Research Paper

Effects of Vlogging and Podcasting on Raising Iraqi Intermediate EFL Learners' Motivation

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Abstract
The present study surveyed the potential role of podcasting and blogging in improving Iraqi intermediate EFL learners' motivation. To this aim, 45 learners (in three intact classes) were selected from a language institute in Iraq through convenience sampling. The participants were then randomly assigned to one of the three groups (podcasting vlogging, and control). Successive to administering the motivation scale as pretest, the researchers initiated the intervention, which lasted for 14 sessions and seven weeks, with the classes being held twice a week. After holding the posttest, and at the culmination of quantitative phase of the study, 14 participants (seven students from each experimental group) were selected to take part in a semi-structured interview. They were asked to provide their opinions on how podcasting and vlogging can improve their motivation. The data collected for the quantitative phase were analyzed using one-way ANOVA and as regards the qualitative phase, thematic analysis was employed. The results demonstrated that both podcasting and vlogging groups exhibited higher degrees of motivation in comparison to the control group following the treatments. Moreover, the findings suggested that there was no statistically significant difference between the groups that engaged in podcasting and vlogging. The qualitative analysis indicated that the participants had positive attitudes about using podcasting and vlogging to improve their motivation. The findings are thought to have fruitful implications for teachers, learners and other educational stakeholders at the context of Iraqi institutes, particularly as regards the proper integration of technology into language learning process.
Keywords: Iraqi EFL learners, Motivation, Podcasting, Vlogging

Introduction

Motivation in language learning is a pivotal factor in different instructional contexts. As a changeable entity, learning motivation is affected by a multitude of individual and contextual factors (e.g., Dörnyei, 2001, 2005; Author & Author2, 2021; Author & Author2, 2021; Ortega, 2009; Pawlak, 2012; Pawlak et al. 2014; Waninge et al. 2014). Sparking motivation in learners, particularly in EFL contexts, is a prickly task, and hence language teachers must find proper ways to heighten learner motivation in such contexts, in which there are fewer extraneous motives for the learners. Motivation, in turn, plays a focal role in achieving success in the language learning process and attaining course objectives in the long run (e.g., Al-Hoorie & MacIntyre, 2019; Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Chalak & Kassaian, 2010; Gardner, 2010; Hennebry-Leung & Lamb, 2024; Lamb, 2020; Author & Author2, 2021). In other words, students who lack motivation or have low motivation encounter difficulties in the learning process, whereas students who are highly motivated are more likely to achieve their learning goals efficiently.

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

It must be noted that like most other EFL learners who are deprived of appropriate contact with the target language in natural encounters with natives, Iraqi EFL learners also face unique challenges in the process of learning that can influence their language acquisition process. Factors such as cultural background, educational settings, and restricted exposure to authentic English-speaking contexts may affect their speaking skills and motivation in English. While video blogs and podcasts have gained recognition as valuable digital resources in language learning, their effectiveness in addressing the specific needs of Iraqi intermediate EFL learners has not been sufficiently explored. Thus, understanding the potential impact of video blogs and podcasts on Iraqi intermediate EFL learners' motivation is vital for the development of appropriate and effective pedagogical practices. By examining the use of these digital tools, language teachers in the Iraqi EFL context may gain insights into how to better support Iraqi learners in improving their speaking skills, enhancing their motivation, and fostering a communicative language learning environment.

Literature Review

Motivation has been mostly regarded as one of the key determiners of success in language learning. As a multifaceted entity, motivation has been approached from a number of different

perspectives, and numerous delineations have been appropriated by different researchers to characterize the term. Among the myriad of conceptualizations provided for the term, reference can be made to Melendy's (2008) description identifying it as the learners' alacrity for reaching their objectives through capitalizing on the techniques which can help them achieve their learning goals. Alternatively, Ushioda (2008) characterizes motivation as the learners' predilection to actively participate in learning activities and reveal perseverance in their actions.

An important issue to bear in mind is that learners today are more exposed to technological devices, and this issue has led to their opting for more avant-garde techniques in their learning trajectory. In other words, the new generation of learners who are technology-savvy and digital-native are more inspired by the application of technology in their lives. Thus, motivating such learners is a painstaking task which might be facilitated through the integration of technology to learning. Vlogging is characterized as the practice of producing and sharing video material via employing web-based platforms (Goh et al. 2012). This process enables the learners to generate personalized audiovisual material and utilize them to engender communication. Vlogs can also prove useful in motivating learners. Though Vlogging, as an innovative technological tool, has facilitated communication to a great extent, its potential in renovating pedagogical practices to spark more interest and fostering language abilities has gone partly unnoticed (Baran, 2007).

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

A brief glance through the literature in this domain reveals that technology has always aided the process of language learning in different instructional settings. For instance, concerning the contribution of building virtual environments via computer-assisted language learning (CALL), it has been evidenced that engagement in CALL projects through virtual spaces can help ameliorate learning motivation in individuals (e.g., Peterson et al. 2010; Wehner et al. 2011).

Also, as regards the effectiveness of CALL and virtual learning for augmented motivation and improved learning, the study by Yahiaoui et al. (2022) examined the effect of CALL, in general, and e-learning, in particular, on learners' motivational intensity. Conducted during the time of coronavirus pandemic, the study opted for a mixed-methods design. Successive to selecting 398 students as the participants, they administered the survey questionnaire to tap into the students' perceptions concerning the efficacy of e-learning for heightening motivation and ameliorating educational outcomes. The participants' responses to Liker-type questions were analyzed via SEM analysis, and their answers the open-ended questionnaire were submitted to qualitative data analysis through Nvivo. Based on the findings, it was revealed that the e-learning experience engendered significant changes in students' motivation, and upgraded their educational outcomes.

In much the same way, Jiang and Fryer (2024) probed the contribution of virtual learning to students' motivation. Functioning as a meta-analytic investigation exploring the overall findings of previous researchers as to the effect of e-learning on enhanced learning motivation, they concluded that the integration of technology into learning, and the outgrowth of computer- assisted learning, and more specifically the practice of virtual reality learning led to an outstanding escalation in learners' motivation. Furthermore, in several studies, to date, the impact

of podcasts on raising learners' motivation has been analyzed. As a case in point, Bolliger et al. (2010) wanted to see how learners' motivation can be influenced by using podcasts. Running the study in the academic online learning context in United States, they recruited 191 students as the participants. At the culmination of the research, a positive correlation was found between the use of podcasts and the degree of motivation in learning. Additionally, significant differences were reported in the extent of learners' motivation based on factors such as gender and prior experience with online learning system. In like manner, Rostami et al. (2017) surveyed the effect of podcasts on shaping learners' attitudes and learning motivation. Choosing a sample of 60 Iranian junior high school students within the age range of 13 to 14, they made use of questionnaire and interview to collect data regarding the efficacy of employing podcasts for learning. Moreover, to analyze the influence of podcasting on learners' motivation, they administered a motivation questionnaire to the participants. The results pointed toward a significant increase in the experimental group participants' motivation resulting from the use of podcasts as a learning tool. Also, as regards the effect of vlogging on bettering EFL learners' motivation and oral communication ability, Sanad (2021) embarked on experimental research with 166 university EFL learners. In line with the obtained findings, it was claimed that though the application of vlogs led to heightened levels of motivation in learners and better oral communication, the influence of vlogging on learners' motivation and oral proficiency was not so significant. In the same vein, Devana and Afifah (2021) probed into the contribution of vlogging for learners' motivation and speaking ability.

To conduct the study, they selected a sample of 36 university EFL learners, from whom they collected the data by means of a speaking test and a motivation questionnaire. The results indicated that learners' motivation and oral proficiency went through a significant degree of betterment as a consequence of being engaged with the practice of vlogging. As the review of related literature in this section helped reveal, though several studies have been performed on motivation, as well as podcasts and vlogging, the impact of such technological devices as podcasts and vlogs on augmenting learners' motivational level is still in dire need of more systematic investigations. Moreover, as regards the Iraqi context of learning, very scant research seems to have been conducted on this highly significant issue. Thus, identifying this gap in the literature, the researchers in the current probe strove to examine the effect of podcasting and vlogging experience on Iraqi EFL learners' motivation. In accordance with the study objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: Is there any significant difference between the effect of video blogging and podcasting on Iraqi intermediate EFL learners' motivation?

RQ2: What are the attitudes of Iraqi intermediate EFL learners regarding the efficacy of podcasting and vlogging as regards their motivation?

Method

Participants

A total of 45 intermediate Iraqi EFL learners participated in this mixed-methods study. The selection of participants followed a convenience sampling approach, chosen for its practicality within the constraints of the specific educational context. The age range of the participants spanned from 18 to 25 ensuring a representation of various age groups within the intermediate level. Moreover, the gender distribution was fairly balanced, with an approximately equal distribution of male and female participants. Additional relevant demographic details, such as educational backgrounds and prior experience with language learning technologies, were also considered to provide a comprehensive overview of the participants' profile. Instruments To gather data regarding students' motivation, Noels et al.'s (2000, 2001) questionnaire, which

consisted of 21 questions was utilized. The inventory consisted of seven sub-scales, namely amotivation (items 1-3), external regulation (items 4-6), introjected regulation (items 7-9), identified regulation (items 10-12), intrinsic motivation-accomplish (items 13-15), intrinsic motivationknowledge (items 16-18), and intrinsic motivation-stimulation (items 19-21). The survey made use of a 5-point Likert scale, which spanned from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". It's worth mentioning that he initials three statements on the questionnaire were phrased negatively and were hence interpreted and scored in the reverse manner.

Procedure

To conduct the study, initially the participants were given Noels et al.'s (2000, 2001) motivation scale. Following this, a 14-session treatment was held, with the class meeting twice a week. A total of 14 topics for discussion were also selected from the textbook entitled Impact Values (Richards et al. 2002). Then, the treatments were performed in two distinct ways for the vlogging and podcasting groups. For the vlog class, the instructor commenced by thoroughly explaining vlogs, their requirements, procedures, and functionalities. Real-life native videos from YouTube illustrated the mechanics of creating a YouTube channel. In each session, students underwent three cycles: introduction of the topic, discussion and practice in groups, and individual expression of ideas, including recording, editing, and uploading personal videos.

Similarly, the Podcast class began with an instructor overview of podcasts, distinguishing them from vlogs. Podcasts related to the chosen topics were played from various sources like the British Council and YouTube. The class followed three sequences: questioning and explaining new words, discussing and practicing in pairs with instructor supervision, and individual expression on the topic with feedback on pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and accuracy. The final step involved recording, editing, and uploading personal podcasts. The control group, however, was taught through traditional methods, employing interactions in pairs and groups based on the same topics from the book. Activities included asking and answering questions, listening to audio, engaging in group discussions, and receiving feedback. Finally, the motivation scale was given to the participants once more on the posttest, to analyze the potential differences in their motivation resulting from their exposure to treatments via vlogging and podcasting.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data for the quantitative phase of the study, SPSS 24 was used. Thus, successive to running the test of normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test), and substantiating the normal distribution of data, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to compare the means of the three groups on pretest and posttest of motivation. However, in analyzing the second research question, which was qualitative in nature, theme analysis was conducted.

Results

As stated earlier, after ensuring the normal distribution of scores through Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, one-way ANOVA was employed for comparing the means of the three groups on pretest and posttest. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics obtained for the learners' motivation prior to treatment.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of Motivation

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	KS Sig.
Amotivation External	1.10	5	3.34	1.03	0.06

regulation Introjected	1	5	3.01	1.05	0.09
regulation Identified	1	5	3.35	1.56	0.09
regulation	1	5	3.41	1.03	0.09
Accomplishment	1.28	5	3.79	0.78	0.07
Knowledge	1	5	3.12	1.13	0.08
Stimulation	1	5	3.22	1.10	0.07

As is evident from Table 3, the values obtained for Kolmogorov-Smirnov test range from 0.07 to 0.09, which illustrate the normality of distribution for the collected data. Hence, to compare the means of the three groups on motivation scale administered for pretest, one-way ANOVA was again employed. Table 2 depicts the results of one-way ANOVA for motivation on the pretest.

Table 2
One-way ANOVA for the Pretest of Motivation

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pretest	Between Groups	34.42	2	17.61	2.14	.16
	Within Groups	820.37	44	13.46		
	Total	855.12	42			

As can be witnessed, based on the data reported in Table 2, there is not a significant difference in the mean motivation level of participants in the three groups (p = .16 > .05). After ensuring the similar status of the three groups in terms of motivation, the researchers went on to compare the group means gained on the posttest. To observe the changes occurring in the participants' motivation level resulting from treatment via podcasting and vlogging, one way ANOVA was run, the results of which are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
One-way ANOVA for the Posttest of Motivation

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Post-test	Between Groups	1271.22	2	512.56	22.41	.04
	Within Groups	1453.61	44	24.29		
	Total	2175.42	42			

As is seen in Table 3, a statistically significant amount of difference is observed between the motivation level of experimental and control groups on the posttest (p = .04 < .05). Table 4 indicates the results of Tukey test for the posttest results of motivation.

Table 4
Tukey Test for the Posttest Scores of Motivations

Group	Test	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Podcasting	Vlog	-.750	1.433	.65
	Control	7.600	1.433	.006
Vlog	Podcasting	.850	1.433	.65
	Control	8.570	1.433	.007

As can be inferred from the table above, there is a statistically significant difference among the three groups. However, the cause of this difference is located in the significantly different performances of podcasting and control groups (p = .006) and vlogging and control groups (p = .007) on the posttest. Nevertheless, the difference between the performance of the two experimental groups is statistically not significant (p = .65 > .05). In other words, the treatments through podcasting and vlogging have proved helpful in increasing the experimental group participants' motivation in a noticeable way.

Finally, the analysis of the findings obtained via interview resulted in the identification of some themes concerning the efficacy of podcasting and vlogging for improving learners' motivation. Based on the participants' responses to the interview questions, it was found that the majority of learners had judged the experience of employing podcasts and vlogs as quite effective for improving their motivation. In what follows, the extracted themes are presented regarding the influences of podcasting and vlogging on developing learners' motivation.

Theme 1: Genuine Input
One theme emerging out of the analysis of interview data was the exposure to genuine input that was created by podcasts, which as they maintained, provided them with the incentive to speak better. As an instance, one of the learners expressed her viewpoint about this issue in the following manner:

Extract 1
Thanks to podcasts, I can pick up on the natural pronunciation and intonation, the way used by natives, and this can help me sound more natural.

Theme 2: Relevance of Topics
The second theme extracted from the responses was the relevance of the topics in podcasts to their immediate needs in real-life contexts of use, which as they claimed helped heighten their motivation. This issue is evident in the following extract:

Extract 2
Podcasts help me with my speaking skills, because they are mostly relevant to my concerns for using the language.

Theme 3: Focus on Paralinguistic Features
The other theme extracted from the learners' responses was the practicality of vlogs in making them attend more to paralinguistic features of language which in turn boosted their motivation. As an instance, announced:

Extract 3
I guess vlogs are more visual and can help with understanding body language. When I see how native speakers use the language with gestures, I get more motivated.

Theme 4: Freedom of Choice
Another way in which vlogging was said to help them feel more motivated for learning English, according to the interview responses, was the way the podcasts provided them with the chance to listen to the topics of their choice. As a case in point, one of the respondents put his impression in the following way:

Extract 4
Vlogs give me the chance to choose content that interests me. I enjoy learning more when I choose the topics by myself.

Discussion

The present study investigated the impact of podcasts and vlogs on the motivation of Iraqi EFL learners. The results indicated that both experimental groups attained significantly higher scores than the control group on the posttest of motivation. It can be hence argued that the significant outperformance of the participants in the two experimental groups can be ascribed to the effect of the treatments via podcasting and vlogging.

The first research question in the current study aimed to gauge the effect of podcasting and vlogging on Iraqi intermediate EFL learners' motivation, an effect which was confirmed through the findings. The result of the study in this regard is in line with the one reported by Baran (2007) who averred that vlogs can help generate more interest in learning. Support for this finding can be gathered from several other investigations (e.g. Peterson, 2010; Wehner et al. 2011; Yahiaoui et al. 2022) which have divulged the effectiveness of online tools for the escalation of learning motivation. This finding is also in keeping with the result obtained by Bolliger et al. (2010) who claimed that learners' motivation can be elevated by means of exposure to the experience of podcasting. It's worth noting, however, that unlike the current study which was conducted in the institute context, their research took place in the academic settings.

The finding for the first research question also falls on a par with the one reported by Rostami et al. (2017). Though their study was conducted in the Iranian school context, the results are comparable in that in both their research and the current one, podcasts were found to be highly efficacious in heightening the learners' motivation. Furthermore, the finding is consistent with that of Jiang and Fryer (2024) who declared that the integration of technology into learning can help uplift learners' motivation. Additional substantiation for this finding can ensue from the results of the research by Sanad (2021) which indicated vlogging experience can lead to an uprise in learners' motivation. However, it must be noted that unlike the current study that focused on institute learners, Sanad's scrutiny dealt with motivational growth resulting from vlogging in the academic context. The finding in this regard is also compliant with the one reported by Devana and Afifah (2021). In terms of research context, their study was similar to the one conducted by Sanad, referred to earlier, since both studies were carried out with university students. Notwithstanding the differences in terms of participants and context, however, both their study and the current study proved that vlogging can significantly contribute to improved motivational status among the learners.

The second research question tapped into the learners' attitudes towards the impact of podcasting and vlogging on enhancing their motivation. Based on the finding attained for this research question, it was concluded that podcasting and vlogging can prove helpful in enhancing learners' motivation. The participants were of the view that the variety of topics entailed in the podcasts provides them with the motive to speak better about different topics. The other way in which podcasting was said to bring about learners' improved speaking was its potential to provide them with genuine and authentic input.

Moreover, the participants found the podcasts to be precious owing to the fact that they provided them with access to relevant topics which were fruitful for their real-life communication, which was in turn, believed to heighten their motivation for better learning. The utility of podcasting for sparking more motivation in learners has been highlighted by a number of researchers among whom reference can be made to Bolliger et al. (2010) and Rostami et al.

(2017). Thus, the finding of the current research concerning the efficacy of podcasting for building more motivation in learners corroborates the findings of these two studies.

Moreover, the contribution of vlogging experience to sparking and heightening motivation in learners was made in two distinct ways based on the finding attained in the current research. The two ways in which vlogging was reported to be practical for augmenting the learners' motivation were via further attention to paralinguistic features of language as well as through the provision of choice for the learners regarding the most interesting and relevant topics to follow. This finding affirms the conclusion made by Sanad (2021) that exposure to vlogging can result in an amelioration in learners' motivation. Likewise, Devana and Afifah (2021) contended that vlogging has a significant role in motivating learners.

Conclusion

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

Like all other investigations, however, the current research is not void of limitations. Among the most prominent limitations restricting the generalizability of the findings, the current researchers tend to refer to the comparatively low number of participants. As is the case with all similar studies focusing on experimentation and treatment, the researchers in this study also experienced hardships in convincing the institutional authorities and the learners in the research venue of the fact that the data were merely gathered for research purposes, and that the findings would not have any adverse ramifications for their instructional trajectory. Owing to this factor and a host of other reasons, the learners didn't willfully appeal to take part in the study, and hence the number of participants was lower than expected by the researchers. Informed by this limitation, therefore, the future researchers are recommended to opt for a larger sample of participants. Additionally, the sampling method used in the current study was based on convenience of the researcher and availability of the participants, which may restrain the generalizability of the findings. Hence, the researcher who might intend to replicate the current study are suggested to use randomized methods of sampling to cater for the representativeness of the participants. Interested researchers are also recommended to try to choose the participants from a wider geographical range, gathering the data from different institutes and, if possible, from a variety of regions. It must also be noted that the researchers in the present study merely implemented tests, questionnaires and interviews to gather the data. However, to triangulate the

data and to come up with more reliable findings, the upcoming investigators may decide to make use of other instruments such as observation, narrative inquiry, journals, think-aloud, retrospective measures or self-report data, among other methods. Furthermore, the progress in learners' performance ensuing from the given treatment was simply scrutinized in terms of motivation, and hence the other aspects of learners' educational outcomes or the possible changes in the other learner traits were not the focus of the present study. Thus, future researchers may choose to survey the effect of these technological resources on other aspects of learners' performance, including other language skills and components. After all, it is hoped that through the findings of the current study, new horizons are going be opened as regards the positive effects of integrating technology into learning.

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