

ISSN:0976-8165

# THE CRITERION

An International Journal in English



Vol. 7, Issue-I February 2016

7 YEARS OF OPEN ACCESS

[www.the-criterion.com](http://www.the-criterion.com)

Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Vishwanath Bite

About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

[www.galaxyimrj.com](http://www.galaxyimrj.com)

## The Role of Podcasts in Developing Language Skills of ESL Learners

**Dr. Ch.Venkata Ramani**

Assoc. Prof. of English  
KL University, Guntur (A.P)

### **Abstract:**

Teaching and learning in an ESL classroom is often limited to processes within classrooms, whereas language learning is a natural process that extends beyond. A major challenge for teachers is stretching the boundaries of language learning to the learners' lives outside classrooms. Though there has been an accelerating innovation in teaching tools, but the classroom challenges are continued. The current generation students are tech-savvy and the ease with which they use these electronic gadgets is indeed amazing. The present paper is intended to explore and suggest the use of 'podcasting' as an ideal and very effective tool for language learning. A podcast is a digital recording delivered in a format that can be played on computer devices such as desktop computer, a laptop, or a portable media player. Podcasting is spreading quickly because of the rapid adoption of MP3 players, and the desire of owners to have fresh content. This research argues for the usefulness of podcasting as a knowledge-sharing medium and a cognitive learning tool.

**Keywords: Podcasting, ESL classroom, language, Cognitive learning, knowledge-sharing**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Integrating technology in education isn't a new thing. Teachers have been using clay slates, the abacus, pencils and pens, typewriters, overhead projectors, computers, and finally, the internet, mobile phones, and social networks as instructional tools to help students learn. Though there has been an accelerating innovation in teaching tools, but the classroom challenges are continued. These technologies that are innovated will have only limited impact if the pedagogy behind their application does not keep pace. The student population which is often referred to as 'generation next' can be said to be addicted to gadgets and it is quite rare to find students who do not possess mobiles or an iPod these days. The ease with which they use the tools of technology like computers, cell phones, iPods and other gadgets is really startling and this strong interest which they have for machines should be put to good use by the teaching fraternity. This study proposes to offer 'Podcasting' as an ideal and very effective tool for language learning. Podcasting offers an ideal alternative to the traditional approach with considerable advantages even to those users with little technical skills.

### **1.2 Podcasting- Scope and Benefits**

The term 'podcast' is a portmanteau of the words "pod" and "broadcast" according to Wiki, and it refers to the use of an iPod for purposes of recording and broadcasting any material. In other words, a podcast is a digital recording delivered in a format that can be played on computer devices such as desktop computer, a laptop, or a portable media player. Podcasts are different from other types of recordings in that they can be downloaded to mobile players, making them

portable for both students and teachers. Using an iPod or other small portable device, one can store literally hundreds of hours of video and audio content which can be used by connecting to any computer capable of playing audio or video files. Podcasting is spreading quickly because of the rapid adoption of MP3 players, and the desire of owners to have fresh content.

Podcasting has ample scope for use in myriad ways. It is an online audio content delivered via an RSS (Really simple Syndication) feed. Many people find it similar to radio on demand, but podcasting gives far more options in terms of content and programming than radio does. In a nutshell, podcasting is a new type of online media delivery. You publish selected audio files via the internet and allow your users to subscribe via an RSS feed to automatically receive new files.

The main benefit of podcasting is that listeners can sync content to their media player and then take it with them to listen whenever they want to.

### 1.3 ELT Podcasts

The first podcasts appeared in early 2005. ELT educators soon joined the movement, and since the second half of 2005, there has been an upsurge in the number of ELT podcasts on web. Obviously, ELT podcasts can be used for intensive and extensive listening activities. There is, however, a strong case for using ELT podcasts for extensive listening, for the purpose of motivating student interest in listening to English, and providing them with exposure to native speakers' speech (Rost, 1991). Stanley (2006) emphasizes that podcasts offer students a wide range of possibilities for extra listening both inside and outside of the classroom: "Supplementing the (often) scripted and stilted textbook listening's with the real life authentic conversations you can find on many podcasts is an attractive option for language teachers. These extracts can bring a range of different voices and varieties of English into the classroom" (p. 2). More advanced learners can be encouraged to listen to authentic podcasts. This activity effectively bridges the gap between the formal English which dominates most second language classrooms and the informal English used in most real-life communication events. In ELT, the appeal is not only in providing additional listening input for students, but that students themselves can become involved in recording and producing the podcast.

#### 1.3.1 Types of ELT Podcasts

There are various types of podcasts you can use with your students:

**Educator Podcasts:** These podcasts are created by educators and cover a variety of topics about how to teach, as well as how to use podcasting in teaching. Educator podcasts such as, *Comprehensible Input* and *Bit by Bit* are reflective podcasts that cover methodological matters.

**Teacher Podcasts:** These podcasts are made by teachers usually for their own classes. They are aimed at helping students learn by producing listening content that is available only for a specific area. *The Daily Idiom* and *Madrid Young Learner* podcasts are two very different types of teacher-produced podcasts.

**Student Podcasts:** These podcasts are produced by students, but often with teacher help. Producing podcasts is a very motivating activity for students. *English Conversations*, for

example is a podcast largely made by students for students. Another interesting example is the podcast created by Fudan University high school students in China.

**Authentic Podcasts:** Though these podcasts are not aimed at ELT students, they can often be a rich source of listening. Most of these are especially suitable for higher level students. Sushi Radio, made by non-native speakers of English are some examples of authentic podcasts.

More podcasts for students can be found by looking at directories such as English Caster, which is directed at students and teachers of English, or other more general directories such as Podcast Alley, which has a large educational section. One example for ELT podcasts is <http://iteslj.org/links/ESL/Listening/Podcasts/> maintained by the Internet TESL Journal.

Some ELT podcasts that can be used for language learners are:

*Comprehensive*, e.g., [www.englishteacherjohn.com/podcast/](http://www.englishteacherjohn.com/podcast/) - These podcasts cover a wide range of traditional listening comprehension activities, interviews, and vocabulary.

Whole lessons, e.g., <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/> - These are ready-made lessons based on podcasts which teachers can use in the classroom immediately.

Vocabulary, idioms, etc., e.g., <http://newyorkenglish.net/> - These podcasts concentrates on the special vocabulary used by New Yorkers.

Conversations with script, e.g., <http://www.e-poche.net/conversations/> - These conversations between native speakers help less proficient learners with the script while listening to the conversation.

Jokes, eg. <http://www.manything.org/jokes/> - These podcasts containing jokes encourage active listening and generates interest towards language learning.

Songs, e.g., <http://englishpodsong.blogspot.com/> - These podcasts contain songs both for children and teenagers and are often accompanied by the text of the lyrics.

Phonetics, pronunciation, e.g., <http://phoneticpodcast.com/> - These podcasts are highly suited for teaching phonetics and pronunciation specifically pronunciation problems in English.

Stories: <http://www.englishthroughstories.com/> - These are usually story read-alouds.

Listening comprehension, e.g., <http://mylcpodcasts.blogspot.com/> - These podcasts provide conventional listening comprehension practice.

## 1.4 Creating Podcasts

You need not be an expert to create your own podcasts. Podcasting may be the ultimate democratization of radio. Anyone with an Internet connection and some inexpensive audio equipment can produce a podcast and make it available online. Before you start recording, it's important to plan what you want to say. What will the format of the podcast be? Will it be an interview, a commentary, a report, or a discussion? How many students will be involved? If possible make a podcasting project collaborative and encourage students to take turns speaking. Outline the key talking points, but avoid reading from a script. A podcast in an EFL environment should focus on fluency. Digital recording can be erased and re-recorded as often as you like. Once you have a topic and format, you need to be aware of timing. Limit speaking time for

lower-level language learners to 1-3 minutes maximum. Of course, group podcasts with multiple speakers can be longer. One thing to consider is whether you are really planning to make a podcast or simply a digital recording to play locally from your computer.

### 1.4.1 Podcasting Tools

A number of free programmes are available on the internet. The very popular options in this regard are:

**Audioboom** – <https://audioboom.com/>

This is a free service which can be used to create web-based audio. To create audio using this site, you just need to register and log in. Once you have done this, you can either upload an audio file you have already recorded or record directly into your web browser. The audio files can either be published publicly or sent privately as audio messages. Once you have created an account, you can also ‘follow’ other users. This means that you will be notified whenever they create a new audio file and share it. This is a good way to share audio with your students, and they can also ‘follow’ some of the channels that have been created on Audioboo. These include a channel from the BBC, though these channels are more suitable for higher level students.

**Voxopop** – <http://www.voxopop.com/>

This is a free service which can be used to create asynchronous audio discussions. Unlike many podcasting sites, it is interactive and it enables listeners to record a response to the audio they hear. This is especially useful if you want to create discussion around your podcast topics, or if you use it to create sentence drills and you want students to create their own recording of each drill. The discussion threads can be downloaded to mobile devices.

**VoiceThread** – <http://voicethread.com/>

This is a premium service with a free option which can be used to create interactive presentations. It was designed for educational purposes and enables teachers to register students. Students can then leave audio, text or video comments on the presentations.

**Podomatic** – <http://www.podomatic.com/>

This is a free service for creating podcasting channels. Podomatic is quite a good tool to use if you want your students to create a regular themed show. It enables them to create a web-based homepage for their shows and they can record directly into their web browser without downloading additional software. The sound quality can be variable on this site, however.

**Audacity** – <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

This is a free software tool that can be downloaded to any computer. The advantage of this software is that once you have downloaded it, you don’t need an internet connection. You can use it like a traditional language lab and get students recording themselves and saving the files on their computer’s hard drive. It also has a good range of editing tools, so you can speed up and slow down recordings and crop them too.

## 1.5 Podcasting in India

The biggest hurdle Indian podcasters face is in the name of the medium itself. Utter the word podcast in public and you'll be met with confused faces. The term sounds complex for what's essentially just like a radio show. People however are often unfamiliar with the term, and thus find it daunting. Podcasting can be utilized in India in large ways especially to counteract the problem of different accents which crop up due to the influence of the regional medium of instruction and the influence of mother tongue. Following the trend set by the Stanford and Berkeley universities, Welingkar Institute of Management, a Mumbai-based business school, is planning to record lectures and make them available to its students over iTunes. According to Preethi (2007) there are three popular Indian podcasters: (i) Indiacast, a podcast network that has been active since October 2005. (ii) Kamla Bhatt and (iii) Podmasti. Another Indian podcast is SynTalk, short for Synthesis Talk. Its focus is on philosophical discussions, but each episode doesn't limit itself to one topic or field. Discussions range "from quantum vacuum, to poison, to naming to cellphones to death".

## 1.6 Limitations

The application of any technology will obviously have its pros and cons. On the technical side, the users must have sufficient bandwidth to download the podcast. Beyond access, there are potential issues with the format. Further, podcasting is not designed for two-way interaction, thus there could arise the problem of the lack of immediacy or the absence of rapport between the teacher and the taught. The quality of sound may not be as effective as that of actual or that of a professional broadcast.

## 1.7 Conclusion

To conclude, it is an undeniable fact that the use of technology, especially podcasting, can greatly enhance the teaching-learning process. Improving learning effectiveness has long been a research goal and a pedagogical aspiration of the academic community. Universities and other organizations of higher education are facing increased pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of their educational efforts. These pedagogical approaches of incorporating technology are certainly not new, but nevertheless not easily adopted by the older generation. But today's learners are so addicted to gadgets and gizmos and it would be better to incorporate this attitude into our learning system. Thus, the technophobic people should necessarily change their mindset and move with the changing times. So, the use of podcasting for language learning has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of traditional learning techniques.

### Works Cited:

Audacity, <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

Beare, Kenneth (2006). Introduction to English learning Podcasts. Available at <http://esl.about.com>

Copley, J. (2007). Audio and video podcasts of lectures for campus-based students: Production and evaluation of student use. *Innovations In Education & Teaching International*, 44(4), 387-399.

Ducate, L., & Lomicka, L. (2009). Podcasting: An effective tool for honing language students' pronunciation? *Language Learning & Technology*, 13(3), 66-86.

Fernandez, V., Simo, P., & Sallan, J. M. (2009). Podcasting: A new technological tool to facilitate good practice in higher education. *Computers & Education*, 53(2), 385-392.

<http://www.brown.uk.com/teaching/qualitativepostgrad/mckinney.pdf>

<https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-of-the-best-Indian-podcasts>

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/methodology/tech-tools-for-teachers/tech-tools-for-teachers-podcasting/551803.article>

<https://prezi.com/xo9vontymnsm/podcasting-in-elt/>

McKinney, D., Dyck, J. L., & Luber, E. S. (2009). iTunes university and the classroom: Can podcasts replace professors? *Computers & Education*, 52(3), 617-623.

Podcasting. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcasting>

Rost, M. (1991). *Listening in action: Activities for developing listening in language teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Schneider, P. "Using Pair Taping" <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Schneider-PairTaping.html>

Shahramiri, P., & Gorjian, B. (2013). The Effect of Podcast transcription Activities on Intermediate and Advanced EFL Learners' Writing Accuracy. *Advances in Digital Multimedia (ADMM)*, 40(3), 194-199.

Stanley, G. (2006). Podcasting: Audio on the Internet comes of age. *TESL-EJ*, 9(4). Retrieved on December 25, 2015 from <http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/ej36/int.html>

Sze, P.M.M. (2006). Developing Students' Listening and Speaking Skills through ELT Podcasts. *Education Journal*, 34(2), 115-134.

[www.thepodcasthost.com/ultimate-podcasting-resources-list/](http://www.thepodcasthost.com/ultimate-podcasting-resources-list/)

[www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/podcasting-elt](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/podcasting-elt)

[www.pearsonelt.com/professionaldevelopment/podcasts](http://www.pearsonelt.com/professionaldevelopment/podcasts)