LITERACIES IN SECOND LANGUAGES PROJECT

LSLP Micro-Papers

Micro-Paper 44: *Podcasting*

Raúl Alberto Mora
Associate Professor, Education and Pedagogy Graduate Programs,
Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central Medellín | LSLP Chair
raul.mora@upb.edu.co

Carla Pulgarín
Student at Licenciatura Inglés-Español, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central Medellín
LSLP Student Researcher
carla.pulgarinme@upb.edu.co

Defining the Term

Podcast, a portmanteau of the words *iPod* and *broadcast*, usually refers to any radio-style broadcast that one can share online. Although one of the first outlets for podcasts was the iTunes platform (hence the "pod"), other websites and platforms have come forward in recent years for amateur and syndicated podcasts.

Formats and styles for podcasts come in a very wide range. Music shows, newscasts, or opinion pieces, to name a few, are among the array of options available for listeners. Education at large and language education in particular have also ventured in the production of podcasts. Looking at iTunes, for example, one can find courses and lessons from varied topics generated by different universities. It is also quite common to find entire lesson plans for almost any language online.

In recent years, podcasts (and their video media cousin, *vodcast*) have become an object of study in literacies research, from a participatory perspective. As a form of user-created media, podcasts provide new spaces for social agency and content appropriation. This has also triggered a shift, as we move from looking at the *consumption* to the *design* and *production* of podcasts as educational alternatives to engage students into the new requirements and needs that 21ˢᵗ century literacies are projecting on our society.

Connecting it to LSLP

Our school literacies research keeps growing. One of the areas of expansion features the use of digital forms of literacy in today's classrooms. WebQuests were our first entry point and we are now exploring podcasts as communication tools in P-16 contexts.

We are specifically interested in podcast creation from two fronts. On the one hand, we are looking at how secondary students engage with podcasts to engage with English. On the other, we are studying how prospective teachers are learning about podcasting by designing their own in the context of preservice methods courses.

Expanding Second Language Research

Given the still recent nature of podcasts, the field of second language studies is still learning about its potential. Some initial efforts have focused on their use as sources of realistic language practices for listening comprehension and metacognitive awareness. More recent research efforts are, as has been the case in literacy studies, looking at the potential of podcasts as communicative competence catalysts since students may have a bigger say on the contents and the conditions for performance.

The emphasis on text production that moves podcasting today may become a very powerful tool for teachers. As today's youth leans toward more participatory literacy practices, using podcasts in second language classrooms may provide more opportunities to increase language appropriation and confidence, as well as more meaningful use of language in social settings.

References

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