- Week 3: Recording
- Week 4: Editing

The groups were given a further week after the fourth class to continue editing and to add clippings from interviews and other sound bites required for the podcasts.

Equipment and software

1. Each group was provided with a laptop and a plug-in microphone.
2. In week 3, a room on campus was designated to each group to ensure maximum privacy and silence when recording.
3. A software program called audacity was downloaded onto each laptop, which was used by the students to make the recording and do the editing. Instructions were provided in both English and Japanese on how to record and edit using the software. A link was also provided to YouTube tutorial videos on the software (in English with Japanese subtitles).
4. Before the deadline, each group had to upload the audio file to a shared Google drive page. From there, each podcast could be accessed by the teacher for grading purposes and by any class member as a part of the peer-review process.

Questionnaire survey

A questionnaire survey was chosen due to it being “a systematic method for gathering information from a sample of entities for the purpose of constructing quantitative descriptors for the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members” (Groves et al., 2011, p.2). This collection of declarative data through self-administered questionnaires placed an emphasis on the anonymity of the responses to avoid any sensitivity in sharing opinions. The systematic and efficient manner of collecting data through a questionnaire was useful for the researcher and convenient for the student participants who felt as though they were involved in something tangible regarding research into their recent assessment.

There was a mix of questions using a Likert scale (which ranged from 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest score for each question), multiple-choice questions, and short answer questions. To avoid confusion, the design of the questions, which were in English, considered the English levels of the students, which ranged from B1 to C2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale. As the questions required short answers, there was not an apparent confusion in the responses

due to linguistic barriers. There were 21 questions in total, and it was designed to take no longer than 15 min to complete, so as to not overburden the students, to improve reliability, and to encourage a higher participation rate. The questionnaire was conducted using Google Forms, and a link was shared with the students of each class, who were given freedom of choice regarding participation. The response rate to the questionnaire survey was 35/39, which equated to 89.7% of students in the two classes combined. This high rate of response was due to the uniqueness of the assessment carried out and a desire to see it, and other innovative forms of assessment become normalized in the coming semesters (see the “[Motivation](#)” section).

The questionnaire was divided into four sections:

1. Motivation
2. Self-efficacy
3. Collaboration
4. Linguistic capabilities

These sections were created based on the major themes explored in the study. They offered clarity and made coding the data more feasible.

Interviews

Interviews are a useful qualitative tool to follow-up with individual respondents after questionnaires. It was essential to further investigate the trends analyzed in the questionnaires to gain deeper insights into the relationship between motivation and podcasting as an assessment method. The semi-structured interviews allowed for this exploration but followed an interview guide that contained a series of questions that maintained an element of structure to proceedings. They were not a “fact-finding” exercise but an interpretation of the “how” and “why” as I explored my research questions in relation to the experiences of the participants. The purpose of the interviews was to produce knowledge in collaboration with the participants, to hear the reflections of their experiences and opinions and to interpret the meaning of the relevant data collected (Brinkmann, 2013).

Nine students participated in the interviews, which were based on the same four themes explored in the questionnaire survey (see the “[Questionnaire survey](#)” section). Within each category, there was no set order for the questions as I was interested in allowing the participants to express their thoughts and opinions on the topic without offering a “leading question.” The research questions to this study were exploratory in nature allowing for spontaneity in the interviews, which led me to adapt the expectations for the results and pre-determined assumptions on what student perceptions may be regarding recording a podcast.

Each interview was between 15 and 25 min in duration and took place on the student’s campus or online via the ZOOM platform. The interviews were recorded onto an audiotape and onto a phone (or onto a laptop during the ZOOM interviews) and were then uploaded onto the researcher’s computer where they were transcribed and coded. All participants were informed of their ethical rights and were asked to sign a consent form that had been approved by the university. Names were anonymized as was the site

of research, and all data has been shared with the participants for clarification. The main limitation of this method was the researcher's presence throughout the process, which could have an influence on the feedback given by the students, despite the assurances given of anonymity.

Results

For the vast majority of the students, it was their first time to do a podcast as a form of academic discourse with the percentage being 94.1%. The novelty of recording a podcast, and doing something multimodal for assessment, was a motivating factor as supported by comments in the questionnaire to the question: What was your main motivation for doing this podcast? These included the following:

- *Something new*
- *I have never done it, so I want to try.*
- *Something interesting*
- *To try something new*

In the interviews conducted, the relation of doing a podcast and the novelty of this were a constant theme as demonstrated by student C, who commented, "I'd always wanted to record and upload a podcast; this was my first time" (Personal communication, July 14, 2023). The current generation of university students live multimodal lives where they receive and share information on a multitude of peer-to-peer sharing platforms, with podcasts being one example. Extending this experience into assessment of their language capabilities sought to enhance their motivation in this sphere, and the results indicated that the prospect of recording a podcast was successful in that regard.

Motivation

Numerous results from the questionnaire survey and interviews related to Ryan and Deci's (2020) model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation based on SDT, which relate to students' basic psychological needs for autonomy and relatedness, two recurrent themes throughout the data. Regarding intrinsic motivation, interest and a sense of anticipation are essential factors. Among the participants of this research, anticipation for conducting the podcast was essential to creating an environment where motivation was high for the spoken assessment. In the questionnaire, the anticipated enjoyment one expects to gain from doing the task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020) was expressed by the question: How motivated were you to do a podcast as a form of spoken assessment? (see Fig. 1).

A total of 25.7% of the students responded with a score of 10 (very enthusiastic), 20% gave a score of 9, 28.6% a score of 8, and 11.4% a score of 7. The total of responses scoring 6 or below totaled 14.3%, with no respondents scoring below 4. These scores were high in comparison to the results when asked: How motivated are you usually to do spoken assessment in academic English class (see Fig. 2).

While there is enthusiasm for doing spoken assessment, what is noticeable is the larger degree of students who respond with less enthusiastic scores where 13.9% responded with a score of 1 (not motivated). In total, 38.9% of students responded with a score of 5 or less on a scale of 1–10. These results offered an indication that initial motivation

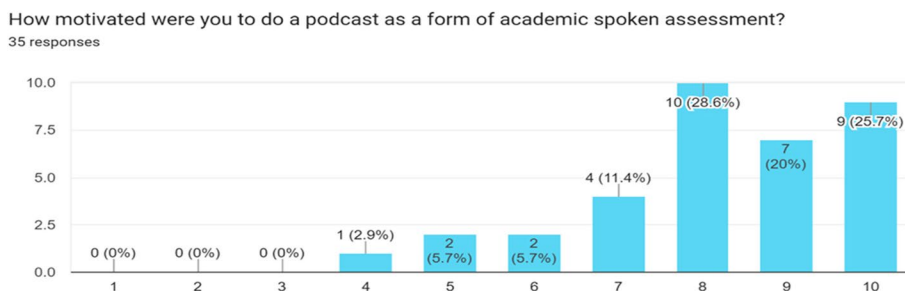


Fig. 1 Motivation to do a podcast as assessment

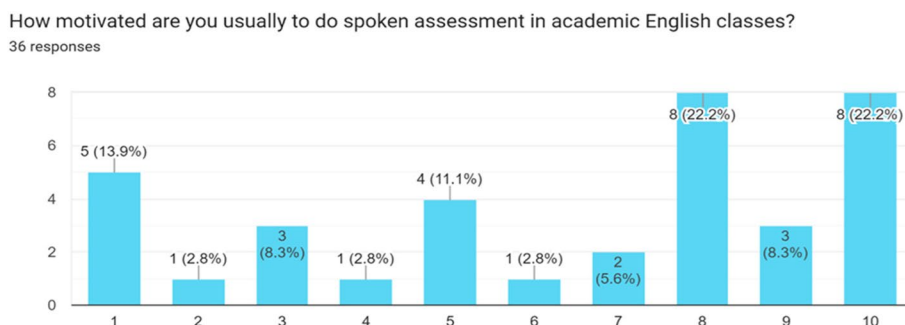


Fig. 2 Motivation to do spoken assessment

was enhanced when announced that recording a podcast would be the prime method of assessment. The relatedness of podcasting was demonstrated by student B, who stated, “I feel like podcast is a little bit trendy, so it’s interesting for me...I like the trendy style, so I love this assignment. A new style!” (Personal Communication, July 3, 2023). As well as relation to what was deemed relevant to this generation of students, the uniqueness of the assessment method was also noted by student D, “Podcast as examination is fresh for me... It’s boring because every time do the PowerPoint presentation” (Personal Communication, July 11, 2023). In the previous semester, the spoken assessment had been based on individual presentations covering a topic from the course, using PowerPoint slides to present secondary data and visuals.

The question “What was your main motivation for doing this podcast?” included in the questionnaire offered further responses that gave a deeper insight into student motivation in relation to the podcast:

- *The main motivation for me was that I increased my interest in the problem of fast fashion.*
- *Practicing speaking skills and deepen my thoughts about the topic*
- *My main motivation is to know the entrance exam system in foreign countries, compare these, and talk to other members.*
- *Four people having fun talking about globalization*

These responses support the notion that intrinsic motivation is aligned with interest and inherent satisfaction. Beyond expression of their linguistic capabilities, the students

were keen to expand their knowledge on a particular topic. It was important to create “need-supportive contexts” (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which allowed a degree of autonomy in the selection of the assessment topic, which encourages the students to explore topics for which they have a genuine interest, thus increasing their engagement with the activity. To enhance autonomous student motivation, it was crucial to offer provision of choice and a sense of ownership while not omitting structure to the proceedings. This was appreciated by the students, as demonstrated by student D, who claimed, “I hate strictness...deciding the topic was fun” (Personal communication, July 14, 2023). Student A was also representative of the participants when she stated, “I didn’t know about my topic at all, so choosing and learning about it was fun” (Personal communication, July 11, 2023). Using podcasts facilitated the sense of ownership among the students of what they were discussing due to the relatedness of this form of multimedia, supporting research conducted into other fields of study using podcasts as assessment (Fernandez et al, 2009; Dale & Pymm, 2009; Jones, Kemp et al, 2012; Jones et al, 2013; Morris, 2010).

Other factors crucial to intrinsic motivation are inherent satisfaction and enjoyment, which are stymied by nervousness. Although there were the external incentives and pressure of being graded and peer reviewed, the podcast assessment was designed to be playful, explorative, and curiosity driven, thus lessening the impact of nervousness. The students were asked how nervous they usually are when doing academic spoken assessment, and 14.7% responded with a score of 1 (very nervous), 32.4% with a score of 2, and 14.7% with a score of 3. Contrarily, just 2.9% responded with a score of 10 (very relaxed), 8.8% with a score of 9, and 2.9% with a score of 8 (see Fig. 3).

In contrast, when asked how nervous they were when doing a podcast as a form of academic spoken assessment, the responses indicated that they were considerably less nervous. A total of 8.6% responded with a score of 10 (very relaxed), 14.3% with a score of 9, and 34.3% with a score of 8. Just 17.1% of responses scored 3 or below (see Figure 4). There is a clear contrast in nervousness between podcasting and previous forms of assessment. The playful and explorative nature of framing the podcast assessment was designed to make the students comfortable in themselves and boost their self-confidence, which enhances intrinsic motivation and opens up an opportunity to express themselves in a manner more befitting of their linguistic abilities, as demonstrated by student G, who stated, “Last year I wanted to get a good grade...but (now) more enjoyable things is connected to get a good grade, so enjoying the class if it’s exciting is important” (Personal Communication, July 13, 2023).

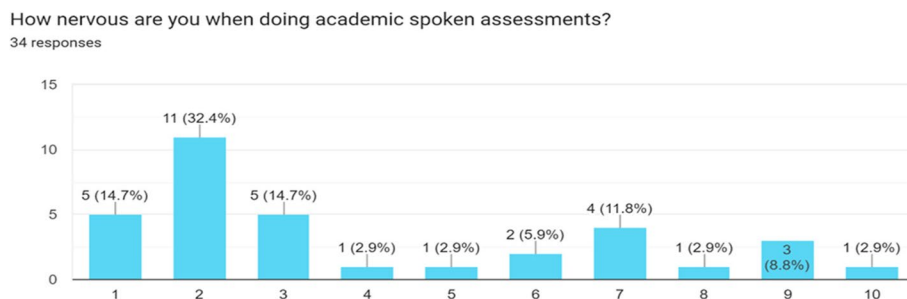


Fig. 3 Feelings conducting spoken assessment

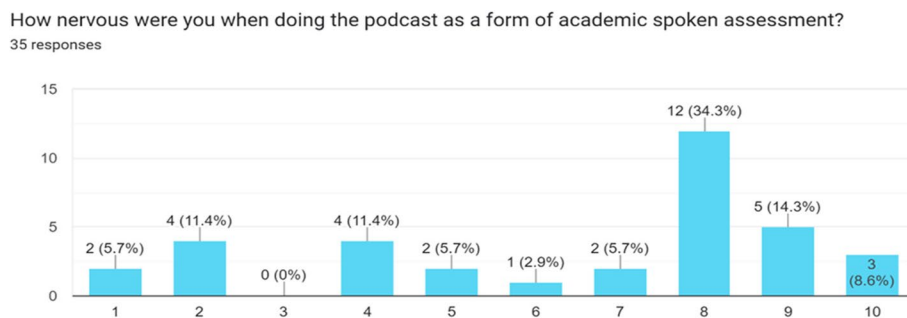


Fig. 4 Feelings conducting podcasts as spoken assessment

The results also offered insights into a range of factors related to extrinsic motivation, the external regulation in motivation. Inherent satisfaction is not relevant to this form of motivation, but externally regulated rewards or punishments are the major factors. The avoidance of anxiety or shame is crucial components, which is largely the teacher’s responsibility, and it is clear that teacher involvement was crucial to student motivation. König’s (2020) study of teacher enthusiasm in conducting podcasts demonstrated more positive instructional quality ratings when the teacher exercised enthusiasm in delivery of the topic. Positive instructional quality ratings were an inspiration in the researcher’s conduct in setting podcasts as the assessment, and the results were positive as shown by the results to the question: How would you describe the classroom environment in which the podcasts were created? There was unanimous agreement that the environment was friendly and inclusive. Urda and Kaplan’s (2020) model based on the context of the classroom and how it affects the student’s personality and goals is relatable to the participant’s perceptions of the environment in which the podcast assessment took place. Perceptions among the interviewee participants were positive as demonstrated by student F, who stated, “You let us talk freely, so we felt good” (Personal Communication, July 11. 2023), and student B, who commented on the classroom atmosphere, “It was more vibrant, so we discussed more” (Personal Communication, July 3. 2023). Focus on the environment and how it could affect student motivation and perceptions appeared to have been successful and played a large part in the success of conducting podcasts as a form of assessment. Ryan and Deci (2020) state how SDT in motivation is not automatic, and needs supportive conditions, such as teacher support and encouragement for the student’s basic psychological needs, which appears to have been successfully implemented in this study.

Regarding the question “What was your main motivation for doing this podcast?”, there was an array of responses, related to extrinsic motivation, to which one response was quite prominent:

- *To get a good score*
- *To get a higher score*
- *Getting high score*

It was clear that the major extrinsic motivating factor for students was to get a good grade from the podcast assessment, as supported by student C, who commented, “(My

motivation is) extrinsic. I always want to get a good grade and communicate with the professor” (Personal Communication, July 14, 2023). There is a sense of control in extrinsic motivation, mostly regarding the outcome of the activity, which in this case was a spoken assessment, and judging by the comments in the interviews, this form of control has few positive effects on motivation, and overshadows autonomous motivation, which was the goal of this research. To place less emphasis on grading, the students were aware that it comprised just 50% of their final score, with the other 50% being based on class performance and diligence. This was in contrast to the previous semester when there was more emphasis on the final presentation for the overall grade on the course.

It can be concluded that this study also supports the findings of Chung and Kim (2015) and Yoestara and Putri (2019) who advocate that student enthusiasm is increased when the option of using podcasts is available, with enhanced self-confidence, bettered attitudes, and a greater sense of authenticity. Both intrinsically and extrinsically, the students demonstrated a heightened sense of motivation as a result of conducting podcasts as a form of academic English-speaking assessment in contrast to previous forms of assessment, which were usually based on individual spoken presentations. The autonomy offered and conducive environment created enabled the students to feel involved with the assessment in a more relaxed manner.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1997). With enhanced self-efficacy, a student can exert control over their motivation toward the goals for which they strive. Developing a deeper interest in the activities in which they were participating was essential to lifting the burden of doing spoken assessment, and the autonomy offered by the teacher, alongside constant encouragement, played an important role in developing this. The teacher’s encouragement took the form of positive and constructive feedback, giving clear guidelines, promoting the sharing of ideas, setting realistic expectations of what was required in the podcast, demonstrating passion for the project, collaborating in their chosen topics with advice, and being sure to facilitate rather than dominate interactions. It appears that the student’s self-efficacy was enhanced due to the educator’s constant feedback and peer feedback within the group. This relates to Schunk and DiBenedetto’s (2020) model of motivation, which states that the belief of making progress is essential to student motivation. Encouraging the students to believe in themselves had the desired effects as demonstrated by student B, “Talking to my friends we said this assignment is really interesting. Out of class we did LINE chat, and we were talking about it...there’s more motivation!” (Personal communication, July 3, 2023). Student E shared similar feelings, stating, “It (autonomous encouragement) gave me the chance to search for solutions to problems...it was fun” (Personal communication, July 11, 2023). The social persuasion exerted by the teacher was a considered approach to enhancing the student’s self-efficacy and appeared to have the desired effects on the enhancement of motivation.

It was compelling to gain the thoughts of the student participants about the “enjoyment factor” for each part of the process in recording the podcast. When asked how

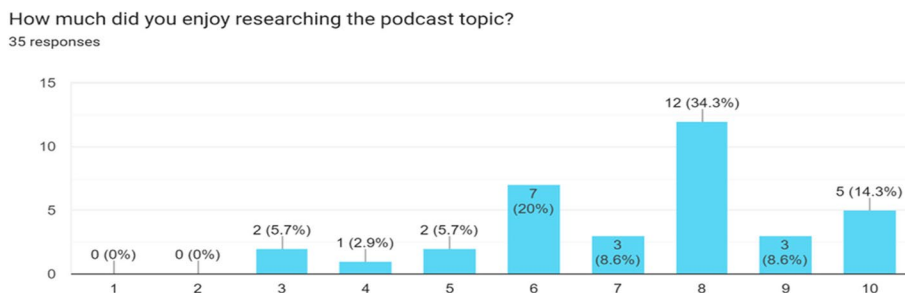


Fig. 5 Enjoyment of researching for the podcast

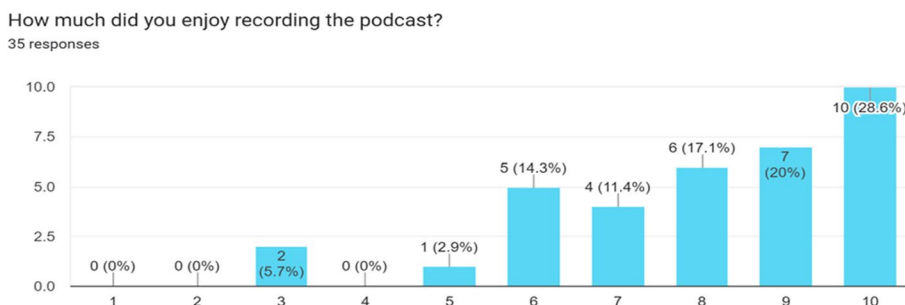


Fig. 6 Enjoyment of recording the podcast

much they enjoyed researching the podcast topic, the responses were generally positive with 14.3% scoring a 10 (enjoyed a lot), 8.6% responding with a score of 9, and 34.3% with a score of 8. There were just 14.3% of responses at a score of 5 or under (see Fig. 5).

The students were encouraged to conduct research collaboratively, and a class of 90 min was dedicated to this process so the teacher could observe and offer suggestions about sources. The remainder of the research was conducted by the students in their free time. When asked about how much they enjoyed recording the podcast, the responses were overwhelmingly positive (see Fig. 6). A total of 28.6% of students responded with the maximum score of 10 (enjoyed a lot), 20% with a score of 9, and 17.1% with a score of 8. Only 8.6% of responses scored 5 or below, indicating that motivation had been high among the groups when engaged in the process of recording the process. The students were given time in class to do the recording, and rooms were reserved around the campus so the groups could be in a quiet zone. This offered them a space where they could express themselves without the fear of being observed and with no peer pressure to perform. What’s more, the teacher’s presence was fleeting as the groups were scattered among different rooms, meaning that extrinsic motivation in the form of impressing the teacher was not an immediate factor.

When asked about the enjoyment of editing the podcast, responses were less favorable. A total of 50.6% of students responded with a score of 5 or less (with 10 being “enjoyed a lot”), and 49.4% responded with a score of 6 or higher (see Fig. 7).

In the questionnaire, responses were unanimous to the question: What was your least favorite thing about making a podcast for assessment? 12 of the responses mentioned editing, and this was supported with opinions shared in the interviews, such as from student B, who stated, “The edit(ing) was interesting, but it was a little bit heavy”

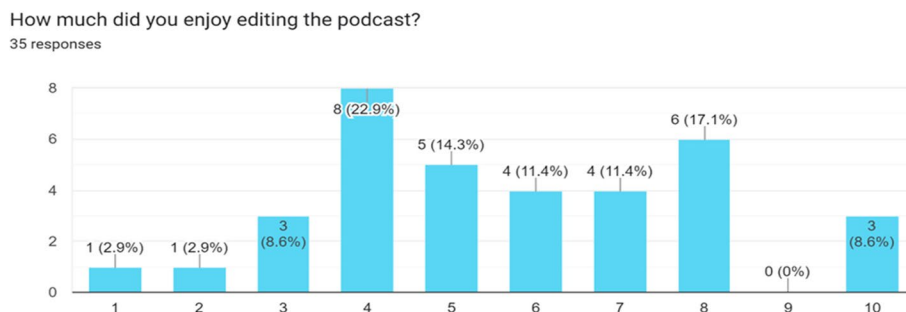


Fig. 7 Enjoyment of editing the podcast

(Personal communication, July 3, 2023). However, several interviewee participants (students B, C, E, G, and H) mentioned that knowledge they could edit improved their confidence in speaking and thus they made less mistakes in the first take and finally used most of the first edits. What this indicates is although the process of editing proved complicated and time-consuming, it enabled the students to relax more as they spoke, resulting in better fluency in the final product.

Collaboration

To the question “Do you prefer doing academic spoken presentations individually or with classmates?”, the response was heavily weighted in favor of collaboration with 85.7% claiming they prefer to work with classmates.

When asked to explain why on the questionnaire, the responses included the following:

- *It is real communication with other people, like I want in real life.*
- *We can think deeply compared to individually.*
- *My team member give me passion.*
- *I can enjoy more working with my classmates because I feel anxious of doing something alone.*
- *I can ease the feeling of nervous.*
- *It is because I can deepen my understanding of the problem through discussion with other members.*

These comments demonstrated how social modeling is an important component of self-efficacy, confidence, and a desire to perform in front of others. Ryan and Deci (2020) claimed that the individual has a need to feel related or connected to others and valued by them, which were sentiments expressed in the interviews with the participants. Student A shared her thoughts about working on the assessment with classmates, “I didn’t know about them but during the podcast we got to know each other... It’s good for making new friends” (Personal communication, July 11, 2023). This kinship was also expressed by student J, who stated, “My motivation was more higher than before preparing the podcast, because the discussion in a group was fun for me” (Personal communication, July 11, 2023). The support network offered by collaboration was prominent, as expressed by student A who said, “If I do it alone maybe I don’t do anything until the deadline but together we were planning

what we were doing” (Personal communication, July 11, 2023). Student G was also appreciative of the group connection, “My friends had good English, so they could help me a lot” (Personal communication, July 13, 2023). Student H shared a similar notion, “Sometimes my personality is not so talkative, but the other members...are talkative persons, it helped” (Personal communication, August 2, 2023). Comfort was also a recurring theme among the interviewee participants. Student B informed me that “Three or four people is comfortable for discussion...it is really fun” (Personal communication, July 3, 2023). This was echoed by student E, who stated, “I felt more comfortable with people I know” (Personal communication, July 11, 2023). The concept of comfort is unique to podcasting as a form of assessment due to the collaborative process and ability to pause, edit, and consider the content. In spoken assessment that is “live,” such as presentations, there is lack of comfort due to the inability to pause for consideration without fear of reprisal. Being comfortable allows students to produce levels of communication that can reflect more accurately their true knowledge of the spoken form of a language. In the course aims, it was emphasized that collaborative efforts in a conducive environment would be prioritized over individualistic course work, and that included assessment. As an elective course, it was important to offer students something different from what they experienced in mandatory courses, which were more formulaic in the learning and assessment methods.

To provide further analysis of the collaborative process in making the podcast, the students were asked how much they enjoyed it, and 60% responded with the maximum score of 10 (enjoyed very much), which was the highest indicator. A total of 11.4% responded with a score of 9, 14.3% with a score of 8, and 8.6% with a score of 7. Just 5.8% of respondents chose a score below 7 (see Fig. 8).

This would indicate that the friendship networks and enhanced peer influence mentioned in Graham’s study (2020) are important contributors to student motivation when conducting spoken assessment. The findings of Sayadi and Mashhadi Heidar (2018) and Chan and Lee (2005) that found student anxiety was reduced, and attitudes were enhanced due to the sense of belonging to a learning community when doing podcasts, were also correlated with the results of this study. This demonstrates that findings from studies conducted into spoken learning processes also relate to attitudes in assessment regarding podcasts. The sense of belonging to a community

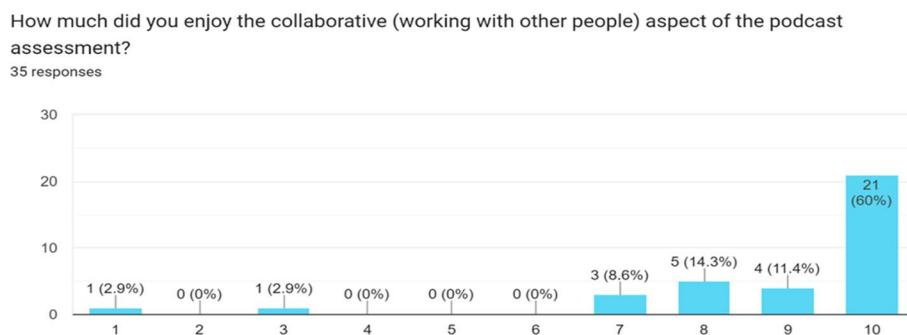


Fig. 8 Collaboration in the podcast

is seldom found in assessment, but in conducting podcasts, it was a unique and appreciated feature among the participants.

The connectedness fostered in the collaborative process of recording the podcast was extended to a desire to hear the podcasts from other groups. The students were asked about how keen they were to hear the other groups' podcasts, and the response was positive, with 31.4% responding with a score of 10 (very keen), 28.6%, with a score of 9, and 17.1% with 8 (see Fig. 9).

The responses in the interviews indicated that the motivation extracted from hearing other groups' podcasts was largely based on linguistic capabilities, as expressed by student B, "We had to hear about other group's podcasts...their pronunciation is really clear to hear, they spoke freely" (Personal communication, July 3, 2023). Student H shared a similar sentiment, "It was good practice for me, to improve my listening skills" (Personal communication, August 2, 2023). Student J extended this to listening to her own podcast, "Listening to myself made me want to practice more...pronunciation skills" (Personal communication, July 11, 2023). As a post assessment activity, the students were asked to listen to another group's podcast and prepare comments and questions for the following class. This further deepened the connections within the class as students could share their experiences, opinions, and creativity with members of groups beyond their own, thus offering them more insight into the topics covered, linguistic capabilities within the class, and creative process.

Linguistic capabilities

When asked on the questionnaire what their favorite thing was about making a podcast for assessment, there was a common theme among the responses:

- *It was fun to talk with my groupmates.*
- *I could talk with my team member.*
- *Talking about our topic with friends*
- *It was real, and I spoke a lot.*
- *Talking with classmates. I was more relaxed.*
- *I tried to speak English well as I could without jamming up, but I inevitably made mistakes. It was interesting to see my classmates and myself making mistakes despite our best efforts.*

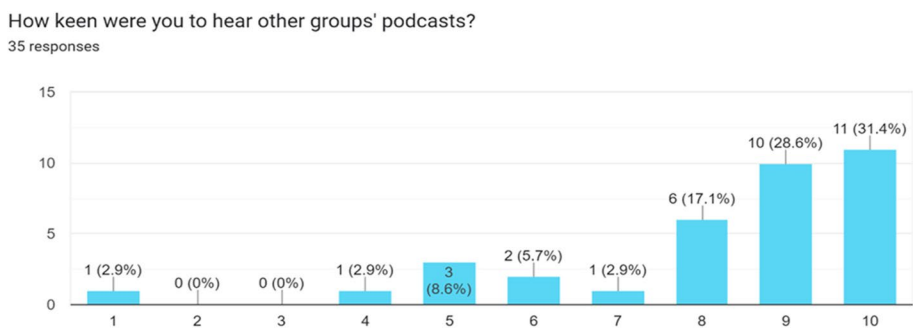


Fig. 9 Keeness to hear other groups' podcasts

- *I was inspired by the group members' English ability. I could enjoy to make a conversation with my teammates.*

Being offered the opportunity to speak freely and express their linguistic capabilities in a relaxed and conducive environment appeared to enhance motivation. These results are in-line with the study conducted by Lebron-Lozada (2014) demonstrating how students feel more liberated in conversing, leading to a more natural conversational style and fewer errors. Student H demonstrated this by stating, "I was motivated to show my participation through the talking (in the podcast)" (Personal communication, August 2, 2023). Student F gained motivation from her groupmate's linguistic capabilities, "I was impressed by my friend's English skills. They used ab-lib and I was so surprised" (Personal communication, July 11, 2023). The alignment of assessing linguistic capabilities with multimedia proved to be popular, proving the effectiveness of podcasting as a form of spoken assessment. Student B shared, "If you want to focus on talking skills podcasts are good to know about our speaking skills" (Personal communication, July 3, 2023). On a more technical note, student H stated, "The podcast has no visualization...only sounds. So, I learnt the importance of accent, pronunciation, and intonation" (Personal communication, August 2, 2023). Thus, the validity of podcasting as an assessment tool for speaking ability appears to be supported by feedback from the students.

It is important to note that the students recognized a difference in their English use recording a podcast as spoken assessment in comparison to more traditional forms of spoken assessment. Student G shared that "We felt daily life talking was important, so we didn't make a script" (Personal communication, July 13, 2023). She also added that her main motivation was, "To (get) more confidence speaking English, and to speak real life English, without a script" (Personal communication, July 13, 2023). Podcasting was deemed to encourage a more natural style of speaking in comparison to the previous assessments conducted, such as PowerPoint presentations, as demonstrated by student A who stated, "Talking is like a conversation and...it's natural" (Personal communication, July 11, 2023). This was supported by student J, "Our podcast is conversation style, so it's more realistic. We didn't make a script" (Personal communication, July 11, 2023).

Conclusion

When asked whether they would be happy to repeat recording a podcast as a form of academic spoken assessment, 51.4% responded with "yes," 42.9% with "maybe," and just 5.7% responded with "no." This indicates that overall, the podcasting as a form of academic spoken assessment was a success, and the students who participated would be happy to repeat the process. One of the reasons to conduct podcasting as a form of spoken assessment was to enable students to relate their academic English discourse to the realities of how they engage with the language. When asked whether they listen to podcasts in their free time, over half said yes. There is an array of activities conducted in speaking skills classes, particularly regarding assessment, which bear little relation to "real-world" activities, thus decreasing relatedness, which in turn decreases motivation among the students who proceed to regard assessment as a means to get credits. The results from this study correlate with Li (2012) who concluded that there was more authenticity for the students in the method of creating podcasts as they felt they

were expressing their English skills in a manner relevant to the contemporary use of technology. Student C confided that “It’s great (using technology and software in the assessment), because we cannot avoid them and they are required when I apply for a job” (Personal communication, July 14, 2023). The relevance of podcasting was also expressed by student H, who stated, “I often to listen to podcasts...so it was not like a test for me. I can commit (to) this task more relaxed.” She went on to say, “Many people has the demand to listen to podcasts, so to learn and practice to make one...how to tell and show our feelings through the internet is important in the future” (Personal communication, August 2, 2023). Student I spoke in a similar vein, “We didn’t have any opportunity to (use multimedia), so I learned for the first time...it’s important.” (Personal communication, August 8, 2023). This selection of quotes represents a wider feeling that the use of relevant social technology motivates students due to it being an extension of their everyday practices that relate to their social world and future professional practices. This relation enhances their motivation to perform beyond the accumulation of grades and credits.

Discussion

The results from the questionnaire survey done by the student participants were mostly conclusive in that conducting podcasts as a form of academic English spoken assessment was well-received. This was supported by data extracted from the interviews conducted with students, which revealed that topic research was made more enjoyable and relevant, motivation was enhanced, and self-confidence improved. A safe space was also created in which students could speak freely and express their linguistic capabilities without fear in an environment they felt was conducive and relatable to their “real-world” practices. From student feedback, it can be applied that podcasts are a viable source for academic speaking assessment. The majority of students were keen to repeat the process, and in the interviews, the participants were unanimous in declaring podcasts as an authentic method with which to test a student’s English-speaking ability. Ryan and Deci stated that “SDT argues that need supports enhance intrinsic motivation and internalization, resulting in higher achievement, whereas, paradoxically, attempting to control achievement outcomes directly through extrinsic rewards, sanctions, and evaluations generally backfires, leading to lower-quality motivation and performance” (2020, p.2). The results indicate that following this theory was successful in achieving the goals of the podcast due to the environment created in which external influence over extrinsic motivations was kept to a minimum, while offering support for student’s basic psychological needs was maximized.

To the research question “Is student motivation increased by creating a podcast as a form of academic speaking assessment?”, the participant response was positive. The study was designed to create highly self-efficacious students with enhanced motivation in the assessment process. Through the observing of others, support of others, and positive affirmation from teacher and peers, self-efficacy was enhanced, which led to a higher level of motivation. The aforementioned factors strengthened the belief among the students that they had the ability to succeed due to an increase in self-confidence. Collaboration was an essential component of increasing student self-confidence, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. Working with peers to create the podcast led

to a support network that increased self-confidence and created an environment where inspiration was taken from each other linguistically and motivationally. What's more, the uniqueness of doing a podcast as a form of assessment was a motivating factor due to its originality and freshness, which meant the students were motivated to try something new.

Intrinsic motivation is an important component of learning and through this study was extended to the realm of assessment. Through intrinsic motivation, the aim was to instill a sense of autonomy in the process where the students could take ownership of the essential components of the assessment. Decisions on topic selection, the research process, recording and editing process, and the style and format of the podcasts were largely left to the students within their groups, which enabled a sense of freedom. This led to a playful, explorative, and curiosity-driven process, which was fostered by the teacher to ensure there was enjoyment in conducting the assessment. Another important aspect of intrinsic motivation is relatedness, which was expressed in this study through collaboration with classmates and through relation to social activities that the students conduct outside of class. The social learning experienced through collaboration was inspired by observation, imitation, and modeling, which led to the need to contribute within the group setting, thus increasing motivation. Autonomy and relatedness in conducting the podcast as a form of assessment garnered a sense of inherent satisfaction, which is the essence of intrinsic motivation. A high level of inherent satisfaction motivates a student beyond externally regulated factors and ensures that motivation is high when conducting a task, something vital in an environment such as spoken assessment, which can often be a daunting process.

Extrinsic motivation is predominantly based around externally regulated rewards or punishments and among the students in this study was predominantly expressed through the desire to achieve a high score. This form of motivation was not the main focus in this study of enhancing student motivation but should not be discounted as it is the accumulation of credits that enables a student to graduate and successfully achieve one of the major purposes of attending tertiary education. However, if the essential components of intrinsic motivation are addressed in assessment, it is likely that student motivation will be enhanced, resulting in higher levels of performance in assessment. Regarding the teacher's role in the assessment process of podcasting, enthusiastic presentation of instructional content when adopting such a contemporary assessment format was essential. This was because evolving away from traditional assessment formats requires a leap of faith from both the teacher and student, and thus, support, guidance, and encouragement were necessary to convince both students and teacher of the process. The major contribution of the teacher in this process was creating a relaxed and supportive classroom environment, which was a major focus in the preparation of the study and according to participant responses would appear to have been achieved.

The other research question to this study was "What are the benefits of creating podcasts as a form of academic speaking assessment?" It was encouraging to see that the students believe their linguistic capabilities were expressed in a natural, fluent, and competent manner due to the notion that podcasting was more relatable, and the collaborative process enabled them to inspire and support each other. The liberation for students to speak freely without the external pressures of teacher presence or

an audience led to fewer errors and more freedom to express themselves on their chosen academic topics, which in turn led to higher grades and a deeper sense of achievement. The students felt as though they had met their goals in demonstrating their ability to speak naturally, something achieved due to the use of scripts not being convenient to podcasting as a form of assessment.

The technical aspect of recording and editing the podcast added a multimodal component to the assessment. Although the technical quality of the podcast just comprised a small proportion of the final grade, it gave the participants and opportunity to combine their linguistic capabilities with technical capabilities highly relevant to the digital age, thus once again enhancing the relatability of the assessment. The participants had the opportunity to use skills that they are largely competent with in their time outside of class, such as editing, and using technology to record their thoughts. This extension of their private activities and the social aspect of the assessment added to their motivation.

With regard to future research, an experiment would be useful to empirically test inter-rater reliability in judging whether results are higher due to the use of contemporary social-technological processes in spoken assessment. While podcasting as a teaching and learning resource has been well researched, there are not an abundance of studies that analyze it as an assessment technique, and these would be useful to create a more rounded view of its feasibility. In general, more research is needed into using multimedia in language assessment in a manner that increases student and teacher motivation while enabling the students to practice and demonstrate an array of skills that extend beyond their linguistic capabilities. Such research will continue to develop language assessment in a manner befitting a fluid, immersive technological age. Finally, a continuation of research into SDT and how it affects motivation within the classroom are a useful tool to assessing how student's basic psychological needs can be met when conducting assessments in educational spaces.

Abbreviations

CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
EAP	English for academic purposes
ELT	English language teaching
EMI	English as a medium of instruction
SDT	Self-determination theory

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Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Author contributions

I, Simon Perry, am the sole author of this work.

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Simon Perry is an assistant professor in the Center for Global Education, the University of Tokyo, Japan. He researches issues in sociolinguistics with a focus on plurilingual language concepts, such as English as a lingua franca and translanguaging. He also takes an interest in human capital and innovation in English language teaching. He is specifically interested in how these issues effect teacher and student identity.

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The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Competing interests

The author declares no competing interests.

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