Podcasting – Past, Present and Future: Applications of Academic Podcasting In and Out of the Language Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores current and potential pedagogical applications of academic podcasting in K-12 and higher education language learning classrooms. In order to fulfill the purpose of the chapter, it is composed of three primary sections: 1) Where we've been - a review of published research on podcasting; 2) Where we are - an investigation of what current teachers and researchers are doing with podcasting in their language classes based on survey results; and 3) Where we're going - an assessment of future trends and applications. After reading the chapter, the reader should be eager to continue to explore the applications of academic podcasting in the language classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Among the first institutions in which instructors used podcasts in the language classroom was Osaka Jogakuin College in Japan, where iPods® were provided to students. Podcasts downloaded to the iPods consisted of audio learning aids designed to help with the learning of English (McCarty, 2005)[i]. Podcasting trends can now be found in different parts of the world; many universities and colleges are embarking on projects using podcasting and MP3 devices in innovative ways. The possibilities for podcasting, both in and out of the language classroom, are many and varied, ranging from areas such as pronunciation and listening to study abroad and peer review.

Since this chapter addresses where we've been, where we are now, and where we're going, it will shed light on current podcasting research which is specific to language teaching and learning, current projects and their uses in K-12 and higher education settings, ideas based on recent research, and current views of language learning and teaching. It will also consider ways in which podcasting might be used in the future to explore new trends in academia. The chapter also offers suggestions for implementation and for overcoming challenges, so that interested readers will be equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary to begin their own podcast project, research, and data collection.

WHERE WE'VE BEEN: DOCUMENTED RESEARCH ON PODCASTING

The latest edition (3rd) of the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines podcasting as "a digital recording of a broadcast" that is typically "made available on the web for downloading to a computer or personal audio player" (Simpson, 2009). Podcasting is considered a Web

2.0 tool which can be used in ways that are dynamic, collaborative, and interactive. In fact, the dynamic nature of podcasting is linked with any audio or video file that listeners can download and play on a digital player (Barsky & Lindstrom, 2008). The use of audio in language learning itself is not particularly new or innovative; however, Web 2.0 tools take advantage of existing technologies or platforms and use them to do more and different tasks, as will be discussed in this chapter. While the use of audio in language learning is well documented, research on podcasting has only recently begun to appear in the literature. This section, in order to pave the way to where we are now, addresses the research that has already documented, including reports on previously implemented podcasting projects and some of the more empirical results of podcasting research.

Theoretical underpinnings

While much of the literature surrounding podcasting and language learning has focused on the technical aspects and practical examples of podcasting projects (e.g., Godwin-Jones, 2005; McCarty, 2005; McQuillan, 2006a; Stanley, 2006; Young, 2007; and below), few articles have considered the theoretical aspects of podcasting (McQuillan, 2006b; O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Blake (2008) argued that "[t]he technology is theoretically and methodologically neutral. But how technology is used—its particular culture of practice—is not neutral; it responds to what the practitioners understand or believe to be true about SLA" (p. 11).

Podcasting has several theoretical underpinnings in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, especially in the areas of input, output, and motivation. O'Bryan and Hegelheimer (2007) proposed that podcasting represents a rich source of input via audio, and potentially via video. This input can reinforce class instruction by offering an additional or alternative mode (rather than the traditional textbook or teacher) of input to students. Dervin (2006) suggested that podcasts can help to develop autonomous learning and motivation (see also Stanley, 2006). Motivation may be increased, speculated Stanley (2006), due to the fact that students are creating authentic content for a real audience and not just for a grade. In addition, Dervin (2006) underscored that students can, for example, take the initiative to ask questions of, interact with, and communicate with podcasters, thus providing opportunities for both autonomy and motivation. Output is also recognized as essential for second language learning. Swain and Lapkin (1995) suggested having students record and then listen to themselves as they edit their output; afterwards, students can go back, listen again, and revise as needed. This type of approach can be quite useful in podcasting as it is easy to record, re-record, and listen to various segments of a podcast. After students record podcasts, they can listen multiple times, edit their podcasts, and comment on their classmates' recordings (see also Lord, 2008; Meng, 2005).

With these theoretical considerations in mind, many scholars have touted the potential power of podcasting in education in general, and in language instruction in particular. The following subsections review these prophesied benefits and then discuss some of the empirical studies carried out so far in an effort to determine their validity.

Podcasting's potential

Many language-specific articles have addressed podcasting and have provided practical ideas for its use in the classroom (Fox, 2008; McQuillan, 2006; Schmidt, 2008; Sze, 2006; Young, 2007). Fox (2008) provided the idea of a talk radio podcast, which is set up like a talk show and allows students to listen, create, and publish podcasts. The particular podcast discussed by Fox, *Absolutely Intercultural,* offered a corresponding blog where information, or "show notes," about corresponding episodes were archived, and where listeners could communicate with the podcasters. Fox explained that users interacted with the available podcasts in several ways: by writing a text comment to the podcast blog, by submitting an audio comment, by recording an idea to include in the blog, by expressing an interest in producing a podcast edition, or by creating and publishing a podcast. Similarly, McQuillan (2006) discussed producing podcasting "shows" that provided interesting, comprehensible input to those at the intermediate or higher levels of proficiency in which students "record[ed] themselves and classmates for a classroom assignment and provide speech samples to the teacher for assessment" (p. 6). Sze (2006) offered a variety of ways in which podcasting could be used: Teachers can produce podcasts to assist their students and reach out beyond the four walls of the classroom, students can produce podcasts for other students, and inter-school podcasting projects can be set up which allow teachers at different schools to organize projects that afford their students the ability to communicate and respond to each other.

In addition to podcast production and talk shows, podcasting has capitalized on authentic materials and has promoted listening comprehension (McBride, 2009; McQuillan, 2006; Schmidt, 2008; Sze, 2006). McBride (2009) underscored the importance of authentic listening materials and how they can easily be incorporated into podcasting projects (see also Schmidt, 2008; Stanley, 2006). She proposed that students, when listening to authentic podcasts, respond to a series of questions that target top-down listening skills. These questions can request information about the general topic, who the speakers might be, where the recording took place, or how the speakers felt when recording. She also suggested that students listen for key words by writing down the time that they heard the word used. Bottom-up skills can also be honed by engaging students in more detailed, careful, and repeated listening. Schmidt (2008) described a project in which students listened to podcast episodes two or three times per week and kept a listening journal to record comments or questions for each episode.

Other articles on podcasting have also addressed ways in which podcasts promote oral production. McQuillan (2006) highlighted several tasks that focus on producing oral work, such as using audio diaries or conducting interviews with native speakers. Sze (2006) proposed that speaking activities for student podcasts can help to develop pronunciation and intonation. He provided examples such as radio drama, radio plays, and English Language Teaching (ELT) rap (rap written with ELT purposes in mind). Similarly, Pettes Guikema (2009) examined the discourse of French language podcasts through authentic podcast transcripts. She exploited the linguistic, lexical, and cultural

features of podcasts to demonstrate ways in which podcasts can be used in and out of the classroom. It is clear that podcasting has made its way into language classrooms, but questions still remain about its quantifiable benefits, for which we turn now to empirical research on the subject.

Empirical research
General gains and benefits

As can be inferred from the above publications, a number of language educators have implemented podcasting projects into their teaching; however, research specific to podcasting remains a young but growing area. Abdous, Camarena, and Facer (2009) and Facer, Abdous, and Camarena (2009) reported on podcasting projects and indicated a positive reception by students, as well as a perceived increase in language skill acquisition. For example, Abdous et al. (2009) discussed using podcasts for multiple purposes, such as guest lectures, providing feedback on student work, paired interviews, student video presentations, and roundtable discussions. With a post-study design, they administered a survey to assess the effects of podcasts for instructional purposes on students' language skill acquisition and compared the effects of integrated (planned) vs. supplemental (unplanned) uses of podcasting. The 113 participants were from varying language backgrounds, and the administered tasks varied in each class (which the authors report as a limitation). Results indicated that student use of podcasts (as well as language skill acquisition) increased, and that students were more willing to report academic benefits. Similarly, Facer et al. (2009) shared initial results of a pilot study comparing the academic benefits of integrating podcasts into course content to using podcasts as supplemental tools. In a post-test design, 33 participants from two pilot classes completed a survey that examined their academic backgrounds, study habits, access to computers, podcasting experiences, and perceived usefulness of podcasting. The most common use of podcasts was to review course lessons. Students self-reported that the use of podcasts helped them to improve their language skills in all areas, but especially with aural and oral skills and with building vocabulary. Results indicated that podcasting can offer greater benefits if it is used as more than merely a tool for reviewing course work.

Student enjoyment of podcasting projects has also been documented in the research (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2006; Ducate & Lomicka, 2009a; Lys, 2008; and Sathe & Waltje, 2008). O'Bryan and Hegelheimer (2006) reported on the use of podcasts in a listening course (semester long, graduate, and undergraduate students (n=6) who listened to 14 podcasts). Their findings, based on surveys, interviews, and a teacher reflective journal, addressed attitudes, feelings about podcasts, and student needs. Results indicated that the podcasts were viewed very positively and that few technical problems occurred. Examining podcasting from a mobility standpoint, Ducate and Lomicka (2009a) investigated four different podcasting projects implemented in university-level language learning or teacher training courses. Each project made use of both input and output to promote speaking and listening comprehension. Findings suggested that the majority of participants enjoyed the podcasting assignments and felt that they benefited from them. However, results also point to the fact that many students

chose convenience over mobility, since students preferred to listen to podcasts on their personal computers rather than updating their MP3 players (see also Lee, Miller, & Newnham, 2008). Ducate and Lomicka suggested that educators should carefully consider task design and how it may relate to mobility as part of the language learning process (see also Colpaert, 2004; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007; Young, 2007).

Positive student responses were also found by Lys (2008), who documented a study with 18 participants taking an advanced German class. Each student was encouraged to use an iPod Touch® to develop vocabulary and oral communication skills and to interact collaboratively. Specifically, students were asked to use the devices to view authentic target language video clips and websites, to comment, and to produce a report. Results indicate that students responded positively to the project. Finally, Sathe and Waltje (2008) discussed a project in which iPods® were distributed on loan to 120 U.S. university-level language students (in German, French, Spanish, ESL, or Linguistics). The iPods were used as mini-language labs (listening and recording) and students were asked to report on their use. The overall results were positive; students expressed perceived benefits from working with their iPods, and many felt that the iPod lab was more convenient than the traditional, physical, language lab.

Linguistic benefits

The number of studies that report on gains made by the use of podcasting to specific areas of language learning is scant. Amemiya, Hasegawa, Kaneko, Miyakoda, and Tsukahara (2007) reported on a study using a foreign word learning system with iPods, in which they examined the pronunciation and images of the vocabulary items (n = 10) with iPods versus with pen and paper. Results indicated that some of the iPod group's participants claimed that they continued to hear the pronunciation of the word even when not listening to the iPod. No immediate difference in the groups was found immediately following the experiment; however, after two weeks, the iPod participants retained the meaning of 40% of the English words by using the audio-oriented system, while only 27% of the word meanings were retained by the conventional paper-and-pencil group.

Both Lord (2008) and Ducate and Lomicka (2009b) reported on results from projects involving pronunciation and podcasting. In Lord's (2008) study, 19 students in an undergraduate phonetics class recorded tongue-twisters, short readings, and personal reflections using their own pronunciation. Lord used the Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (Elliott, 1995), in addition to scores from six oral tasks, and students were rated by three judges on overall pronunciation ability. Both attitudes and pronunciation abilities were assessed pre-semester and post-semester; both were found to improve. Podcasts also remained available as references for students to revisit and work on individual pronunciation issues. Ducate and Lomicka (2009b) examined podcasting as a tool for honing pronunciation skills in intermediate language learning. The 22 students in Intermediate German and French courses prepared five scripted pronunciation recordings and produced three extemporaneous recordings. The study also included results from a pre- and post-survey based on Elliott's (1995) Pronunciation Attitude

Inventory. Results suggested that students' pronunciation did not significantly improve in regard to accentedness or comprehensibility, but the podcast project was perceived positively by students, who reported that they appreciated the feedback provided and enjoyed the opportunities to be creative during extemporaneous podcasts.

Having examined where we have been by exploring the literature surrounding podcasting in language learning and its perceived benefits, its effects on listening and pronunciation, and its pedagogical uses in the classroom, we know that there is still much to be learned. As we move on to the next section and situate where we are now, it is our hope (as we discuss current projects and uses of podcasting) that we will come to a better sense of potential future directions for this technology.

WHERE WE ARE NOW: DATA GATHERED FROM AN ONLINE SURVEY

In order to examine current views of podcasting, this section highlights a preliminary project from which data were gathered via a short online survey. The survey sought to answer the following general research questions:

RQ1: Who uses podcasting in language classes?
RQ2: Where is podcasting implemented in language education?
RQ3: Why do language educators use podcasting?
RQ4: How do language educators use podcasting?

Task

The data presented here were gathered through an online anonymous survey administered through www.surveymonkey.com. Our goal in administering this survey was to gain a general overview as to the types of projects in which teachers are currently engaged; it was not in the scope of this project to collect and report quantitative data. Therefore, while they do not reflect a fully representative sample of all language teachers *per se*, the data reported are relevant to the current chapter and its goals.

The survey questions targeted teachers' reasons for using podcasting and their current uses of podcasting tools in their classes. (Please see the Appendix for a complete copy of the survey text and questions.) The overall goal of the survey was to obtain information from those who currently use podcasts in one way or another; therefore, we did not focus on whether the respondents did or did not use podcasts. The assumption was that, if they were answering the survey questions, it was because they had some experience with the tool.

Participants

A weblink to the survey and the appropriate consent forms was distributed widely via various educational and language-related listservs, such as FLTeach, AAUSC, and CALICO's membership lists. A total of 37 responses were received. While this number

is relatively low, it does represent the self-selected participants who chose to answer the questions because they wanted to share their work in podcasting. Further details regarding the participants' backgrounds will be discussed in the Results section, below.

Results

This section is divided into various subsections which address the primary questions that motivated the survey in the first place: who is using podcasting; when (or at what levels) they are doing so; why educators employ podcasting; and what specific kinds of projects they are developing.

RQ1: Who uses podcasting in language classes?

We wanted to gauge who is using podcasting. In other words, we wanted to know which teachers of what languages and what levels at what institutions were using the tool, and what grades were given. Based on the responses we received, it seems that podcasting appeals to almost everyone as a pedagogical tool of one sort or another. Of the teachers who responded, a variety of languages, levels, and institutions were represented. For example, we heard from teachers of several different languages, ranging from French and Spanish to German, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, Italian, Portuguese, ESL/EFL, Japanese, Hebrew, Hindi, Thai, and Vietnamese. We also heard from language technology specialists who work with multiple languages. While the vast majority of our respondents reported teaching at the college/university level, we did get responses from educators in elementary, middle, and high schools, and from both public and private institutions. It seems, though, that podcasting is enjoyed as an academic tool or activity for older (rather than younger) learners: over 90% of responders were teaching at the high school and college levels. Thus, we must keep in mind, as we continue to discuss these survey findings, that the reported projects were geared more toward learners in high school and in higher education. This fact is reinforced by respondents' answers to the survey question that asked for the average age of their learners: 50% indicated 19-23 year olds, and a quarter said 16-18 years, with the remaining fourth of the responses divided among the younger ages.

RQ2: Where is podcasting implemented in language education?

Although the learners involved in the reported podcast projects tend to be older, our respondents indicated that podcasting is being used at all levels of language instruction: beginning, intermediate, and advanced, and in fairly equal numbers. Of course, there are a variety of tasks that can be employed at differing levels, since what is asked of the learner can be determined by language proficiency. These tasks will be discussed in the next subsections.

RQ3: Why do language educators use podcasting?

Perhaps the most important question we asked in our survey was *why* educators use podcasting. This was an open-ended question, yet answers tended to fall into three

primary categories: for listening practice, for speaking practice, and for pronunciation practice. Of course, other reasons were given, as well. Table 1 presents the responses received and the frequency with which they were mentioned.

Table 1. Responses to the survey question asking about educators' goals in using podcasting

Reason given	# of times mentioned	% of mentions
Listening practice	30	41.10%
Speaking practice/presentational skills	17	23.29%
Pronunciation practice	9	12.33%
Increase students' independence (learning outside of class, replace lectures, etc.)	4	5.48%
Learn / be exposed to cultural information and authentic materials	4	5.48%
Collaborate with peers or students at other institutions	3	4.11%
Writing practice	2	2.74%
Vocabulary learning	2	2.74%
Other: Increased motivation; provide individual feedback; promote digital literacy; enhance class discussions	1 each	1.37% each
TOTAL	*73[ii]*	*100%*

Respondents to this study viewed podcasting as a tool that can aid in developing both receptive and productive skills. Educators feel that it is useful for listening as well as for speaking practice. On the receptive end, podcasts provide unlimited access to authentic materials, as was discussed previously, and can greatly benefit students' listening comprehension skills (if used regularly and appropriately). On the productive end, if students create their own podcasts, the tool becomes an outlet for creativity, oral practice, pronunciation exercises, and personalization of the learning process. In this respect, our survey respondents seem to concur with previous studies, reviewed above (e.g., Ducate & Lomicka 2009b, Lord 2008), in their recognition of podcasting as a valuable tool for improving linguistic abilities.

At the same time, there is a multiplicity of additional motivations for incorporating podcasts into language classes, as can be seen from the variety of responses. Some educators seek to increase students' independence by making class materials available in podcast format, which allows students to practice on their own, outside of class time. This approach takes advantage of the (possibly) mobile aspect of podcasting, in that it allows students to access course materials anytime and anywhere. Surprisingly few

educators commented on the collaborative aspect of podcasting, although (as we have seen above) podcasting's potential for collaborations and group learning is enormous. Other cited motivations include increasing learner motivation and fostering digital literacy among students. Although previous research has not examined all of these facets (e.g., Ducate & Lomicka 2008a, Lys 2008, Sathew & Waltje 2008), our survey respondents do recognize the potential of podcasting in language education. The next section examines how these goals can be achieved through a variety of project types suggested by our respondents.

RQ4: How do language educators use podcasting?

In this subsection, we examine the types of projects discussed by the survey respondents. As will become evident in this discussion, these projects mirror the uses discussed previously in the review of current research. This is not to say that these uses are not unique or interesting to their participants, but rather to point out that what we are reporting on now (in large part) resembles what we have reported already. (Future possible uses of podcasting that go beyond these traditional approaches are discussed in the next section.) A cursory examination of the survey responses provided reveals that project types tend to be divided in to two main trends: those which use existing target language podcasts and those for which teachers create their own podcast materials. Each will be discussed in turn.

Using existing materials

A number of educators are taking advantage of the multitude of podcasts available in every language by having students access these authentic materials as part of a project. Many educators rely on podcasts for providing authentic input to their students, and for this reason, they require students to subscribe to them. For example, in one kind of project, students choose podcasts based on their own interests and then engage in some kind of follow-up activity, such as blogging about their reactions to the content or creating their own podcast following that style. Another option that many educators are beginning to employ is the use of podcasts and sound files created by textbook companies or other language programs; while these are not specifically "authentic" materials (in the sense that they were not created by and for native speakers), they can provide several advantages to students, from mobility of learning to the reinforcement of vocabulary. At the same time, many have recognized their potential in creating podcasts, a task that allows either the teacher or the students (or both) to create and collaborate with the language.

Teacher-created podcasts

Many teachers who responded to our survey indicated that they create their own podcasts and make them available for their students to access outside of class time. This practice takes advantage of the "anywhere, anytime" idea behind podcasting and encourages students to continue their learning beyond the confines of the classroom.

Some teachers create grammar lectures to supplement the textbook and make them available in podcast format to their students. Others record vocabulary and useful phrases for students to access on their own in an attempt to increase their vocabulary outside of class time. Yet others create podcasts which offer guides for pronunciation and vocabulary, to which students are encouraged to listen. These audio tools can all be created with visual supplements too, taking advantage of the latest technologies available to provide both audio and visual input in podcasts.

Other instructors are involved in more process-oriented activities related to podcasting. For example, some educators create podcasts as a means to provide an oral text to the students, and then ask accompanying comprehension questions for students to answer in writing. In this way, podcasting becomes a part of students' homework assignments and allows them to incorporate regular listening practice, as well. Similarly, one educator indicated that s/he uses podcasts to summarize recent class lectures and to provide students with comprehension or summary questions to be handed in. Again, these uses of podcasting serve primarily to enhance the classroom experience and to broaden it in time and space beyond the limits of the classroom.

Student-created podcasts

The final type of podcast project reported in our survey was the creation of podcast projects by the students, themselves. There are a number of options presented in this category, all of which allow learners to create (and, often, to collaborate). For example, educators use podcasting to allow students to talk on any topic that interests them in order to practice their oral abilities, or to systematically respond to guided questions from the instructor. Many teachers also encourage students to comment on each other's work in these kinds of projects. Another option for podcasting is for students to use the recording capacities of the tool to practice their speaking and pronunciation. Some instructors have students read stories or dramatic performances (either by recognized authors or that the class has created for that purpose) aloud. These podcasts provide a performance outlet for the students, and give them another stage on which to perform. Other instructors have students perform their class presentations as a podcast.

From a more project-oriented perspective, educators have embraced the possibilities that podcasting offers to create longer-term projects. For example, one survey respondent indicated that his/her students create their own podcasts by reviewing books that they have read or films that they have watched. Others have had their students create genre-based podcasts, such as newscasts or sportscasts. In these projects, students express their own opinions while learning about the opinions of their classmates, as well. Similarly, another reported podcast project involves carrying out audio interviews with native speakers, which are then posted to a class podcast site. Such a project not only involves the cultural aspects of communication, but also gets students connected to a broader community of target-language speakers than they would otherwise be exposed to.

Clearly, the data presented in this section confirm that podcasting is "[…] well known, popular, and widely available […]" (Seitzinger, 2006, p. 1), and that it has been used in a variety of language classes and levels. Furthermore, educators have implemented podcasting in myriad ways – some of which are more traditional (recording lectures) and some of which are more collaborative (class presentations, projects). In gaining an idea as to where we are currently, we can better suggest ideas for where we are going and provide suggestions for potential uses of podcasting in language learning.

WHERE WE'RE GOING: THE FUTURE OF PODCASTING

Our survey respondents overwhelmingly indicated their interest in continuing to explore podcasts and their use in language classes in the future. As can be seen in Figure 1, in response to the question of whether they will use podcasting again, the vast majority of respondents indicate that they will or maybe will incorporate another podcasting project in their classes. In fact, only one respondent indicated that s/he would not do so.

Figure 1. Percentage of survey responses indicating respondents' plans to use podcasting again in the future.

The question we must ask at this point, however, is *how* educators will expand the use of podcasting in the future. Since it is based on the current trends in language teaching and in technology-assisted language instruction, this section briefly outlines some podcasting trends that link schools, students, classes, and institutions. These are trends which we have identified as those likely to shape the future of podcasting in language teaching and learning.

First, projects could establish a focus on digital literacy, which Wikipedia defines as "the ability to locate, organize, understand, evaluate, and create information using digital technology." One example of a podcasting project focusing on digital literacy is documented as "Clubcasting" (Beilke, Stuve, & Williams-Hawkins, 2008). In this particular project, students worked with inner-city children to produce podcast episodes for a radio show, in order to promote digital literacy and multiculturalism. Goals for the project included increasing literacy skills in inner-city children; contributing to authentic identity constructions; and gaining acceptance from white teachers (see Beilke et al. 2008). This type of project could easily be adapted to language classes, especially among Hispanic or other language communities, who could benefit from digital literacy skills. Simultaneously, students would benefit from the contact with the community and from the opportunities to use their target language in real communicative situations.

Second, projects could focus on community outreach through partnerships with local businesses, non-profits, and organizations. For example, Hartigan, Hill, Lewis-Faupel, and Springsteen (2006) discussed a project in which anthropology students produced podcasts in the form of audio guides for local museums. Language classes could provide a service to these organizations in translating material into the target language, thus allowing students to practice both language and digital skills while connecting with

the community, at the same time.. Similarly, Bruce and Lin (2009) reported on a project based on an inquiry-learning model in which podcasting was used to foster personal growth and community engagement among a group of Mexican-American youth enrolled in an afterschool program. Learners worked with the Mexican-American students to produce audiovisual podcasts that served as mini-video productions. This kind of project can promote collaborative spaces that young people can use to learn "new media, enjoy creative expression, take action for community needs, and develop potential for civic engagement by serving their family, friends, and communities" (p. 230). This type of community service project could easily be adapted to upper-level language classes. Language students could partner with institutions to produce target language audio campus guides, and upper-level language classes could establish connections with literature and history classes to work on projects for other community groups or institutions, such as local libraries and historical foundations.

Third, podcasting trends move educators beyond utilizing podcasts merely for practicing speaking or pronunciation and more toward the integration of skills and a focused use of mobility. Using podcasting in language classes could be framed with both a broader goal and a focus on multiple skills, simultaneously. Some applications are now ready to expand to speech-to-text conversion to access transcripts and search podcasts and use for reading/writing (podscope, 2007; Ramp, 2007). Also, more research is needed in the area of mobility, or time/place shifting. Lee, Miller, and Newnham (2008) reported that students did not tend to subscribe to podcasts or take advantage of the mobility offered, but rather followed traditional trends of downloading audio directly to their computers and listening to it on their computers. The authors concluded that one reason students do not download podcasts by subscribing may be due to "pre-established habits in the way they use the Internet and access web-based information" (p. 58). Perhaps projects should focus on providing students with reasons to subscribe, making subscription mandatory or necessary for completion of the associated tasks.

Finally, we can capitalize on others' experiences to empower our current students. One example of this trend can be found in podcasts from those who study abroad. Students who study abroad can provide podcasts or audio segments in the target language to share with students at the home institution (or elsewhere) or can provide podcasts discussing intercultural issues (example at http://www.absolutely-intercultural.com/?p=49). Students can also interview those who have studied abroad, or can create a podcast about a place in which they would like to study abroad some day. The possibilities for these kinds of podcasts are endless, ranging from student reports to interviews and more. Such resources would benefit current as well as future students and would form a resource for students and faculty.

The podcasting uses proposed above, which are based on current practices and look toward the future, offer ample ideas for language teachers to make the most of podcasting tools as they design their curricula. However, the incorporation of podcasting is not without challenges, some of which have been discussed in previously published work while others have also come up in the responses to our survey. The following subsections address some of these challenges and offer possible solutions.

Challenges

As we have seen, podcasting is being increasingly implemented in educational settings (Barsky & Lindstrom, 2008) and thus in the language classroom. We have also seen that educators are interested in continuing to do so. Nonetheless, we must carefully consider our goals in using this or any other tool. While "foreign language instruction has always had a close relationship with technology" (Simon, 2008, p. 6), researchers and educators have cautioned against using technology merely for technology's sake. Instead, as O'Bryan and Hegelheimer (2007) suggested, if educators decide to use podcasts, it is important to determine instructional goals. Rosell-Aguilar (2007, 2009) reminded educators to maintain an emphasis on pedagogy when implementing podcasting. Similarly, Simon (2008) suggested that while MP3 devices "might have an instructional potential, […] it is the educators who arrange and structure instructional events around it to make learning happen, not the instrument itself" (p. 6). Keeping instructional goals and an emphasis on pedagogy in mind, the success of podcasting (or lack thereof) depends on its use (Bush, 2008; McCloskey, 2007). This section takes a closer look at the challenges that educators face in designing podcasting projects for the language classroom and offers suggestions for overcoming those challenges. Thus, interested readers will be equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary to begin their own podcast project, research, and data collection.

Teachers face various hurdles when designing podcasts or when preparing to implement podcasting projects. For example, podcasting projects can be extremely time-consuming to create (Schmidt, 2008), and often require technological know-how that is beyond some teachers' comfort level. Students may require extra training and assistance with the technical competence for production of podcasts (Facer et al., 2009). Schmidt (2008) encouraged educators to provide students with guidance in the early stages of podcasting. Especially challenging is the creation of materials in languages encompassing unique or exotic fonts that are not common to all computing systems in this country; in this case, teachers need to seek creative solutions. In addition, administrative concerns (such as the blocking of certain sites or the disallowing of the use of podcasts in schools) can severely hinder an educator's efforts. A common theme among survey respondents was the issue of how to assess podcasts and how to assign grades for the projects. Additionally, many of these educators reported that they included student-generated podcasts in their classes as supplemental activities – either due to administrative or time limitations – and so it was difficult to get students to take them seriously if they were not rigidly graded.

Students also face challenges in classes in which podcasts are part of the curriculum. For example, not all students have access to the appropriate recording or playback equipment, and often the recordings that they make can be of poor quality. If students don't have portable listening devices – or if they don't want to use their personal devices for academic endeavors – they may not be making the most of the podcasting potential (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009b). Since students are invariably busy, they often do not listen to podcasts for more than the required time, thus limiting the potential of the authentic

input to aid in their comprehension and listening skills. Finally, many students are shy in front of a microphone or camera, or are reluctant to be as creative as they can be.

These challenges are not unique to any learning environment, but they can be particularly limiting in the context of podcasting. For this reason, the next subsection offers solutions to these challenges. These are offered in the hope that educators will be encouraged to try new tactics and to incorporate new podcast projects in their classes.

Solutions

In proposing possible solutions to the challenges discussed above, survey respondents indicated that podcasting could be an in-class activity. First, from a technical standpoint, support could be on-demand and provided instantly if podcasting occurs as a part of class time. For educators (as well as for students), increased administrative support could be provided (Schmidt, 2008). Second, from a pedagogical point of view, educators should state objectives explicitly and integrate podcast tasks and projects into the curriculum, making certain to provide both a purpose and a rationale (Abdous et al., 2009; Herrington & Kervin, 2007; O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007).

Further, Rosell-Aguilar (2009) noted that "[…] many podcasts created for educational purposes follow a behavioristic view of language learning and assume knowledge is acquired individually by a listen-and-repeat approach" (p. 23). Rather than limiting oneself to this type of approach, one could explore more interactive types of tasks for podcasts, such as group projects, native speaker interviews, radio shows, and a variety of student-generated podcasts, such as those discussed above. Educators could be encouraged to try student-generated podcasts, rather than (or in addition to) offering pre-created material. For student-generated podcasts, the focus could shift to collaboration, self-reflection (Seitzinger, 2006), and interactivity, through the use of, for example, audio or video responses, tweets, or blog comments. Rosell-Aguilar (2007) and Edirisingha, Rizzi, Nie, and Rothwell (2007) agreed that podcasting can be made more interactive by using Web 2.0 tools to provide opportunities to engage and collaborate with other learners, which can offer a discursive dimension to learning.

Regardless of the projects that educators create, in the end, the success of any podcasting endeavor depends on the goals and administration of the project. Below, we offer some practical ideas to consider when creating podcasting projects, using the word "PODCAST" as a mnemonic device. These suggestions come from the lessons learned in published work at large, as well as from the wisdom of our survey respondents, linked with our own experience and knowledge.

> **P** = portability. Take advantage of the mobility offered by podcasting and MP3 players and make mobile learning a priority. Encourage students to access materials outside of class time and to make language learning a part of their daily lives.
> **O** = originality. Use authentic materials that have already been created, but also encourage originality and creativity among learners in designing their own

recordings and/or their own responses to podcasts they hear. The more that learners create with the language, the closer they will come to their communicative goals.

D = distribution. Remember that that podcasts can be widely distributed to potential audiences in order to promote authenticity, and that there are a number of available distribution options (e.g., in class, out of class, mobile, etc.) which teachers can explore.

C = collaboration. Take advantage of podcasting's potential to create communities of learners, and allow learners to interact with each other and with native speakers. Keep this interaction in mind, as podcasting in the real world exists to generate discussion, commentary, reactions and responses. Our podcast projects should do the same thing, and student-created material should not exist in a vacuum.

A = authenticity. Podcasts should be used in academic contexts in the same kinds of ways that they are used in non-academic settings. Consider the authenticity of your podcast project, and use podcasting in class in the same way that you would use it in your everyday life. Make sure that it is relevant and interesting to students' lives and that its academic implementation mimics natural podcasting use.

S = sustainability. Create reusable projects that can be used semester after semester and can become self-sustaining, in the interest of maximizing your time and talents. Of course, projects can always be tweaked and modified as the course's goals or tools change, but creating self-sustaining projects will save time and energy.

T = technology. Prensky (2009) refers to our students' "digital wisdom" as an additional benefit of including technology-based tasks in our curricula. This digital wisdom is a "twofold concept, referring both to wisdom arising from the use of digital technology to access cognitive power beyond our innate capacity and to wisdom in the prudent use of technology to enhance our capabilities" (n.p.). As educators, we must keep in mind that the advantages of including podcasting projects go beyond the immediate goals of the project itself and help prepare our students to become active citizens in this increasingly technological world.

CONCLUSION

Our goal in this chapter has been to provide the reader with a solid foundation in podcasting's past, present, and future. We have explored both previous research and current podcasting projects, and we have provided suggestions for incorporating podcasting into the language classroom. Pedagogically, there are myriad ways that podcasting can be incorporated into language learning tasks, but the emphasis should remain on the task rather than on the technological tool. Young (2007) offered suggestions as to how to make podcasting tasks both communicative and meaningful. Essentially, teachers need to keep in mind that these projects should be designed around sound pedagogy. Young (2007) underscored that we must use knowledge of SLA to design effective podcasting tasks in order to create activities that are "engaging,

problem-solving and task-based, and that encourage authentic self expression for a purpose, are more appealing than listening to mechanical discrete-point verb conjugations or prefabricated audio files" (p. 45). Additionally, Colpaert (2004) reminded us to focus on the learner rather than the technology. He stressed the importance of developing the language learning environment before deciding on the role of mobile technologies.

Clearly, educators can benefit from learning what other scholars have done and from exploring the data that they have collected, as well as from understanding the projects in which our colleagues are currently involved. As the contents of this volume confirm, podcasting is a popular and productive tool with ample academic potential. Podcasting has enjoyed a fruitful past and is engaged in a productive and developing present. The future of podcasting is bright, especially for academic and educational purposes.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Mobile assisted language learning: MALL is an approach to language learning that is carried out or enhanced through use of mobile devices such as mobiles phones, MP3 players, or laptop computers. The primary focus of MALL is to allow students to access language learning materials, and to communicate with teachers or peers, at anytime, and from anywhere.

MP3 player: This device is designed to play digital audio files, and can store, organize, and play back. It is also referred to as a portable media player.

Podcast: A podcast is a collection or series of digital media files that are released in episodes and downloaded through web syndication (ATOM or RSS).

APPENDIX: SURVEY

Podcasting in language teaching

1. What language(s) do you teach? (check all that apply)

☐ Arabic

☐ Chinese

☐ ESL

☐ French

☐ German

☐ Italian

☐ Portuguese

☐ Russian

☐ Spanish

Other (please specify) [   ]

2. At what kind of institution do you teach? (check all that apply)

☐ Elementary school

☐ Middle school

☐ High school

☐ College/University

☐ Public

☐ Private

Other (please specify) [   ]

3. What level(s) of language do you teach?
(check all that apply)

☐ Beginning

☐ Intermediate

☐ Advanced

Other (please specify) [   ]

4. What is the average age of the students you teach?

○ 5-10

○ 11-15

○ 16-18

○ 19-23

○ Over 23

Other (please specify) [   ]

5. What are the goals of your podcasting project? (i.e., to develop listening, to work on pronunciation, etc…)

[   ]

6. Please provide a brief description of your project.

[   ]

7. What challenges did you face/are you facing in the design and implementation of your project?

[   ]

8. Do you plan to use podcasting in future projects?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe

Comments? [   ]

9. What would you do differently for future projects?

[text area]

10. May we contact you for further information regarding this or other podcast projects in which you've been involved?

○ No

○ Yes

If yes, please provide an email address [   ]

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[i]Other pioneering projects include those at Duke University and Middlebury College (cited in Thorne & Payne, 2005) and at the University of Wisconsin (The University of Wisconsin Language Institute Website, n.d.).

[ii] Note that the total number of reasons mentioned is greater than the number of respondents. This is because a number of respondents indicated multiple reasons for using podcasting, and each reason was recorded.