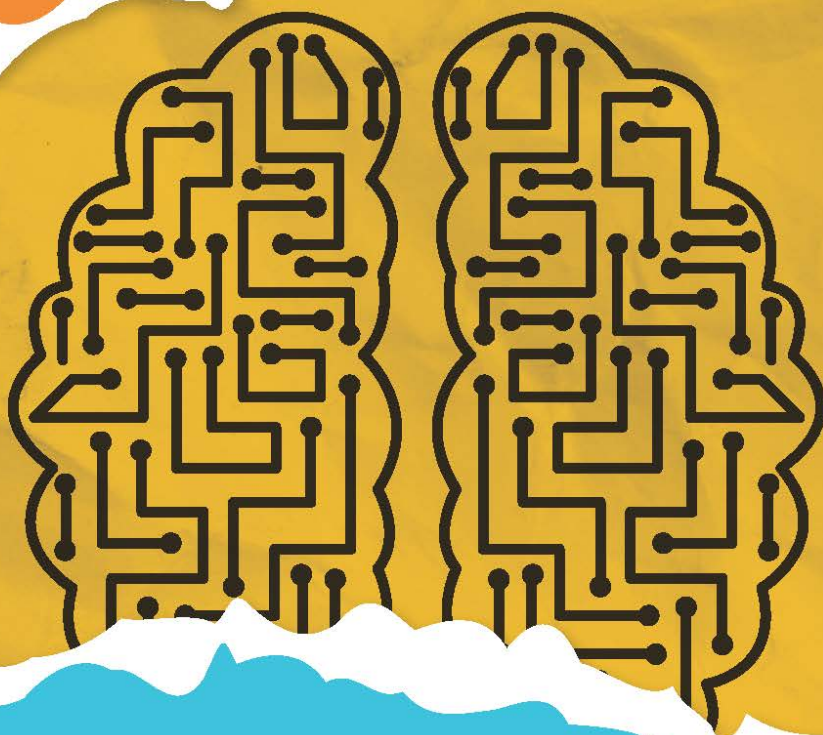# Reimagining South African Higher Education

Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future

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CHAPTER 8

SOUND MATTERS: PODCASTING AS A LEARNING AND TEACHING INTERVENTION TO ENHANCE READING AND WRITING SKILLS

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Abstract

In this chapter, a group of student-researchers and their lecturer discuss their findings relating to a podcasting intervention which took place in an Ethnomusicology third- and fourth-year class at Rhodes University in Makhanda, Eastern Cape, South Africa. As part of a larger project, in which the class explored podcasting in general, they experimented with the medium in order to ascertain in what role it could be used as a learning and teaching aid in tertiary pedagogy. Audio recordings of the lecturer discussing journal articles relating to the module were sent to students. They listened to and used them in different scenarios, orchestrated to research their effectiveness in diverse learning and teaching situations. Using a qualitative case study research design methodology, the student researchers and their lecturer present these findings through a participatory lens. They analyse the podcasts' efficacy and limitations from various perspectives through coding responses. Finally, they discuss future usage of the medium as a way to enhance students' understanding of academic readings.

Keywords: case study; ethnomusicology; learning and teaching; literacy intervention; podcasting

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CHAPTER 8: SOUND MATTERS: PODCASTING AS A LEARNING AND TEACHING INTERVENTION TO …

1. Introduction

Studies in Ethnomusicology are represented as much by words as they are by sound. In undergraduate teaching of this subject, therefore, it is imperative that each student understands the value of the written word and how to use academic language which interprets the relationships between humans and musical output. As universities in South Africa see students from various backgrounds enter tertiary education, ensuring that courses empower all students with adequate and equal literacy skills is vital. The use of podcasting may seem inappropriate because this medium utilises only sound to share knowledge, stories, music, and more, however, as stated above, in the field of study through which this empirical research was produced, sound and writing are valued equally. Therefore, the study approached the development of academic language in this course using podcasts.

In this chapter student researchers and their lecturer describe a learning and teaching intervention where they used a sonic or sound-based approach, in this case podcasts, to assist in cultivating a nuanced approach for reading and understanding academic articles relating to Ethnomusicology themes. Although there are several studies on language development (Abdi & Makiabadi, 2019; Edirisingha et al., 2007; Nikolou & Darra, 2018) and listening skills expansion (Davydenko, 2021; Gonulal, 2020; Mirza Suzani, 2021) through podcasting, this intervention was aimed at developing specific academic literacy rather than general language skills. Podcasts play an important role in content dissemination and knowledge production at Rhodes University, and specifically at the International Library of African Music (ILAM) where the goals of the institute include community engagement and community–based education. Lecturers and students at ILAM believe that podcasts can link the knowledge the archive holds and collects, to the communities from which it comes in a more efficient and accessible manner. Therefore, in undergraduate and Honours classes, ILAM teaches students to produce their own podcasts with the intention of disseminating their academic knowledge and output in a sonic manner, along with their written work. At this stage, ILAM produces two podcast series with an educational theme. These include *African Music Activists*, a series which focuses on African music pedagogues who have changed the path of African music education on the continent, and *Afroloops*, an educational podcast aimed at high school learners which introduces African instruments (all the students in this intervention were part of this series).

While producing *Afroloops* in 2021, the students and lecturer in the Ethnomusicology class decided to experiment with using podcasts as an educational tool to assist with the development of reading and writing skills. They took guidance and analysed results from other researchers on the effective integration of podcasting in learning and teaching (Pachagadu & Nel, 2016; Saxena, 2013; Van Zanten et al., 2012). This research speaks to the importance of technology in education while Pachagadu and Nel (2016) list podcasts as being beneficial specifically as audio archives for lectures and supplementary course materials. This was an important point for this team of researchers because archival materials at ILAM are considered

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Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future

living, breathing, and interactive resources that open opportunities for students to co-create new knowledge. These articles and the results of the intervention were so insightful that it spurred the team on to interrogate their research further. As a research team, they met weekly to co-produce a conference presentation, thus creating new opportunities to use the very skills that the intervention was developing. Using a qualitative case study methodology and thereafter coding the reflections, they found that integrating podcasts to enhance academic reading skills was not only effective but that it was a tool that could be used to augment analytical writing and reading skills in tertiary education in general. The final result, the co-writing of this chapter by the student researchers and the lecturer, shows that the use of technology and a novel approach to improving writing skills can have impactful results.

2. Contextualisation

Swiatek (2018) writes, "Podcasts are a means of communication that generate a sense of intimacy among listeners who are physically separate from each other, thus enabling boundaries of knowledge and context to be crossed". This definition proved to be the closest to the student-researchers' experience of the medium. However, starting with analysing several articles where podcast interventions were explored (Besser et al., 2021; Reyna et al., 2018), they jointly defined podcasts as audio files that can be downloaded and played on digital audio players which can be used to disseminate a variety of sonic outputs. The word podcast can refer to either the content, or the technique of distribution, and the latter is also known as podcasting (Jham et al., 2008). Podcasting is a term that combines the words iPod and broadcasting, and the word Podcast was named the 2005 word of the year, defining it as "a digital recording of a radio broadcast or comparable program made available on the internet for download to a personal audio player" (Johnson & Grayden, 2006). Podcasts also have the advantage of being a push or subscription technology, rather than a pull technology. This means that rather than requiring the listener, or in this case the student, to seek out and download the content, it is sent straight from the original source or internet location to the portable device. This ease of technology is a driving factor in podcast popularity, where a listener's time spent searching for, locating, and retrieving material, is considerably reduced. While downloading podcasts to a portable device provides the greatest benefit, they can also be listened to on a computer, making them an excellent tool for listeners without mobile devices (Evans, 2008). In addition, the medium has opportunities to be accessed safely and comfortably because of relatively small bandwidth requirements (Zellatifanny, 2020). Statistics on podcast listening in Southern Africa are vastly different from those in the Global North where Apple estimated over 2 million active podcasting shows with more than 48 million series and over 50 billion episodes were downloaded and streamed in 2019 (Winn, 2021). The challenges and barriers to podcasting in Africa are both technological and educational. Weak mobile and internet access, though increasing, stifles the ability of the industry to flourish since internet strength is not as robust as it could

Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future. African Sun Media: Stellenbosch, South Africa.

CHAPTER 8: SOUND MATTERS: PODCASTING AS A LEARNING AND TEACHING INTERVENTION TO …

be. In addition, the large amount of data consumed by podcast listening presents a problem as the field attempts to develop as an emerging media on the continent. Though popular podcasts on media platforms where many listeners consume podcasts are in English, in Africa, where it is estimated that there are at least 1500 languages, podcasts are produced in various languages, and this substantially limits potential listenership expansion (Fox & Karianjahi, 2021).

Nevertheless, students, as personally experienced by the researchers, are more mobile than ever. They are frequently multitasking, working part-time jobs, or on professional practice placement at a distance from their institutions, and as a result, having access to knowledge without being tied to a specific physical location is appealing. Therefore, the number of educational podcasts such as recordings of lectures, interviews, and academic readings is rapidly growing (Palmer & Devitt, 2007). Student-created podcasts have been shown to improve reading, writing, and listening skills (Smythe & Neufeld, 2010) and stimulate engagement and collaboration which lead to gains in literacy development (Morgan, 2015). According to Vandenberg (2018), podcasting aids students in learning to use storytelling techniques that feature the importance of logical and coherent thinking. Storytelling is an important technique for the learning and teaching of language as well as a vehicle for cultural transmission (Barrett & Cocq, 2019). Additionally, incorporating either audio or video podcasts allows for a greater ability to personalise and accommodate learners (O'Bannon et al., 2011). One of the most obvious uses for podcasts in higher education is the recording of lectures: academic staff record lectures and disseminate them as an audio podcast on the internet, complete with visuals from other applications like Microsoft Word or PowerPoint. In this way, podcasts offer students opportunities to revisit classroom content while providing greater critical thinking opportunities (Evans, 2008; Shumack & Gilchrist, 2009). Thus, the delivery of podcasting must be refined to suit the needs of the specific class.

Older methods of disseminating educational audio materials via compact disc (CD), video or digital versatile disc (DVD) are costly and limited, but the internet has lowered these costs, allowing specialists in their field to distribute audio-visual material to anybody with an internet connection at a minimal cost. The push technology explained before has significantly reduced technological hurdles for students with access to computers and smartphones (Jham et al., 2008). This is done through Really Simple Syndication (RSS) technology which automates the downloading of podcasts by pushing through new audio samples to the listener's subscribed streaming format as soon as they are uploaded (Cold, 2006).

As highlighted before, the student-researchers and lecturer experienced this technology first-hand when they developed new episodes for their educational series *Afroloops*. While recording those podcasts and researching the efficacy of the medium as a learning and teaching tool, the team decided to test the research presented which resulted in the intervention.

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Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future

3. Approach

To examine the effectiveness of podcasting for higher education, the Ethnomusicology class, composed of third-year and fourth-year students, participated in a pilot study where the lecturer made a podcast for two of their weekly article readings. There was a total of six participants (five students and one lecturer) involved in this study, all of whom were part of the Ethnomusicology course at Rhodes University from February until December 2021. Utilising a participatory approach, the students and the lecturer were involved as both researchers and participants in the project, analysing and writing about the findings together. Bergold and Thomas (2012) write, "The participatory research process enables co-researchers to step back cognitively from familiar routines, forms of interaction, and power relationships in order to fundamentally question and rethink established interpretations of situation" (p. 192). Thus, the student-researchers had the opportunity to experience the new learning and teaching intervention as well as analyse its efficacy, resulting in a holistic understanding encompassing every angle of the research. As the method of using podcasts was novel to the lecturer and students both parties had to negotiate the learning and teaching space from a new, collaborative perspective. According to Dillenbourg (1999, p. 1), collaborative learning involves "a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together". The re-negotiation of this space took some compromise and real effort had to be made to create a sense of partnership between all the parties. Student-lecturer partnerships can be defined as "a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualisation, decision making, implementation, investigation or analysis" (Cook-Sather et al., 2014, pp. 6–7). However, the reality is that power dynamics, agency and cultural norms can disrupt this relationship and undermine effective communication and collaboration (Collins et al., 2022; Seale et al., 2015). Despite trying hard to hand over final decision-making, the lecturer found that she had to take responsibility as a mediator and guide, and certain student-researchers found themselves in a more dominant position than others. This was not, however, a defining factor in the results and opportunities were created for each researcher's ideas to be heard and their research to be shared. The classroom became a boardroom, a negotiated space where creative ideas were put forward, some kept, and others discarded. As tasks were shared each member took on a specific section of the research which contributed to the final product.

The first practical task relating to the research intervention, was the production of the podcasts, which the lecturer recorded on her smartphone. The content was presented in a semi-structured manner, where the lecturer occasionally offered her opinion on certain aspects of the article, highlighting, or emphasising important sections, and explaining or contextualising the more difficult areas to understand. Each recording was approached differently to ascertain if the reading style made a difference to the listening experience. The first podcast was made by the lecturer without reading the article before the recording, which meant that she read through the whole article without a specific structure to the podcast. Her approach

Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future. African Sun Media: Stellenbosch, South Africa.

CHAPTER 8: SOUND MATTERS: PODCASTING AS A LEARNING AND TEACHING INTERVENTION TO ...

was informal and included asides and passages where she was clarifying meaning for herself. In some sections, she rushed, and one could hear she was skimming the reading. For the second podcast, the lecturer read the article first before recording it, which allowed her to structure her presentation. In this second podcast, she did not read the whole article but focused on sections she felt were important for a deeper understanding of the content. The students then received the podcasts and listened to them utilising a particular approach, outlined below. The results were analysed by the student researchers themselves and this analysis became the focus of the research.

4. Objective and Methodology

The objective of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of using podcasts as a learning and teaching intervention where academic language cognition was the focus. In addition, the study aimed to identify characteristics of an effective educational podcast from the perspective of students.

After consultation and group discussion, the research team decided that a qualitative case study was the most appropriate research design for the project. This was because our intention for this project was to gain a deep understanding of the unique nature of a particular context, setting, and participants. Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 544) state that the use of a qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their context. A definition of a case study is offered by McMillan and Schumacher (2006) who state that "in a case study, the researcher seeks to fully understand a phenomenon in depth, regardless of the number of sites or participants for the study" (p. 316). Thomas (2003) writes that a major advantage of using a case study design is that it "permits a researcher to reveal the way in which a number of different factors have interacted to produce the unique character of the subject of research" (p. 35). Baxter and Jack (2008) offer, in addition, that using such an approach allows close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, "while enabling participants to tell their stories and to share their experiences resulting in useful qualitative data that can then be analysed" (p. 545). The case study approach thus allowed the student-researchers the freedom to comment on their experiences as both recipients of knowledge in the intervention, but also as researchers and producers of new knowledge.

Although the case study, with only six participants, was small, the results were extremely insightful. The researchers, therefore, decided to formulate all the information and data collected into a research paper and presented the initial findings at the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA) (Un)Conference 2021. This opportunity led to deeper analysis and discussion which enabled them to further understand the responses and develop the insights gained. As stated earlier, the population selected for this study was the five Ethnomusicology students enrolled for the course at Rhodes University, and their lecturer, who created and shared the educational podcasts. Although the

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Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future

participants were not specifically selected for this study before it was conducted, they became central to the project in terms of providing first-hand experiences of the phenomenon being studied. The Ethnomusicology lecturer agreed to assist and guide the research and writing process and supervised the study. This required the lecturer to collaborate with the students and to incorporate podcasting into her teaching methods during the Ethnomusicology course. Both the students and lecturer had not used podcasting as a learning and teaching resource before and were thus equally positioned to respond to the data.

A qualitative survey was administered as one way to collect data, and each participant offered their perspectives and experiences on the effectiveness of using podcasts in an educational setting to supplement reading and learning. The feedback from each participant provided a general picture of how the students evaluated the use of podcasts to learn. Data was also collected through focus-group type discussions. The students had weekly meetings with their lecturer over the course of the study in which the participants involved discussed, analysed, and elaborated on the podcasting experience. These focus-group type discussions allowed the student researchers to explore multiple perspectives on the experience of listening to a podcast **before** reading an article, listening to a podcast **while** reading an article and listening to a podcast **after** reading the article. Each person was allowed to choose two of the three approaches. Finally, each participant gave feedback on their podcasting experience, which was recorded through reflective writing, a skill that the lecturer was working on as a curriculum goal. These reflections were important data for the research and were read out loud to the focus group and discussed in detail in class following each iteration of the intervention.

Using this kind of interview strategy allowed exploration of students' thoughts, ideas, perceptions, and feelings regarding podcasts and not just their behaviour (Njie & Asimiran, 2014). Furthermore, focus group discussions provided "a unique, socially enhanced platform that encourages students to share their ideas and disclose information regarding their learning experiences with podcasts that they may have forgotten" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 360). A shared Google Drive was created for the student researchers and the lecturer to allow for collaborative and interactive analysis of the data as well as for co-editing of the resulting research text and presentation.

To analyse the data, the students and lecturer used a coding strategy. Coding is the examination of distinct parts of data for differences and similarities (Miles et al., 2018) "to form explanations and comprehensive themes in the data" (Akinyode & Khan, 2018, p. 166). As Akinyode and Khan (2018) write, data coding in qualitative research involves labelling or assigning codes to different sections of data in relation to the different problems or topics. Therefore, once all the responses were saved into the shared Google Drive, the students were asked to read through all the data and code the collective responses using a set of questions provided by the lecturer. Upon reflection, colour codes were assigned to help participants who identify with visual analysis tools. The questions and colours included:

Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future. African Sun Media: Stellenbosch, South Africa.

CHAPTER 8: SOUND MATTERS: PODCASTING AS A LEARNING AND TEACHING INTERVENTION TO …

1. What are the common themes? – Blue
2. Which responses deemed the intervention helpful? – Green
3. Which responses were unique or different from the others? – Yellow
4. What recommendations were made? – Orange
5. What did respondents not want to do again/What did they say did not work? – Red

This helped the students categorise the responses of each participant into categories or themes so that the data could be easily organised and compared. Each participant was given a number from one to five so that the recorded responses for reporting purposes were anonymous. As the research was conducted by the researcher-participants, ethical risk was low, due process was followed and the student researchers discussed the risks involved in the study during the course of the intervention. In the shared Google Drive, a table was developed which allowed for the development of the analysis based on personal reflections and responses. These colour-coded reflections led to many lively discussions at weekly meetings about personal preferences regarding where, when, how, and why people learn the way they do. This was interesting as it highlights the importance of ensuring that students are given opportunities to experience learning in different ways. In these discussions, the student-researchers shared their initial thoughts and were then given instructions by the lecturer regarding the approach to the coding and analysis of the data, as outlined above. The coded responses were recorded and yielded the findings on the effectiveness of using podcasts for learning purposes in higher education as well as what each participant believed made an effective podcast.

5. Findings

A table was collectively developed which depicts the results of the analysis. Three vertical columns illustrate the listening approaches, while the horizontal columns portray which student-researcher the data comes from. The participants' two choices of the three different approaches to listening to the podcasts highlighted their distinct preferences of engagement with educational content. Students 1 and 3 decided to read the article first and then listen to the podcast later. These students also chose the third approach of reading and listening to the article simultaneously. Students 1 and 2 also chose the first approach (reading then listening). The other approach that Student 1 chose was to listen to the podcast then read the article afterwards. Student 4 chose to listen to the podcast and thereafter read the article in their first iteration and then later chose to read and listen to the article simultaneously. Student 5 only chose the first approach. The table below illustrates their choices regarding the approaches to listening to the two podcasts whilst also colour-coding the responses.

Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future. African Sun Media: Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future

| Helpful = [Green] | Not Helpful = [Red] | Recommendations = [Orange] |
| Similarities = [Blue] | Differences = [Yellow] | |

Note: This table was originally designed in full colour, but it has been adapted to appear in greyscale for ease of access.

APPROACHES	READING, THEN LISTENING	LISTENING, THEN READING	LISTENING + READING SIMULTANEOUSLY
Student 1	• Reading before listening was helpful. [Green]. • Appreciation of "casual" tone of podcast. [Green]. • Tips on efficient article reading and analysis. [Green].	N/A	• Detailed analysis of podcasts helped clarify things. [Green] • Casual approach was fun and conversational. [Green]. • Academic nature of article was retained. [Green].
Student 2	• Reading before listening helped identify missed information. [Green] • Appreciation of "casual" tone. [Green]. • Podcast encouraged full engagement, time-efficient reading. [Green].	• Listening before reading made him "lazy" to read, decreasing the learning value and article engagement. [Red]. • Prefers podcasts as "supplementary learning materials". [Orange]. • Time-efficient. [Green].	N/A
Student 3	• Immersive and reassuring experience. [Green]. • Time-efficient reading. [Green]. • Reading first encouraged full engagement with article. [Green].	N/A	• Beneficial supplementary content. [Green]. • Natural absorption of article while listening. [Green]. • More personal experiences, conversational. [Green].
Student 4	N/A	• "Difficult to follow" without being able to note as she read. [Red]. • Audio was supplementary. [Green]. • Podcast should not replace written course work material. [Orange].	• Insightful experience. [Green]. • Better understanding and article engagement. [Green]. • Appreciation of guidelines for important and unimportant section. [Green]. • Time-efficient. [Green]. • Listening was more natural. [Green]. • Audio was supplementary. [Green].
Student 5	• Used podcasts as reflecting experience after reading. [Green]. • Helped identify information she had missed or misunderstood. [Green]. • Would be "more enjoyable" to listen to audios of readings before reading it herself. [Orange]. • Prefers shorter podcasts. [Red].	N/A	N/A

Table 8.1: *Tabulated responses (developed by authors)*

The five coding questions were answered by the five students in relation to the approaches they chose when listening to the two podcasts. Blue depicted the similarities in the responses of the students. Three overall similarities were noted by the students. The first similarity was that the two podcasts facilitated time-efficient engagement with the articles they read. The second similarity was that the second podcast, which was more detailed compared to the first, aided them in obtaining significant information that they had overlooked during the reading process. Student 1 affirmed this point by stating that the lecturer "went into detail on certain aspects of the article and that made things clearer and understandable". The third similarity that they picked up on was that the casual tone of the lecturer in both recordings made the podcasts seem personal as if they were having a conversation with the lecturer. Student 1 alluded to this saying, "What stood out to me was how casual she was when going through the article, it made me relax and it felt as though she was in the same place that I was in".

Green was used to colour code the responses that students viewed as helpful. The table shows how the majority of the responses from all the students were deemed this way; hence the colour green dominates the coding table. The students who initially read the article and listened to the podcast were mainly positive in their responses. Student 1 noted that they learnt tips on how to read efficiently while Students 2 and 5 both stated that reading before listening helped to identify missing information. Both Student 1 and 2 stated that this technique demonstrated a time-efficient reading of the article. Students 3 and 5 both commented that listening to the podcast allowed for a better reflection of, or engagement with, the content. There were also green-coded responses to the listening and then reading approach. Student 2 commented that, like the first approach, this was time-efficient while

Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future. African Sun Media: Stellenbosch, South Africa.

CHAPTER 8: SOUND MATTERS: PODCASTING AS A LEARNING AND TEACHING INTERVENTION TO ...

Student 4 noted that the audio was supplementary. We assume this student meant that it was positive and helpful. The final approach was only coded in green, thus showing that the students were most positive about this method which was reading and listening simultaneously. All three students who used this approach said that the experience was "natural", "personal" or "conversational". It must be noted that the podcast in each of these cases was presented by the lecturer after she had read the article and had the opportunity to plan the reading. Nevertheless, the students all stated that their engagement with the article was amplified in some way or another. Student 1 wrote, "The detailed analysis in the podcast helped clarify things", while Student 3 responded that there was a "natural absorption of the article while listening". Student 4 commented that they had an "appreciation for guidelines for important and unimportant sections". A complaint from students that often arises is that when they read academically dense articles, they find it difficult to understand what is most important and what is not. Having a lecturer point this out was therefore very important to the students and something that they felt guided their understanding of the content.

However, not all aspects of the interventions were considered helpful. The colour red was used to code not-helpful responses. Student 5 retorted to the first, unprepared reading where they used the first approach of reading and then listening that they, "Prefer shorter podcasts". In class discussions after the interventions, the participants all agreed that if a reading is very long, the podcasts need to summarise the content rather than "drone" out the full article. When Student 2 reflected on their experience of listening to the podcast and then reading the article later, they mentioned that it made them less interested in engaging with the article. The student said, "The second podcast where I hadn't read the article, it made me a bit lazy because it felt as though the work was done for me. So, I didn't learn as much from the article nor was I invested in it". Student 4 noted that listening to the podcast first, "...was difficult to follow because I wasn't able to note things down as I listened". Although these were the only negative comments that were recorded, they were very helpful as these points are vital to the development of successful podcasts as supplementary materials for courses in the future.

The colour yellow was used to code the responses that stood out as being different from the group or unique to an individual. Two participants had contrasting responses when reflecting on their experience of listening to the podcasts. Student 2, as noted above, wrote that listening before reading discouraged full engagement with the article, but Student 5 thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience and remarked, "Through listening to the reflections recorded by the lecturer, I noticed that it would be more enjoyable for me to have audio of someone reading an article before reading it myself". This was another important point to note. Due to students having different approaches to learning, it is not possible to prescribe when or how the educational podcast should be used. However, it is important for the lecturer to provide guidance regarding how and when the podcast can be used. This will provide the listener with an understanding of their options.

Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future. African Sun Media: Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future

The colour orange was used to code the recommendations that the student-researchers made about the whole podcasting experience. All the student-researchers recommended that podcasts be integrated in the learning process as an aid to the academic content. Student 4 stated that they "…found that the podcasts were beneficial when used to supplement learning but should not replace other learning methods" and Student 3 added "I personally prefer educational podcasts as supplementary learning material to aid me to have a better understanding of the article I'm reading or read."

The lecturer involved also stated that the experience had changed her thoughts on how to approach learning how to read academic articles. She wrote, "The podcasts were so easy to record and the results so immediate. I can't believe I haven't used this before". She continued that she used the recording of the podcast to prepare herself for the lectures and thus saved time in the process. Therefore, the resounding theme which was highlighted in the analysis of the reflections made by all the researchers was that the podcasts were a great aid to their learning and teaching experience. It helped the students engage with the academic content in a casual manner that did not diminish the academic significance of the articles. All the participants came to a consensus with regard to how they felt podcasts should be used in higher education institutions. They all stated that podcasts should not replace reading material, but that they could be used for many purposes including reviewing material, supplementary resources, and guidance for clarification.

6. Future Prospects

Lessons learnt through this research can be implemented in effective learning and teaching strategies for future face-to-face, online, and blended learning environments. The efficiency of podcasting can be utilised to target student-oriented information dissemination. Making study resources more accessible is vital and offering a way for students' education to fit around the rest of their lives is desirable. Thus, the fact that podcasts can be downloaded and listened to from students' smartphones while commuting or during a spare moment is very important. This means that students who do not have access to the internet all the time, and those whose private lives are busy, can use the resource. In addition, instead of having to return to campus when sick to catch up with work, students who are indisposed can use podcasts to remain up to date. The research shows that podcasts are also a novel way to introduce additional content after hours, thus freeing up valuable classroom time for more active learning and group discussions. Importantly, once a podcast is made, it is always available and thus can also become a valuable revision tool.

There is no perfect way to record a podcast or a set format that is considered better than another. This means that even simple recordings of lectures or, as in the case of this research a reading of an article, can also become valuable review material. Setting up a platform to disseminate podcasts is also very cost-efficient and easy. University open-source learning sites are perfect for this and, once uploaded by

Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future. African Sun Media: Stellenbosch, South Africa.

CHAPTER 8: SOUND MATTERS: PODCASTING AS A LEARNING AND TEACHING INTERVENTION TO ...

the lecturer or tutor, will mean that students will not even have to pay for the data related to downloading.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to ascertain the effectiveness of educational podcasts as a learning and teaching tool to enhance academic writing and reading skills at tertiary level. In addition, the study aimed to identify characteristics of an effective educational podcast from a student perspective. The five Ethnomusicology students, under the guidance of their lecturer, used a qualitative case study research design followed by data coding to grasp how everyone was assisted by podcasting within their subject at the Music Department at Rhodes University. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that each student gained different benefits from the various approaches to the podcast intervention. The inclusion of podcasts, according to the results of the intervention, allows for time-efficient engagement with reading content since most of the students agreed that their use alongside reading material helped identify important information quickly. Podcasts are also beneficial because they promote casual engagement with academic content which leads to more confidence from students when tackling academic scripts, theses, and articles. The choice of when the podcasts were used differed from person to person. Certain students prefer listening to podcasts after reading an article, while others prefer reading and listening to the article at the same time. The study found that if podcasts are free-flowing and natural, they allow for a more relaxed listening experience, and all agreed that the shorter the podcast, the better the learning process. The research also showed that all the students needed the written article to fully grasp the content and that the listening materials should only be used as supplementary materials.

It was found, however, that preferences for podcast style and approach differ, as it may in different university departments and for different lecturers. Nevertheless, this study recommends that podcasts be implemented in university faculties and departments as a supplementary approach. This is because podcasts are a form of technology that students are comfortable with and are easy to produce and disseminate. In light of this, the researchers also concluded that a future study should be conducted where the student-researchers themselves record podcasts and share them with the class. This approach to co-learning has great potential.

Finally, this research further finds that podcasts could constitute a standard part of higher education learning and teaching approaches and become essential, supplementary learning materials that could aid effective learning at tertiary level by supporting face-to-face, blended, and online teaching. From the researchers' personal experiences and discussions, they all agreed that they would actively promote podcasting as an academic intervention and use this form of technology in their own learning and teaching practice. It can be an essential aspect of learning that should not be overlooked.

Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future. African Sun Media: Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a Student-Centred Learning and Teaching Future

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CHAPTER 8: SOUND MATTERS: PODCASTING AS A LEARNING AND TEACHING INTERVENTION TO ...

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