

PODCASTING IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM? WHY NOT?

Made Hery Santosa

Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha Singaraja, Bali
madeherysantosa@yahoo.com

ABSTARKSI

The present paper aims at discussing the use of podcast as one of online media delivery in English instruction. Advanced ICT development has provided its users both challenges and opportunity where it creates a strong demand to utilize of ICT in classroom teaching. One of the ways that can be applied to enhance with the technology use in a situated multi-learning environment using ICT systems is the use of podcast. By podcast, teaching English can be conducted in advanced ways by the use of online media delivery. There are several benefits that students can get from podcast, namely 1) it gives students a potential audience of thousands for their work, 2) it is great for developing literacy skills, 3) podcasts can be interactive, and 4) making a podcast is also great for developing teamwork skills. Especially in the teaching of English, podcasting will help the students improve their communication skills as well as their creativity in making a radio show will increase.

Kata kunci: *ICT, podcasting, English instruction.*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, information and communication technology (ICT) have developed vastly. In this globalization era, the use of ICT in education is rapidly expanding in many countries, and is now seen worldwide as both challenges and opportunity. They develop due to challenges that are faced by human beings all this time. There are always situations where men are encouraged to think, produce and be creative to particular condition (Mutansyir, 2002:63). This vast development provides challenges and opportunities to all aspects of life, including education. In educational field, especially in English teaching learning, the advancement of the use of ICT provides a strong demand to bring into reality its applications in classroom teaching (Sei-Hwa, 2006). According to Merchant (2003), the use of ICT for communicating with those not physically present in the classroom can add a new dimension to literacy work, ICT opens new possibilities for learners, enriches the curricular emphasis on genres and forms, and expands their horizons by encouraging them to study in new ways for potential audiences.

In the course of time (though with differing approaches, methods and instruments) the drive towards "computer innovation" has substantially had the following objectives, they are 1) to develop new capabilities in the students, permitting their integration in a society that has been drastically modified by information technologies, 2) to use computer-linked methods, contents and tools for transforming and improving teaching and learning processes in the framework of traditional curricula (Bottino, 2001).

When researchers have compared more and less effective uses of technology, they have noticed that computer use appears to be most successful in

several aspects, such as critical thinking skills, customization and student interests, human interaction, student collaboration, accommodating disabilities, using drill for memorization, performing real-life tasks and performing complex tasks (Cromley, 2000). By providing one-on-one interaction and producing immediate responses to input answers, computers allow students to demonstrate mastery and learn new material at their own pace. However, a disadvantage also occurs that computerized instruction cannot extend the lesson beyond the limits of the programming (Pelgrum, 1996).

Technology can tap different skills than do textbooks and group work. For example, learners need to develop complex thinking skills. They need to be able to analyze and read critically, to explain what they believe and why they believe it. They might feel nervous when asked "why" in front of a class. Computer software can prompt learners to explain their thinking without making them feel vulnerable. For example, the *Scientists in Action* software series asks learners to choose a tool for measuring mussels, crayfish, and other macro invertebrates that are sensitive to river quality, and are therefore an indicator of pollution. Students choose a tool and also give an explanation for why they chose the tool. They receive feedback over the World Wide Web from students in other classrooms (Vye et. al., 1998). Students examine their thinking processes by engaging in these dialogues.

Another skill many learners must develop is the ability to compare and evaluate information. The seemingly endless sources of information on the internet almost dictate that internet users do this (Benton Foundation, 1997). Moreover, the internet provides teachers with an easy way to find texts with opposing viewpoints that can generate student

discussion and debate. Teachers can use computers to develop evaluation skills by downloading materials from the internet to use in conventional classes or by asking students to search for information and then evaluate the credibility of the sources.

In this paper, the writer aims at discussing the use of podcast in English classroom for optimum achievement, especially in terms of giving students a potential audience for their work, great opportunity for developing literacy skills, interactivity, communication skills and creativity.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1 Learning and its Relationships with ICT Design and Use

Research on ICT-based learning and instruction has undergone a deep transformation in the course of time, due in part to the parallel evolution of pedagogical and cognitive science theories. A set of ideas and principles has been produced which have substantially changed orientations, at least at the research level, regarding the design and use of educational software. Some of the main orientations are possible to single out in the design and use of ICT-based educational tools.

In relation to the use of ICT in teaching, Zhu and Kaplan (2001) propose a model for teaching with technology that can be viewed as follows.

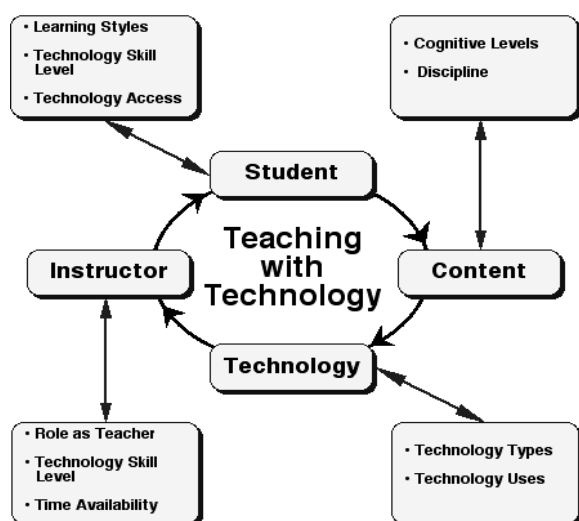


Figure 1: A Model for Teaching with Technology

From a systems approach, teaching with technology involves four major components, namely the students, the instructor, course content, and technology tools (See Figure 1). An examination of each component raises a set of issues that the teachers need to consider in order to make technology integration as successful as possible. For example, content can be examined in terms of learning outcomes and the discipline being taught.

Teachers can think of their own experience with technology, the amount of time they have for planning and teaching, and their view of their role in the teaching and learning process. They need to think carefully about their students, their exposure and access to technology as well as their preferred learning styles. Finally, they can turn to the technology itself and analyze it according to its functions. This approach to teaching and learning with technology assumes that the four component parts are integrated and that changes in one part will require adjustments to the other three in order to achieve the same goals (Zhu and Kaplan, 2001: 6).

It can be observed that, in general, school curricula subsume different types of teaching and learning methods, and no single method or type of tool used can be the choice for all occasions. Moreover, within any learning domain, students' and teachers' needs evolve over the activities in which they are involved and tools have to support this evolution. Situated multi-environment learning systems can be considered as a new generation of open-learning systems which are more suited to mediate the new ways of looking at teaching and learning processes that are now progressively affirming themselves.

These systems makes available tools able to support not only the relationship of the student with the knowledge to be learnt (learning object) but also all the relationships that are established between participants during a teaching and learning activity. These systems are typically designed with the classroom in mind. Rather than constrain the learning experience to be narrowly individualistic, the next generation technology supports socially situated interaction and investigation. It is possible to delineate some general indications for the design and analysis of such systems. These indications are to be detailed and specified according to the characteristics of the specific field of application and educational context considered. In particular, in the design of situated multi-environments learning systems, the following issues assume a crucial importance:

- The computational objects and interactivity that a system makes available to the user and their relationship with the cognitive processes involved in the acquisition of the knowledge for the learning of which the system has been realized.
- The tools offered to validate student's actions and the support they offer to the evolution of student's knowledge.
- The tools offered to support the re-laboration of personal experience and its sharing within the class.
- The tools offered to support the setting up of a social context able to assist students' performance and the

evolution of competencies and knowledge.

In general, situated multi-environment systems are characterised by a strict integration of tools for supporting visualisation, re-elaboration of knowledge, and communication. The aim is to offer tools for problem exploration, for representing solution strategies and processes and for communicating such processes as well as tools to support learning evaluation. Tools and features cannot by themselves guarantee learning. They have to be used in order to support the construction of activities in which learning could be the result of a social construction of meaning and of its justification. It can be noted also that situated multi-environment systems can integrate environments of different kinds, such as specific drill and practice systems, communication environments, simulation systems, etc. Thus, there are many ways and tools that can be applied in the situated ICT systems and one of them is the use of podcast in English teaching.

2.2 Podcast

The term podcast derives its name from *Apple's iPod*, but to create a podcast or even to listen to one, it is not necessary to have an iPod, or any portable music player for that matter (<http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcasting>, 2007). A podcast is like a radio show. However, instead of being broadcast live, a podcast is recorded and then distributed over the internet, so that people will be able to listen to it whenever they please. There are thousands of podcasts available, ranging from general interest entertainment shows to those which focus on specific topics (e.g. computers/music/education). In a nutshell, podcast is a new type of online media delivery (Torrone, 2005).

People who are interested in this can usually listen to podcasts directly on the websites of those people who make them. However, they can also "subscribe" to podcasts using software like iPodder and iTunes. These programs will automatically download the latest shows, and they can then listen to them on their computer and/or mp3 player. To subscribe to a podcast, they need to know the RSS (Really Simple Syndication/Rich Summary Site) feed (they will find this information on the podcaster's website). Moreover, iTunes has its own directory, where you can subscribe to a show, simply by clicking the "Subscribe" button.

A podcast can range from a single recorded story which is put onto the website, to a weekly radio show with music and interviews which visitors can subscribe to using an RSS feed. The way students make up their podcast is free according to their creativity. The basic equipment needed to make a podcast is a computer with some kind of recording ability (an internal or external microphone) and

some recording software, like Audicity. It is free and it allows students to record their show and then export it as an mp3 file. They can then upload this to the website.

Since making a podcast is on the basis of creativity and can be helpful in learning English, Warner (2006) suggests that the students can also develop this by trying some of the following:

- Create jingles – They can use software, such as eJay (PC) or Garageband (Mac) to create jingles. These can be used to introduce particular features to the show.
- Try outside broadcasts – They can use an mp3 player with recording facilities to record a feature "on location" around the campus, or on a campus field trip. They can then download this to their computer and add it to their show.
- Add podsafe music – There are some musics that have copyrights. Make sure it is permitted. They can find this in podsafe special directories, for example, www.music.podshow.com.
- Promote them – Register with the various podcast directories to get more listeners.
- Use more sophisticated software - Mixcast Live (PC) or a combination of iTunes and Nicecast (Mac) is specifically designed for podcasters, allowing them to set up playlists and record their podcasts directly to MP3.

2.3 Podcasting in English Classroom

Podcast can also be applied in teaching learning process. As an online media delivery, the teacher and/or the students can publish selected audio files via the internet and allow their users to subscribe via an RSS feed to automatically receive new files. This thought indeed needs supports of adequate facilities and knowledge to run and work on podcast. Podcasting involves producing the students' own audio files (usually in MP3 format) and then publishing them online somewhere, indexed for subscription and reception by an RSS reader. They are then downloaded to subscribers' iPods, cell phones, iTunes directories, or other locations to listen to whenever they want. Anyone can do this, using all free tools.

Furthermore, the equipments needed to podcast are as follows:

1. PC or Laptop – This is used for both recording and production (the students can also record onto a portable recorder – since it is handy for field recordings – and then produce and publish to any kind of computer).

2. Microphone – This is helpful in recording in person. To avoid noise, a good alternative for recording is by using a headset.

After all the equipments set, the steps to podcast are as follows.

1. Record the material – this can be in person by using PC, Laptop, or Portable Recorder or by using remote recording, such as Skype or iChat as in remote conversation. Likewise, it can utilize already built in software, like my podcast recorder. We just need to record directly on the laptop and publish it or we can record it using other audio software and upload to the site (www.mypodcast.com).
2. Edit the Podcast – As the students have the recording, they may want to edit out gaps, remove “umms” and “hmms”, and add music or effects. Sound editing is more art than science. If their interview, music, and other sounds are of different volumes, they should adjust the sounds to even things out. They can do this quickly in Audacity by selecting Edit/Select All and then Effects/Normalize.
3. Compress the File – This is needed to avoid having large file that it will take longer period of uploading and/or downloading. For voice, it is general to use 32 kbps with a sample rate of 22 kHz. For instance, for a 30-minute segment, it is better to keep the files less than 8 megabytes. It is necessary to know that many listeners use phones and other devices without much space.
4. Tag and Package the File – The audio files contain metadata text that can be added to files, such as Song title, Artist, and Genre. Actually, not all players will show these tags, but they are good to add.
5. Publish and Syndicate the Podcast – This is the time when the students let the world know about their podcast. There are a few directory sites that they can register their podcast on. For example, audio.weblogs.com, podcastalley.com, and odeo.com.

After all are set, the students are said to be podcasters since they have been able to record their audio, edit it, compress, tag, upload, syndicate, and publish it. As podcasts increase in popularity, listeners have more choices. It is needed then ways to make unique podcast which stand out from similarly themed podcasts. Housley (2007) outlines ten tips for podcasting, namely:

1. Plan Accordingly.
When making the decision and commitment to podcast, it is important to think beyond the moment. Before starting, think about the time the podcast production

will take. How will podcasting fit into a current schedule? How frequently will you podcast? How will hosting of podcasting files be handled? If the podcast is excessively popular, how will fees be generated to pay for hosting? What is the common theme that threads all podcasts in a series together? Think not only of a broad theme, but also various episodic themes that fit into a broader theme. What will make you distinct or different from others podcasting about similar content?

2. Original Content.
Just like any media company, in order to attract and maintain an audience, it is needed to provide original content, or at the very least, present the content in an original way. Think about a long term strategy that will help the show distinguish itself from others.
3. Get to the Point.
Jibber Jabber is fun, but not to the point of excluding quality content. Listeners in today’s society do not have time for constant inconsistency. The point should be in a reasonable amount of time.
4. Do Homework.
Not only is faulty information a liability, but incorrect information will hurt a broadcaster’s long term reputation – just like a journalist’s credibility is paramount to their success. It is important that the information provided is accurate.
5. Consistency.
The best content is consistent content. Podcasts should contain compelling content with episodic titles that are united in common broad theme. The format of the podcast should be consistent, persistent and stable. Each show should be about the same length and contain a common format.
6. Timeless Content.
Content that is timeless has a long shelf life. Broadcasters will benefit more from content that is timeless and can be effectively archived. “How to” content that solves problems will often have long term appeal and listening life. When choosing topics, consider the long term effects of a specific piece and determine whether it will fit with the broad theme of the show.
7. Articulate Words.
The quality of the audio content does matter. Listeners will not want to strain to hear a podcast; pay particular attention to articulation. Another important item worth noting is that Podcasts have global reach and often global appeal. Minimizing an accent will often extend the podcast’s listening audience.

8. Optimize Podcasts.

Podcast titles should be optimized to incorporate data that relates to the contents of the podcast. Think about the themes when selecting a podcast channel title and description. Use critical and related keywords and phrases that relate to a common theme. The text in the feed is important for both feed optimization and for attracting listeners. Many of the podcast directories index the contents of podcasts using the information contained in the channel and items, titles and descriptions. Use these text fields to effectively capture the interest of listeners.

9. Listener Expectations.

Invariably listeners will come to expect certain things from broadcasters. In order to maintain a listening audience, it is important that broadcasts are consistent and satisfy the expectations of listeners. While it is okay to experiment, straying too far from what a listener expects will often disappoint.

10. Archive.

Many new listeners will want to review previous broadcasts. Consider ways to make older shows available through archives. Archives allow broadcasters another channel to benefit from the content. Maintaining archives of older podcasts might bring in new listeners and satisfy listeners who just cannot get enough. Podcasts require effort, but by following basic guidelines and thinking things through, podcasts can be instrumental in increasing web traffic and communications within a community.

After the students finish their podcast, they can put it in several places or directories, namely:

- Campus news – a great way of telling students what is going on at the campus.
- Children's work – children love sharing their work. The teacher can ask them to record their own stories, or write reports about an activity they have tried at campus.
- Campus songs.
- Interviews – with members of staff, students, members of the community, and visitors to campus.
- Music corner – The students should be aware that it is not allowed to use commercial music in podcasts for copyright reasons. However, some artists allow their music to be played in podcasts. The students can find this "podsafes" music in special directories (e.g. music.podshow.com)

- Jokes.

- National/International news – The students should be aware of any copyright regulations when finding sources of news.

Seeing its characteristics, podcast offers challenges as well as opportunities in the implementation. In English teaching learning, podcasting lets students create their own syndicated online talk show or radio program, with content of their choice (Torrone, 2005). Podcasting is also said a wonderful way of allowing students to share their work and experiences with a potentially huge audience over the Internet. Campuses are increasingly using the internet to promote what they do, and to celebrate the achievements of their children, and podcasting is an excellent way of doing this (Udell, 2005).

3. Podcasting for Classroom Use

There are several aspects of English that can use Podcast as a medium of teaching, like the language skills and components. In listening, for instance, students will find ways of how to search through the podcast directories; download (or upload) files, and listen to them. These audio files can function as materials for the teachers also. In speaking activity, podcasting can also be used as the materials can give new good topics to be discussed. This can work also the same for reading and writing. By podcasting, teaching English can be conducted in advanced ways by the use of online media delivery. The materials provided are tremendous that the students can select. At the same time, they can create their own files, distribute them over the world through the internet so that they can learn, share, and practice English more intensively.

The teacher can teach the students and learn together of how to listen to podcasts and then create their own. Udell (2005) states that there are several benefits that students can get from podcast, that 1) it gives students a potential audience of thousands for their work, 2) it is great for developing literacy skills, such as writing scripts, setting up interviews, allows children to develop and practice their speaking and listening skills, and they also learn some amazing ICT skills, 3) podcasts can be interactive, and the audience can be invited to send their comments, giving valuable feedback to the children about their work and 4) making a podcast is also great for developing teamwork skills. Especially in the teaching of English, podcasting will help the students improve their communication skills as well as their creativity in making a radio show will increase.

4. Conclusion

ICT has been expanding rapidly and developing vastly in this globalization era. This development has come to many aspects of human's

life, including education. Due to globalization which needs qualified and competitive human index quality, education has many complex challenges. The teaching and learning of English also has that kind of thing. One of the things that can be used to cope with this challenge is by making use of ICT itself in the classroom. ICT tools can influence and transform learning by fundamentally changing the way in which content can be taught and learnt. ICT-based tools should support students' problem solving processes.

ICT tools can influence and transform learning by fundamentally changing the way in which content can be taught and learnt. When considering the design and use of such environments, teachers need to consider the whole learning situation, for example, not only the tool, but who will be using the software, the ways in which it will be used, the curriculum objectives, the social context and way in which learning is organised. This means that consideration needs to be given not only to the software design but also to the definition of possible ways it might be used effectively.

It is clear that the use of ICT in can act both as a necessity and an opportunity. In English teaching learning, the use of teacher and students can have a creative and effective medium for better improvement and achievement. Podcasting will help the students improve their English skills as well as their creativity. They are also provided with a real and potential audience for students' works, interactivity, literacy skills, and team development.

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