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# **MASTER'S DISSERTATION**

**How does creating a podcast in groups  
foster student-student interaction and  
promote cooperative learning?**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Abstract**

In the past few years, an increasing number of schools have incorporated the use of podcasts into their classes. This dissertation examines how podcasting — as an optimal resource to facilitate learning — can foster student-student interaction and promote cooperative learning. Through a detailed analysis of the data collected in a state school in northeast Spain, the researcher describes the different aspects of the study, the characteristics of the activities carried out, the viewpoints of the participants and the effect of the activities on the participants. The final step of this document involves interpreting the data and responding to the research problem. The findings of this study reveal that creating podcasts allows students to interact and learn from each other through a very original process.

**Keywords:** podcast, interaction, cooperative learning, task-based methodology, action research, interdependence

### **Resumen**

En los últimos años cada vez más escuelas han incorporado el uso de podcasts en las aulas. Esta tesis examina cómo el podcasting — que se puede concebir como un óptimo recurso para facilitar el aprendizaje — favorece la interacción entre estudiantes y promueve el aprendizaje cooperativo. A través de un análisis detallado de los datos recopilados en una escuela estatal en el noreste de España, se describen los diferentes aspectos del estudio, las características de las actividades realizadas, el punto de vista de los participantes y el efecto de las actividades en los participantes. La última parte de este documento se centra en la interpretación de los datos y la elaboración de una respuesta al asunto de investigación. Los hallazgos de este estudio revelan que crear podcasts permite a los estudiantes interactuar y aprender cooperativamente mediante un proceso muy original.

**Palabras clave:** podcast, interacción, aprendizaje cooperativo, metodología basada en tareas, investigación-acción, interdependencia









## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this document is to examine how podcasting can foster student-student interaction and promote cooperative learning through a task-based methodology implemented in a state school in Catalonia (Spain).

The role of schools has always been to train students as citizens and today's world poses new challenges to all educational institutions. In order to delve deeply into innovative strategies, the researcher takes into account the process by which some students carry out their tasks.

His interest in this issue arises from the necessity to help students increase their interpersonal relationships and facilitate the way they learn. For this reason, he proposes to design a creative task and analyse the implementation results.

He tries to respond to the following research question: "how does creating a podcast in groups foster student-student interaction and promote cooperative learning?"

The final goal of this paper is to explain the usefulness of the research carried out for the professional development of the student-teacher whose ambition is to contribute to the evolution of the educational system, by incorporating the use of podcasting into foreign language classes.

The content of this dissertation is organised in the following sections:

- Section 1 encompasses an introduction of the study, including the research purpose.
- Section 2 includes a very detailed literature review, that is, the theoretical framework this document is based on.
- Section 3 contains the research methodology — the generical methodological approach employed —, an in-depth explanation of the school context where the data were collected, and a description of the tasks the participants performed.
- Section 4 concentrates on describing the data and presents an exhaustive analysis tightly linked to the observed phenomena.
- Section 5 consists in responding to the research problem through the interpretation of the analysis.
- Section 6 focuses on the final conclusions of this thesis, including an answer to the main research question, an explanation of other findings, and a brief reflection on the usefulness of the results for the student-teacher.
- Section 7 contains all the references.

- Section 8 includes all the appendices: the complete transcripts of the data, the transcription symbology, and relevant pictures of the teacher's diary related to the tasks.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Podcasting in education**

In the last few years, education has been reshaped through ground-breaking methods aimed at overcoming multiple challenges. Diverse academic environments have embraced the recent innovations in technology without hesitation. “The omnipresence of mainstream media and flexible and independent access to technology has encouraged adult learners to become more receptive to new forms of instruction in the classroom” (Luna & Cullen, 2011, p.40). One of the latest medium to emerge into the mainstream has been “podcasting” having quite an impact on the learning process. The term is a combination of the words “iPod” and “Broadcasting” and refers to a form of audio broadcast on the internet people can create and access at any time and wherever they are. Increasingly the term is also being applied to video as well as audio recording.

According to Ng'ambi and Lombe (2012):

(..) podcasts can be used as learning resources for facilitating student learning. The extent to which this is done is dependent on environmental and pedagogical factors. Using podcasts within a constructivist paradigm encourages scholarly knowledge construction as students are given the opportunity to engage with content critically (p.191).

An increasing number of teachers are of the opinion that by incorporating digital materials into lessons, language learning turns into a dynamic process. “Done well, podcasting can reveal to students, faculty, staff, communities—even the world—the essential humanity at the heart of higher education” (Campbell, 2005, p.42).

Arguably, technology is changing the way people approach learning, and the way educators experience teaching – with this, there are plenty of different options to structure discipline content and offer opportunity for technological application. Nowadays, teaching involves more than being able to convey knowledge to people. It is no longer conceived as a simple transmission of knowledge. Students are provided with “fresh” material enabling them to interact and to enhance their personal and professional development.

## 2.2 An interaction-based learning approach

Podcasting certainly paves the way for a teaching method which is mostly based on student-student interaction. Given that languages mainly exist to facilitate communication, it has become essential to promote interaction in foreign language classes.

Long (as cited in Lightbown and Spada, 2013, p.114) says:

(...) what learners need is opportunities to interact with other speakers, working together to reach mutual comprehension through negotiation for meaning. Through these interactions, interlocutors figure out what they need to do to keep the conversation going and make the input comprehensible to the less proficient speaker.

It can be argued without straying too far afield from the primary focus of this research that social interaction has always played a significant role in people's life. The human brain is equipped with a noticeable ability that allows it to perceive what others do so as to try to understand their thoughts, feelings and intentions. Blumer (1986) states that: "Group life necessarily presupposes interaction between the group members; or, put otherwise, a society consists of individuals interacting with one another. The activities of the members occur predominantly in response to one another or in relation to one another" (p.7). Like all social systems, schools are made up of social networks that cause learners to interact with each other.

However, it should be noted that constructive interaction does not automatically arise from a mere context in which students share time and space. Johnson (1981) argues that: "In order for student-student interaction to have constructive impact on learning, it must be characterized by acceptance, support and liking" (p.9). Therefore, only when these components are present, effective cooperation can flourish.

When interacting, students become the centre of the classroom and the fact that they take on more active role arouses their motivation. Furthermore, they are more autonomous and their communication skills through cooperative effort lead to the mastery of oral discourse (Escobar, 2002). Yet, although they are at the core of the learning-teaching process, the educator still has a great responsibility. As Grubaugh and Houston (2010) point out: "A teacher can improve the context or learning by adjusting a number of specific variables to exert increasing control or to relax control over the management and behavior of the class" (p.375).

Language learners engage in an evolving process which takes place in interaction. In other words, learning originates in a social context shaped by interaction – which is increasingly being fostered by the use of podcasting enabling students to manipulate learning content, with critical acumen.

## 2.3 Cooperative learning

Undoubtedly when student-student interaction is established, cooperative learning takes the reins from conventional teaching-learning methods.

According to Olsen and Kagan (1992):

Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others (p.8).

Indeed, “cooperative learning, also known as collaborative learning, involves working together with peers toward a common goal. Often, it involves collectively identifying and studying real-world problems, interacting with classmates, and assessing each other's contributions, such as project-based learning” (Price-Mitchell, 2015, para.3).

However, while both cooperative and collaborative learning are terms often used interchangeably and the purpose of both pedagogical methods is the same – to offer students opportunities to engage with each other in introspective learning – there are some important differences: “with collaborative learning, students make individual progress in tandem with others. Cooperative learning involves more inherent interdependence, promoting greater accountability” (“Collaborative learning vs. cooperative learning,” 2017).

Johnson (1981) points out:

There are three ways in which learning goals may be structured: cooperative, competitive, and individualistic. It is the cooperative goal structure that is most effective in promoting supportive peer relationships as well as the achievement, healthy development, and effective socialization of students (p.9).

The research context of the present study contributed satisfactorily to the data gathering as the task-based methodology, intended to promote cooperative learning, helped the students acquire language content by taking into account their social skills.



### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Action Research**

The methodological approach of this study is based on action research. Action research is defined as an organised process which can be conducted by a single teacher or a group of teachers who share an interest in a particular issue. According to Sagor (2000), such disciplined process of inquiry begins with the researcher(s) asking the following question: *“What element(s) of our practice or what aspect of student learning do we wish to investigate?”* Once chosen the researchers’ proposals, the next step consists in creating meaningful questions in order to guide the inquiry. Professional educators always make sure their instructional decisions are based on the best possible data and obtain reasonable reliability of their data analysis. The final step involves taking informed action or action planning. One of the main goals of action research is to personalise teaching, to enhance the motivation and efficacy of a specific faculty and to meet the needs of a diverse student body.

In short, action research is developed in seven stages: 1) Selecting a focus; 2) Clarifying theories; 3) Identifying research question; 4) Collecting data; 5) Analysing data; 6) Reporting results; 7) Taking informed action. It is worth mentioning that the final phase of this process was not taken into account as the student-teacher carried out his internship at the allocated school for a short professional period.

#### **3.2 Data observation**

The present study employs a qualitative method of data analysis. Firstly, this research takes an objective position: the initial approach concentrates on analysing the data. Secondly, the emphasis is on generating hypothesis from the data collection. During the second phase, the researcher describes the different pertinent aspects of the study encompassing the setting, the purpose of the activities examined, the viewpoints of the participants and the effect of the activities on the participants. The final stage of the analysis process involves interpreting and responding to the research question – *“how does creating a podcast in groups foster student-student interaction and promote cooperative learning?”*

In order to guarantee anonymity, none of the real students’ names are shown in this research. Formal permission from the participants was needed before the implementation of the tasks.

### **3.3 Method**

#### **3.3.1 Research context**

The present study was conducted in a state school in the Baix Llobregat, an area of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia (Spain). The school offered language courses designed to form plurilingual and pluricultural citizens and help them develop the key competencies for lifelong learning such as digital abilities fostering the development of audiovisual interaction and communication. Its philosophy – which fully focused on task-based learning method – enhanced learners’ autonomy and responsibility and placed great emphasis on collaborative work contributing substantially to a welcoming learning atmosphere. In order to guarantee effective teaching methods, the school promoted the use of new technologies: all classrooms were equipped with interactive digital whiteboards, computers with projectors and loudspeakers, web cameras and video conferencing software.

The student body was diverse and composed of people aged 16 to 60 who spent their time learning languages for several reasons, i.e. improving their professional profile, traveling, enriching their personal knowledge, etc. All students contributed as much as possible to the educational community, by taking an active part in the teachers’ proposals, in both the classroom and extracurricular activities enabling them to fulfil the objectives of the face-to-face courses.

The teaching unit was created in collaboration with a teacher-student before the beginning of the internship. It had a comprehensible final product promoting communication among classmates. The material provided session-by-session detailed instructions for implementation and was designed to teach the students to express themselves properly in a job interview, to help them write a cover letter, and to offer advice on how to get a job. Its content-rich sections were fundamental to the development of the research<sup>1</sup>.

#### **3.3.2 Participants**

The participants in the study were 44 people from two upper-intermediate English courses corresponding to level B2, certified according to the CEFR. The first course was composed of 22 people of different ages and from diverse social backgrounds, while the second one consisted of 22 professionals aged 30 - 50, most of whom were secondary school teachers willing to

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 4 - Picture 1 for the teacher’s material

sharpen their English skills. They worked in small groups, by using multiple modes of communication, e.g. discussions and presentations.

### **3.3.3 Tasks and data collection**

The participants had to discuss some important strategies about how to perform in a job interview. They had to identify what they considered to be their abilities, skills, personal qualities and strategies to market themselves effectively to potential employers while performing two different tasks. During the first assignment, in groups of three they had to audio-record themselves (some students of the second group video-recorded themselves), playing three different roles: the person looking for a job, the employer asking the candidate a series of questions – previously formulated by the teacher in training – and the examiner assessing the whole performance. At the end of the presentation, the roles were reversed so that all of them were able to play different characters. Due to lack of time, the students had to limit their activity to approximately five minutes. However, such time-restriction did not affect their outcomes which were definitely productive. Throughout the second task, in groups of four they had to video-record themselves, explaining the necessary steps in order for anyone to have a successful job interview. Prior to the beginning of the recordings, they tried to organise the main ideas and write them down in a notebook. Given the complexity of the project they worked on, forty-five minutes were allotted for the final activity. The high-degree of self-selection on behalf of the students indicated that the tasks were engaging.

The participants used their smartphones and the school laptop video cameras to record themselves. All groups chose different settings to fulfil the assignments: some stayed in the classroom and positioned themselves next to the window, others went to the hallway and other school rooms. Once they completed the activities, they were asked to upload both the audio and video recordings to Edmodo – an online networking application for teachers and students, that is, a kind of virtual classroom. The student-teacher accessed Edmodo to create two folders in which the participants saved their final products. All podcasts were renamed and uploaded to a Google Drive folder. The data to carry out this study were gathered in March 2018. Following the data collection, the recordings were transcribed using the Jeffersonian transcription system so that they could be studied in detail<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 3 for the transcription symbology

Table 1. *Details of the tasks*

GROUP 1 – 22 participants	GROUP 2 – 22 participants
<p>1. First task 9 AUDIO RECORDINGS – groups of three</p> <p>2. Second task 6 VIDEO RECORDINGS – groups of four</p>	<p>1. First task 4 VIDEO RECORDINGS – groups of three</p> <p>5 AUDIO RECORDINGS – groups of three</p> <p>2. Second task 6 VIDEO RECORDINGS – groups of four</p>

## 4. ANALYSIS

The aim of this section is to concentrate on describing the content of the video recordings, including the participants' engagement and participation in the tasks, and to carry out a qualitative analysis tightly linked to the data. Two different podcasts have been selected. Before analysing the data in depth, the transcriptions have been divided into detailed sequences.

### 4.1 Podcast 1

The primary data source in this study consists of a six-minute podcast – created by some participants of the first group during the second task – which begins with one student introducing the topic, by explaining to the world the main steps that any candidate should take in order to have a successful job interview<sup>3</sup>. Four students put into practice the knowledge acquired, by using the words they learned in class.

#### *Excerpt 1*

- S1** 1 we are going to to speak ↑ and give you e::hm some piece of advice ↑ e::hm  
2 and also to discuss about about XXX e:hm that you (.) must consider when  
3 doing a: a job interview and e:hm also e:hm (.) what are the things ↑ that you  
4 must know (.) in order to in order to to have a successful e:hm interview job  
5 so: now Anita is going [to] =
- S2** 6 [Yeah]
- S1** 7 talk about some different points ↑
- S2** 8 Yeah now we are going to start the cover letter (.) we consider the it's (.) it's  
9 the main intern XXX about yourself and you: you maybe ↑ make a big  
10 difference among all the candidates (.) and also it's like a big opportunity to  
11 explain (.) information you don't have (.) with details in the cv (.) and right now  
12 Sarah is going to talk about the main parts

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<sup>3</sup> Complementary data aid in interpreting the analysis. See Appendix 4 - Picture 2 for the teacher's diary

It can be observed that while starting to record themselves, the students show a good degree of control and autonomy. The first interaction takes place when S1 invites S2 to discuss the main points of the topic<sup>4</sup>.

The second excerpt illustrates how student-student interaction is established during the first steps of the task.

*Excerpt 2*

**S3** 13 °° Yeah °° the main information that you need to have in a cover letter it's first  
14 explain your personal details like your name or your age then your experience  
15 your skills and your studies ↑ (.) e:hm and the most important is to explain  
16 why you are suitable for that job or what you can provide to the company  
17 using a formal vocabulary ↓ (0.2) ((looks at S4))

**S4** 18 [One]

**S3** 19 [Now] Omar is going to talk about the job interview

**S4** 20 °° Yeah °° right now we are going to talk about the job interview a:nd e:hm  
21 how the candidate e::hm should e::hm show ↑ e:hm (0.4) in in the interview  
22 and we think that (.) she or he e:hm should e::hm show her or his best e:hm  
23 confidence confident e:hm (0.4) ((looks at S1))

**S3** 24 The parts that we need in a job interview

**S1** 25 [°° Yeah °°]

**S4** 26 [Yeah] for instance e::hm do you know e:hm ↑ what's e:hm like a candidate  
27 e:hm do you know what you can do or you cannot do ↓ in a interview? ↑  
28 ((looks at S2))

S3 is perfectly in tune with what S2 says as she starts to talk by whispering the word “yeah”. It is interesting to notice that S2 and S4 also begin the discussion by uttering the same word. This shows that they are capable of starting the speech in an appropriate way.

After saying the word “studies” (line 15), S3 briefly pauses, which suggests that she needs to arrange her ideas. Shortly before she finishes her turn (line 17), she looks at S4, waiting

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1 for the entire transcription

for his answer. Just as S4 starts to speak, S3 realises that she has to mention what S4 is going to talk about. S4 seems to have difficulty presenting the topic, as he continuously utters words and sounds such as “a:nd” and “e::hm” (lines 20, 21 and 22) which allow him to gain more time in order to restructure the speech. Afterwards, he stops talking and looks at S1 (line 23), waiting for her to say something that might enable him to remember the main points. S3 becomes actively involved in the discussion (line 24) in an attempt to help S4, by mentioning the words “the parts” (line 24) that permit him to move on to the next step. S4 continues to explain the stages of a job interview, although he finds it hard to express himself properly. Such effort is stressed by the sounds and words “a:nd” and “e::hm” he utters once again (line 26). Finally, he interacts with S2, by posing a question about some job interview strategies.

In the following excerpt, the task has already warmed up. All the students are eager to have a say about the topic and stick to the rules of respect, listening to each other and showing consideration for their peers’ opinion and ideas.

*Excerpt 3*

**S2** 29 So like I think ↑ had in XXX had I given ↓ a chance to (.) to do a job  
 30 interview ↑ you need to (0.3) to focus on like ∞ on ∞ what ↓ what you are  
 31 going to wear like XXX to make e:hm to make a good e:hm first impression  
 32 you need to XXX and not wear anything casual shorts or bright colours  
 33 ∞ I think that’s it you need like to ∞

**S1** 34 A:nd also I do believe that were I were we offered to apply for any  
 35 enterprise ↑ it would be: e::hm it would be interesting to think about your body  
 36 language because sometimes we are not e::hm focused on that but it’s so  
 37 important because when (.) with your movements you can explain e::hm what  
 38 you want to say so it’s so important

**S3** 39 And the make-up ↑ (.) needs to be: natural without lightly colours ↓ in your  
 40 face

**S1** 41 ((nods her head))

S2 answers the question by explaining what people should wear in order to make a good impression when having a job interview. S1 takes part in the discussion (line 34), by placing great emphasis on the fact that body language plays a significant role in the interview process. S3 also

has a say about the topic (line 39). After that, S1 nods her head, which means that S1 and S3 are on the same page.

The fourth excerpt shows how the students help and support each other while continuing to record themselves.

*Excerpt 4*

**S4** 42 Ok and now we are going to do a specific e::hm (0.3) job about  
43 °° the interview °° =

**S2** 44 An example ↑

**S1** 45 An example

**S3** 46 °° An example °°

**S4** 47 An example e:hm I am the interviewer and you are the candidate a:nd =

**S2** 48 °° Ok °° let's begin

**S4** 49 e:hm

**S1** 50 Yeah [as your XXX]

**S4** 51 [For instance ↑] (0.2) what type of personali:ty what what type of personality

52 can you work better with? ↓

**S1** 53 °° Do you think °° ((addresses S2))

**S2** 54 I think e:hm someone (0.2) like in my case I think someone [who is

55 open- minded to work with any kind of pers XXX people °° that's it I think

56 yeah °°]

**S1** 57 [((nods her head))]

S4 wants to offer more details on the topic, but he cannot find the word that best fits in the context. This is evidenced by the pause (line 42) that lets him gain time: he tries to come up with an appropriate expression, but without success. S2 suddenly intervenes to prevent the situation from getting worse: she finds the word that S4 needs (line 44). S1 repeats the word “example” to reinforce the tone of the speech and to make sure that S4 keeps talking and accepts the help offered. S3 is in tune with that, since she whispers what has just been said. S4 regains his



strength and addresses S2 to invite her to simulate a job interview. He begins by saying that they are going to play two different roles, that is, the interviewer and the candidate. It is interesting to point out that it is not the first time that S4 has got stuck in the conversation. His thoughts often become disorganised. Communication is severely hampered due to his lack of vocabulary. His intonation is not appropriate and sentence stress is not accurately placed. Throughout the recording he tries in vain to enhance his abilities. As mentioned above, he often pauses and puts a lot of effort into finding words that do not help him at all. However, the high degree of sensitivity shown by the other participants allows S4 to regain ground. The mock interview proceeds smoothly now, as empathy among all the students increases. The S4's question – about the kind of personality with which the candidate prefers to work – directed at S2 makes room for constructive collaboration and support. S1 turns to S2 and whispers something that may help her answer in a proper way (line 53). S2 answers the question by using the verb suggested by S1 (S1: do you think...? S2: I think...). Despite a brief moment of hesitation, she keeps talking. Although she cannot organise her ideas very well, she displays confidence when speaking, unlike S4. S1 nods her head, which contributes substantially to a good peer interaction. The last excerpt analysed suggests how the final part of the activity increases student-student interaction and promotes cooperation.

*Excerpt 5*

- S4** 58 And what are you doing ↑ to (.) pursue your dreams? ↓ ((looks at S2 as he  
59 waits for her to answer))
- S1** 60 ((tries to say something))
- S3** 61 I think that you need to be (.) a dynamic person (0.2) and (0.2) try to show  
62 your best =↓
- S4** 63 °° Yeah yeah °°
- S3** 64 In a job (0.2) and the most important it's that you like the job (.) °° on °°  
65 you are working ((looks at S1))
- S1** 66 Yeah ((nods her head))
- S3** 67 And have passion and °° that °°
- S1** 68 that's [very important]

- S4** 69 [Very important] yeah a:nd the last one (0.2) do you think that (0.2) should  
70 you get the job ↓ would you speak very well language? ((looks at S1))
- S1** 71 Well were I offered the jo:b ↑ I think that I would well it would be very interesting  
72 for me to to speak and yes to speak very different languages because today's  
73 nowadays is so important to to be or to have a different and or good  
74 communication skills ↑ and (.) languages could help you to to communicate  
75 with others and world so it's so important

S4 asks S2 another question (line 58), but she decides not to answer and lets someone else take part in the conversation. S1 would like to give a straight answer (line 60), even though she is aware that she is not ready to talk yet. S3 knows that the question formulated by S4 is not semantically accurate for the setting of the task. Despite this, she answers and manages to get to the point; S4 carefully pays attention to what S3 says and seems to be in agreement with her (line 63). S3 continues talking, explaining the main qualities and abilities that any employee should have. S1 listens to S3 gladly and nods her head (line 66). Just as S3 stops talking, S1 says that what has just been said is very important (line 68). At this point, it may be observed that during the implementation of this task-based methodology, the participants have the opportunity to enhance their autonomy, responsibility and awareness of their evolution and learn to work cooperatively with their colleagues, which reinforces interpersonal relationships within the classroom.

## 4.2 Podcast 2

The following section offers an analysis of the transcript of a three-minute podcast – created by three students of the second group during the first task. The teacher-student provides the participants with a set of questions which might be asked in a job interview.

### *Excerpt 1*

S1 asks S2 some questions. S3 is also present, but she does not participate in the task actively, since she assesses the whole performance.

- S1** 1 what could you tell me about yourself? ↑
- S2** 2 e:hm I finish my degree a:nd I actually I'm °° find °° and having a job a:nd  
3 here I am ((she laughs))

- S1 4 what would you describe as your greatest weakness? ↑
- S2 5 E:hm I think I am not a commercial person (.) I'm not e:hm charming a:nd a:nd  
6 (.) not sociable person (.) a:nd maybe my English is not e:hm my ((she laughs))  
7 my strong point ↓
- S1 8 E:hm what are your key strengths? ↑
- S2 9 key strength? ↑ e:hm I'm (0.2) I think I'm a good person I'm sympathetic and  
10 I like work e:hm in team and individually (0.2) and I think I can work e:hm (.)  
11 ((she laughs)) I can work in this company very well ↓
- S1 12 Ok ↑ is there any type of person or any personality with which you would  
13 rather work? ↑
- S2 14 I don't like the selfish p selfish people (.) a:nd I prefer work with helpful helpful  
15 partners a:nd ∞ that's it ∞ ↓

S1 looks self-confident when starting to talk, probably because she only has to read the questions. Such assertiveness is well expressed by the pitch of her voice. S2 gets nervous when answering the first question as she repeats the word “and” three times and giggles (line 2). The mock interview proceeds easily, although S2 is not capable of speaking off the cuff. In fact, she struggles to arrange her ideas and finds it difficult to express herself properly (lines 5, 6, 9, 10 and 11).

#### Excerpt 2

The second excerpt illustrates the second part of the activity.

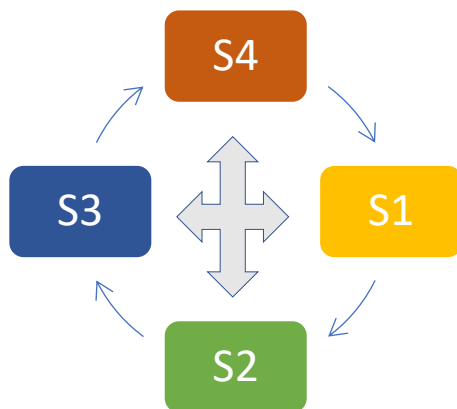
- S1 16 Ok ↑ e:hm were you given the chance to work with us how would you give  
17 an optimal service to the client?
- S2 18 I like to help people a:nd I think ∞ I have ∞ ↓ e:hm I have good e:hm  
19 competences ↑ ((she smiles))
- S1 20 Ok ↑ e:hm since our company ↑ (.) sells purses what would you do (0.2) if a  
21 client was interested in purchasing a (.) five hundred and ninety nine purse?
- S2 22 E:hm If the client like this e:hm ∞ sell ∞ this e:hm this ↓ =
- S1 23 product? ↑

- S2** 24 Yeah I show this and I try to: to: the client buy e:hm this product ↑
- S1** 25 And the last one ↑ if you could change two things at your former place of  
26 employment what would they be?
- S2** 27 E:hm maybe e:hm I would like to: (.) improve my photoshop e:hm my  
28 photoshop ↓ ability and improve my English too ↑
- S1** 29 Ok thank you ∞ that's all ∞
- S3** 30 Very good ↑

S1 keeps feeling confident when asking the questions. There is still some uncertainty surrounding S2. She is not able to come up with appropriate answers (lines 18, 19 and 22). On line 23, S1 tries to help her, by saying the word “product”. Afterwards, S2 tries to improvise, but without success. Her hesitation and the sound “e:hm” she continually utters hamper her communicative skills. At the end of the task, S3 says “very good”, as if she wants to congratulate her peers on the great effort they have made to simulate a job interview.

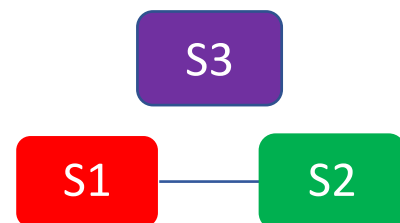
The following graphs show the main steps of the video recordings.

Graph 1. *Group 1*



1. **S1** introduces the task
2. **S2** explains what a cover letter is
3. **S3** gives further details on the topic
4. **S4** discusses job interview strategies
5. All of them exchange views on the topic

Graph 2. *Group 2*



1. **S1** asks **S2** some questions
2. **S2** answers
3. **S1** helps **S2**
4. **S3** observes the whole performance

## 5. DISCUSSION

After examining the transcriptions, the researcher can safely come to the conclusion that the results of the analysis respond to the research question: “how does creating a podcast in groups foster student-student interaction and promote cooperative learning?”

Before organising the work, interdependence takes place. All members rely on each other to accomplish a common goal. They are aware that if one of them does not participate actively in the task, they all suffer the consequences. Individual responsibility plays a leading role: all participants have to demonstrate what they have learned. The thought of creating a video of themselves makes them feel responsible for their own learning.

Although part of the assignment can be divided and carried out individually, they work interactively in order to engage with content critically. The group gets involved in a dynamic adventure after taking into consideration the chain of reasoning and reflecting upon the importance of their own role.

### 5.1 Evidence-based results

Evidence of how podcasting fosters student-student interaction and promotes cooperative learning can be found in the excerpts analysed:

- The first podcast allows the researcher to study the way a group activity promotes interaction and cooperative learning.
- The second podcast aims to delve further into the issue, by examining a group from another class<sup>5</sup>.

During the first video recording, the conversation is not dominated by the teacher in chronological sequences. On the contrary, while sitting in front of the laptop, the students show a high degree of autonomy – the axis around which the whole task revolves. Such autonomy seems to reflect what Escobar (2002) states about oral interaction in the classroom: they are absolutely independent and assume a central role helping them to take control of oral discourse.

Just as they get down to business, something surprising happens: the group now appears to be composed of five members. The webcam acts as the fifth component encouraging each of them to build confidence in their own abilities, promoting individualisation and respecting

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<sup>5</sup> This video recording can be defined as a secondary source since it does not contribute substantially to the development of the results.

learning differences. The podcast itself becomes a coach whose main purpose is to make sure that their interpersonal relationships thrive and their knowledge increases in a welcoming atmosphere making the activity dynamic. As Luna and Cullen (2011) argue, when using new technologies, learners are encouraged to become more receptive to new forms of instruction.

Partnering with individuals from different settings – in front of a camera – provides them with valuable insights into their work. This leads them to believe that interaction is the only way to carry out the task effectively. They pay great attention to what each of them is doing or is about to do. This echoes the theory about symbolic interactionism elaborated by Blumer (1986): “The actions of others enter to set what one plans to do, may oppose or prevent such plans, may require a revision of such plans, and may demand a very different set of such plans” (p.8). The students show a high sense of responsibility for the role they play. In order for them to be able to act socially through language, they stick to a regulatory principle that allows them to negotiate meanings, by solving what they consider to be “problematic” for the development of the interaction itself. In the fourth excerpt of the first recording, S2 goes through a process to reach a clear understanding of what her pair means (the word “example”). The same goes for the second excerpt of the second podcast: S1 comes up with the appropriate word that S2 looks for (“product”). Both speakers provide an alternative option for one element of their turn, by searching for a word and by repairing a statement considered contextually inappropriate. This episode of negotiation of meaning reflects Long’s opinion, according to which learners need to interact with other interlocutors to keep the conversation going and make the input comprehensible to other speakers (Spada, 2013).

The participants of the first group mechanically learn from each other, as shown in Excerpt 4: S1, S3 and S4 listen and repeat what S2 says (lines 45, 46 and 47) and S2 carefully answers the question formulated by S4 (line 54) after accepting the help offered by S1 (S1 uses the verb “think” that enables S2 to start). They benefit from a constructive situation that permits them to apply thinking skills to language learning. The podcast gradually transforms this interaction into a cooperative learning process teaching the students the rules of respect: they listen to each other and wait before interrupting their peers to help them improve their utterances. Within interdependence conditions, they seek to achieve results that might be as beneficial as possible to themselves and to all other group members, which is in line with what Olsen and Kagan (1992) consider to be cooperative learning.

In both groups, the participants tend to focus on what they can do and not on what they cannot do and are not afraid to attempt new solutions to possible difficulties. While proceeding with proper caution, they do not let mistakes affect the whole performance. They do not stop,

because they want to make sure that the task ends in an effective way. The ones who find it hard to make the speech agreeable and fluid do not ask for help explicitly: they permit the other members to monitor the evolution of the activity. The students' positive attitude towards the assignment demonstrates that it makes the learning experience constructive. This seems to confirm Johnson's notion about student-student interaction.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The results presented in this dissertation demonstrate that creating a podcast in groups fosters student-student interaction and promotes cooperative learning through mechanical inputs that make students aware of their autonomy and responsibility. Such inputs are provided by the podcast itself which acts as a kind of supervisor aiming to guarantee that learners become the main actors of a process that automatically invites them to interact. This generates a context that makes them learn from each other, both consciously and unconsciously.

It should be pointed out that only “podcast 1”, that is, the primary data source of this paper, could fully meet the investigation objectives and permitted the teacher-student to formulate an answer to the main research question. While “podcast 2” offered valuable information for the development of this thesis, its results did not completely satisfy the purpose of this document due to lack of relevant details necessary for the study.

Through this research it was also possible to determine how podcasting – as a valuable means of facilitating knowledge acquisition – changed the way students approached learning. The use of new technologies offered schools the opportunity to enrich their educational methodologies making students aware of their abilities. As Ng'ambi and Lombe (2012) state, podcasting encourages scholarly knowledge construction and helps the learner during his/her educational development.

The school where the present study was conducted was perfectly in line with the technological approach adopted by most of the 21<sup>st</sup> century academic environments. This – along with a research context totally focused on a task-based learning methodology – contributed considerably to satisfactory outcomes.

It goes without saying that podcasting may represent an innovative way to help students acquire new knowledge and enhance oral expression. Therefore, the following questions arise from the outcomes of this research project:

- “How can podcasting help learners improve their oral skills?” And “what role does the teacher play?”

In order to examine how this could be possible, more research needs to be done.

Writing this document allowed the researcher to delve into a teaching method that was not taken into account prior to the beginning of the internship at the allocated school. This study provides evidence for the usefulness of podcasting which paves the way for effective student-student interaction and cooperative learning through a process which promotes individualisation and implements a learner-centred approach, respecting personal learning



styles and rhythms, with a variety of proposals and a high grade of autonomy. The results can serve as a starting point to shape future methods intended to enhance students' abilities – both oral and written – and improve the teacher's professional skills.

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## 8. APPENDICES

### 8.1 Transcript 1

S1 We are going to to speak ↑ and give you e::hm some piece of advice ↑ e::hm and also to discuss about about pros and cons XXX e:hm that you (.) must consider when doing a: a job interview and e:hm also e:hm (.) what are the things ↑ that you must know (.) in order to in order to to have a successful e:hm interview job ↓ so: now Anita is going [to] =

S2 [Yeah]

S1 talk about some different points ↑

S2 Yeah now we are going to start the cover letter (.) we consider the it's (.) it's the main intern XXX about yourself and you: you maybe ↑ make a big difference among all the candidates (.) and also it's like a big opportunity to explain (.) information you don't have (.) with details in the cv (.) and right now Sarah is going to talk about the main parts

S3 ☹☹ Yeah ☹☹ the main information that you need to have in a cover letter it's first explain your personal details like your name or your age then your experience your skills and your studies ↑ (.) e:hm and the most important is to explain why you are suitable for that job or what you can provide to the company using a formal vocabulary ↓ (0.2) ((looks at S4))

S4 [One]

S3 [Now] Omar is going to talk about the job interview

S4 ☹☹ Yeah ☹☹ right now we are going to talk about the job interview a:nd: e::hm how the candidate e:hm should e:hm show ↑ e:hm (0.4) in in the interview and we think that (.) she or he e:hm should e:hm show her or his best e:hm confidence confident e:hm (0.4) ((looks at S1))

S3 The parts that we need in a job interview

S1 [☹☹ Yeah ☹☹]

S4 [Yeah] for instance e:hm do you know e:hm ↑ what's e:hm like a candidate e:hm do you know what you can do or you cannot do ↓ in a interview? ↑ ((looks at S2))

S2 So like I think ↑ had in XXX had I given ↓ a chance to (.) to do a job interview ↑ you need to (0.3) to focus on like ☹☹ on ☹☹ what ↓ what you are going to wear like XXX to make e:hm to make a good e:hm first impression you need to XXX and not wear anything casual shorts or bright colours ☹☹ I think that's it you need like to ☹☹

- S1 A:nd also I do believe that were I were we offered to apply for any enterprise ↑ it would be: e::hm it would be interesting to think about your body language because sometimes we are not e::hm focused on that but it's so important because when (.) with your movements you can explain e::hm what you want to say so it's so important
- S3 And the make-up ↑ (.) needs to be: natural without lightly colours ↓ in your face
- S1 ((nods her head))
- S4 Ok and now we are going to do a specific e::hm: (0.3) job about °° the interview °° =
- S2 An example ↑
- S1 An example
- S3 °° An example °°
- S4 An example e::hm I am the interviewer and you are the candidate a:nd =
- S2 °° Ok °° let's begin
- S4 e::hm
- S1 Yeah [as your XXX]
- S4 [For instance ↑] (0.2) what type of personali:ty what what type of personality can you work better with? ↓
- S1 °° Do you think °° ((addresses S2))
- S2 I think e::hm someone (0.2) like in my case I think someone [who is open-minded to work with any kind of pers XXX people °° that's it I think yeah °°]
- S1 [((nods her head))]
- S4 ((looks at the paper))
- S2 If the XXX cause like ↑ when you when you are working °° and °° the most important thing is to get to work not the person or like their personality or what their religion or what like their behinds XXX °° that's it I think someone °°
- S1 ((looks at S2 and nods her head))
- S4 And what are you doing ↑ to (.) pursu:e your dreams? ↓ ((looks at S2 as he waits for her to answer))
- S1 ((tries to say something))
- S3 I think that you need to be (.) a dynamic person (0.2) and (0.2) try to show your best = ↓
- S4 °° Yeah yeah °°
- S3 In a job (0.2) and the most important it's that you like the job (.) °° on °° you are working ((looks at S1))

- S1 Yeah ((nods her head))
- S3 And have passion and oo that oo
- S1 that's [very important]
- S4 [Very important] yeah a:nd the last one (0.2) do you think that (0.2) should you get the job ↓ would you speak very well language? ((looks at S1))
- S1 Well were I offered the job ↑ I think that I would well it would be very interesting for me to to speak and yes to speak very different languages because today's nowadays is so important to to be or to have a different and or good communication skills ↑ and (.) languages could help you to to communicate with others and world so it's so important
- S4 Ok [e:hm XXX] ((looks at S1 and then at S2))
- S1 [E:hm] yeah e:hm we have finish hum we have discuss or we have talk about the job interview and also the = ((looks at S2))
- S2 The cover letter =
- S1 The cover letter so we hope you: can enjoy with this tutorial a:nd you learn a lot ((smiles))
- S2 And get the job
- S1 Yeah (((smiles)))
- S3 (((smiles)))
- S4 (((smiles)))

## 8.2 Transcript 2

- S1 what could you tell me about yourself? ↑
- S2 e:hm I finish my degree a:nd I actually I'm oo find oo and having a job a:nd here I am ((she laughs))
- S1 what would you describe as your greatest weakness? ↑
- S2 E:hm I think I am not a commercial person (.) I'm not e:hm charming a:nd a:nd (.) not sociable person (.) a:nd maybe my English is not e:hm my ((she laughs)) my strong point ↓
- S1 E:hm what are your key strengths? ↑

- S2 key strength? ↑ e:hm I'm (0.2) I think I'm a good person I'm sympathetic and I like work e:hm in team and individually (0.2) and I think I can work e:hm (.) ((she laughs)) I can work in this company very well ↓
- S1 Ok ↑ is there any type of person or any personality with which you would rather work? ↑
- S2 I don't like the selfish p selfish people (.) a:nd I prefer work with helpful helpful partners a:nd oo that's it oo ↓
- S1 Ok ↑ e:hm were you given the chance to work with us how would you give an optimal service to the client?
- S2 I like to help people a:nd I think oo I have oo ↓ e:hm I have good e:hm competences ↑ ((she smiles))
- S1 Ok ↑ e:hm since our company ↑ (.) sells purses what would you do (0.2) if a client was interested in purchasing a (.) five hundred and ninety nine purse?
- S2 E:hm If the client like this e:hm oo sell oo this e:hm this ↓ =
- S1 product? ↑
- S2 Yeah I show this and I try to: to: the client buy e:hm this product ↑
- S1 And the last one ↑ if you could change two things at your former place of employment what would they be?
- S2 E:hm maybe e:hm I would like to: (.) improve my photoshop e:hm my photoshop ↓ ability and improve my English too ↑
- S1 Ok thank you oo that's all oo
- S3 Very good ↑

### 8.3 Transcription symbology

#### SYMBOLS OF TRANSCRIPTION (from the Jeffersonian Transcript Notation)

<b>S</b>	Student
<b>S1</b>	Student 1
<b>S2</b>	Student 2
<b>S3</b>	Student 3

S4	Student 4
↑	Rising pitch or intonation
↓	Falling pitch or intonation
(.)	A brief pause
(# of seconds)	Timed pause
(( ))	Annotation of non-verbal activity
oo	Whisper, reduced volume, or quiet speech
:	Prolongation of a sound
<b>Underline</b>	The speaker is emphasizing or stressing the speech
=	Latching
[]	Start and end points of overlapping speech
<b>XXX</b>	Speech which is unclear or in doubt in the transcript

## 8.4 The teacher's diary

Picture 1

GOALS	HOW DO YOU KNOW STUDENTS ARE MAKING PROGRESS? <small>(assessment criteria)</small>
<p>To express themselves properly for a job interview.</p> <p>To write a cover letter.</p> <p>To convey some advice on how to get a job.</p>	<p>After receiving input on how to have a successful job interview, they will have to act out while their peers grade and record them. After the activity, the teacher will watch the videos and provide feedback, too.</p> <p>The students will be given a rubric prior to asking them to write the composition. They will be graded accordingly and then the teacher will correct the cover letter to give it back to the student.</p> <p>The third goal will be assessed as part of the final product, which will be graded by the teacher following the rubric previously provided to the students. Plus, students will also assess themselves individually through Menti about how much they feel they have learned. Finally the pupils will use Menti again to assess their colleague's collaboration by stating strengths and aspects to improve from their peers.</p>

PRODUCTS	
	<p>Product 1: Recorded simulation of a job interview.</p> <p>Product 2: Cover letter.</p> <p>Product 3: Explanatory video on how to get a job.</p>



## *Picture 2*

In groups of four, record yourselves explaining to the world the keys to a successful job interview. The presentation must include:

- An introduction
- A body
  - Cover letter: why do we need one & how to write it
  - Professional interview: clothes, skills, possible questions to be asked
  - Short interview example: the employer should ask at least two questions
- A conclusion