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Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How Podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom

Episode 2: Review of the Literature on Podcasting in the Writing Classroom

By Jennifer L. Bowie

Transcript of the Podcast

<http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/16.2/topoi/bowie/ep2.html>

Welcome to “Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How Podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom” a multimodal project exploring podcasting as a part of a writing class. You are listening to Episode 2 “Review of the Literature on Podcasting in the Writing Classroom.” This is a seven episode podcast series with an interconnected webtext published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. A full transcript of each episode is available on the website and in the lyrics field of this MP3 file.

I am Dr. Jennifer L. Bowie, your host for this series and a Senior Usability Research Analyst for The Home Depot website. This work draws from my experience as an Assistant Professor at Georgia State University. Inside and outside the academy, I teach and research podcasting, digital media, writing, usability, and rhetoric

In this episode, I explore some of the literature on podcasting in the writing classroom, focusing on some advantages researchers have found with podcasting: Higher Achievements, Student Support and Enthusiasm, Time- and Location-Shifted, Student Opinions, Community Building and Classroom Experience. Further literature discussion

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is available, in a more traditional academic style, on the webtext. Without further ado, let us begin Episode 2 “Review of the Literature on Podcasting in the Writing Classroom.”

Review of the Literature on Podcasting in the Writing Classroom

Since podcasting is so young, only about six years old, it is not surprising there is limited scholarship on the subject and even less on podcasting in education, let alone in writing classrooms. But, the research that does exist provides rationale for the adoption of podcasts in the writing classroom. Various scholars have found several benefits to podcasting, which can be combined into five categories:

- ◆ **Higher Achievements:** In two different studies on the use of podcasts of class lectures, researchers found that podcasts resulted in higher student achievements. Belinda Tynan and Stephen Colbran, on pages 831-2, discovered reduced attrition and a [quote] “higher standard of answers in examinations” [unquote], with the use of podcasts. Dani McKinney, Jennifer Dyck, and Elise Luber found that students who studied with podcasts and related PowerPoint handouts had higher exam scores than students who only attended a lecture with PowerPoint slides.
- ◆ **Student Support and Enthusiasm:** Three different studies on teacher-produced podcasts found high levels of student support and enthusiasm for the podcasts. McKinney, Dyck, and Luber, on page 621, determined that 88% of students prefer a podcast of a missed lecture over lecture notes. Similarly, Evan noted that students are more receptive to learning from podcasts than

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from lectures or textbooks. In the third study, Michael Huntsberger and Alan Stavitsky provided optional and supplemental podcasts of reading overviews for the students and learned that students enthusiastically appreciated these podcasts and 89% of students listened to these podcasts. In fact, 35% of the students listened more than once, which is impressive for optional class material.

- ◆ **Time- and Location-Shifted:** The time- and location-shifted option for podcasts is a benefit that researchers in two different studies highlighted. According to Evans, nearly 80% of the students rated the “anytime anywhere” ability as important and 25% of the students took advantage of this and listened to their class podcasts while traveling. Huntsberger and Stavitsky, on page 403, found similar numbers of students taking advantage of this ability—about 30% listened during [quote] “unspecified activities” [quote]—and students were also excited that they could listen to the podcasts at their own convenience.
- ◆ **Student Opinions:** In two studies, students expressed positive opinions on the benefits of podcasts. According to Tynan and Colbran, students think podcasts are valuable to their studies, assist learning, aid exam preparation, and provide flexibility. Evans states on 496 that students think podcasts enhance their learning experience and are more effective revision tools than textbooks or student notes.
- ◆ **Community Building and Classroom Experience:** The use of podcasts may also enrich community building and classroom experience according to two studies. Students in Krause’ online class thought the podcast-like audio

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files provided them a classroom-like experience, which was helpful. Tynan and Colbran discovered increased community building in the classes with lecture-based podcasts.

Each of these studies analyzed audio podcasts.

Of course, there are also issues with including podcasts. While the time- and location-shifted option is a benefit, it is not always used. Evans found that 80% of the students he studied listened on their computer and only 20% on MP3 players. So, mobility was not fully utilized by the students, but this did not mean that it was not a benefit for those 20% of students who listen anywhere. In Tynan and Colbran's study, on page 831, students pointed out several other problems including implementation costs, lack of visuals, delays in availability of the lectures, additional time needed to listen, reduction in lecture attendance, and [quote] "not being able to ask questions," [unquote]. Not being able to ask questions points to a serious concern related to podcasts, especially lecture-style podcasts. This lack of interaction could be a significant deterrent to many students, especially those struggling with the material. While other forms of interaction may be possible—emails, discussion forums, and even future classes—the lack of an instantaneous answer is problematic. Also, the podcasters does not get the immediate feedback from the audience and cannot adjust the material to fit the audience's immediate needs. So, while many advantages exist, there are also disadvantages to consider.

The majority of these studies occurred outside computer and writing classes or even rhetoric, composition, and technical communication classes. Steven D. Krause

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conducted one of the few audio/podcast research studies in computers and writing. In a small study of his online writing class, which 11 of his 19 students participated in, he provided supplemental audio files, similar to podcasts. He found students thought the files aided in the study of material, but that some students had issues with the extra time the podcasts took or because they were not audio-based learners. Krause also found that of the 11 students, three did not listen to the supplemental material; four listened to some, and the other four listened to half or more. This matches the research by McKinney, Dyck, and Luber and also Huntsberger and Stavitsky—students will listen to podcast supplemental material. While none of these studies examined other types of supplemental material, it would be interesting to see if students are more or less likely to access supplemental material in podcast or audio form.

From these studies it appears that podcasts in the classroom may lead to higher scores; high levels of student interest in the material and repeated listening to the podcasts; and a more classroom-like experience for online classes. In addition, students find that that podcasts are valuable to their studies, assist learning, and provide flexibility. However, drawing on these studies, issues like increased time requirements, implementation costs, and a lack of visuals should be considered with podcasts in the classroom.

Although these studies are helpful to those considering incorporating podcasting into their classes, the researchers focus on teacher-produced podcasts that are usually recorded lectures. While it is important to understand how effective and helpful teacher-produced podcasts are, these are not the only types of podcasts computer and writing teachers should consider for their classes. We teach our students how to compose in

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various media and genres, so we should consider the fit of student-produced podcasts in our classrooms.

[Musical transition]

This concludes Episode 2 “Review of the Literature on Podcasting in the Writing Classroom.” Thanks for listening. In the webtext, I have an expanded literature review, with more of the literature in computers and writing and related academic areas. Please check this out too! Ready to move onto Rhetorical Roots and Media Future? In the next episode, episode 3, of this article, I present how podcasting, especially student-produced podcasts, may help our students rethink well established rhetorical and writing concepts—such as the five canons—and apply them in new ways. I cover invention in episode 3, arrangement and style in episode 4, and memory and delivery in episode 5. In episode 6, I discuss how the rethinking and new applications may often lead to increased traditional print and digital media writing skills. In episode 7, I wrap up the article and think about the future. If you missed it, do listen to episode 1, where I introduce the series and podcasting.

This multimodal text was published in [Kairos](#): *A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. Please check out the full webtext on *Kairos* at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/16.2/topoi/bowie>. Full reference information, transcript, and links are available in the webtext and also in the lyrics field of the MP3. All student samples in this podcast were used with full permission. The music used in this podcast is “6” off *Ghosts I* by Nine Inch Nails, which is available under an [Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike Creative Commons License](#).

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Thanks for listening!

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