

Podcast as an Alternative Media: A Fancy Way to Improve Students' Digital Literacy

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Abstract. The development of the Industrial Revolution in education has brought new dynamics, enabling innovative learning processes through information technology. The use of alternative media aims to enrich learning experiences, enhance student engagement, and facilitate more interactive and enjoyable teaching and learning. Alternative media refer to any type of media used as an alternative or replacement for traditional media such as print books, whiteboards, or worksheets. In the context of education, alternative media include podcasts, instructional videos, mobile applications, educational games, and more. One striking aspect is the role of podcasts as engaging alternative media. Podcasts can serve as innovative teaching resources for educators in designing classroom activities. The use of podcasts as teaching materials in enhancing the digital literacy of English Education students explores the full potential of podcasts in improving their digital literacy skills. The aim of this research is to identify the challenges of using podcasts as teaching materials and to develop students' digital literacy through podcast use. This research utilizes a qualitative method with data collection techniques such as observation and questionnaires administered to a sample of students from the English Education program. The research results are expected to serve as references in developing fancy media for students in the English department.

Keywords: Revolution Industry 4.0, Podcast, Digital Literacy, Alternative Media.

1 Introduction

The Fourth Industrial Revolution has brought about an incredible revolution in education because of technological improvements. The use of digital technologies into educational practices has been made possible by technological breakthroughs, which have encouraged creative approaches to teaching and learning. This integration improves how students engage with the material and communicate with teachers and peers, as well as modernizing the educational environment [1].

The usage of alternative media is among this transformation's most noteworthy breakthroughs. Non-traditional educational tools that go beyond textbooks and lectures in the classroom are referred to as alternative media. These comprise digital resources such educational games,

podcasts in particular, mobile applications, and instructional films. By offering rich and varied learning experiences that accommodate various learning preferences and styles, these kinds of media boost student engagement and interaction [2].

Podcasts have shown to be a particularly useful instructional tool among these several alternative media formats. A simple and adaptable method for students to obtain knowledge and instructional materials is through podcasts, which are online audio broadcasts. By offering extra resources that might reinforce and deepen the subject given in the classroom, they complement traditional teaching methods in a useful way [3]. Podcasts, for example, can provide a wealth of knowledge, a range of viewpoints, and in-depth conversations on subjects related to the curriculum.

Podcasts are becoming more and more popular in education because of their special capacity to improve student learning. For auditory learners who learn best by listening to information rather than reading it, they are very helpful [4]. Furthermore, students may learn while on the go with podcasts' portability, which makes it simpler for them to fit educational activities into their daily schedules. This adaptability facilitates a more individualized education where students interact with the material at their own speed and in settings that suit them best [5].

This article reviews the research on podcasts' educational applications, concentrating on how they might improve students' digital literacy in English language instruction. Being able to use digital tools and pass through digital settings efficiently is known as digital literacy, and it is an essential talent in today's world. It includes a variety of skills, such as the capacity to locate, assess, and apply information as well as produce and disseminate digital material [6]. Teachers hope to foster these competencies in their pupils by incorporating podcasts into the curriculum, equipping them for the opportunities and challenges of a digitalized world.

This study uses a qualitative research methodology, gathering and analyzing data on the use of podcasts in education, particularly to improve digital literacy among English Education students, through a review of the literature. Recent books, conference papers, peer-reviewed journals, and reliable web sources were all carefully examined for this evaluation. Finding important themes about podcasts' function in education, their efficacy, and related difficulties was the main goal of the analysis. The results were combined to show both significant advances and areas of weakness in the field's body of knowledge. Although this method lacks primary data collecting, it still provides an extensive review of existing information and ideas for researchers, educators, and policymakers.

The use of podcasts as an alternative media in education represents a significant shift in teaching and learning practices. As educational institutions continue to embrace digital tools, the potential of podcasts to enhance digital literacy and enrich the learning experience becomes increasingly evident. This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current research on this topic, offering insights into best practices for integrating podcasts into educational curricula and maximizing their impact on student learning outcomes.

2 Method

The Evolution of Digital Literacy

Digital literacy has evolved significantly over the past few decades, becoming a fundamental skill in the 21st century. It goes beyond basic computer skills, encompassing a range of abilities

that enable individuals to use digital technology, communication tools, and networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information. As technology has advanced, so too has the concept of digital literacy, expanding to include critical thinking, ethical understanding, and the ability to communicate and collaborate in digital environments [7].

The evolution of digital literacy is closely tied to the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICTs). With the advent of the internet, smartphones, social media, and other digital platforms, the ways in which people access and interact with information have changed dramatically. This shift has led to a growing need for individuals to develop skills that allow them to critically evaluate digital content, understand online privacy and security issues, and communicate effectively in various digital formats [8].

Educational systems worldwide have recognized the importance of digital literacy and are increasingly integrating it into curricula. This integration is crucial for preparing students to navigate the digital world effectively. Students need to be proficient in digital literacy to participate fully in academic, professional, and social contexts. They must be able to discern reliable information from misinformation, use digital tools for problem-solving, and create content that is both ethical and impactful [9].

In the context of higher education, particularly in English Education programs, digital literacy plays a vital role. For example, English Education students need to develop digital literacy skills to access and analyze diverse sources of information, collaborate on projects using digital tools, and present their ideas in various digital formats. Furthermore, these students are often preparing to become educators themselves, making it essential for them to understand how to integrate digital literacy into their future teaching practices [10].

The literature highlights several frameworks and models for understanding and teaching digital literacy. One such model is the "Five Competences of Digital Literacy," which includes accessing information, evaluating information, managing information, integrating information, and creating information [11]. This model emphasizes a comprehensive approach to digital literacy, ensuring that individuals not only consume digital content but also critically engage with and contribute to the digital world.

Recent studies have also explored the impact of digital literacy on students' academic performance and future career prospects. For instance, research has shown that students with higher levels of digital literacy tend to perform better academically and are better equipped to enter the workforce, where digital skills are increasingly in demand [12]. Moreover, digital literacy is linked to lifelong learning, as it empowers individuals to continually adapt to new technologies and information sources.

Digital literacy has evolved into a critical competency in the digital age, encompassing a wide range of skills and knowledge. The integration of digital literacy into educational curricula, particularly in English Education programs, is essential for preparing students to thrive in a digitalized world. As technology continues to advance, the importance of digital literacy will only grow, making it a key area of focus for educators, policymakers, and researchers.

Podcasts as Educational Tools

Podcasts have become increasingly popular in educational settings due to their flexibility, accessibility, and engaging nature. They offer several advantages that make them effective tools for enhancing learning experiences. One of the key benefits of podcasts is their ability to cater to various learning styles. For auditory learners, podcasts provide an effective way to process

and absorb information through listening, which can be particularly useful for understanding complex concepts and retaining information [13]. This auditory approach aligns with different learning preferences and can complement traditional text-based materials.

Recent studies have highlighted how podcasts can support diverse learning needs. For instance, Kaplan and Haenlein [14] found that podcasts offer a dynamic and interactive learning experience, enabling students to engage with educational content in a format that suits their individual preferences. This adaptability helps accommodate various learning styles, from those who benefit from auditory input to those who require more visual or interactive elements.

Another significant advantage of podcasts is their on-demand availability. Students can access podcasts anytime and anywhere, which allows for flexible learning schedules and the ability to revisit content as needed. This convenience supports self-paced learning and helps students manage their study time more effectively [15]. The ability to pause, rewind, and re-listen to podcast episodes ensures that students can engage with material at their own pace, enhancing comprehension and retention.

Podcasts also serve as a valuable supplement to traditional teaching methods. They can introduce new topics, provide additional context, and offer expert insights that might not be covered in standard textbooks or lectures. This supplemental content can enrich the learning experience and offer students a broader perspective on subjects of interest [16].

Moreover, the integration of podcasts into the curriculum can encourage active learning. By engaging with podcast content, students can develop critical listening skills and learn to evaluate the credibility of information sources. This practice aligns with broader educational goals of fostering critical thinking and digital literacy [17].

In summary, podcasts have proven to be valuable educational tools due to their ability to accommodate different learning styles, provide flexible access to content, and support active learning. As educational technology continues to evolve, podcasts offer a practical and engaging way to enhance the learning experience and support diverse educational needs.

Benefits of Podcasts in Education

Research has highlighted several benefits of using podcasts in education:

1. **Enhanced Engagement**
Podcasts have emerged as a powerful tool for increasing student engagement in education. Kemp [18] argues that by delivering content in a narrative style similar to storytelling, podcasts can capture and hold students' attention more effectively than traditional textbooks. This approach transforms learning into an immersive experience, making complex topics more accessible and enjoyable, thereby fostering a greater interest and motivation to learn.
2. **Flexibility and Convenience**
The flexibility of podcasts is particularly well-suited to the demands of the modern digital age. Students can access educational content whenever it fits into their schedule, whether during a commute, while exercising, or during leisure time. Chan [19] highlights that this on-demand nature of podcasts allows learners to integrate education into their daily lives effortlessly, turning idle moments into productive learning opportunities. This flexibility not only promotes independent learning but also supports the development of lifelong learning habits.
3. **Development of Critical Thinking Skills**

Podcasts are effective in fostering critical thinking skills by breaking down complex topics into manageable, thought-provoking segments. McGarr [20] emphasizes that this format encourages students to engage with the material by analyzing different perspectives, questioning underlying assumptions, and forming their own informed opinions. By presenting content in this way, podcasts contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject matter and the development of essential analytical skills.

4. Support for Diverse Learning Needs

One of the significant advantages of podcasts is their ability to cater to various learning styles. For auditory learners, podcasts offer an ideal medium for absorbing information, as they process content more effectively through listening. Moryl and Jiang [21] point out that podcasts also provide an alternative learning method for students who may struggle with traditional reading or prefer auditory content. This inclusivity ensures that podcasts can create a more equitable learning environment, accommodating the diverse needs of all students.

Challenges of Using Podcasts in Education

Podcasts offer considerable advantages as an educational tool, but their implementation in academic settings, especially at higher levels, comes with several challenges. Addressing these issues is crucial for optimizing the use of podcasts to support and enhance the learning process.

1. Technical Issues

Access to the necessary technology and reliable internet connectivity can be significant barriers. Not all students have the devices or stable internet connections required to stream or download podcast episodes. Li and Hafner [22] point out that these disparities can hinder students' ability to fully engage with podcast content, creating a digital divide. In academic environments where consistent access to resources is crucial, these technical issues can prevent some students from fully participating, making it important for institutions to consider ways to support all learners.

2. Content Quality

The educational effectiveness of podcasts depends heavily on the quality and relevance of the content. Al-Qatawneh and Mubaslat [23] stress that not all podcasts available online are created with academic rigor, and the sheer volume of options can make it difficult to find content that meets the needs of advanced learning. In an academic setting, it's crucial that podcasts provide accurate, current, and in-depth information that aligns with course objectives. Poorly chosen or irrelevant content can detract from the learning experience, so educators must carefully select or even create podcast material that truly supports students' understanding and academic goals.

3. Student Engagement

Keeping students engaged with audio-only content can be challenging, especially for those who are more visually oriented in their learning. Rodero [24] notes that while podcasts can be highly effective for auditory learners, they may not fully engage students who need visual aids or interactive elements to grasp the material. In higher education, where deep comprehension and critical thinking are essential, relying solely on audio content may not be enough to maintain student interest. To address this, educators might consider combining podcasts with visual materials, interactive discussions, or additional resources to ensure all students remain actively involved in the learning process.

In summary, podcasts offer significant potential to enhance learning, especially in higher education. Managing challenges such as technical difficulties, content quality, and student

engagement is crucial. Successfully addressing these issues can lead to the effective integration of podcasts into academic programs, making them a valuable and flexible educational resource.

3 Discussion

The review of literature underscores that podcasts are a promising tool for enhancing digital literacy among English Education students. According to Heilesen [16], podcasts can significantly improve student engagement by delivering content in a narrative format that captures and retains attention more effectively than traditional texts. This auditory approach facilitates the development of critical listening and analytical skills essential for navigating digital environments.

However, several challenges must be addressed to optimize the use of podcasts. Technical issues, such as inconsistent internet access and limited device availability, can hinder students' ability to fully benefit from podcasts [22]. Al-Qatawneh and Mubaslat [23] emphasize that the quality and relevance of podcast content are critical; subpar or irrelevant material can diminish the educational value of podcasts. Additionally, maintaining student engagement can be difficult, particularly for those who may require visual or interactive elements to sustain interest [24].

To maximize the benefits of podcasts, educators should focus on curating high-quality content, addressing technical limitations, and incorporating supplementary materials that enhance the learning experience [25]. Future research should explore strategies to overcome these challenges and evaluate the long-term impact of podcasts on students' digital literacy and overall academic performance.

So, one of the most significant advantages of podcasts is their flexibility and accessibility. Podcasts can be listened to anytime and anywhere, so they are ideal for students who have busy schedules or who prefer to study independently. It can also help reduce educational disparities by giving students from diverse backgrounds equal access to learning resources. However, podcast accessibility also has its challenges. Students must develop effective time management skills to ensure that they can listen to podcasts regularly. Additionally, they should also learn how to navigate podcast platforms and find relevant content.

In addition to the educational benefits of podcasts, they can also be a valuable tool for fostering critical thinking and cultural awareness. Podcasts always explore a wide range of topics, from current events and social issues to history, science, and art. When listening to podcasts, students can develop a deeper understanding of the world around them and also learn to evaluate different perspectives. Podcasts can also help break down cultural barriers and increase understanding between cultures. By listening to podcasts from a variety of sources, students can gain an understanding of different cultures and points of view, and learn to appreciate the value of diversity.

4 Conclusion

Podcasts present a valuable tool for enhancing digital literacy in education, offering flexibility, engagement, and accessibility that align with modern learning needs. Their auditory format supports diverse learning styles, integrating easily into students' daily routines and fostering

critical listening skills. However, challenges such as technical issues, content quality, and maintaining engagement need to be addressed for optimal effectiveness. Educators should focus on selecting high-quality podcasts, overcoming technical barriers, and using supplementary materials to enrich the learning experience. Future research should explore strategies to address these challenges and evaluate the long-term impact of podcasts on digital literacy and academic performance. Overall, podcasts hold significant promise as an alternative media to enhance educational outcomes and prepare students for the digital age.

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