

Research Article

## **The Role of Participatory Structure and Output Modality in Enhancing Iranian EFL Learners' Speaking and their Perceptions: A Mixed-Method Study**

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### **Abstract**

The current study was an effort to investigate the role of participatory structure and output modality in enhancing Iranian EFL learners' speaking, and examine their perceptions toward participating in speaking activities. The population of this study included all female EFL learners (90 language learners of English) at intermediate level studying at Avayeh Daneshvaran Language Institute in Tabriz, and the sampling procedure was convenience sampling. From among these language learners, 63 learners were selected as the sample group after conducting a sample of the PET; they were grouped in four intact classes. The instruments that were used in this study included two samples of the English language proficiency test of PET, the speaking section of which was used as the pre-test and posttest of the study, and an open-ended questionnaire. The data which were collected were analyzed through one-way ANOVA and two-way ANCOVA. The researchers analyzed the responses of the intended participants to the open-ended questionnaire qualitatively. The findings revealed that output modality was effective in improving speaking skill and that participatory structure and the interaction of these two had no significant effect on this skill. Regarding the qualitative section, the findings presented that the participants had optimistic attitude toward the use of podcasts and summary telling and writing in improving their speaking. The findings offer some implications for the stakeholders, including material developers, EFL learners, and teachers, to incorporate task-based collaborative exchanges in language education.

**Keywords:** participatory structure, output modality, speaking, perceptions

### **Introduction**

English language as the largely used language worldwide and a requirement to the attainment of a great deal of knowledge has grown into a significant issue in the educational systems of countries across the globe. Moreover, the capability to speak English can be considered as one of the main purposes of numerous individuals (Khabiri & Firooz, 2012). Improving Iranian learners' speaking skill has developed to be the focal concern of EFL instructors since there are infrequent opportunities for interaction in Iranian EFL settings (Shirbagi, 2010). However, lack of enough opportunities does not demotivate learners to acquire English and they attempt to improve their productive and receptive skills. Additionally, most EFL learners are intended to speak English like native English speakers or at best meeting their regular language needs (Abvali & Mohammadi, 2016). Much like other EFL contexts, English language is taught as an obligatory subject at Iranian high schools. However, learning English language has permanently been an excessive challenge for Iranian learners owing to the restricted interaction with English-language speakers and absence of occasions to practice it in their ordinary lives and interact with native speakers. That is why most of students prefer to improve their English in language institutes and academies.

To this end, a superior type of instruction needs to be administered in language classes that are practical and based on proper theoretical frameworks. Accordingly, the language learning process can be developed by including task-based approach that is valued in language classes to develop language skills and enhance learner-centered atmosphere. According to Ellis and Shintani (2014), task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an advanced development of the approach of communicative language teaching (CLT). Tasks provide learners with authentic and comprehensible input that can be used in producing output. The output that learners produce can be written or oral, which can be produced individually or through participating with others. However, lack of ability to use foreign language productively, that is, in speaking and writing, may discourage learners from language learning since in most of the cases the ultimate expectation from foreign language learners is the mastery of writing and speaking skills.

One of the key theoretical frameworks of this study is related to Output Hypothesis that is used to explain output modality. Output Hypothesis is based on the Sociocultural or Social Interactional Theory of Vygotsky. Hence, Swain (1985) pondered that acquiring new subjects is scanty, so for the actual learning happening it is essential that the learner get the chance to produce, to test, and to reflect over new things. The Output Hypothesis

includes the written and oral production (output), specifically writing and telling summary, in the current study.

Additionally, the output that learners produce can be discussed based on the theory of *participatory structure*. According to Ellis (2004), participatory structure refers to “the procedures that control how the teacher’s and students’ cooperation to the task performance are organized, for example, in terms of teacher-class or small group interactions” (p. 347). In the current study, participatory structure deals with the written and oral summaries that learners produce individually and in pairs.

Moreover, the process of foreign language learning is influenced by a variety of cognitive, metacognitive and affective factors and learners’ perceptions and emotions toward various aspects of the language and the academic elements including the materials, teachers, their peers, etc. are of great importance. Learner perception is the process that gives the foundation for learning, understanding, knowing, and learning or motivating a specific action or response (Greenberg & Baron, 2008). According to Davis (1989), learners’ perceptions involve two cognitive beliefs: learners’ perception of the usefulness of an object (PU) that is the amount to which a technology develops one’s output or skill in a certain job and the perception of the ease of use (PEU) that is the capability to apply a technology with little or no trouble. As argued by Davis (1989) learners make decisions centered on their impression of how they distinguish each method of learning. Thus, learners’ perceptions related to online learning may cause learners to consider learning with definite outlook that may improve or weaken their strength to administer particular resources. On the other hand, learner autonomy necessitates that learners manage their learning process through adapting, re-adapting, and enhancing their learning behavior in various learning conditions. Autonomous learners are frequently motivated which results in operative learning consequences via the establishment of varied occasions for learning.

Previous studies (e.g., Aghazadeh et al., 2019; Farahanynia & Khatib, 2021; Ivanova, 2014; Lu & Wang, 2014) on the role of individual and collaborative written and oral summaries in EFL contexts have been concentrated in a variety of settings. However, review of the related literature showed scarcity of research in examining the effect of output modality and participatory structure. Based on the above-mentioned points it can be claimed that there is not any comprehensive study that examines the role of participatory structure and output modality in developing learners’ speaking skill in classes in which podcasts are used. Thus, the current study is an attempt to scrutinize how summary writing and summary telling of the podcasts individually and in pairs can be effective in improving EFL learners’

speaking performance and is there any difference among writing and telling the summaries individually or in pairs.

Generally, EFL teachers can use the results of the current study in providing comprehensible input for the learners and guide them to produce acceptable outputs that can be in the form of oral performances. It is estimated that the crucial determination of second language (L2) teaching is flooring the ground for EFL students to use English accurately and fluently in their communicative situations. However, in several EFL situations, learners regularly try to talk and express themselves in the target language, fluently. Here, they might have a rational degree of comprehension during reading or listening, and they might even be capable to interconnect in writing, however speaking abilities create numerous difficulties (Chang & Alhusna, 2022; Renandya & Nguyen, 2022). Learners will also recognize the influence of acting individually or participating with the classmates in order to perform a linguistic or communicative task. As stated by Setiyadi (2020), to language learners, language learning is not just about obtaining a group of unconscious behaviors; rather, it is a process of realizing the fundamental rules, and administering them in their performances. In order for this realization to happen, the learners have to get through numerous phases and procedures. Equipping learners with acceptable and tangible input and instructing them to work with others in dealing with language tasks can lead to professional outputs. Moreover, knowing about the perceptions of EFL learners toward task types and task conditions can inform teachers and material developers to provide the best contexts and appropriate materials for the learners in EFL contexts. All these points inspired the researchers to lead the present study and inquire the problems related to the improvement of speaking skill in Iran; the study can provide a better understanding of using output modality in producing comprehensible outputs in language classes, individually or in pairs.

Hence, the purpose of the study was to investigate the role of participatory structure and output modality in enhancing EFL learners' speaking and examining their perceptions. Accordingly, the succeeding research questions were posed:

**RQ 1:** Does output modality show any significant effect on intermediate EFL learners' speaking performance?

**RQ 2:** Does participatory structure have any significant effect on intermediate EFL learners' speaking performance?

**RQ3:** Is there any significant interactional effect of participatory structure and output modality in terms of their effect on intermediate EFL learners' speaking performance?

**RQ4:** What are the intermediate EFL learners' perceptions of the participatory structures in speaking tasks?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The population of the current study included all 90 female EFL learners at intermediate proficiency level who were studying English at Avayeh Daneshvaran Language Institute in Tabriz and the sampling procedure was convenience sampling. From among these language learners, 63 learners were selected as the sample group after conducting PET proficiency test and they were grouped in four intact classes. Yet, to counteract the effect of selection bias, the learners' groups were totally randomly allotted to four experimental groups, including two writing groups, that is, 15 learners in the individual summary writing group and 16 in the paired summary writing group and two speaking groups, that is, 16 learners in the individual summary telling group and 16 in the paired summary telling group. Their age ranged from 16 to 35 years old with different educational backgrounds. The same teacher taught and directed learners in these groups. It is worth noting that in the individual summary writing group, one of the learners were disregarded from the study due to the number of his absent sessions.

### **Instruments**

The instruments of the study included two samples of the English language proficiency test of the Preliminary English Test (PET), which were administered as the homogeneity test, and the pre-test and posttest of speaking as well as an open-ended questionnaire with five questions developed by the researchers to examine the learners' perceptions toward participatory structure and output modality of the tasks in their classes. The content validity was ensured consulting a panel of experts including the supervisor and advisor of the study.

The materials of this study included the podcasts and the course book. The podcasts were carefully chosen from the English as a Second Language (ESL) Podcasts (<http://www.podcastinginenglish.com>). The coursebooks were Four Corners series and the teachers in all groups taught the same syllabus.

### **Procedure**

Initially, a sample of the PET test was administered and then, through a one-way ANOVA the homogeneity of the learners based on their language proficiency was examined. Based on the participants' PET scores, those students who scored 1 standard deviation (SD) below or above the mean were considered as the main participants of this study. Thus, out of 90 students, 63 students were carefully chosen as the participants of the study. The participants were generally in four intact groups, assigned to four experimental groups, randomly. The participants were grouped in four classes based on task modality and task condition; in Group 1, the participants were requested to compose the summary of the podcast they listened to individually; in Group 2, the participants were requested to compose the summary of the podcasts in pairs; in Group 3, the participants were required to tell the summary of the podcasts individually; and in Group 4, the participants were asked to tell the summary of the podcasts in pairs.

Prior to the treatment, the scores of speaking section of the PET test were used as the participants' speaking pre-test scores. Then, the treatment was conducted which lasted for twelve 20-minute sessions. Each session, one podcast was played in all classes. The topics of the podcasts were similar to the ones they had in their course books.

After the treatment, the participants were asked to take another sample of PET test (only speaking section) as their speaking posttest. It should be mentioned that the speaking pre-tests and posttests were scored by two watchful raters and the inter-rater reliability was checked. For the purpose of scoring the speaking of the participants, the scoring rubric of PET test for speaking assessment was provided by the researcher in order to be used by the raters. At the end of the treatment, the participants in each group were requested to answer an open-ended questionnaire developed by the researcher, which asked about their perceptions toward output modality and participatory structure of the tasks. The answers were analyzed through thematic analysis method.

### **Design**

The current study adopted a mixed-method approach in investigating the role of participatory structure and output modality in enhancing Iranian EFL learners' speaking and their perceptions. Thus, the design of this study was explanatory mixed-method.

### Results

The following section provides the results and outcomes of the data analyses.

#### Testing the Normality of the Distributions

Initially, the normality of the writing data gathered in the both pre-test and post-test was probed by computing the ratios of skewness and kurtosis indices over their standard errors (Table 1). For continuous data, the test of normality is important to decide what statistical methods should be used for the data analysis. When the data has normal distribution, parametric tests, otherwise, nonparametric methods are usually used to compare the groups.

Table 1  
Descriptive Statistics; Testing Normality of Data

P-Structure	Modality	Homogeneity	Skewness		Ratio	Kurtosis		
			Statistic	Std. Error		Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio
Individual	Speaking	Homogeneity	.542	.564	0.96	-.185	1.091	-0.17
		Pre-Speaking	.010	.564	0.02	-.979	1.091	-0.90
		Post-Speaking	.283	.564	0.50	.171	1.091	0.16
		Pre-Writing	.836	.564	1.48	.184	1.091	0.17
		Post-Writing	.439	.564	0.78	-.597	1.091	-0.55
Pair	Speaking	Homogeneity	-.174	.564	-0.31	-.839	1.091	-0.77
		Pre-Speaking	-.139	.564	0.25	-.779	1.091	-0.71
		Post-Speaking	.575	.564	1.02	-1.096	1.091	-1.00
		Pre-Writing	-.477	.564	-0.85	-.246	1.091	-0.23
		Post-Writing	.127	.564	0.23	-1.402	1.091	-1.29

Note. P-Structure = Participatory Structure, Pre = Pretest, and Post = Posttest.

As the absolute values of the ratios in Table 1 were less than 1.96, the assumption of normality was retained. It should be noted that the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their standard errors are analogous to Z-scores,

that can be compared and contrasted against critical values of +/- 1.96 at .05 levels (Field, 2018).

However, initially, the researchers had to ensure the homogeneity of the participants based on their language proficiency. Therefore, based the participants' PET scores, those students who scored 1 Standard Deviation (SD) below or above the mean were considered as the key participants. Thus, out of 90 students in four intact classes, 63 students were chosen as the participants of the study, and the rest attended the classes but were excluded from the analyses (Table 2).

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics for PET Scores*

Statistics		
PET		
N	Valid	90
	Missing	0
Mean		65.7278
Std. Deviation		11.29063
Skewness		.032
Std. Error of		.254
Skewness		
Range		52.50
Minimum		41.00
Maximum		93.50

Additionally, the participants' writing and speaking pretests and posttests were scored by two raters and the inter-rater reliability was calculated. Table 3 presents the results of the Pearson correlations which was computed to estimate the inter-rater reliability indices of the two raters who evaluated the participants' performance on both the pretest and posttest of speaking.

Table 3  
*Inter-Rater Reliability of Pretest and Posttest of Speaking*

		Pre-Rater 2	Post-Rater 2
Pre-Rater 1	Pearson Correlation	.991**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	63	
Post-Rater 1	Pearson Correlation		.957**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		63

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



Based on the obtained results in Table 3, there were chief agreements among the two mentioned raters on the pretest scores of speaking,  $r(61) = .991$ , representing a great effect size,  $p = .000$ , and the posttest scores of speaking,  $r(61) = .957$ , representing a large effect size,  $p = .000$ .

To respond the three research questions, a two-way ANCOVA was employed, yet initially, its three main assumptions, that is, homogeneity of variances, linearity of relationship between covariate (pretest of speaking) and its dependent variable (posttest of speaking) and homogeneity of regression slopes, had to be met.

Regarding the first assumption, two-way ANCOVA requires the groups enjoy homogeneous variances on the posttest of speaking performance. The results displayed in Table 4 presented that the homogeneity assumption of variances was retained on the posttest of speaking,  $F(3, 59) = 3.59$ ,  $p > .05$ .

Table 4  
*Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances; Speaking Posttest*

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.535	3	59	.660

Regarding the second assumption, two-way ANCOVA presumes the relationship between posttest of speaking performance (dependent variable) and its pretest (covariate) is linear. The outcomes of the test of linearity (Table 5), representing a large effect size, demonstrated that the assumption of linearity was retained,  $F(1, 36) = 180.74$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .846$ .

Table 5  
*Test of Linearity of Relationship between Speaking Posttest and Pretest*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
		(Combined)	275.309	26	10.589	7.602	.000
Post-Speaking Pre-Speaking	*Between Groups	Linearity	251.762	1	251.762	180.74	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	23.546	25	.942	.676	.845
Within Groups		50.146	36	1.393			
Total		325.454	62				
Eta Squared		.846					

Finally, regarding the third assumption, two-way ANCOVA assumes the homogeneity of regression slopes (Table 6). This means that the relationships between the pretest and posttest should be roughly identical across groups. The non-significant interaction between participatory structure, output modality and covariate (pretest), indicating a weak effect size, presented that

the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes was retained on the performance of speaking after controlling for the effect of the pretest,  $F(1, 56) = .002$ ,  $p > .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ .

Table 6  
*Tests of Homogeneity of Regression Slopes; Regarding Speaking Posttest*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
P-Structure	.280	1	.280	.275	.602	.005
Modality	3.057	1	3.057	3.000	.089	.051
P-Structure * Pre-Writing	.752	1	.752	.738	.394	.013
Modality * Pre-Writing	1.817	1	1.817	1.783	.187	.031
P-Structure * Modality * Pre-Writing	.002	1	.002	.002	.965	.000
Error	57.062	56	1.019			
Total	14696.125	63				

Since the assumptions were satisfied, it was appropriate to proceed with a two-way ANCOVA. Table 7 shows the results of two-way ANCOVA.

Table 7  
*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects; Posttest of speaking performance by Participatory Structure by Output Modality with Pretest*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pre-Writing	201.127	1	201.127	190.671	.000	.767
P-Structure	3.262	1	3.262	3.092	.084	.051
Modality	9.764	1	9.764	9.256	.004	.138
P-Structure * Modality	.003	1	.003	.003	.958	.000
Error	61.181	58	1.055			
Total	14696.125	63				

### The Effect of Output Modality Speaking

Table 8 illustrates the descriptive statistics for the effect of modality on the posttest of speaking after controlling for the effect of the pretest.

Table 8  
*Descriptive Statistics for the Speaking Posttest Considering Modality*

Output Modality	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Summary Writing	14.690 <sup>a</sup>	.187	14.316	15.064
Summary Telling	15.497 <sup>a</sup>	.184	15.129	15.865

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pre-Writing = 14.26.

As indicated in Table 8, summary telling ( $M = 15.49$ ,  $SE = .184$ ) had a higher mean than summary writing ( $M = 14.69$ ,  $SE = .187$ ) on the posttest of speaking after controlling for the effect of the pretest.

The results of two-way ANCOVA in Table 7, representing an almost large effect size, specified that summary telling groups meaningfully outperformed summary writing groups on the posttest of speaking after controlling for the effect of the pretest,  $F(1, 58) = 9.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .138$ . Hence, the null-hypothesis, stating that there was not any significant effect of output modality on intermediate EFL learners' speaking performance was rejected.

### The Effect of Participatory Structure on Speaking

Table 9 represents the descriptive statistics related to the individual and paired work groups on the posttest of speaking after controlling for the effect of the pretest.

Table 9  
*Descriptive Statistics for the Posttest of Speaking Considering Participatory Structure*

P-Structure	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Individual	14.863 <sup>a</sup>	.186	14.492	15.235
Pair	15.323 <sup>a</sup>	.183	14.958	15.689

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pre-Writing = 14.26

The individual ( $M = 14.86$ ,  $SE = .186$ ) and pair work ( $M = 15.32$ ,  $SE = .183$ ) groups had roughly equal means on the speaking posttest scores after controlling for the consequence of pretest.

The results of two-way ANCOVA (Table 7), representing a weak effect size, indicated that there was not any significant difference among the means of the individual and pair work groups on the scores of the posttest of speaking after controlling for the effect of the pretest,  $F(1, 58) = 3.09$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.051$ . Thus, the hypothesis, stating that there was not any

significant effect of participatory structure on intermediate EFL learners' speaking performance was confirmed.

### **The Interactional Effect of Participatory Structure and Output Modality on Speaking**

Table 10 displays the descriptive statistics for the effect of interaction between participatory structure and output modality on the posttest of speaking after controlling for the effect of the pretest.

Table 10  
*Descriptive Statistics for Effect of the Interaction between Modality and Participatory Structure on the Speaking Posttest*

P-Structure	Modality	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Individual	Summary Writing	14.467 <sup>a</sup>	.266	13.933	15.000
	Summary Telling	15.260 <sup>a</sup>	.257	14.745	15.774
Pair	Summary Writing	14.913 <sup>a</sup>	.259	14.395	15.431
	Summary Telling	15.734 <sup>a</sup>	.266	15.201	16.267

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pre-Writing = 14.88

As shown in Table 10, the means of the individual groups in summary writing (M=14.46, SE=0.266) and summary telling (M= 15.26, SE= 0.257) and the pair groups in both summary writing (M=14.91, SE= 0.259) and summary telling (M= 15.73, SE= 0.266) were roughly equal.

The results of two-way ANCOVA, representing a weak effect, mentioned that there was not any significant effect of interaction between participatory structure and output modality on the speaking scores of posttests after controlling for the effect of the pretest,  $F(1, 58) = .003$ ,  $p > .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ . Thus, the hypothesis, asserting that there was not any significant interactional effect of participatory structure and output modality on intermediate EFL learners' speaking performance was confirmed.

### **Qualitative Analyses**

#### **The Learners' Perceptions Toward the Output Modality and Participatory Structures**

The RQ4 is related to the qualitative section. In this regard, a researcher-made open-ended questionnaire (Appendix A) was conducted by the researcher to inspect the participants' attitudes toward the use of podcasts in the class and the role of summary telling in developing speaking skill. The

interview questionnaire was sent to all of the participants who were asked to answer the questions; however, only 12 of them took part in this phase. The participants' responses were read and categorized as illustrated in the following tables. The responses are provided under each question posed in the interview. Tables 11 represent the analyses of the responses related to writing summaries individually.

Table 11

*Writing Summaries Individually**What is the Role of Writing Summary Individually in Improving Speaking Skill?*

1. Having positive attitude toward the role of summary writing individually in speaking development
2. Understanding vocabularies and knowing about formal and informal ways of writing
3. Using the heard key words of the podcasts in writings
4. Time to think alone without further argument
5. Time to search and gain information
6. Use of different words and grammar
7. Better and deeper concentration
8. Having self-confidence during writing individually

*What are the Difficulties in Writing Summaries Individually?*

1. No difficulty
2. Inability to replace exact word and correct grammar
3. Feeling exhausted during writing as a result of limited knowledge
4. Forgetting previously learnt points
5. Lack of ideas and background knowledge

*What are the Interesting Things about Listening to Podcasts?*

1. Enjoying listening to podcasts
2. Learning words and grammar of the heard podcasts
3. Being able to learn English individually
4. More concentration despite of having difficulty in finding certain words and grammar
5. Providing learners with new and different ideas
6. Providing interesting ideas

*What are Your Suggestions?*

1. No suggestion
2. Listening to the podcast more than once in the class
3. Presenting podcasts with more interesting topics

The analyses in Tables 12 are related to writing summary in pairs.

Table 12

*Writing Summaries in Pairs**What is the Role of Writing Summary in pairs in Improving Speaking Skill?*

1. Having positive attitude toward the role of summary writing in pairs in writing development
2. Improving writing quality and increase personal information through sharing new and unknown ideas and knowledge can

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3. Preventing individual thinking by working in pairs and hindering the flow of writing through discussing different ideas of others
  4. Confusion in writing due to divided responsibilities
  5. Destroying writing due to having opposing ideas and arguments
  6. Improving vocabulary, grammar, and spelling through working together to write a summary

*What are the Difficulties in Writing Summaries in pairs?*

1. No difficulty
2. Having problems during summary writing because of different ideas
3. Feeling anxious of working with others and not being able to perform at same level
4. Having opposing and different ideas

*What are the Interesting Things about Listening to Podcasts?*

1. Enjoying listening to podcasts
2. Learning the words and grammar of the heard podcasts
3. Being able to learn English individually
4. More concentration despite of having difficulty in finding certain words and grammar
5. Providing learners with new and different ideas
6. Providing interesting ideas
7. Communicating in English during tasks was interesting.
8. Podcasts being useful and effective
9. Enjoying working in pairs and solving problems together
10. Listening to podcasts in accordance with their proficiency level and topics that are familiar and presented in their books
11. Following group rules and adjusting misunderstandings

*What are Your Suggestions?*

1. No suggestion
  2. Listening to the podcast more than once in the class
  3. Presenting podcasts with more interesting topics
- 

The analyses in Tables 13 are related to telling summary individually.

Table 13

*Telling Summary Individually*

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*What is the Role of Telling Summary Individually in Improving Speaking Skill?*

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1. Having positive attitude toward the role of summary telling individually in speaking development
2. Making sentences easily and quickly by using different words and structures during speaking that later can be applied in speaking
3. Thinking about different issues individually with higher concentration
4. Improving speaking correctly through planning during speaking to make accurate sentences
5. Taking notes to tell the summary being useful for writing and spelling

*What are the Difficulties in Telling Summaries Individually?*

1. No difficulty
  2. Inability to continue the summary
  3. Unknown words, topics and concepts
  4. Difficulty in finding correct words and grammatical points
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*What are the Interesting Things about Listening to Podcasts?*

1. Enjoying listening to podcasts
2. Concentrating on pronunciation while listening to podcasts
3. Providing the learners with new words and different ideas
4. Providing interesting ideas
5. Podcasts being useful and effective to develop speaking and listening

*What are Your Suggestions?*

1. No suggestion
  2. Practicing the new words after listening to podcasts
  3. Listening to several podcasts with different topics
  4. Taking notes during listening to improve summary telling
  5. Practicing time management to deal with limited time provided by the teacher
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The analyses in Tables 14 are related to telling summary in pairs.

Table 14

*Telling Summary in Pairs*

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*What is the Role of Telling Summary in Pairs in Improving Speaking Skill?*

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1. Having positive attitude toward the role of summary telling in pairs in improving speaking skill
2. Receiving corrective feedback from the classmates
3. Learning words and structures from the classmates
4. Learning English being fun and easy by working in pairs
5. Having partner being effective in both writing and speaking development
6. Using the words acquired during summary writing

*What are the Difficulties in Telling Summaries in Pairs?*

1. No difficulty
2. Inability to find proper words and structures, which is solved with the help of the classmates

*What are the Interesting Things about Listening to Podcasts?*

1. Enjoying working with others and learning from them
2. Sharing ideas and working with classmates
3. Solving problems together being interesting and useful
4. Listening to podcasts with different topics and native pronunciation

*What are Your Suggestions?*

1. No suggestion
  2. Working in groups doing other tasks as well
- 

### Discussion

The current study was an effort to investigate the role of participatory structure and output modality in enhancing Iranian EFL learners' speaking with a focus on their perceptions. In particular, the participants were requested to compose or tell the summaries of the podcasts that they were provided during the treatment. The function of the podcasts was to provide comprehensible input for the participants in different groups, which could

further facilitate their output production. At the end of the treatment, the effects of summary telling and writing, individually and in pairs were inspected on the speaking skill of the intended participants.

The outcomes of the first research question revealed that output modality showed a significant effect on the learners' speaking skill. This means that telling and writing summary were effective in improving speaking skill; however, telling the summary was more effective than writing a summary in improving speaking skill. Telling the summary of the podcasts that the learners listened to during the treatment helped them to improve their speaking performance. Using the words and structures of the podcasts in summary telling could facilitate their speaking performance. This is equally true for summary writing. Through summary writing, the learners could focus more delicately on the sentence structure and vocabulary use, which is ultimately effective in developing speaking skill. As mentioned earlier, telling summary was more effective in improving speaking skill of the participants. According to Taylor (1983), learners acquire language by using it more willingly than learning it by studying it. Here, by using oral summary of the podcasts, students would be able to make sentences and try to deliver coherent and meaningful speech. It is notable that, as Swain and Lapkin (1995) asserted, output is an important constituent of the process of learning a foreign language. Moreover, Ducate and Lomicka (2009) stated that one tactic which can be supportive for augmenting learners' language output is podcasting. Allowing for the findings that telling the summary of the podcasts by the learners has a positive effect on speaking skill improvement, it can be claimed that telling summaries can be considered as an effective classroom activity rather than writing summaries. Oral summarization provides an important contribution to learners in distinguishing main information and conveying it. Similarly, summarization can improve memory and understanding by ensuring effective use of mental and cognitive skills without paying too much attention to the basic structural and linguistic rules required in written productions. Through telling summary learners would be able to express their ideas more effortlessly than writing them.

In a similar vein, Farahanynia and Khatib (2021) investigated L2 oral performance and how it is affected by task complexity (complex vs. simple tasks) and participatory structure of strategic planning (collaborative vs. individual pair planning), demarcated consistent with the quantity of the components engaged. It similarly explored collaborative and individual planners' planning behaviors before complex vs. simple tasks. The findings exposed that complexity and fluency developed as a function of task complexity plus collaborative planning. The influence of collaborative



planning was found to be larger on the complex tasks in all measures excluding the accuracy component. The significant effect of output modality on the learners' speaking skills suggests that the way in which learners convey language—be it through speaking, writing, or enacted forms—plays a critical role in their overall proficiency. This finding supports the idea that active engagement in language production enhances learning outcomes. Specifically, modalities that require vocal output, such as speaking tasks or oral presentations, may facilitate deeper cognitive processing and retention of language structures compared to passive modalities like reading or listening.

Moreover, based on the findings related to the second research question, participatory structure had no significant effect on improving speaking performance, that is, telling summary individually or in pairs and writing summary individually and in pairs were not effective in improving speaking skill. In addition, considering the third research question, there was not interactional outcome of participatory structure and output modality on the learners' speaking performance. This means that summary telling and writing, either individually or in pair, were not effective in enhancing the speaking scores.

The lack of significant improvement in speaking skills through participatory structures suggests that simply engaging in collaborative tasks or summarizing activities may not be sufficient to enhance learners' speaking abilities. Factors such as task design, learner engagement, and the specific nature of the activities may play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of participatory structures. As the results of the data analyses for the first research question indicated, writing and telling summaries of the podcasts could enhance the students' speaking skill. Still this finding does not align with Stockwell (2010) who argued that whereas podcasting can be supposed as an appreciated source for supplying audiovisual material, it lacks an imperative component of language learning which is interaction. Although podcasts are monologues that provide no interaction and collaboration of the speakers to exchange ideas and feelings, the findings of this study indicated that listening to podcasts, and telling and writing of their summaries can increase the learners' speaking ability. This is in line with the findings of Rosell-Aguilar (2013) who found that both listening to and constructing podcasts can be considered as essential strategies for refining speaking skills.

The results obtained from the open-ended questionnaire lent support to the assumption that most of the participants enjoyed listening to podcasts in the class and they found it interesting to listen to different topics that are at their own level of proficiency. They also mentioned that podcasts were more interactive than usual tasks presented in the course books. They also preferred

to work in pairs, as they would be able to share their ideas, get feedback from their peers and prepare a more accurate summary to tell or write in cooperation with their friends. The findings of the present study agree substantially with those of Ducate and Lomicka's (2009) study, indicating that including podcast within the processes of language teaching supports teachers and educators to make meaningful and contextualized tasks and activities rather than simple and ordinary drilling and error correction activities and tasks. Additionally, the results are in line with Storch's (2005) findings that discovered the students who participated in her study (16 of 18) were generally optimistic and positive regarding the collaborative experience.

Furthermore, regarding the learners' perceptions toward implementing summary telling and writing and listening to podcasts in language classes to improve productive skills, the results indicated that most of the language learners have positive view in this regard and believe that telling and writing summary can be effective tools in improving speaking skill. The results of this study are in line with those of Facer, Abdous, and Camarena's (2009) study. They discovered that podcasting could progress learners' speaking skill. In contrary, Stiffler, Stoten and Cullen (2011) provided evidence that learners did not have positive views toward podcasting.

The outcomes commonly recognized the prominence of task-based language teaching processes in the development of speaking skills. This fact is in line with the conclusions of Ganjouee, Ghonsooly and Fatemi (2018) that examined the impact of task-based instruction on the enhancement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' speaking skill and confirmed the impact of task-based instruction on the enhancement of Iranian EFL learners' speaking skill.

The findings of the present study also revealed that output modality was effective in improving speaking skill, participatory structure and the interaction of these two had no significant effect on this skill. Regarding the qualitative section, the results displayed that learners had constructive attitude to the use of podcasts and summary telling and writing in improving their speaking and writing performances. They were also interested in working in pairs and sharing their ideas and knowledge with each other. Accordingly, it can be concluded that both summary telling and summary writing tasks can be effective in developing their speaking performance. Thus, it can be argued that learners can benefit from both written and oral outputs produced with their peers or by themselves in improving their productive skills, in particular, speaking skills. Generally, the findings revealed the importance of task-based approach that considers pedagogic tasks modeling real-life activities in the center of language learning.

The discoveries of this study provide some pedagogical implications for those foreign language teachers engaged in task-based language training. Summarizing helps the learners to recognize the most central concepts in a text, disregard unrelated ideas, and integrate the dominant ideas in an expressive way. This study suffered from a number of limitations and delimitations, which add further caution regarding the generalizability of these findings. The participants of the study were only female EFL learners at intermediate proficiency level; the same study can be conducted among the male participants at different proficiency levels. Moreover, in further studies, the role of task types can be investigated in improving other language abilities including listening, reading comprehension, vocabulary learning, or pronunciation. Moreover, collaborative and individual language productions can be examined in affecting learners' language performance. In the current study, podcasts have been applied as the comprehensible input for the treatment phase of the study; further research can focus on the effect of podcasts' modality on improving language skills. Researchers motivated to expand upon the findings are recommended to add a qualitative account of teachers and learners' attitudes towards podcasts and interactive input-output instruction to provide additional support for the efficacy of such an elaborate instructional method.

**Declaration of Interest:** None

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