

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

**The Use of Podcasting in EFL Classroom:
Armenian EFL Students' Perceptions and Practices**

A thesis submitted in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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DEDICATION
TO MY FAMILY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate how Armenian EFL students' podcast listening practices change and by proficiency level. Also it aimed to find out students' attitude towards using podcasts in their language learning process and how they feel about educational value of podcasts. There was a need for such research as podcasts are believed to be important for students in their learning process in this technology century. Moreover, it is vital to know how students go with using the podcasts in their English language learning process.

To conduct this research mixed method was used that included both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Instruments included surveys on a regular basis, field notes and semi-structured interview. Field notes were taken to see the students' behavior in natural settings. The population of the research was Communication 4 (Com 4) and Communication 6 (Com 6) level students in Experimental English Classes (EEC) at American University of Armenia (AUA). The results of the study showed some changes in the students' podcasts listening practices in the course of eight weeks in both groups. In comparison with Communication 4 group Communication 6 group students showed more changes in their podcast listening practices. In the last few weeks Communication 6 group students began to use different places for listening to podcasts. Moreover, they used a variety of equipment for listening to podcasts compared to Communication 4 group students. Overall Communication 6 group students listened to podcasts more actively. However, both group students reported high educational value of podcast.

Keywords: podcast, podcast listening, proficiency level, podcast listening practices.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Foreign language learning has always been considered as an important activity since it is the way of interaction among people. Therefore, learning a foreign language is necessary to communicate with people of different cultures. However, people have difficulty in learning a foreign language at a high level of proficiency having high level listening and speaking skills. There are many aspects on which a foreign language learner should focus. Here one of the most important aspects in this process is the development of a learner's listening skills. For this students should be exposed to a lot of listening not only in the language classroom but also outside of its walls. To overcome this obstacle podcasts can be used. It is believed that podcasts increase listening input outside of the classroom. It provides extensive listening opportunities. In Armenian schools students have very few opportunities to listen to English speech and also there is no appropriate equipment for teachers to provide students with the listening material. In this case the podcasts are of a great help. With their easily and freely downloadable characteristics, podcasts provide students with more or less real, interesting and even authentic listening materials.

Armenian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners always have a lack of listening skills because the teachers mainly do not have enough listening materials for their students. The teachers can have a big listening library from podcasts and the use of podcast can help students to have more exposure to English speech. Therefore it was important to investigate how Armenian EFL learners' podcast listening practices and perceptions change overtime and by proficiency level. Also it aimed to identify students feeling about podcasts educational value to find better ways to integrate podcasts in the English language learning process.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Based on the literature review podcasts were increasingly used in educational settings during last couple of years. There were some practices of using podcasts in teaching different subject matters. However, applicability of podcasting to teaching English needs researching.

More specifically, there is a lack of empirical data about the specific podcast listening habits that students follow while listening to podcasts depending on time and their proficiency level. Another issue was that there was not enough evidence specifically about Armenian EFL learners' podcast listening practices. Also there was a need to find out Armenian EFL learners' perceptions about educational value of this new technology. Besides, students' may encounter some problems and/or difficulties while using podcasts. Moreover, it is still unclear whether Armenian EFL learners are ready to use and adopt this new technology. Thus, there were many questions that should be answered and many gaps that should be filled.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate Armenian EFL students' perceptions and practices in using podcasts in their language learning process. Also it aimed to find out how students feel about educational value of podcasts.

The findings of this study might benefit both the teachers and their students. Teachers can use the knowledge gained from this research findings to change the ways of integration of this new technology. They can find better ways or methods to introduce and use the podcasts. Hence, there is a need to find another way of providing the students with the wide range of listening material and here podcasts are of the great importance as they provide extensive listening material outside of the classroom. From the results of this study Armenian educators can assume

whether to use podcasts and have their students exposed to a lot of listening outside of the classroom walls or not. Teachers can also have some ideas about the level of the students' digital literacy and find better ways to integrate podcasts in their English language classes.

According to the authors (Constantine, 2007; Kavaliauskienė, n.d; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007) teachers can build up a big listening library for their students on contemporary and relevant topics from the podcasts. Teachers expose their students to large listening input providing them a huge library of up-to-date listening materials. Thus, this study could be of great help for teachers as a basis for a better integration of podcasts in teaching and learning.

1.3. Research Questions

The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. *How do the students' podcast listening practices change over time and by proficiency level?*
2. *What are the students' perceptions about the educational value of podcasts and what are their attitudes towards using podcast in their language learning process?*

1.4. Definitions of Terms

Podcasts are composed of MP3 files. They are usually privately produced audio or video shows, which content can be automatically downloaded and synchronized with a player (computer, cell phone, MP3-player, etc.) so that a user can receive the podcast episodes anytime (Bongey et al. 2006; Flanagan & Calandra, 2005; Mocigemba, 2008; Morales & Moses, 2006).

Podcast listening practices are the ones that the listeners or/and students follow while listening to podcasts. That is to say how the students choose podcasts,

where they listen to them, what equipment they use and what difficulties they have while listening to them. According to Lane et al. (2006) those are the habits of listeners that they go with while using podcasts.

Language proficiency level is a particular level of a language, the ability of an individual to convey a message in that language. The proficiency level of students who took part in this study was estimated according to EEC level division which corresponds to B1 and B2 levels, according to Common European Framework of References of Languages (CEFR) standards.

This study aimed to identify the students' podcast listening practices (that was defined above) and differences over time. That is to say how students went with the listening to podcasts in the course of the study and what kind of changes occurred over time (in the period of the study) while using podcasts in their language learning process.

1.5. Overview of the Study

The thesis paper consists of 5 main chapters. The discussion of the significance, the background of the study and purpose of the study are discussed in Chapter one. It also presents the research questions and the structure of the thesis. Chapter one is followed by chapter two that presents the appropriate literature on using podcasts in educational settings, revealing their educational value, defining their characteristics and discussing their benefits and drawbacks. Chapter three describes the methodology of the study. It presents the information about the participants and the settings of the study, research design, instruments and the procedure of the data collection. Chapter four illustrates the analyses of the data to provide the answer to the research questions. Chapter five discusses the findings, implications, limitations and provides suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter shows some of the types of podcasts, their use in higher education and specifically in language classrooms. The first part of this chapter introduces the definition of podcast because it is relatively a new term and people may not be familiar with its notion. It also defines the nature of podcasts taking into account the viewpoints of various scholars and linguists; it discusses possible uses of podcasts for language learning and teaching as well as for other subject matters. The second part of this chapter examines the role of podcasts in education, their benefits and drawbacks and also discusses some of the implementation issues.

2.1. Defining Podcast

Podcast is a relatively new term so before going deep into the using podcasts in teaching, first it is essential to define the word podcast. The following table demonstrates the overview of the definition of term “podcast/podcasting”.

Table 2.1 Podcast definitions

Source	Definition
Bell et al., (2007)	“Podcasting is an asynchronous mode of distributing multimedia files- “podcasts” – over the Internet using syndication feeds, for playback on portable devices and personal computers at the user’s convenience.” (p.1)
Lomincka & Ducate, (2009)	“Podcasts are easy-to-create audio files that can be uploaded to the Internet and to which users can subscribe”. (p.2)

Mocigemba, (2008)	<p>“Podcasting is an extension of weblogging on audio- and video-content” Podcasts are usually privately produced audio- or video shows, which can be automatically received and synchronized with a (mobile) player (computer, cell phone, MP3-player, etc.) so that a time-shifted reception is possible”. (p.7)</p>
Bongey et al., (2006).	<p>“Podcasts are composed of MP3 files, it is the automatic distribution method combined with the potential for portability that makes podcasts what they are.” (p.1)</p>
Flanagan & Calandra, (2005)	<p>“Podcasting is an automated technology that allows listeners to subscribe and listen to digitally recorded audio shows.” (p.20)</p>
Morales & Moses, (2006)	<p>“Podcasting is part of the so-called Web 2.0 that depends on push technologies to deliver content”. (p.1)</p>
Man, (2006)	<p>“Podcasts are audio/video programs on the Web which are usually updated at regular intervals. New episodes can be downloaded on the computer, or an MP3</p>

	player or iPod for later listening”.
	(p.116)

Podcasts are more and more used in education settings and now have a prominent position in the interests of researchers in second or foreign language teaching and learning process. As it is seen from the table above the term podcast is defined almost in the same ways but from different perspectives. It is worth mentioning that in this study podcasts are viewed as additional English listening materials/recordings designed for different proficiency level students. Surely they are mainly composed of MP3 files which allow students to download the podcasts, synchronize with the appropriate equipment (cell phone, computer, etc) and listen any time anywhere.

2.2. Characteristics and Types of Educational Podcasting

Killian and Lewis (2006) discuss that there are many types of podcasts which provide up-to-date content, addressing multiple intelligences and allowing for the anytime and anywhere delivery. Podcast content can include audio and video recordings of lectures or other content. Also podcasts differ in terms of type of pedagogy used within the podcasts such as interviews, lectures, videos and narrations.

Harris and Park (2008) present the characteristics of educational podcasting based on the grouping of podcasting usages at UK Universities. They are as follows:

- ‘teaching-driven’
- ‘service-driven’,
- ‘marketing-driven’
- ‘technology-driven’

According to the authors educational podcasting usage has a few perspectives which help educators to explain the current popularity of it.

1. From educators' perspectives: podcasting gives educators an opportunity for direct communication and interaction with students.
2. From the student's perspectives: the flexibility and affordability of podcasting provide to diverse student's needs by enabling students to re-listen to their lectures as 'repeated learning' (p. 4) any time
3. From the University's perspective: podcasting is a communication tool which helps to reach to wider community outside

Also according to Stanley (2005) there are different types of language podcasts:

- Authentic podcasts are podcasts that probably cannot be used for low level students as they are difficult for them. However for higher level students these podcasts can often be a rich source of listening.
- Teacher podcasts are produced by teachers, often for their own classes. Teachers use these podcasts to help students learn listening content that is not available elsewhere (Stanley, 2005; Rossell-Aguilar, 2007)
- Student podcasts are produced by students, but often with teachers' help. The students can listen to these and experience the culture and hear about the lives and interests of other students from around the world (Stanley, 2005; Rossell-Aguilar, 2007).

According to Panday (2009) there are a few more types of podcasts: *public* podcasts, *personal* podcasts, and *professional* podcasts (educational or corporate). Podcasts can also be classified by the format of content – *basic* podcasts, *enhanced* podcasts, and *video* podcasts. Public podcasts are generic podcasts and are simple to

use and easy to understand. One can create a public podcast to spread information all over the world. One can also subscribe to different public podcasts. Mostly, podcasts are for public use and easy available. Personal and professional podcasts are a lot different as compared to the public ones, thus it is vital to understand them in depth.

As it is seen there are different types of podcasts described by various scholars. However, according to Rossell-Aguilar (2007) podcasting can be divided into two main groups:

1. creating own materials
2. using available existing podcast resources

The second group can be classified into two main groups: podcasts developed by teachers, and podcasts developed by students (Rossell-Aguilar, 2007, Stanley, 2005). Available or existing podcast resources typically consist of podcasts that can be found easily in web pages.

For this study existing and freely available podcasts were used. The participants mainly used podcast of the popular websites (BBC podcasts, British Council podcasts).

Podcast can be used for completely different purposes and teaching different subject matters. The research (Falanagan & Calandra, 2005; Kavaliauskienė, n.d) shows that this new technology has the capacity of doing more than just record lecture. For instance music students have used podcasting to listen to, memorize, and to share musical works. Foreign language teachers can share native music, literature, plays, and audio books and have a lot of material for teaching listening skills via podcasting. Students have even created foreign language audio projects to share with their friend and teachers for grading. All this possibilities can give

foreign language students the exposure to different accents of the particular language without being glued to a computer. Students can conduct field research by taking an MP3 player with a microphone and interview the respondents. Moreover, students can use podcasting technology as a quick, easy and free way to communicate with their peers. It is thought that podcasting is particularly beneficial for English learners as it gives an opportunity for students to access to authentic listening sources about any desired topic (Kavaliauskienė, n.d.). Teachers can take advantage of podcasts as a basis for comprehension exercises, as a way of generating conversation based on students' reaction to podcasts, and as a technique of providing each and every student diverse listening materials.

Generally podcasts can be as short as two to three minutes and as long as an hour. Though there are different types of podcasts for different subject matters, in this study the podcasts for language teaching and learning were emphasized. So, as it was mentioned above different podcasts can be found for different level of proficiency language students and age based on the difficulty of topic and its length (Constantine, 2007; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007; Kavaliauskienė, n.d.). For this study podcasts appropriate to B1 and B2 level students were used.

2. 3. Advantages and Disadvantages of Podcasts

According to some scholars (Edirisingha et al, 2007; Flanagan & Caladra , 2005) the advantage of using podcasts in the language classroom is that it is simple and can be downloaded easily. Prior it was hard to find appropriate listening materials for the language students and those that different educational publishing companies provided were not cheap for students to buy. In this situation, podcasts somehow solve this problem by providing the huge amount of freely downloadable

listening materials. Besides, learners can listen to digital sound using MP3 players or mobile devices outside.

Muppala and Kong (2007) point out another advantage of podcast which is its ability to use anywhere because auditory learning is portable form of learning that can be used any time. According to Hew (2007) the main advantage is the simplicity, convenience and time savings that it offers to learners. Bell et al. (2007) also state that podcast enables students to listen to course related material while they are engaged in other activities. Podcasts can also be used as a tool to expose the students to more listening outside of the classroom. While listening to podcasts, students can do other things such as walk, cook, write and etc.

Based on many articles presented above it is obvious that podcasts have educational benefit. However, there can be some drawbacks. Critics of podcast are that the educators are afraid of using podcasts of lectures because students will stop attending the lectures (Bongey et al. 2006; Blaisdell, 2006; Menzies, 2005).

However according to Flanagan and Calandra (2005) students loved being able to listen to either lecture podcasts or other podcasts anywhere and anytime. The availability of podcasts allowed them to listen to difficult parts more than once and had better grade in the exam. However, according to Blaisdell (2006) and Menzies (2005) creating podcasts can increase teachers' workload if they will not use the existing ones.

Another drawback of podcasts is that it is not regulated as almost everything in the Internet. Podcasting and the content of some podcasts can be unsuitable for the students. It is important to review the podcasts before the teachers let their students listen to them (Flanagan & Calandra, 2005).

Based on a few descriptive research studies (Edirisingha et al. 2007; Lane 2006; Ogawa and Nickles 2006; Tynan and Colbran, 2006) some barriers of using podcasts were identified. The key barriers were categorized as either student encountered or instructor-encountered. Student-encountered barriers include:

- unfamiliarity with podcasts
- technical problems in accessing and downloading podcasts
- not seeing the relevance for their learning

Instructor-encountered barriers include only first two barriers mentioned in terms of students-encountered barriers that are- unfamiliarity with podcasts and irrelevance of podcasts for the subject areas. It is worth mentioning that in this study some of the student encountered barriers were investigated that were seen as some problems that students encountered while listening to podcasts.

According to Bell et al (2007) the main disadvantages of this ‘medium’ (p.2) is the lack of visual content, the ‘environmental distraction’ (p.2) and the difficulty of taking notes when a student listens to it outside.

2.4. The Role of Podcasts in Education

Podcasting is one of the WEB 2.0 tools that is now widely used in different education settings. Podcasts are changing the way people learn, teach, communicate and share ideas (Gaitewood, 2008; Moses and Morales, 2006). Kavaliauskienė, (n.d) and Mohammadzadeh, (2010) state that podcasting is a modern digital technology that can be used effectively for language teaching and learning purposes. Moreover, podcasting is a new way to encourage learning because it is a new online communication technology that provides an exciting way for students and educators to explore and discover educational content. Podcasts differ from other types of recording in a way that they are portable and free so students can have an easy

access to them. Moreover, there is the capability to subscribe to RSS feed that allows the user to register for the first podcast in a series and then all subsequent productions. In a word the content the user likes is automatically transmitted to the user's computer (Barry, n.d). Large audiences can use it via downloading or a subscription notification system. As it was mentioned above podcasts are portable and the best thing about them is that they can be accessible not only via computers but also be settled on MP3 players. Thus, as with most new technologies, podcasting offers new ways for teachers to enhance the learning of students allowing teachers and students to download content to listen to on their personal computers or mobile devices anywhere and anytime (Chartrand & Pellowe, 2001; Killian & Lewis, 2006; Lu, n.d.; Morales & Moses, 2006; Mohammadzadeh, 2010). These are the main and important features that podcasts are different from the other types of recordings.

Different authors (Chartrand & Pellowe, 2001; Killian & Lewis, 2006; Lu, n.d.; Morales & Moses, 2006; Mohammadzadeh, 2010) claim that podcasting offers an opportunity to listen to different topics that the students are interested in. Students can search easily and find from the wide range of podcasts the one that they want only having an internet accessible computer, a web browser and podcatching software (Bongey, Cizadlo, & Kalnbach, 2006). Schmit (2007), states that many listeners use web browsers or music software on their computer to listen to podcasts. Others choose to transfer the programs to their iPod or other MP3 player and listen to them when they go jogging, walk or ride the bus to work. Durbridge (1984), points the advantages using audio over printed materials in learning process because spoken word influence on person's cognition.

2.5. Discussion of Research

The study (Spies, 2011) was conducted to find out the effectiveness of audio podcasting as a tool to engage students studying by flexible delivery at a dual sector tertiary institution in Australia. The nine educators who participated in the study taught across 35 classes with a total enrolment of 620 students. Educators were introduced how to use podcasts. Throughout the Trimester, participating educators used the Audacity program and a headset microphone to record audio podcasts and make them available in their online class spaces. There were no specific requirements placed on the educators in terms of the way in which they could use podcasting in their teaching, however guidance, examples and suggestions were made available in the Sandbox site which was created in the college learning management environment-Moodle. At the end of the study a link to an online survey was placed in the announcements section of each of the classes where podcasts had been used. Students could provide anonymous feedback on their experiences of the audio podcasts by following the link to the survey. The survey was conducted through the commercial online survey tool -Survey Monkey. Students gained access to the survey by following the link to the external site. The first page included a statement about the purpose of the survey. Students could answer the questions or exit without completing the survey. The survey included sixteen questions with 5-point Likert scale items, one yes/no question and four multiple choice questions. The multiple choice and yes/no questions in the survey asked about the way in which the educator used audio podcasts and whether the student experienced any technical difficulty listening to the podcast. Thus, based on the results it was found out that the majority of educators expressed an interest in audio podcasting and nine of them decided to use podcasts in their teaching.

Interestingly, only two students (2.7%) reported technical difficulties in downloading or listening to the podcasts. The majority of students (80%) indicated that they would like podcasts to be used to explain complex concepts, provide guidance around assessment (83%) and to add information related to the content (82%). Over half (62%) indicated that would like to see weekly announcements about the course requirements as a podcast strategy in the future. Hence, the findings showed a strong positive response to the use of audio as a medium for learning and indicated that audio podcasts have the potential to improve students' engagement distance education. Students indicated that they liked learning by listening. Though this study was not about using podcast for language classroom, it was valuable to know students' attitudes toward using podcasts in the classroom.

Another study (Fietze, 2009) was conducted at the University of Flensburg, in Germany. The aim of that study was to find out students' usage behavior regarding podcasts in general, how students use university podcasts and what reasons students have for not using them. A total of 148 students took part in the two survey sessions. Both surveys were carried out using a password-protected online questionnaire. The majority (72.1%) of the surveyed students were inexperienced in the use of podcasts. The lecture podcasts were their first contact with this medium. The vast (77.8%) majority of the students concentrated totally on the recorded lectures and listened to podcasts at home using lap-tops and did not do other activities while doing so. Only the minority (14.8%) of students used lecture podcasts when on the move. The main reasons for using podcasts were that the students had systematic written tests and examinations so they needed lectures revision all the time (80.7%). A factor in the success of lecture podcasts is that the

students can reuse the recorded lecture. Podcasts are considered a possibility to assimilate the contents of lectures better and more efficiently.

Kavaliauskienė (n.d.) in his paper described research of learners' perceptions of online listening to podcasts, self-evaluation of their own performance in individual listening practice and reflections on ways of improving listening skills. First, the research methods included the survey of students' self-evaluation of their performance in listening to different podcasts at upper-intermediate, advanced, native speakers, or intermediate level. Second, methods included students' reflections on their experience of online listening. Some evidence from student feedback and collected data pointed that the podcasts were highly appreciated and extensively used by students. The podcasts were frequently downloaded, and students reported listening to each podcast several times both for their listening practice opportunities and for informational value as well as entertainment (Flanagan & Calandra, 2005; Kavaliauskienė, n.d.). Consequently, investigation (Kavaliauskienė, n.d.) into the student reaction to podcasting is still in progress and not clearly revealed. Thus the present study was conducted to find out students reactions and/or attitudes.

Nathan and Chan (2007) stated that during recent years a number of universities have started different projects to prove that the students benefit from using this new technology and mode of learning. Hence, they conducted a study (2007) which aimed to measure the students' views on the educational value of the podcasts, the manner in which they listened to them, and the technology they use for listening to podcasts. A total of 21 of the 23 students in the class participated in the exercise. Over a period of six weeks, podcasts were created in the form of discussions between the subject matter expert and a student on various issues in the

subject of Business Strategy. The topics were decided after deliberating on aspects of the subject that were deemed to be more complex or where it was inferred that students may face some anxiety. Students were advised on various techniques of downloading these podcasts and the use of Real Simple Syndication (RSS) which is the automated feed that is linked to the university's podcast server to enable automated downloads whenever a new file is ready. The students were recommended to use iTunes as a podcatcher as this was freely available. It offered features that facilitated downloading the most recent podcasts. Just before the end of the session, students were requested to complete a questionnaire designed to establish the role of podcasting in the subject. In addition to basic demographic data on the students, questions were directed at access to podcasting equipment and their experience with the podcasts. Finally, general comments on the exercise were requested. To measure the views of the students on the educational value of the podcasts, the manner in which they listened to them, and the technology used, a total of 16 questions were developed, incorporating a 7-point Likert Scale that measured the extent to which the students agreed or disagreed. The participants were to listen to specific podcasts on the subject Business Strategy. According to this study it was revealed that the majority of participants had positive attitude towards the educational value of podcasts and they agreed with the usefulness of the podcasts and would like to continue using this learning tool in their learning process and even recommend them to others. The survey also revealed a surprising finding that the majority of the students thought that listening to podcasts is not a 'fad' (p.749). According to authors this may simply be due to the cultural and social norms and habits of the present generation of students or the specific cohort which was made up of mainly local Australian students whose age varied from 20 to 25.

The response rate to the survey was 91%. Only two did not return the survey. In brief the study mainly showed the Australian students' view of educational value of using podcasts in their learning process.

Thus, in the present study the Armenian students' view of the podcast educational value was investigated and as in the previous study the cohort was made up of basically Australian students, in this one the cohort was completely made of Armenian EEC students.

Another research was carried out (Chester, Buntine, Hammond, & Atkinson, 2011) at a large Australian university. The purpose of that study was to assess students' satisfaction with podcasts, to compare the academic behavior and academic self-efficiency of podcast users and non-users, to examine preferred modes of podcast use and to evaluate reasons of podcast use and non-use. 273 undergraduate students enrolled in six different courses at Australian university took part in that study. Two surveys were used for this study. The first questionnaire included 26 scale response and open-ended questions that were about demographic details, lecture attendance, academic staff contact, knowledge and use of lecture recordings, reasons for using lecture recordings or choosing not to use them and questions of where, how and how often recordings were accessed. The second questionnaire consisted of 20 questions, focusing on the use of lecture recordings for examination revision. The survey was administered in hard copies and online for those who did not attend the lecture that day. The results of the study suggested that both uptake and satisfaction with lecture recordings varied across courses, with higher satisfaction in later year courses than first year. Uptake was considerably lower when reported during the semester compared to self-report after examinations. This confirms the use of lecture recordings for examination revision

as a primary motivation. Older students (90% of respondents were aged under 26) were significantly more likely to report using podcasts than younger students. Uptake and satisfaction varied across courses supporting the notion that mandatory podcasting may be inappropriate. Also it was revealed that 50% of students preferred face-to-face interacting rather than listening to podcasts and not attended to lectures. Only a small proportion of students who used the podcasts did not attend lectures. The request by students for video of the lecturer suggests that non-verbal aspects of lectures are perceived to be useful. From this study an interesting pattern arose of podcast users that the older, more confident students, who are typically engaged in their learning used podcasts more actively. Therefore it seems that the more confident is a student the more diverse resources he/she uses. They also contact staff more than non-users. In the meanwhile the finding highlights the value of emphasizing the usage of innovative technologies throughout a course and the importance of providing effective training for students, particularly those who may lack confidence in their capacity to meet the requirements of study. Thus, based on this study lecture recordings that are available online via podcasts have been ‘proved to be a technology valued’ (p.245) and appreciated by students.

Another study (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009) about the students’ attitude towards the pronunciation tasks provided by the podcasts was conducted. The study concentrated mainly on whether podcasts listening and recording improve students’ pronunciation, or whether there was a difference in comprehensibility and ‘accentedness’ (p.67) between the extemporaneous podcasts and the scripted podcasts. The participants in this study were 22 students (12 students learning German and 10 learners of French). Their L1 was American English. They all were enrolled at a university in the United States during one academic semester. Their

level of English was intermediate and their age varied from 18 to 22. For answering research questions mixed methodology design, qualitative and quantitative data collection, was used. The study lasted 16 weeks and the participants were selected based on a convenience sample. To answer the research question, whether students had positive attitudes towards pronunciation tasks and whether they felt any improvement in their pronunciation during the semester, statistics revealed no significant differences in the pre- and post-tests. The study revealed that podcasting and repeated listening were not enough to improve students' pronunciation. The study suggests that language teacher use podcasts as a supplementary tool by integrating them into their classes to lead to more progression in pronunciation. This study provided evidence about the possible improvement in the students' pronunciation after using podcasts and showed that the students needed more than just listening to only podcasts. This study was somehow close to the current one as the number of participants, the sample selection type and the data collection method were the same.

Another study was conducted by Lane et al. (2006) which is the base for this research study. The authors conducted an online survey to find out students' podcast listening habits, the strengths and weaknesses of podcasting and opinions of using this technology in the future. The researchers conducted an online of students enrolled in courses that used podcasting. The survey contained open-ended questions about the strengths and weaknesses of this technology. Many courses were involved but only a few responded to the survey. In total 388 students and 11 faculty members took part in this survey. The findings showed that students tended to listen to podcasts on computers rather than MP3 players. However, they reported about owning Ipod or MP3 player. It was revealed that mobility may not be the

driving factor behind student use. Furthermore, students reported using podcasts in conjunction with other online resources, such as lecture notes and PowerPoint slides. Interestingly, instructors were able to use this technology with no reported difficulties even without having any knowledge about this tool. Moreover, the responses showed that both teachers and students found podcasts to be useful tools for helping students catch up missed class. Though many educators (Blaisdell, 2006; Bongey et al., 2006; Menzies, 2005;) worry that students will stop going to classes if they use course podcast, this study tells the opposite. Thus, one of the possible drawbacks of using course podcasts mentioned in the previous studies can be crossed out. Based on the findings a strong majority of students reported that the availability of podcasts had no impact on their attendance.

Therefore, taking into account different studies conducted and discussed above, this study is needed in terms of revealing Armenian EFL learners practices while using podcasts in their learning. Besides, there was a need to understand students' perceptions about podcasts' educational value and attitude towards using language podcast in the future.

2.6. Summary

Based on the literature review podcasting is widely used in educational settings. Some research studies (Chester et. al. 2011; Ducate & Lomicka, 2009; Fietze, 2009; Nathan & Chan, 2007; Spies, 2011) were conducted to find out students' attitude towards using podcasting in their learning process and their perceptions about its educational value. In fact the studies of students' use and attitudes towards podcasting appeared in literature starting from 2006 (Chester et al., 2011). Those studies directed the researcher to understand the focus of this study and to work out some methodology issues. All those studies were conducted in

different countries. However, there was not enough evidence about Armenian EFL students' perceptions and attitudes. Also, some of the papers discussed possible difficulties while using podcasts. Thus, based on the related literature this study was carried out to find out Armenian EFL learners' perceptions and attitude towards using podcasts in their language learning. Also it aimed to identify some podcast listening practices and possible changes in those practices over time and by proficiency level.

As previously noted, the lack of empirical data was the basis to conduct this study. Moreover, there was a need to use mixed method as according to the literature review a lot of studies used mixed methodology design. It was done to find out associations between variables (quantitative method) and to observe the participants in their natural classroom settings (qualitative, naturalistic method).

As this study was qualitative in its nature it was impossible to identify more direct evidence that could be generalized to the population. Besides the participants were from the EEC courses not from the Armenian public schools. Therefore, as there was a lack of any research, the use of qualitative research to explore the new field in more depth was justified. As a type of qualitative method, naturalistic inquiry was used that implies only a commitment to studying something in its natural environment. In any naturalistic study, there is no pre-selection or manipulation of variables, and no a priori commitment to any theoretical view of a target phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The research questions of the study were the following:

1. *How do the students' podcast listening practices change over time and by proficiency level?*
2. *What are the students' perceptions about the educational value of podcasts and what are their attitudes towards using podcast in their language learning process?*

3.1. Research Design

This study aimed to investigate Armenian EFL learners' practices and their perceptions about using podcasts in their language learning process over time and by proficiency level. Its purpose was also to find out how students feel about the educational value of podcasts. In order to answer all research questions mixed method was used that included both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. It is believed that the use of both methods provides a more complete understanding of research problems (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2009). A qualitative descriptive method was used as the straight descriptions of the phenomenon were desired. According to Farhady (1995, p.144) the descriptive methods give opportunity to researchers "to describe and interpret the current status of phenomena". As a type of qualitative method, naturalistic inquiry was used which is a generic orientation to inquiry that implies only a commitment to studying something in its natural environment. In any naturalistic study, there is no pre-selection of variables to study, no manipulation of variables, and no a priori commitment to any one theoretical view of a target phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Its goal was the development of concepts which help us understand social

phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) settings, giving the emphasis to the meanings, experiences, and views of all the participants. Accordingly, the naturalist inquirer used techniques that allow the target phenomenon to present itself as it would if it were not under study (Sandelowski, 2000).

Quantitative research (Hopkins, 2000) can be either descriptive (subjects are measured once) or experimental (subjects are measured twice: before and after the treatment). Thus, using quantitative descriptive method helped to show the students' practices and their changes over time in numbers and percentages that is to say numerical data. So, the quantitative data were analyzed descriptively. Besides most of the studies that investigated students' attitudes towards podcasts have been descriptive, building up the picture presented above of the proportion of students using podcasts, their reasons for use, and satisfaction with them (Chester et al., 2011).

3.2. Settings and Participants

The research was conducted in EEC, Department of English Programs (DEP) at American University of Armenia in spring 2012. It lasted for 10 weeks (one term according to AUA standards). The study was conducted in two different level groups. The groups were Communication 4 and Communication 6 according to EEC level division which corresponds to B1 and B2 levels respectively, according to Common European Framework of References of Languages (CEFR) standards. The criterion used to place these students in this level was a placement test. There were 22 students (Communication 4-10 and Communication 6-12) and their age ranged from 12 to 16. In Communication 6 group the teacher was also a researcher whereas in Communication 4 the teacher and the researcher were different people.

Thus, the teacher in Communication 4 group was also a participant. The mother tongue of all the participants was Armenian.

EEC students met twice a week in one-hour sessions of English. The groups used different books due to their level of proficiency. Communication 4 and Communication 6 level students studied with “English in Mind 1” and “English in Mind 2” course books respectively.

There are different types of sampling in qualitative research that include convenience, accidental, snowball, quota sample, purposive sampling, simple random sampling and cluster sampling (Landreneau & Creek, n.d; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). For this study it was not possible to randomly select the students as the groups were formed based on the placement test for studying English. Besides, it was important to recognize that the essence of the qualitative approach is that it is naturalistic—studying real people in natural settings rather than in artificial isolation. Thus, before sampling the context of the study should be taken into account. It is believed that for qualitative study random sampling is not appropriate because studying a random sample provides the best opportunity to generalize the results to the population but is not the most effective way of developing an understanding of complex issues relating to human behavior (Landreneau & Creek, n.d; Marshal, 1996). Samples for qualitative investigations tend to be small, even if a representative sample is desirable. Random sampling of a population is likely to produce a representative sample only if the research characteristics are normally distributed within the population. There is no evidence that the values, beliefs and attitudes that form the core of qualitative investigation are normally distributed, making the probability approach inappropriate. As to the size of the sample there is no fixed size of a sample for qualitative study. An appropriate sample size for a

qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question (Marshall, 1996).

One of the drawbacks of qualitative study is the confidentiality and/or anonymity issue. As qualitative studies are mainly conversational it is difficult to keep anonymity. However, the ways in which confidentiality might be broken should be carefully considered before data collection begins (Tedlok, 2009). In this study the surveys were anonymous.

3.3. Instrumentation

To understand and interpret the students' practices and perceptions, surveys and semi-structured interview were used. By means of finding more in depth understanding of students podcast listening habits and as this was mainly a naturalistic approach, field notes were taken by the investigator in both groups. For enhancing validity and reliability a variety of instruments to collect data were used. This kind of checking is often referred to triangulation (Wallen, & Fraenkel, 2009).

There were three sets of measurement instruments in this study: surveys (see Appendices A) on a regular weekly basis for discovering their podcast listening practices over time and by proficiency level, field notes and semi-structured interview (see Appendices B) to have more valid data. The interview was conducted at the end of the study. The interviews are believed to be the most frequently used method to gather qualitative data because naturalistic inquiry requires instruments that are flexible and adaptive to the setting.

As this study sought to describe not the frequency but the behaviors, perceptions and feelings of the participants' in a natural setting field notes were also taken.

3.3.1. Surveys

The surveys included eight close-ended questions and conducted every week in the course of eight weeks. However, the participants were given a chance to response without using the provided options if there was not an appropriate option for them to choose. The participants selected the one/ones from the given options. The surveys aimed to identify how the students' podcast listening practices (what device students used to listen to podcasts, where they did it, how many times and etc.) differ over time and by proficiency level.

3.3.2. Semi-structured interview

Interviewing gave the respondents an opportunity to elaborate or explain their choices. Interviewing is an important way for a researcher to check the accuracy of the impressions he or she gained through surveys. Among a few interview types a semi-structured interview was used in this study because it allowed high validity. In semi-structured interview people are able to talk about something in detail and depth. According to Bernard (2011) the semi-structured interview guide provides a clear set of instructions for interviewers and can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data. Many researchers like to use semi-structured interviews because questions can be prepared ahead of time. However, the questions in semi-structured interview are flexible and researchers can ask questions which are not included in the guide depending on the participants' answers.

Once the specific patterns were identified in the surveys, questions were included in the interview to find out more detailed information. The semi-structured interview integrated five open-ended questions (see Appendices B)

prepared in advance. The interview was conducted at the end of the study. The principles of conducting the interview were thoroughly considered by the interviewer. The aim of the interview was clarified to the participants before the interview begins. The interview was conducted face-to-face, and the participants' answers were recorded. Interview questions were mainly based on the answers of the students given earlier in the weekly surveys.

3.3.3. Field Notes

According to Mulhall (2003), observation is a basic technique used in almost all qualitative research even if other methods or techniques are used. Careful attention to the form, meaning, use and construction of field- notes enable researchers to clarify more closely what, when, where and how such notes should be recorded.

Robert (1995) claims field notes are accounts made by a researcher that describe experiences and observations collected while participating.

In this study the field notes were open-ended; the researcher did not look at the certain things guided by particular guidelines because the researcher aimed to look at the students' attitudes and perceptions while reporting their listened podcast in class.

3.4. Procedures

The participants were informed of the aims of the study. The teacher indirectly introduced podcasts and their use in today's educational settings to the students. However, they should believe that the podcasts used during the classes were part of the EEC curriculum in order to keep reliability.

On the first day the students received the course syllabus with all the course assignments and grades. During the first week students were asked to join Facebook group that was specifically created for this study, and explore podcast links. In the

interest of time the students did not look for podcasts by themselves and use RSS for subscription. The teacher prepared the list of the podcasts according to the level of the students (B1 and B2). The list of the links was posted on the Facebook group page. The Facebook has been chosen for providing the students with podcasts links due to its popularity and easy access. Beginning from the second week the students listened to podcast episode (s) and completed podcast listening logs in class. Afterwards they did the survey. As it was mentioned above the surveys were on a regular weekly basis. The surveys included eight close-ended questions with the given options. During these ten weeks students were assigned to choose the podcasts from the list, to listen to an episode(s) and be prepared to complete the podcast listening logs. A minimum listening amount per week was 5-15 minutes. Students had their podcast listening practices aligned with their usual homework. When students had some problems, the instructor supported and encouraged them. For instance when they had problems with remembering the listened material the instructor advised to use certain strategies such as note taking, using dictionaries or listening to the same episode more than once to be able to fill in a podcast listening logs in class.

In the course of ten weeks the researcher also observed and took notes about students' behavior and attitude. When the students were completing their podcast listening logs the researcher took notes about their behavior, attitude and the comments that they made among their peers. If the students had some technical problems with listening to or downloading podcast episodes the teacher/researcher guided them and tried to find solutions. The field notes were taken also during such kind of discussions where the behavior and the attitude of students were seen well.

The semi-structured interview was conducted at the end of the study. All students took part in it. The interview was face-to-face and it was recorded. There were five interview questions and all of them were open-ended. So, each participant was asked five questions that were prepared in advanced. However, as it was a semi-structured interview a researcher could ask questions that were not included in the interview question list trying to record students' answers in details.

3.5. Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Qualitative content analysis is data-derived: that is, codes also are systematically applied, but they were generated from the data themselves in the course of the study. Qualitative research is generally characterized by the simultaneous collection and analysis of data (Sandelowski, 2000). The qualitative data included the results of field notes and semi-structured interview.

The quantitative data of the current study included the results of the surveys which were conducted on a regular weekly basis. As it has already been mentioned in chapter three both groups were listening to podcast episodes and doing a survey after completing their podcast listening logs. The surveys they showed students' podcast listening practices over time and by proficiency level.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

The present study was carried out to investigate how Armenian EFL learners' podcasts listening practices change overtime and by proficiency level. It also aimed find out students' perceptions and attitudes towards using podcast in their learning process. For the study quantitative and qualitative data were collected.

The results of both quantitative and qualitative data sets aim at answering the following research questions guiding the study:

- 1. How do the students' podcast listening practices change over time and by proficiency level?*
- 2. What are the students' perceptions about the educational value of podcasts and what are their attitudes towards using podcast in their language learning process?*

This chapter presents the results of the data of the present study analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The mode of the data collection was direct administration.

Besides data gained from surveys, filed notes were also used to identify the students' perceptions about listening to podcasts in their language learning process and their educational value. For reinforcing the data gained from the surveys and observational field notes the data from the interview were analyzed.

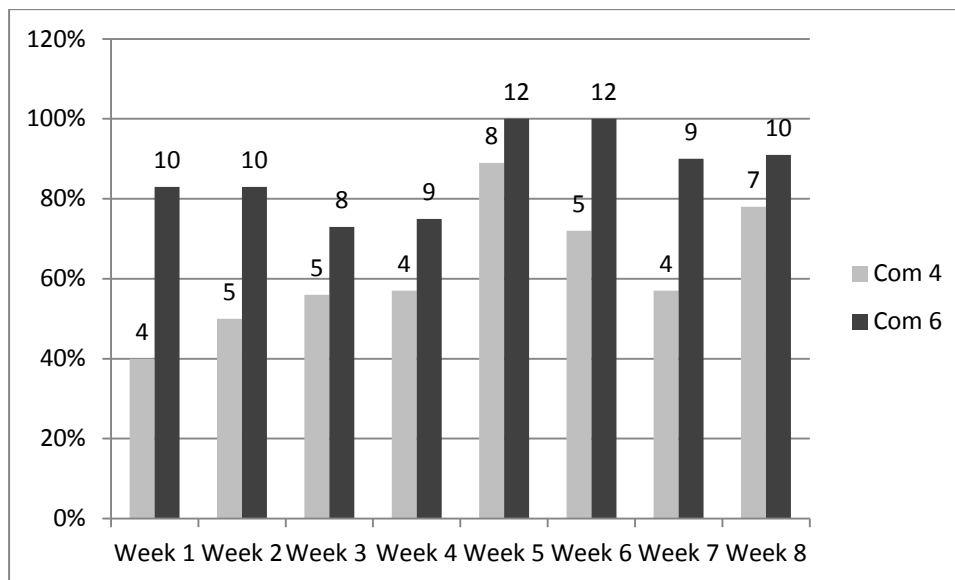
4.1. Survey Analyses

The study was conducted during ten weeks. However, the data from the weekly surveys were collected during eight weeks because in the first week the students were asked to go online to the Facebook group where the podcast links were posted and explore them. The last week the interview was conducted so the data from the surveys were for eight weeks.

In the weekly surveys there were eight questions with the given options (see Appendix A) and with the opportunity for the responder to add another option. The same surveys were in both Communication 4 and Communication 6 groups. The surveys aimed to find out students' practices in terms of a place and device for listening to podcast, the strategies used while listening to it and possible difficulties that the students might encounter. The surveys were analyzed via Microsoft Excel by creating a graph for each option of each question for both groups.

For answering the first research question the survey data for two groups were analyzed to see changes in the students' practices over time in both groups and by comparing them to see how those practices differ by their proficiency level. Based on the results it was seen that more students listened to podcast episodes in Communication 6 than in Communication 4 group (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. The frequency of listening to podcast (N varied from 4 to 12)



As it is seen from the figure in Communication 4 group the highest point of listening to podcast episodes was 89% in the 5th week whereas in Communication 6 the highest was 100% in 5th and 6th weeks. There was a change in Communication 4 group because as it is seen in the 8th week the percentage of students who did not

listen to podcast declined reaching 22 percent consequently the percentage of students who listened to rose to 78 percent. In Communication 6 the percentage of students ended up with 91 percent.

In terms of the place that students listened to podcasts there was no much of a change because the majority of them in both groups listened at home (see Figures 4.2, 4.3, 4.4), only in the fourth, seventh and eighth weeks in Communication 6 other practices were noticed. In the survey this question had six options however only for three of them the researcher got responses and created figures.

Figure 4.2. The popularity of listening to podcast at home (N varied from 4 to 12)

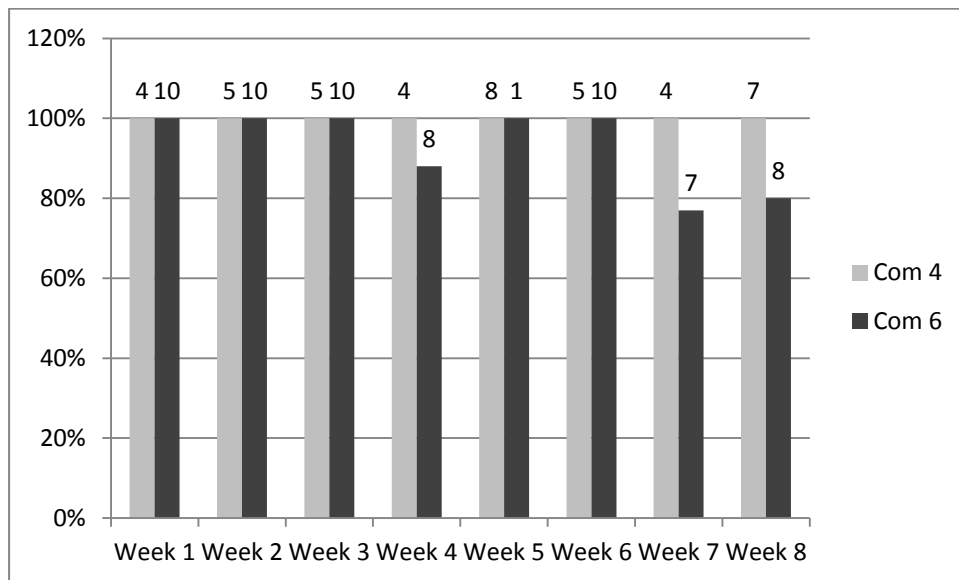


Figure 4.3. The popularity of listening to podcast in public transport (N=from4to12)

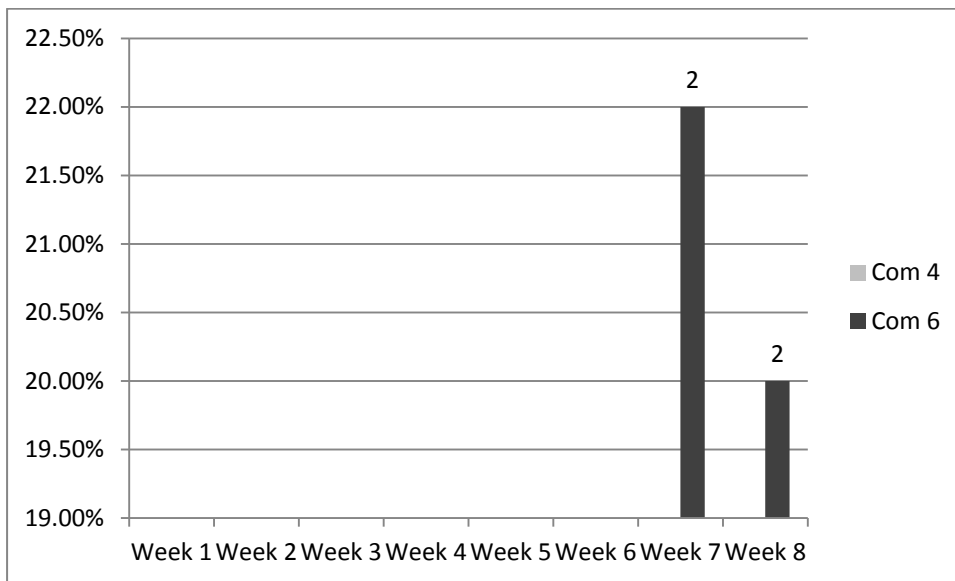
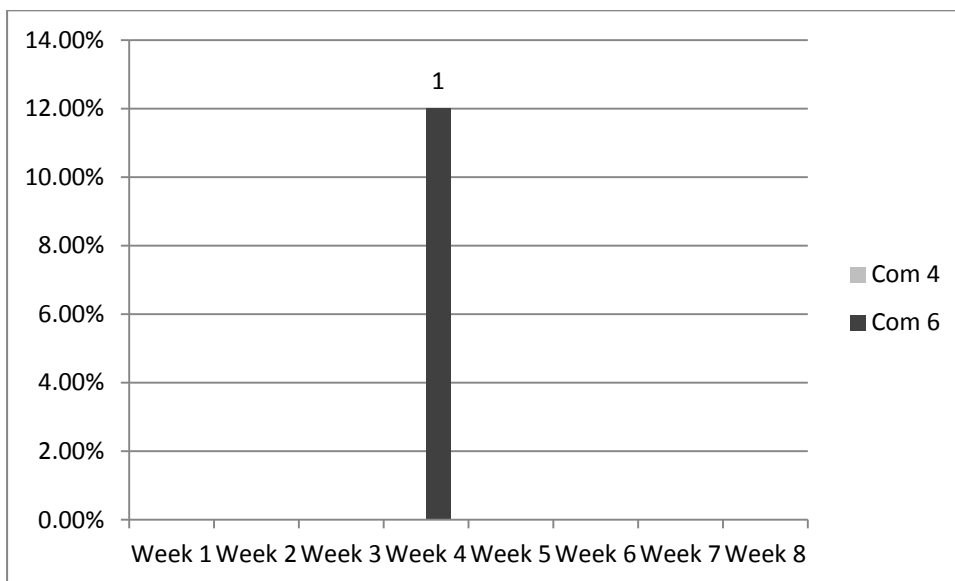


Figure 4.4. The popularity of listening to podcast while walking (N = from 4 to 12)



In the 7th and 8th weeks the 22% and 20% of Communication 6 group students listened to podcast episodes in the public transport. Moreover, in the 4th week 12% of Communication 6 students listened to podcast episodes while walking. So, it can be said that there were some changes in students' practices in terms of the place of listening to podcast. Contrary to Communication 6 in Communication 4 there was no change because during the whole 8 weeks the students (100%) listened to podcast episodes at home.

In terms of the devices the students used to listen to podcast episodes there was no much of a variety in Communication 4 group. However, Communication 6 group students experimented and used a variety of equipment for listening to podcasts (see figures 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10).

Figure 4.5. The popularity of using computer for listening to podcast (N varied from 4 to 12)

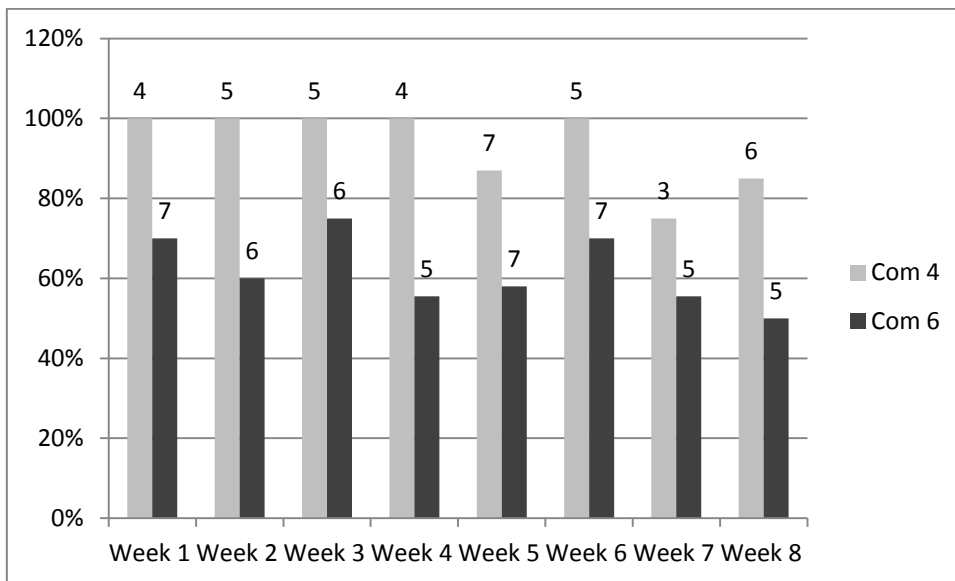


Figure 4.6. The popularity of using lap-top for listening to podcast (N=from 4 to 12)

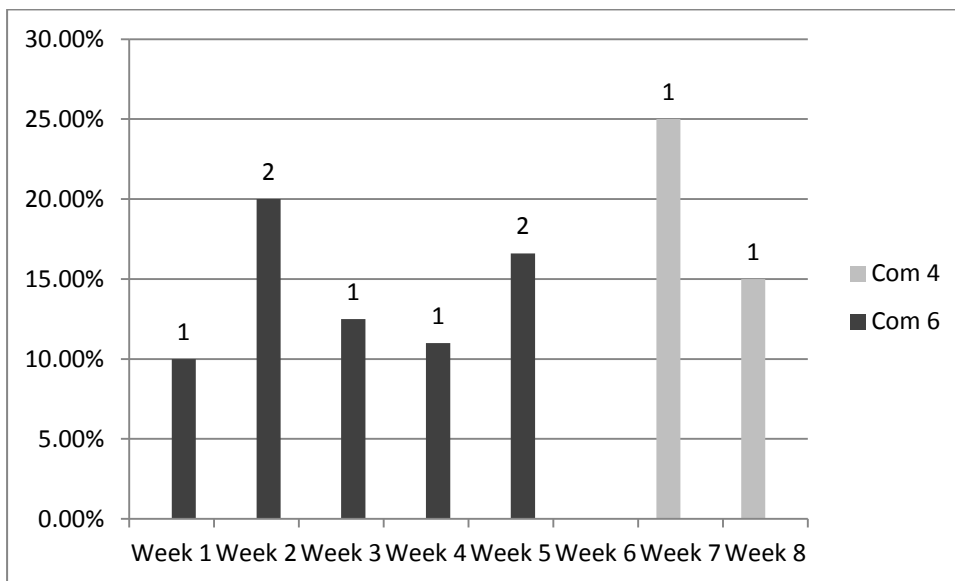


Figure 4.7. The popularity of using i-pod for listening to podcast (N= from 4 to 12)

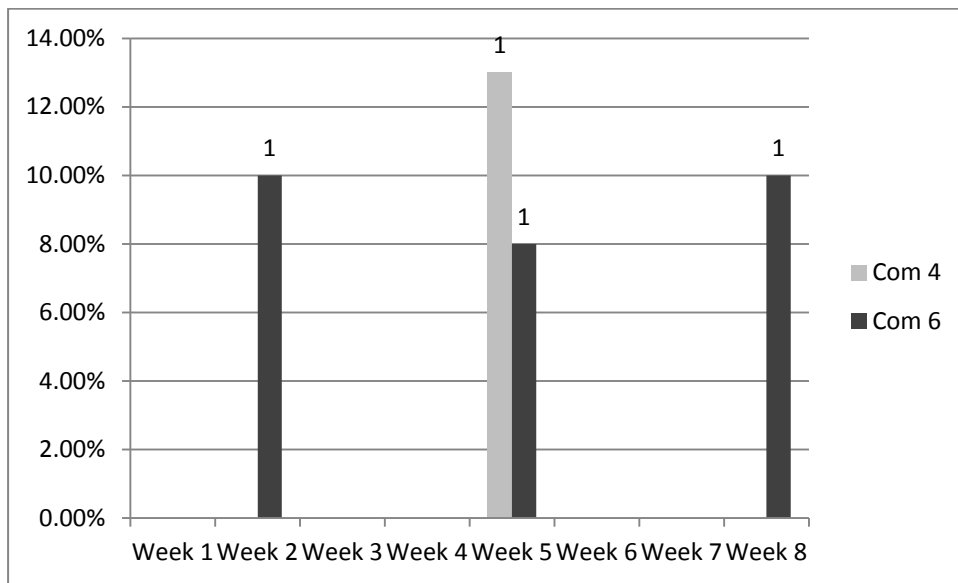


Figure 4.8. The popularity of using i-phone for listening to podcast (N varied from 4 to 12)

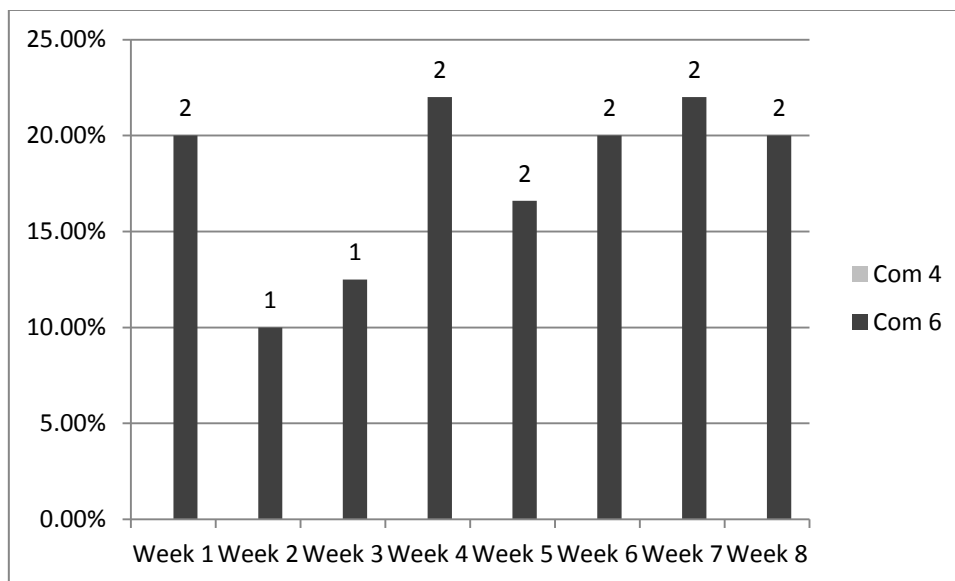


Figure 4.9. The popularity of using mobile phone while listening to podcast (N varied from 4 to 12)

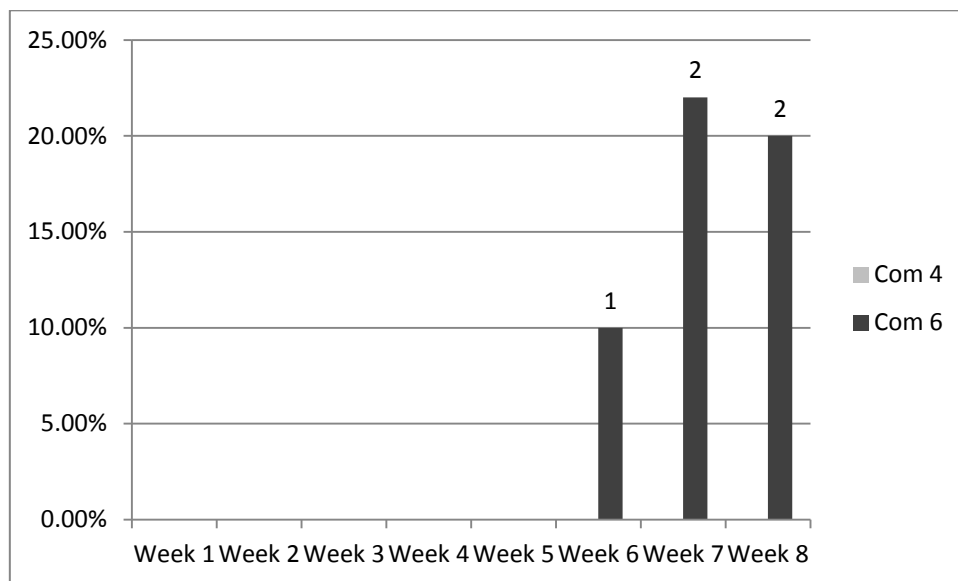
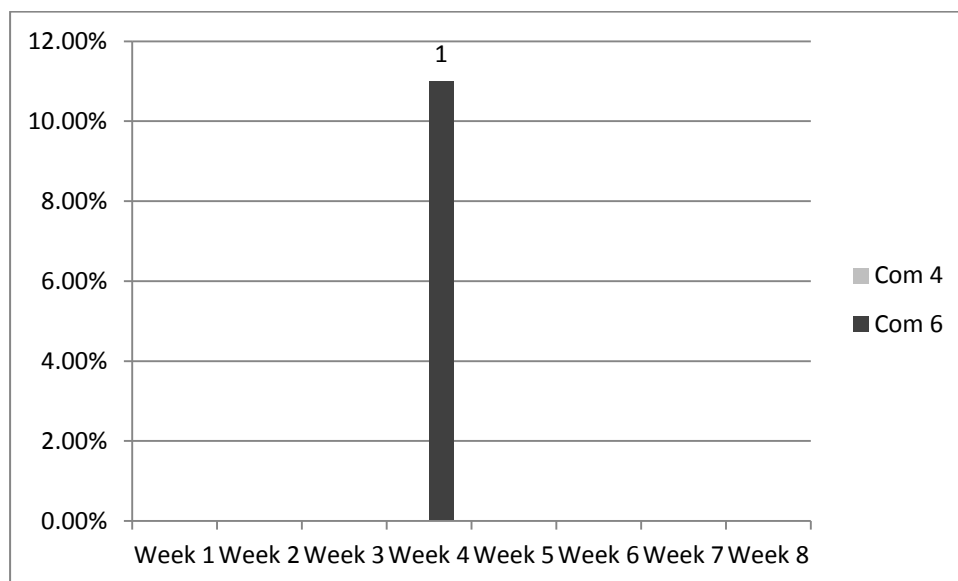


Figure 4.10. The popularity of using i-pad while listening to podcast (N varied from 4 to 12)

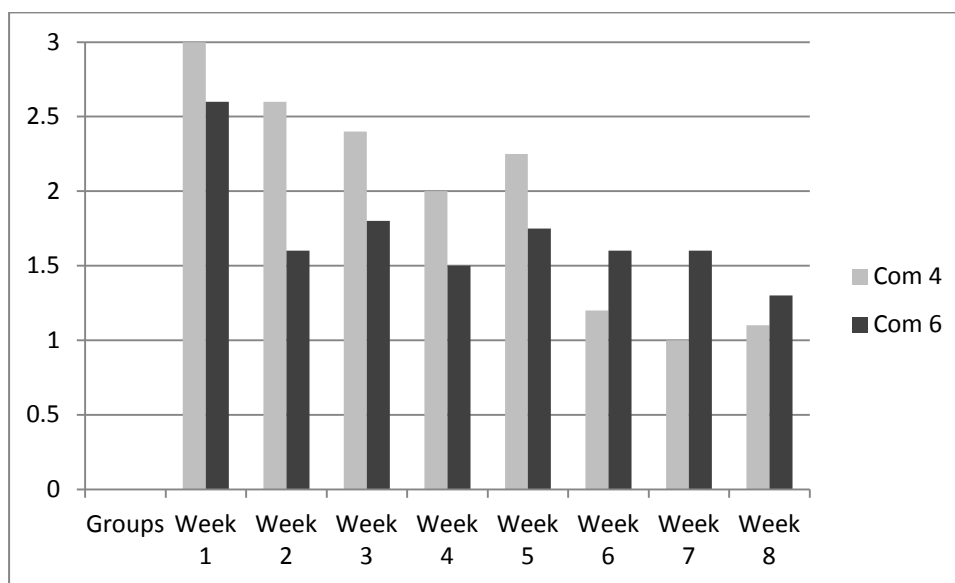


As it is seen Communication 4 group students mainly used computer, whereas in Communication 6 group the students used different devices for listening to podcast episodes. Undoubtedly, the majority again used computers but some Communication 6 group students used I-phones, I-pods, I-pads and mobile phones. Interestingly, though some students used different devices and they had opportunity

to listen to podcast episodes outside, they mainly listened to them at home. As they explained later in their interview listening at home was more comfortable.

Interesting changes were identified looking at the differences in how many times the students in both groups listened to the same podcast episode (see figure 4.11). The figure shows the average number of times each student listened to the same episode.

Figure 4.11. The average number of times each student listened to the same episode



It is seen that the average time per student listened to the same episode per week went down in both groups. In Communication 4 it started from in average 3 times per student per week and then steadily went down reaching in average 1.1. However, in Communication 6 there were some fluctuations starting with 2.6 times and reaching 1.3 times per student per week at the end of the study. Thus, the frequency of listening to the same podcast episode in Communication 4 group decreased in the course of 8 weeks. Though in Communication 6 that practice was also noticed, during the last three weeks the average time per student listened to the same episode went up. This practice may be explained based on the field notes as it was recorded that Communication 6 group students chose scientific content to listen

which possibly required more frequent listening. The results would be better seen if the standard deviation (SD) was calculated. However, for keeping confidentiality the surveys were anonymous which did not allow the researcher to calculate SD and to show how much variation existed from the average.

The students in both groups showed almost same practices in terms of strategy used. However, the popularity of the certain types of strategies was different (see Figures 4.12, 4.13, 4.14, 4.15, 4.16, 4.17).

Figure 4.12. The popularity of using note taking strategy (N varied from 4 to 12)

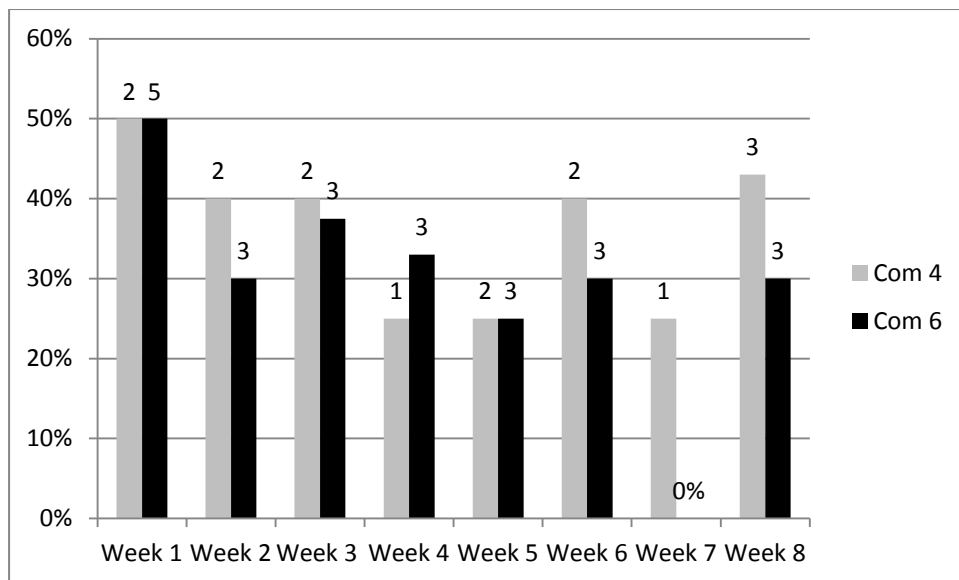


Figure 4.13. The popularity of using dictionaries (N varied from 4 to 12)

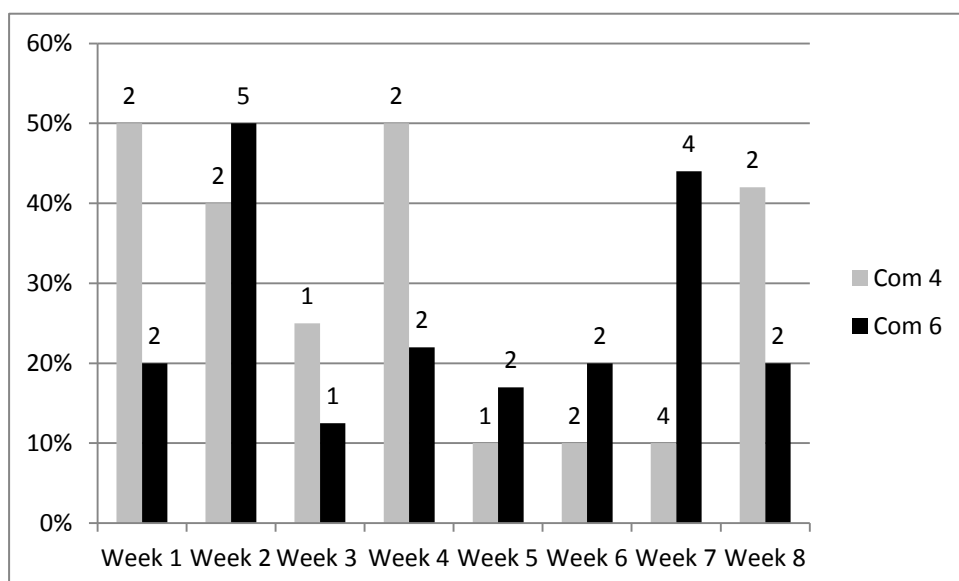


Figure 4.14. The popularity of using translation strategy (N varied from 4 to 12)

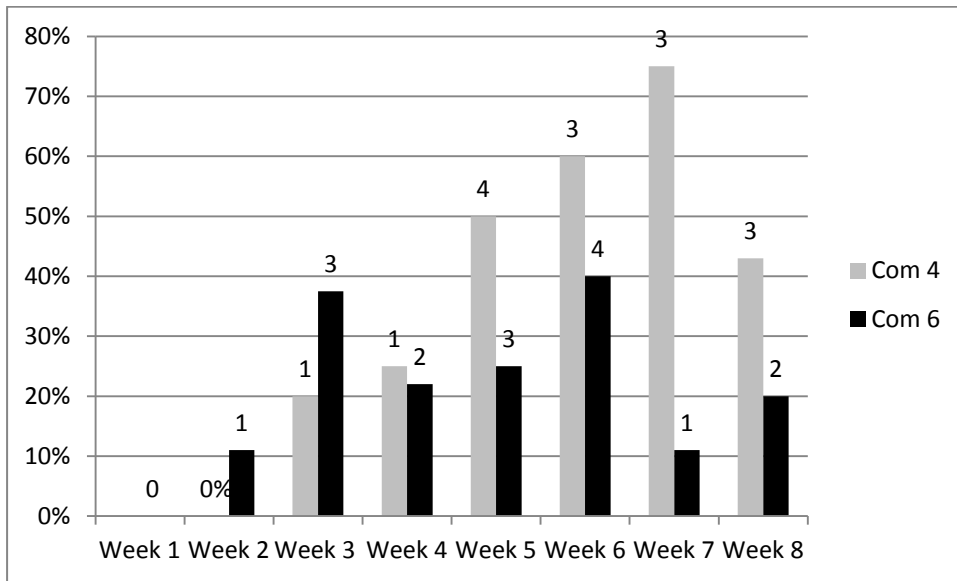
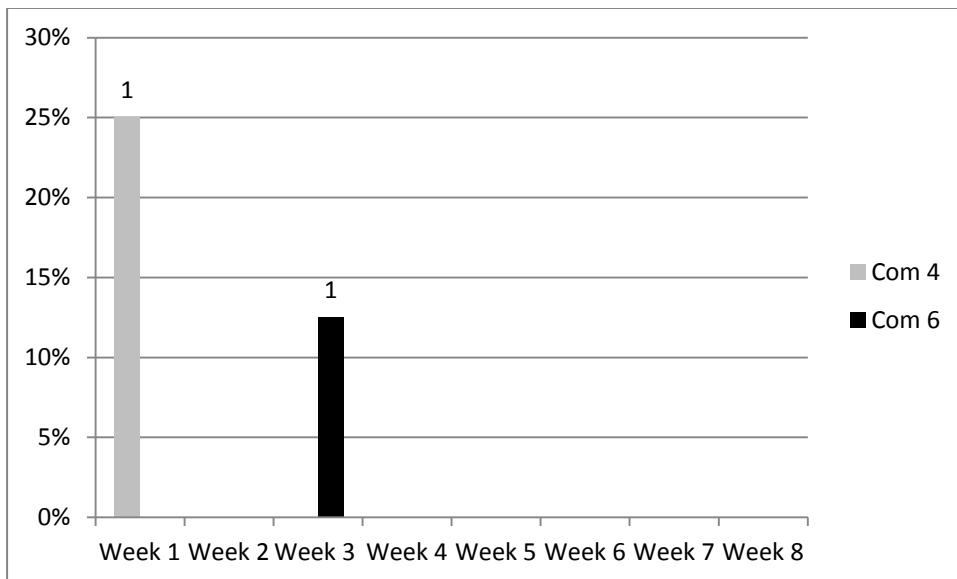
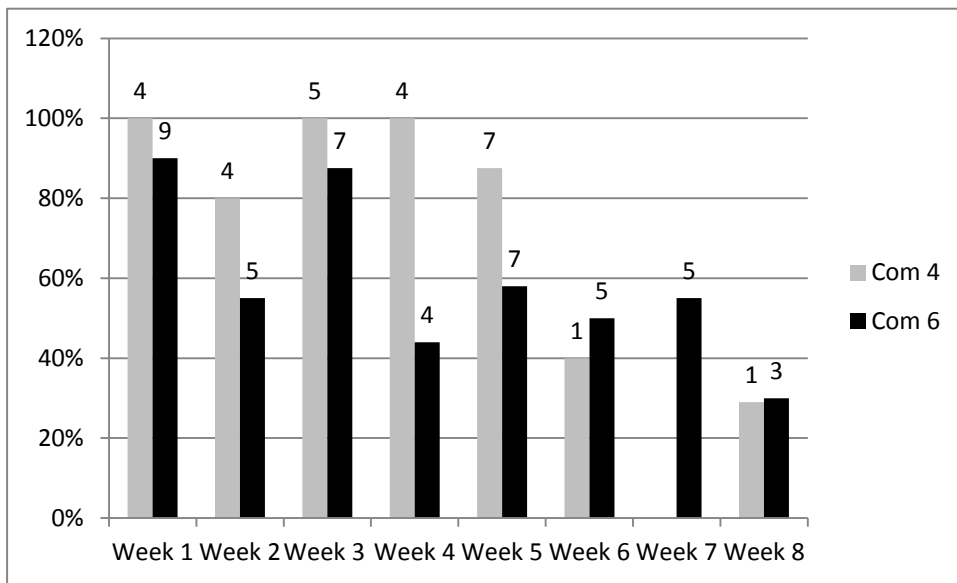


Figure 4.15. The popularity of using 'asking for help' strategy (N varied from 4 to 12)



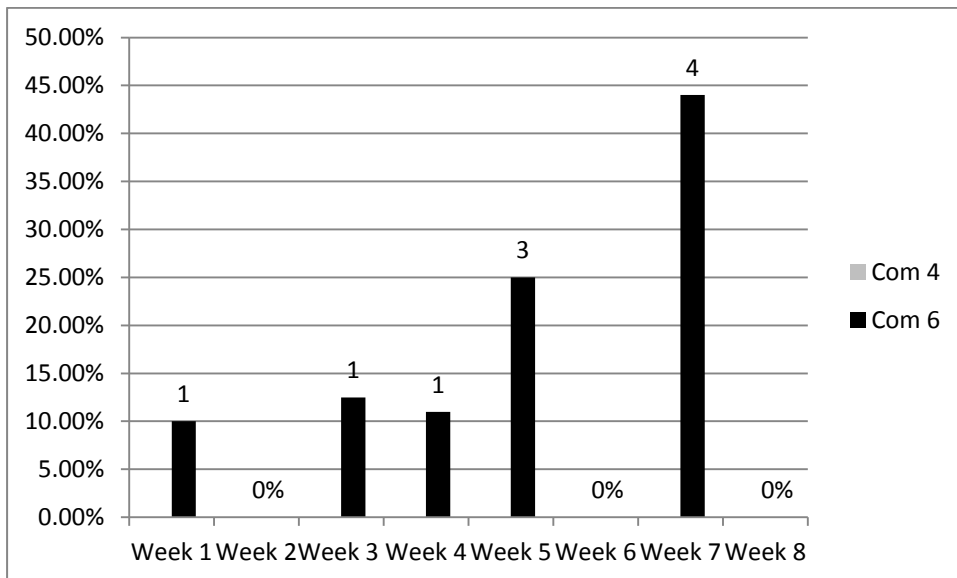
The most popular strategy that the students used while listening to podcast was re-listening (see figure 4.16). These numbers were consistent with the ones showing the frequency of times per student listened to the same podcast episode.

Figure 4.16. The popularity of using 're-listening' strategy (N varied from 4 to 12)



As it is seen from the figure (4.17) Communication 6 group students used even no strategy while listening to podcasts whereas Communication 4 students never listened to the podcast episodes without using one.

Figure 4.17. The popularity of using no strategy while listening to podcast (N varied from 4 to 12)



Figures 4.18, 4.19 and 4.20 present the criteria used by the students for choosing what podcast to listen. Communication 4 group students chose podcasts only by topic, whereas Communication 6 group students chose also by length and

even by chance. Interesting fact was that in their course syllabus there was a requirement of listening to podcasts 5-15 minutes per week. However, as it is seen the majority of students chose the podcasts by topic. This may mean that the attractive factor of listening to podcast was the topic /content.

Figure 4.18. The popularity of choosing podcasts by topic (N = from 4 to 12)

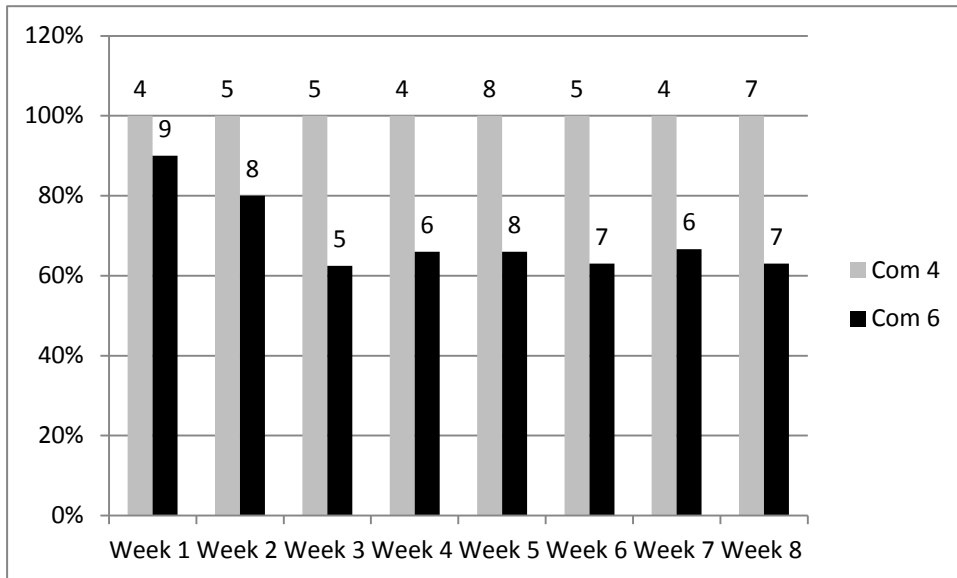


Figure 4.19. The popularity of choosing podcast by its length (N = from 4 to 12)

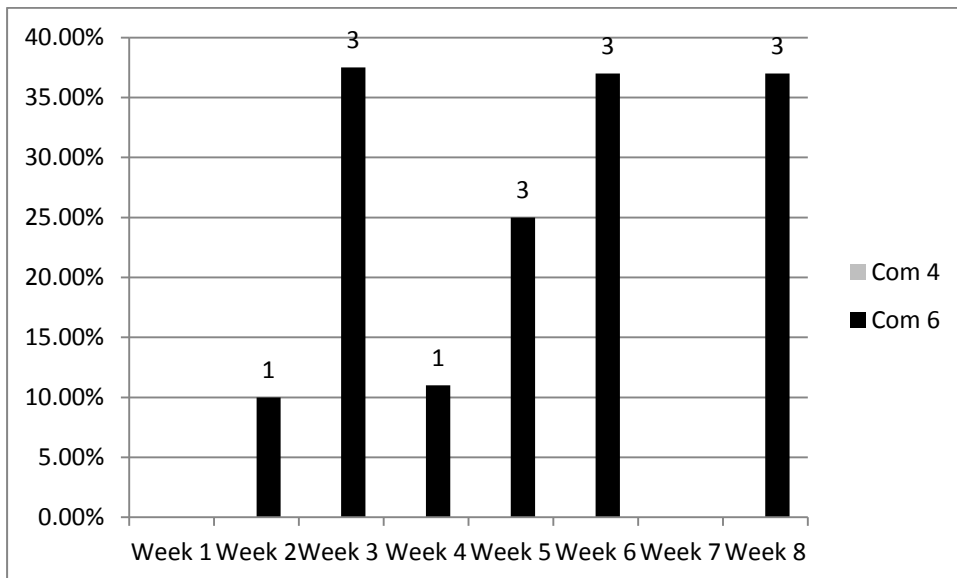
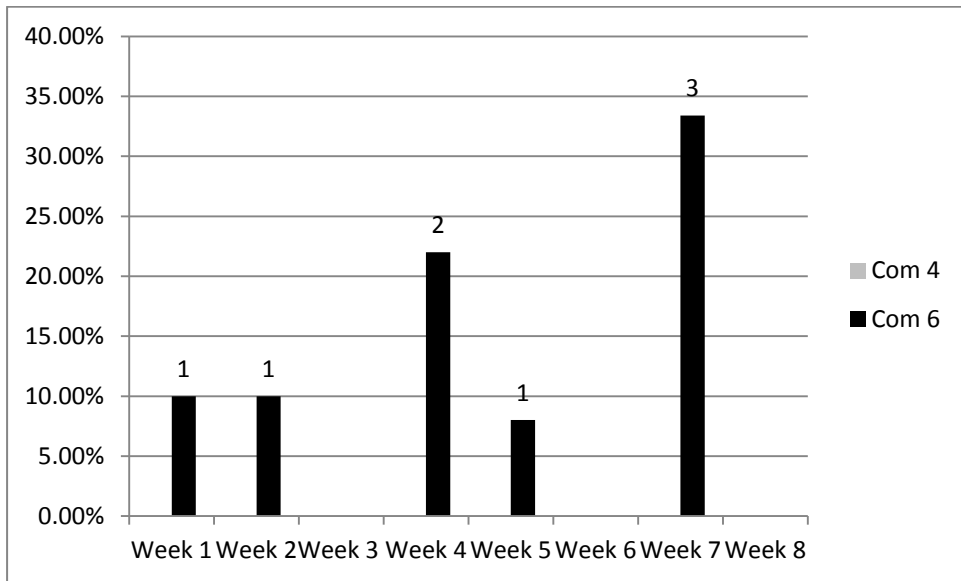


Figure 4.20. The popularity of choosing podcast by chance (N varied from 4 to 12)



Figures 4.21, 4.22, and 4.23 show how students felt while listening to podcasts. As figure 4.22 shows the majority of students felt comfortable while listening to podcasts. Starting from the 4th (Com 6) and 5th (Com 4) weeks the students did not report any stress. This can be considered as an important change in both groups podcast listening practices as it led to the idea that when the students got used to the new technology they overcame the stress.

Figure 4.21. The percentage of students who felt comfortable while listening to podcast (N varied from 4 to 12)

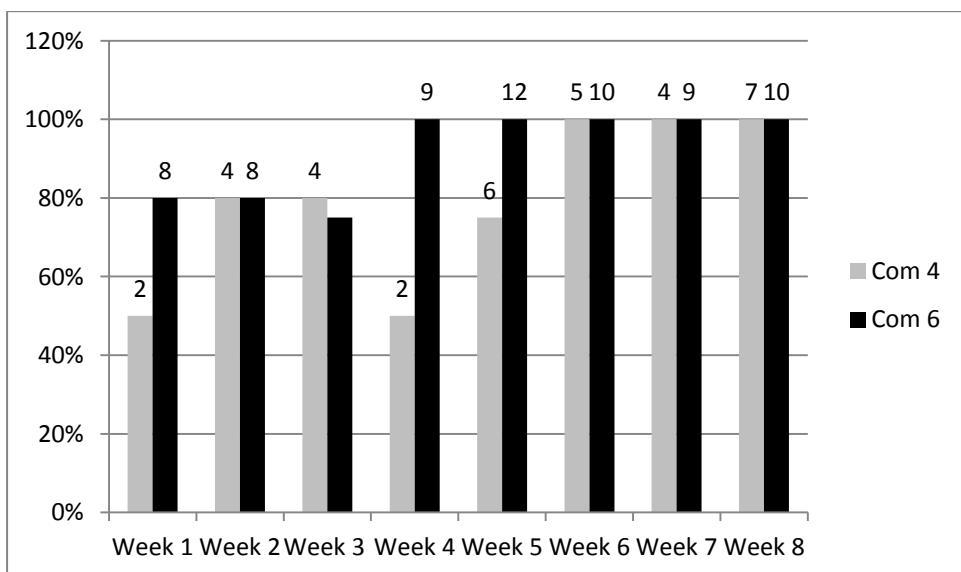


Figure 4.22. The Percentage of students who reported stress while listening to podcast (N varied from 4 to 12)

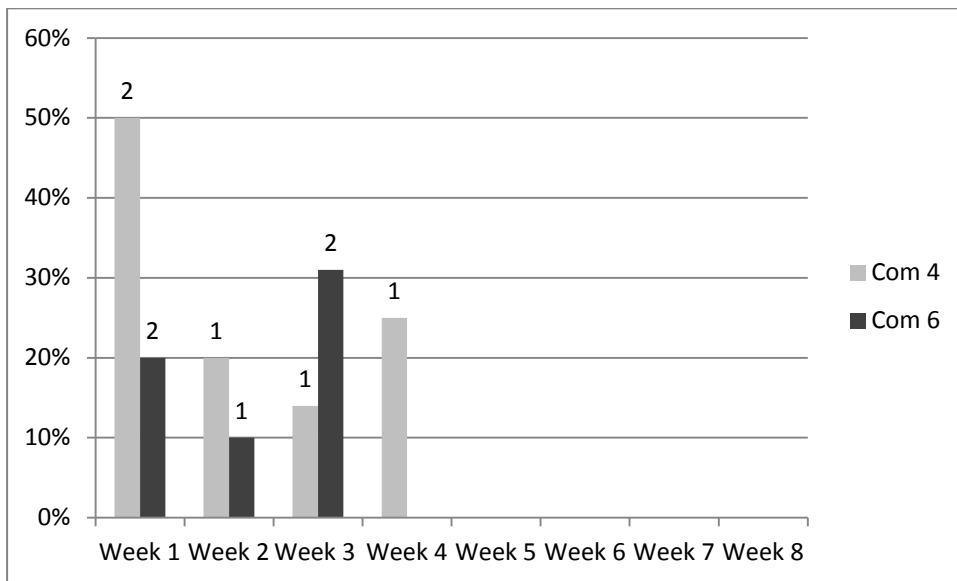
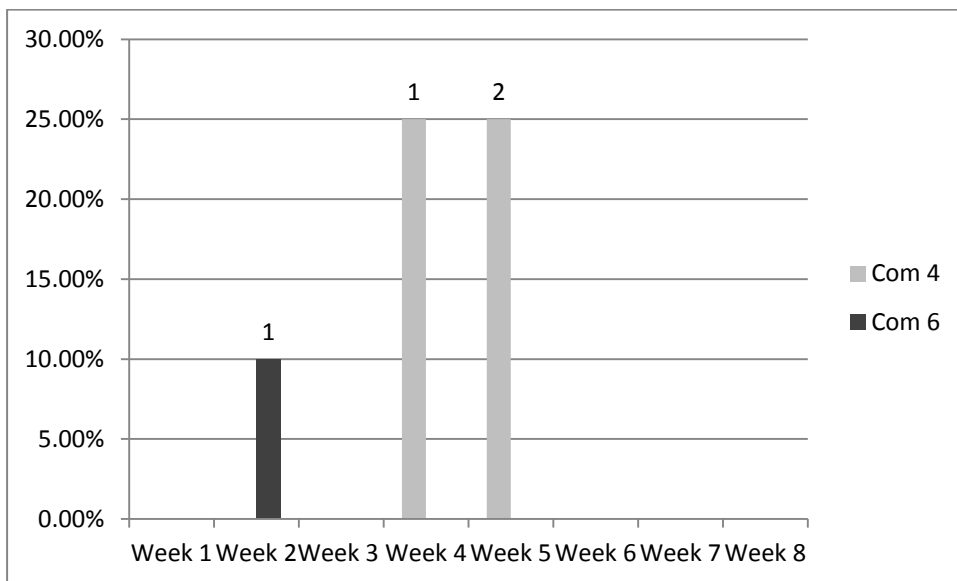


Figure 4.23. The percentage of students who felt happy while listening to podcast (N varied from 4 to 12)



Figures 4.24, 4.25, 4.26 and 4.27 present some difficulties that the students encountered while using podcasts in their English language learning process. Here the students in both groups mostly did not have any problems while listening to podcasts. However, there were some problems with low internet connection which in Communication 4 was quite in a high percentage reaching 75% in the 7th week.

Communication 6 group students had that problem since the first week till the sixth one which reason may be their active participation, thus their practices varied. As it is seen from the figures the vast majority of student did not encounter any difficulties while listening to podcasts in their language learning process.

Figure 4.24. The percentage of students who had difficulties with low internet connection (N varied from 4 to 12)

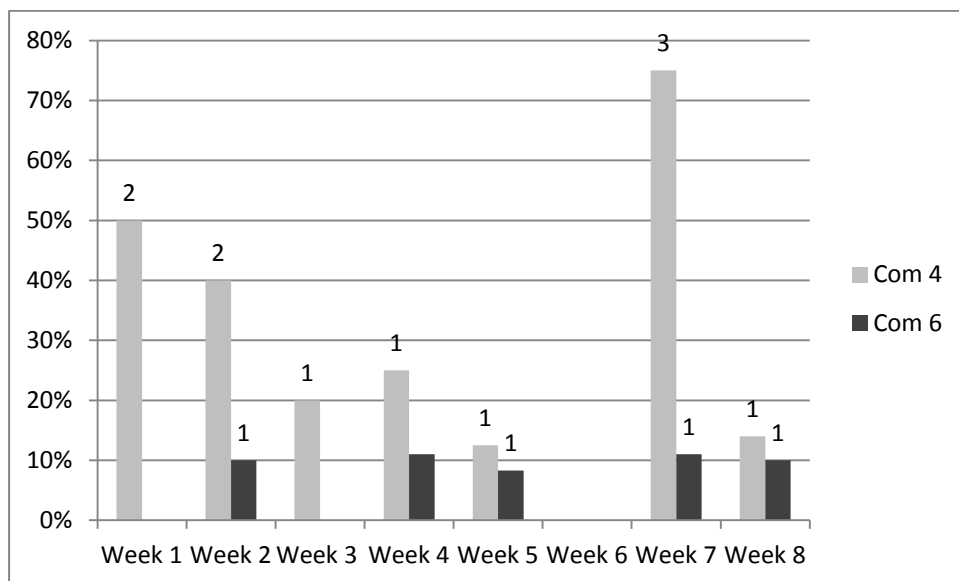


Figure 4.25. The percentage of students who had problems with the device (N varied from 4 to 12)

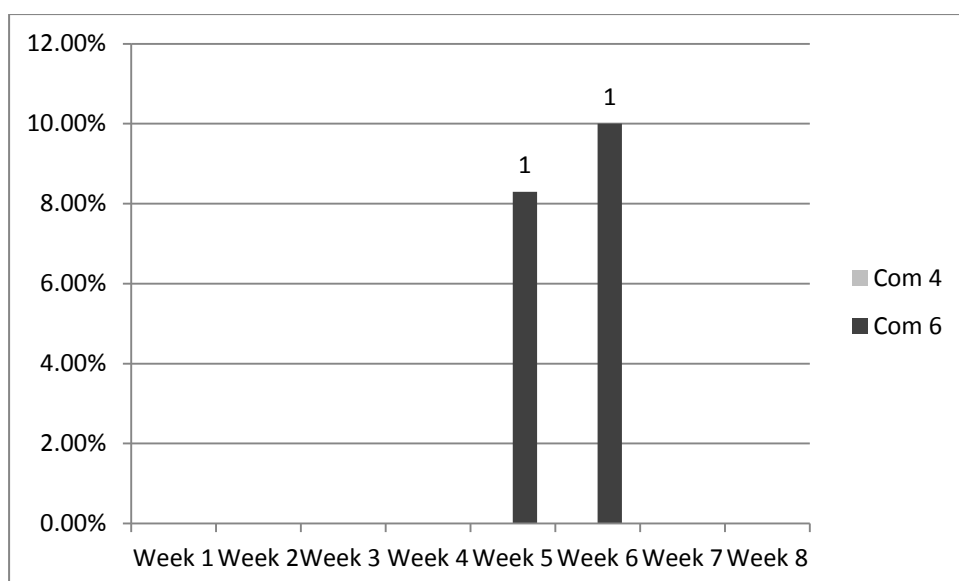


Figure 4.26. The percentage of students who had problems with downloading (N varied from 4 to 12)

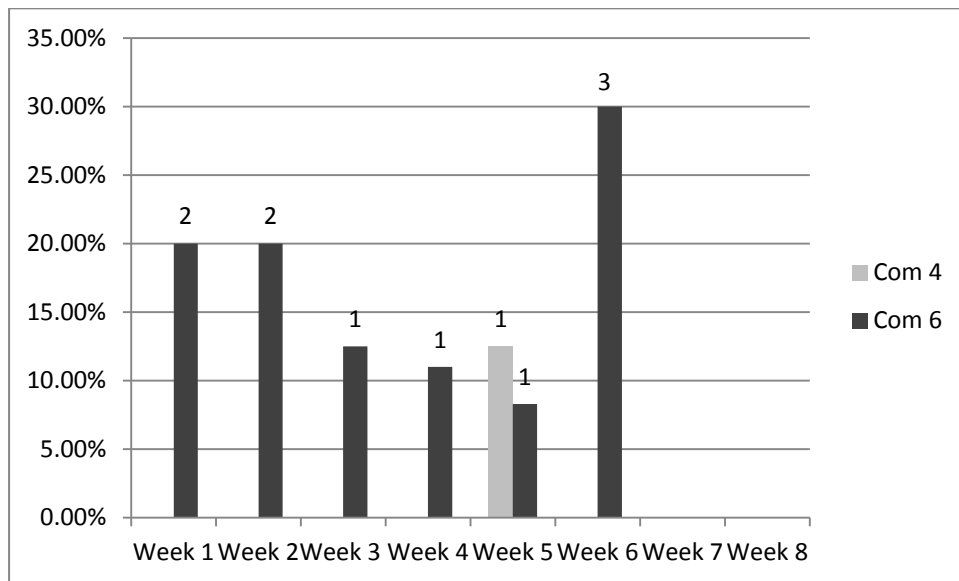
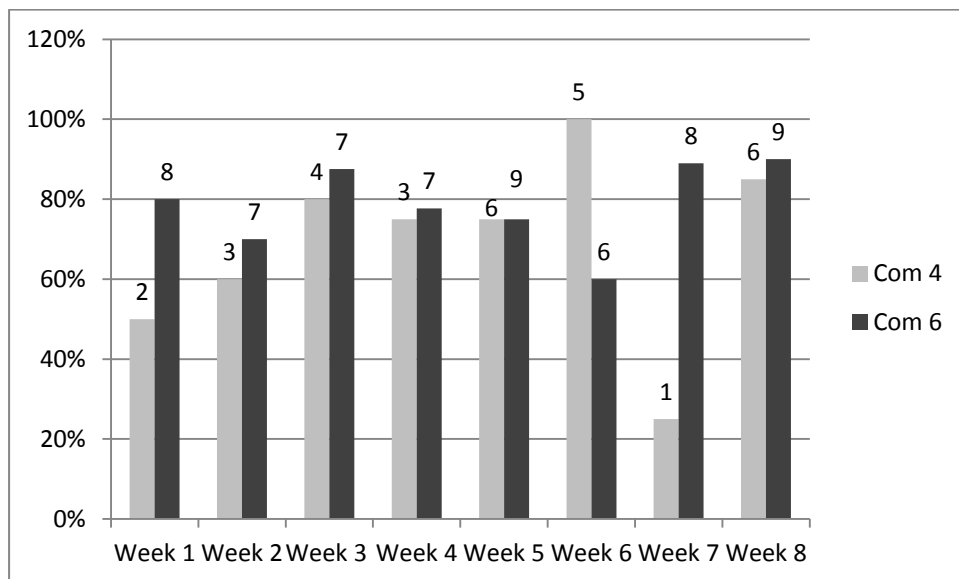


Figure 4.27. The percentage of students who had no problems while listening to podcast (N varied from 4 to 12)



4.2. Interview analyses

The data gained from the interview were coded into categories that emerge as the analysis proceeds. Data reduction was used to categorize and analyze data gained from the semi-structured interview. The researcher counted responses and

the numbers of participants in each response category, then description of the patterns or regularities in the data were discovered and then confirmed by counting. In other words a coding scheme was used (Sndelowski, 2000).

According to the given answers during the interview in Communication 6 group it was revealed that the majority of students liked listening to podcasts. The reasons why they liked doing it were the opportunity to get new information due and learn new words. This practice was noticed also in the answers of Communication 4 group students. They were satisfied with the opportunity to be exposed to different accents and to get new information. During the first few weeks, in fewer cases the participants complained about high speed and incomprehensible accent. However, the interview results showed that at the end of the study the students reported very positive attitude as they confessed about being exposed to various accent and having no any difficulties while listening to podcast. Also it is worth mentioning that the students listen to podcasts at home using computers whereas they could listen to podcast outside. This practice was noticed also in the study conducted by Lane et al. (2006). In that study the students also preferred using computers instead of MP3 players or mobile phones. Though in that study there was no any practice of using other equipment in this study some of Communication 6 group students listened to podcasts at home but with lap-top, I-pad and I-phone. A few used mobile phone and listened to podcasts in the public transport. However this phenomenon was noticed during last few weeks of the study. At first the researcher assumed that maybe the students did not have appropriate equipment for listening outside. However, based on the field notes the vast majority of students had smart phones that allowed them to listen to MP3 files outside. The interview analysis revealed that the students used their phones or other outdoor equipment to

listen to music while walking or in the public transport rather than listening to podcast. The students explained that they preferred listening to music rather than listening to podcast because listening to podcast required more concentration and sometimes the use of dictionaries or paper and pen for note taking. Hence, outside it was uncomfortable for them to listen to podcast. However, as the survey analysis showed at the end of the study in Communication 6 group some changes were noticed, over 20 percent of students began to listen to podcast outside either in the public transport or on the go. The reason of this change may be their proficiency level which allowed them not to use dictionaries or other listening strategies to comprehend the listened material.

In terms of the educational value of podcast the majority agreed about being exposed to different accents due to those podcasts. Moreover, the students saw podcast's educational value in getting new information which is another educational aspect of listening to podcasts. Then the participants agreed that podcast listening helped them to improve listening skills and enrich their vocabulary knowledge as they reported using various strategies such as using dictionaries. A few students saw podcast listening usefulness in learning pragmatics.

As it was already mentioned the participants had positive attitude towards using podcasts in their classrooms as more than half of them assured that they would continue listening to podcasts even without teacher's guidance. The others would possibly listen but they were not quite sure about it.

4.3. Field Notes Analysis

During the field notes the researcher did not use a set of categories to record a person's or group's behavior (Sndelowski, 2000) because the aim of the observation was to discover students' specific attitude and perceptions and having a set of

categories might not be helpful as there was no anticipated behavior. Also the observation of informal interaction and non verbal communication was desired.

During the first weeks in both groups the students were a bit confused and even uninterested in using podcasts. It was something new and unexplored for them. Some of them showed indifference but some were exploring it and asking whether they could find podcasts by their own or use alternative listening materials from Youtube. Generally, starting from the second week the interest to podcast listening rose mostly among Communication 6 group students. Some of the students were telling their partners interesting things that they had listened. Overall, Communication 6 group students showed more interest and listened more actively than Communication 4 group students. This can also be seen in the data gained from the surveys and the interview. In Communication 4 only some students were happy with using podcasts during their language learning process. Moreover, there was a student who had a Facebook account but did not register in Facebook group and listen to a single episode. This student did not even show much interest in the classroom activities. A few students in Communication 4 were complaining about podcasts being boring for them. They assumed that the reason for that may be the long process of getting to the podcast links (go to Facebook page, download and listen). However, having said that during the last week when there was no requirement to listen to podcast some of Communication 4 students listened to them and wanted to tell to their classmates. Field notes also showed that there were cases when a student could not understand the podcast episodes because of their high speed and accent and tried to find an alternative listening material searching online. That student thought that her listening skills were not developed enough to listen to podcasts. However, the researcher advised and guided her to find the one that would

be appropriate to her listening abilities. Next lesson she was very excited as she found ‘a very interesting podcast’.

Once a researcher was given an interesting question whether podcast listening can improve language students’ listening skills. This can be an interesting question for further investigation.

4.5. Summary of the Results

One of the main purposes of the current study was to find out Armenian EFL learners podcast listening practices. Also it aimed to find out the students’ attitude towards using podcast in the language classroom as well as students’ perceptions about podcasts’ educational value. In order to find out the students’ practices/habits, attitude and perceptions, and answer the research questions, the data were obtained from the surveys on a weekly basis, semi-structured interview and field notes. The results of each were analyzed and compared as the study looked at the changes of practices and their differences by proficiency level.

The first research question was “*How do the students’ podcast listening practices change over time and by proficiency level?*”.

Based on the result of the surveys it was found out that there were some changes in practices of using podcast in both groups. The most noticeable changes were in terms of the number of times that students listened to the same podcast episode. Firstly most students in both groups listened to the same podcast episode more than once. As it was revealed both from the field notes and interview the reason of that was high speed and accent. The students had some difficulties with comprehending different accents of English. However, week by week their responses in the surveys showed that the students getting used to the speed and accents. Thus it was assumed that the students were so much exposed to different accents and speed that during

the last weeks of this study listening to the same podcast episode once was enough for them to comprehend. The analysis of the interview also showed that the students got used to accents and speed of podcasts which proved that the survey results were accurate and supported the notion of triangulation.

As the students were listening to the same podcast episode more than once the main strategy for listening to podcast was re-listening in both groups. The most common strategy used by Communication 6 group students were taking notes, using dictionaries and translating. Also there were students who used no strategy. In Communication 4 group the students preferred translating and note taking equally, then came -using dictionaries.

Interesting themes were found in terms of the used equipment for listening to podcast and place for doing that. During the whole study Communication 4 group students listened to podcasts at home using computer and rarely lap-top, whereas students in Communication 6 used relatively a variety of equipment such as lap-top, I-phone, I-pad, mobile phone and I-pod. As it was recorded in the study (Chester et al., 2011) the students who were more confident with listening to podcast tended to use diverse resources. In terms of a place for listening to podcasts Communication 6 group students recorded also responses such as public transport and while walking in the end of the study. The findings mainly showed that students tended to listen to podcasts on computers rather than MP3 players, pointing that mobility may not be the driving factor behind student use of podcasts. This was the main finding in the study conducted by Lane. et al (2007). According to the interview the reason why the students in both groups mainly preferred listening to podcast at home with computer was the convenience because they needed to take notes or use dictionaries. However it can be assumed that the students with relatively high level

of proficiency (Communication 6) could listen to podcast outside because they did not need dictionaries so much.

Also it was found that in course of the study Communication 4 group students listening frequency to the same podcast episode decreased, whereas in Communication 6 group it increased. Based on the field notes it was assumed that the reason for this may be the topic/content as during last three weeks Communication 6 group students listened mostly scientific content.

The second research question was “*What are the students’ perceptions about the educational value of students and their attitude towards using podcasts in their language learning process*”?

It was revealed that EEC students of those particular groups had positive attitude towards using podcast in their language learning process and would like to use it in the future as well. However, a few students from both groups confessed that they would listen to podcasts if they had free time. In terms of podcasts educational value they all said that listening to podcasts help them learn new words as they were using dictionaries during listening to podcasts. This finding was reinforced by the results of the surveys and field notes. The analysis of the survey, field notes and interview showed how students’ podcast listening practices differ over time and by proficiency level. Though they differ, there were some practices which were the same.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter deals with the overall conclusions to be drawn from the study. Section 5.1 summarizes the main aims and the procedures of the study. Section 5.2 summarizes the implications and interpretations. The limitations of the study are presented in Section 5.3. Finally, the recommendations for further research are considered in Section 5.4.

5.1. Aims and procedures of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate possible changes in students' practices or habits over time and by proficiency level while using podcasts in their language learning process. It also sought to explore the students' attitude towards using podcasts in language learning and to find out their perceptions about podcasts' educational value. To achieve this purpose, the following study was carried out over one EEC term. Two groups were selected one Communication 4 (B1) and Communication 6 (B2). In Communication 4 the teacher and the researcher were different people but in Communication 6 the researcher and the teacher were the same. The same teaching program was used in both groups with one difference; the difference was that for each group the podcasts of appropriate level were used.

To collect the data surveys on a weekly basis, field notes and semi-structured interview were used. All the data were analyzed in relation to the research questions.

In spite of the fact that there were not a lot of differences in students' podcast listening practices between two groups, it is important to note that the Communication 6 group recorded more positive responses in the interview and

survey than the Communication 4 group learners. However, both group students highly appreciated podcasts' educational value. This finding supports the common perception on the educational value of podcasts as a new learning and teaching tool that emerged from most of the literature review in chapter 2.

To conclude the current research study, it may be pointed out that podcasts may be used in the English language classroom as the students showed positive attitude toward using them and reported about their educational value.

5.2. Interpretations and Implications

This study has some implications and interpretations in language learning and teaching. Based on this study the researcher may suggest using podcast in the language classes preferably after learning about students' digital literacy level. This may be important because if the students are lack of it they may have some difficulties with finding and downloading the podcast episodes.

As it was said above one of the main benefits of podcast is its mobility. However, the result showed that the mobility may not be the driving factor of students' use of podcasts because they used mainly computers for listening to them. Based on the findings it was indicated that almost all students in both groups liked listening to podcasts in their language classes and the survey analysis reported that the participant showed much interest at the end of the study when they became more familiar with this new technology. Thus, one of the main implications is that when the students are introduced to podcasts they need time to develop the ownership of this new technology. Moreover, teachers should always guide and encourage their students. As the field notes presented, the students could do their best and did not give up when they were motivated. Another interesting implication, again supported by the findings, was that students chose podcasts by topic. It means they found

topics of their interests and needs. The students also reported in the interview that they began to feel more comfortable while listening to podcasts than they did in the beginning of the study. As the interview findings showed the students became familiar with the accent and got used to the speed. These findings were identified also in the survey analysis. Hence, it is recommended that English teachers use podcasts during their classes encouraging and guiding their students. However, as podcasting is a relatively new term and using it requires some digital skills which the students may lack of so, before integrating podcasts in their teaching process the teachers should take into account all unexpected or anticipated problems. Learning about the students' digital literacy level is important as the students may lack of very simple knowledge of using the internet or computer. Summing up the implications there are several suggestions for teachers who would like to use podcasts in their teaching process.

Teachers should:

- learn about students' digital literacy level
- provide with the interesting topics
- motivate and guide their students
- be patient as students need time to get used to it
- have the specific purpose of using podcast (the students always look for a specific purpose of doing something).

One of the interpretations is that the reason of listening to podcasts at home may be the requirement in their syllabus. They were to report on a listened podcast by completing their podcast listening logs. This requirement may be the cause of the practice that students listened at home via computers because they needed to take

notes or comprehend the listened material accurately to be able to reflect on it in class.

The interview also revealed that in general students had positive attitude towards using podcast. As they reported podcasts brought variety in their learning process. Taking all these findings into consideration it is advised that the teachers begin introducing and using podcasts in their language classes via motivating their students and supporting if they need.

5.3. Limitations

The only limitation of this study was that for having valid and informative results it would be better to have enough long time to instruct the groups than the researcher had.

5.4. Suggestions for further Research

Taking into account the above mentioned limitations, it is suggested to carry out further research in the long term.

This research was applied to B1 and B2 level students. Further studies can be conducted on different age and proficiency levels in order to investigate how podcast listening practices differ by different proficiency level students. Besides, for further research it would be interesting to investigate whether podcast listening improve EFL learners listening skills and too what extend.

This study revealed that the majority of students listened to podcasts at home using computers. Thus, it is suggested to find out the other reasons why the students listened to some music on the go or in the public transport but they did not listen to podcast.

As it was discussed above, the participants reported high educational value of podcasts. Hence, educators and teachers can assume that listening to podcasts can

enrich learners' vocabulary and expose students to more listening. However, it is worth investigating to what extent the students can be exposed to various accents via extensive listening provided by podcasts. Probably quantitative study may show the usefulness of using podcast in language classrooms in numbers which will present direct evidence that can be generalized.

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APPENDICIES

APPENDIX A

Survey Questions

1. Did you listen to podcast episode(s) in this past week?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. Where did you listen to podcast episodes this past week? (Choose all that apply)
 - a. At home
 - b. At public transport
 - c. In a private car
 - d. While walking
 - e. While exercising
 - f. Other ((Please specify)_____

3. What device did you use for listening to podcast episode(s this past week?) (Choose all that apply)
 - a. Computer
 - b. Lap-top
 - c. I-Pod
 - d. I-Phone
 - e. Mobile phone
 - f. Other (Please specify)_____

4. How many times did you listen to the same episode(s) this past week?
- a. Once
 - b. Twice
 - c. Three times
 - d. More than three times
5. Did you use any techniques/strategies while listening to podcast episode(s) this past week? (Choose all that apply)
- a. Taking notes
 - b. Using dictionaries
 - c. Translating
 - d. Asking someone for help
 - e. Re-listening
 - f. Other (Please specify) _____
6. How did you choose what podcast episode(s) to listen this past week?
(Choose all that apply)
- a. By topic
 - b. By Length
 - c. Other (Please specify) _____
7. How did you feel while listening to podcast episode(s) this past week?
(Choose all that apply)
- a. Comfortable
 - b. Stressed
 - c. Relaxed
 - d. Other (Please specify) _____

8. Did you have any technical difficulties while listening to podcast episode(s)?

(Choose all that apply)

- a. Low internet connection
- b. Problems with the device (computer, mobile, etc)
- c. Difficulties with downloading
- d. Other (Please specify) _____

APPENDIX B

Semi-structured Interview questions

1. Did you like listening to podcasts? Why/Why not?
2. Did you change your opinion and/or attitude to using podcasts in your language learning process? How?
3. Where did you mainly listen to podcast episodes? Why?
4. Do you think listening to podcast episodes may be helpful in your language learning process? If yes in what way? If no why?
5. Would you like to use podcasts in your language learning process in the future?