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The Benefits of Podcasting in the Literacy Classroom

Abstract

This study examined the benefits of podcasting in the literacy classroom and beyond. The research was conducted in a small tutoring session, comprising of two high school students. During the study, participants listened, viewed, and created podcasts. Data was collected and analyzed through means of observation, student work samples, and personal interviews. The findings suggest that there are many benefits to be had for educators who incorporate podcasting into daily instruction. Increased motivation and engagement, building a sense of collaboration and community, capturing authentic learning experiences, and strengthening student writing skills are some of the benefits that podcasting lends itself to.

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The Benefits of Podcasting in the
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St. John Fisher College

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Abstract

This study examined the benefits of podcasting in the literacy classroom and beyond. The research was conducted in a small tutoring session, comprising of two high school students. During the study, participants listened, viewed, and created podcasts. Data was collected and analyzed through means of observation, student work samples, and personal interviews. The findings suggest that there are many benefits to be had for educators who incorporate podcasting into daily instruction. Increased motivation and engagement, building a sense of collaboration and community, capturing authentic learning experiences, and strengthening student writing skills are some of the benefits that podcasting lends itself to.

Podcasting in the Literacy Classroom

Computer, Internet, Facebook, and iPod are just a few examples of some common place technology terms that have made their way into children's everyday vocabulary. Although many children are interacting with these technologies outside of school, teachers seldom feel prepared to use these technologies in the classroom and so, unfortunately, they do not (Hansen, 2008). But how can one deny the importance of these technologies when they have had the power to expand the once narrow definition society had given to the term literacy? Not long ago, being literate meant you only needed to read, write, speak, and listen with proficiency. However, current technology has paved the way for new facets of literacy proficiency such as being able to communicate with people from around the world (global literacy), interpret digital and non-linear text (digital literacy) and designing, viewing and interpreting visual representations (Visual literacy) (Cohen & Cowen, 2008). If teachers continue to ignore the importance that technology has in students' lives, the gap between home and school life will continue to widen and students will come to feel that their culture is not valued in the school setting. Already, the widening gap in home and school technology use has teachers taking notice of student disengagement in class (Bauleke & Herrmann, 2010). Moreover, if educators continue to shy away from technology use in school they are detrimentally affecting their student's futures. If technology use in schools is absent, students will be denied access to new literacy skills that are needed to navigate growing digitally mediated social practices in which employers are searching out and will continue to search for in the future. Fortunately, it is not too late for educators to realize the importance that technology serves in the classroom setting. Technology can be incorporated into the classroom in a variety of ways to serve a variety of purposes. Podcasting offers teachers one outlet for technology integration. Podcasting refers to the authoring of or

subscription to audio and or video files that can be downloaded and played back on a wide range of mobile devices such MP3 players and iPods (Dale & Pymm, 2009).

I have set out to evaluate how podcasting is currently being utilized in schools and the benefits and challenges for including podcasting as a tool for educational instruction. To evaluate the benefits of podcasting I observed, interviewed, and surveyed two high school students about their podcasting experiences. Both children participated in two podcast activities. One activity involved participants having to listen to and view a podcast and a vodcast, a podcasts that contains visual information such as still images, animation or video (Brown & Green, 2007). The second activity had the participants create a podcast for the purpose of peer revision. Based on the literature I have read and the findings of my study, I have determined that podcasting is a valuable, mobile communication tool that can provide students with resources while motivating them to learn through active instruction.

Theoretical Framework

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of podcasting in the literacy classroom, it is helpful to be informed of the underlying theories pertinent to this research. The sociocultural theory and New Literacy Studies are two theories that will be used to guide understanding in this topic. Although both theories in and of themselves can help in guiding understanding of this topic, it is the interconnectedness of the two that really helps to shed light and clarify understanding of the research being.

The sociocultural theory defines a child as an active member of a larger community of learners, where learners take in as well as construct knowledge (Larson & Marsh, 2005). In other words, a child's literacy practices are social in nature and are mediated by a person's culture. Like Larson and Marsh (2005), Gee (2001) believes in the social nature of human

beings. Gee (2001) claims that language is the tool used for communication and that it serves functional purposes within and outside of one's social community. According to Gee (2001), one's primary discourse is used to communicate with individuals within one's own community, and a secondary discourse is used to communicate with others in the broader spectrum of the community. Gee and Larson and Marsh's idea that human beings are social in nature is not hard for many of us to comprehend. Even from the earliest stages of infancy one can assume that a baby's coo is an attempt, on the part of the child, to form a social bond with those who surround it. As humans continue to develop, we maintain the need to communicate for both social and functional purposes alike.

As stated previously, we know that one's literacy practices are social in nature. As time progresses, ideas and societal practices change to keep up with modern notions. For example, before the advent of the computer, reading letters, writing letters, face-to-face communication and communication by telephone were the predominant ways for people to communicate with one another. As the computer becomes integrated into societal literacy practices, digital forms of communication become more predominate (even causing some to worry if a telephone call or an old fashion letter will become obsolete with the emergence of email and text messaging). Technology offers individuals new ways of socially communicating.

Podcasting is one type of technology that can be used as a vehicle for communication. Podcasting holds the capacity to capture and share learning voices (Middleton, 2009). In an effort to communicate, one can record a podcast that can then be distributed to someone anywhere in the world (granted, in order to communicate, the recipient has to have the means of accessing a computerized device). Communication can then be returned via podcast if desired. Because podcasting gives users the option of adding video images, communication can take

place by both audio and visual means. In this aspect, human beings are satisfying their need to be social, as theorized by the sociocultural theory.

The idea that new technologies create new forms of literacy is an idea proposed by New Literacy Studies (Lankshear and Knobel, 2006). Before the creation and utilization of computers, being able to read, write, speak and listen proficiently were the only standards that constituted a person as being literate. However, with the advent of the computer new literacies have arisen. Being able to maneuver within a search engine or determine the authenticity of a website are just some examples of what the twenty-first century literate pupil needs to be able to do. As these practices become more common place, new standards of literacy inundate our culture and new literacy practices must be learned (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006).

In addition, New Literacy Studies takes the stance that literacy is a multimodal social practice that occurs both inside and outside of the school setting (Larson & Marsh, 2005)). According to Larson & Marsh (2005) literacy learning does not occur in one specific context but rather in multiple contexts and at different times. For example, literacy is not learned just by reading English texts in a school setting but can be learned through the interactions among individuals for social purposes in informal settings outside of school (Larson & Marsh, 2005). The ideas stemming from New Literacy Studies has real implications for educators. Teachers need to recognize that all students come to school with rich literacy practices that are socially constructed (Meier, 2003). Only when teachers take the initiative to understand the literacy practices of their students can they create authentic and meaningful contexts for literacy learning (Larson & Marsh, 2005). In order to create authentic literacy learning experiences, teachers need to move beyond the “page nine in the basal book” mentality and search out rich literacy practices that can be extended to student’s lives outside of the school setting. Retrieving, listening,

viewing and communicating information through the use of podcasting is one way to provide rich in school literacy practices that can be extended to children's lives outside of school.

Podcasting is a tool that provides flexibility in way users can access and distribute media (Middleton, 2009). A public podcast that can be accessed on school grounds can be retrieved from any computer, regardless of its location. Moreover, a podcast can be created on any type of computer, regardless of location, as long as the computer is equipped with a microphone. In this way, podcasting can extend learning that takes place at school into the home environment and vice versa. In addition, the flexibility and mobility of podcasting offers students choice in the way they choose to access and create their literacy experiences. Authentic learning experiences can also take place with the use of podcasting and will be discussed in more depth later on in this paper.

Research Question

Research has shown that literacy acquisition is social by nature. Moreover, the rise in new technology has changed the way in which people communicate, therefore changing the way in which literacy is acquired. In addition to changing the way in which people communicate, the emergence of new technologies has changed society's stance on what it means to be a literate individual in this day and age. Given that literacy is a social practice and that technology is changing the way in which people communicate socially with one another this action research asks, what are the benefits of podcasting and how do they support literacy development in the classroom setting?

Literature Review

As technology continues to develop and expand into children's everyday lives, many researchers have taken interest in evaluating the use of technology at school and its educational

impact. It is undeniable that technology has changed, and will continue to change, the face of literacy pedagogy. With that said, not all educators embrace technology integration in school for fear of their own incompetence. However, research has shown that there is much to be gained if teachers were to weave technology into their curriculum. Podcasting is one medium of technology that educators have at their disposal. If podcasting is used in an authentic manner there are many benefits to be had. The following literature review will provide insight into the change in literacy pedagogy, teachers' perceptions on technology use, and the potential benefits of using podcasting in the contemporary classroom.

Technology and Changes in Literacy Pedagogy

It is hard to imagine a world without any Youtube, Facebook, iPhones and cellular phones because they seem flawlessly integrated into our everyday lives. However, just as little as five years ago most of the technologies mentioned had not yet been invented (Williams, 2008). Furthermore, it stands to reason that five years from now some of the technologies mentioned may become obsolete, being replaced by newer and updated versions of themselves (Williams, 2008). It can be said that technology has become so imbedded in everyday life that it is no longer distinguishable. Relying on an ecological perspective, Zhao, Lei and Frank (2006) set out to examine the nature of ubiquitous technology in education. Zhao et al. (2006) noted that in the early stages of school computer integration a computer was a rarity, often reserved for an expert. Computers were costly, so a teacher was lucky if they had one in the classroom (although they may not have seen much use for it). During this time education took on a psychological perspective. Teachers and researchers were left wondering whether the computer would improve educational outcomes (Zhao et al., 2006). At this point, certain teachers throughout the world (no individuals specifically named), began the challenging task of being the first in their field to

incorporate the new technology. As classroom success stories were being heard, many more educators were interested in learning how to duplicate that success. Zhao et al. (2006) refer to this as a sociological perspective to education. During this time more schools began purchasing computers. Today we know that if used properly, computers can have a positive impact on teaching and learning. Relying on an ecological perspective, Zhao et al. (2006) discusses the cyclical pattern that technology takes on in the school setting. Zhao et al. (2006) describe that first the technology is introduced into the school system. The introduction of technology changes teaching practices, learning activities and social relationships. These initial changes then cause further changes in technology use, thus in turn, affecting how other things change. Of course, Zhao et al. (2006) do not believe that every technological advancement that enters the school culture is adopted by the environment. They compare this to the survival of the fittest where the strong survive and the weak technologies perish. As opposed to classrooms in the past, where possibly one computer could be seen in the room, students in today's schools have access to desktops, laptops, hand-held computers, peripheral technologies, Internet resources, multimedia technologies, e-learning systems and numerous types of computer software (Zhao et al., 2006). In many cases, whether they are being utilized or not by educators, the technology is available. This change in the school environment can best be described by Baron (1999) and his technology stages. According to Baron (1999) all technology advances begin with restricted communication function where the technology is available to a small number of initiates either due to cost or consumer ignorance. Next, the technology begins to resonate with the general public as it becomes associated with an older and accepted form of communication. Barron (1999) believes as the cost of the technology decreases and people begin to see it mimicking more familiar forms of technology, its popularity will increase and spread. Lastly, as the new

technology increases in popularity new literacies and forms of communication arise, thus bringing about change and possibly even new technologies.

Starting at a young age, children are immersed with popular technology within the constraints of their own home. Davidson (2009) investigated the digital practices of young children in their home environments. Davidson recorded and analyzed children and family member's interaction with their home computer. She concluded that young children, in their home environment, are seamlessly moving between texts and technologies in order to accomplish various social activities such as talking about computer images, doing a Google search, and in his case, finding the name of a lizard in a book. While engaging in these activities the children were acquiring, using and generating socially recognized ways of interacting with literacy and technology.

In addition to the increase of home computers, gadgets such as cellular phones, iPods and MP3 players are quickly becoming must have items amongst young adults (Pechacek, 2007). As Davidson (2009) suggested, students are engaged in a plethora of digital practices at home, however, school base literacy practices largely remain focused on print-based skills, even though technology is accessible in the school environment. Swan, Hooft, Krateoski and Schenker (2007) add that school based instruction looks much like it did fifty years ago. Teachers are still in the same mentality of telling students to read to page ten in their basal reader and answer comprehension questions in connection with the reading. Unless someone comes around to show teachers otherwise, they will continue to teach in the manner they were taught (Marks, 2009).

All this information about a student's engagement with technology out of school brings about real challenges for educators in school environments. Research conducted by Davidson

(2009) shows that children, starting from an early age, are not only surrounded by but are actively engaging with a variety of digital media. Moreover, technology has become such a way of life that it is not even viewed by children as working with technology, it is just life. The divide of interacting with technology at home but not in school is creating problems for teachers who claim that they are struggling with finding ways to motivate and engage students in the classroom setting (Marks, 2009). It should not be hard to jump to the conclusion that students are disengaged or bored in the classroom because the technology being utilized in their out of school lives is not being recognized as valuable in the classroom setting (Bauleke and Hermann, 2010). Davidson (2009) refers to this as a divide between home and school cultures. The participants in my study confirmed the notion that they are being taught predominately through lectures and books. Both participants stated that working with technology would be a much more exciting outlet than reading from a textbook. Podcasting is one type of technology that can be integrated into classroom instruction as a way to lessen the digital divide between home and school literacy.

In recent years, researchers such as Middleton (2009), Vess (2006), Crawford (2007), Cihak, Fahrendrog, Ayres & Smith (2010), Brown, Brown, Mae, Luterback, Sugar & Vinciguerra (2009), Lord (2008) Lee (2009) and many others have taken the initiative to examine and analyze the potential benefits and challenges that exist in classrooms that integrate technology. Guiding questions such as, what does it look like to successfully integrate technology in the classroom? What is the teacher's role? What is the student's role? What are the potential benefits and challenges for teachers? What are the benefits and challenges for students? Although there are no definitive answers to these questions, researchers have

identified trends that seem to exist in classrooms that use current technology compared to those that do not.

One important feature that researchers have noted is that technology is not a substitution for valuable literacy instruction (Keengwe, Pearson & Smart, 2009). Moreover, there needs to be a solid connection between what is being taught and why the technology device is the best outlet for the delivery. Incorporating technology, just for the sake of including technology, does not enhance learning (Levin & Wadmany, 2006). Only when technology is successfully used to engage learners through multiple learning styles and diverse needs is it a successful delivery of technology instruction (Keengwe, Pearson & Smart, 2009). Just like other forms of technology podcasting in and of itself holds little educational value (Middleton, 2009). However, podcasting has the capacity to capture and share learning voices, offers flexibility in providing access to media and its method of production and targeted distribution offer educators endless educational opportunities (Middleton, 2009). Therefore, podcasting and other technologies, when successfully integrated, can have many benefits for students in the classroom. Research suggests that effective technology integration increases student motivation to learn and keeps them on task and engaged in the learning assignment (Barone & Wright, 2008; Cooper, Dale and Spencer, 2009; Lee, 2009; Vess, 2006; Bauleke & Herrmann, 2010). Furthermore technology utilization creates authentic learning environments where children employ critical thinking skills in a collaborative learning environment (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007; Keengwe, Pearson & Smart, 2009; Cooper, Dale & Spencer, 2009; Lee, 2009; Davis & McGrail, 2009; Lord, 2008; Middleton, 2009). Lastly, current research has shown that technology instruction can provide multimodal forms of communication in order to enhance the learning experience (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007; Crawford, 2007; Davis & McGrail, 2009;

Middleton, 2009; Cihak, Fahrenkrog, Ayres and Smith, 2010). Although technical difficulties and the initial familiarization time it takes to get used to a new technology poses challenges for teachers and students alike, the overall research is in high support of technology integration (Brown & Green, 2007; Brookes, 2010).

Teacher Perspectives of Technology Integration

As stated previously, Zhao et al. (2006) describe the numerous technologies that are available to teachers. However, just because the technology is available, does not mean that it will necessarily be used. In fact, there are two important factors that influence a teacher's willingness to integrate technology. Those factors include knowledge and experience with the technological devices (Yuen & Ma, 2008).

Yuen and Ma (2008) claim that successful pedagogical use of technology depends on the attitude and acceptance of the technology by the teacher. Moreover, an educator's initial acceptance of computer technology will predict their future behavior regarding the technologies usage. Yuen and Ma were interested in analyzing how teacher acceptance of technology affects usage in the classroom. By means of self-reported questionnaires, Yuen and Ma surveyed 152 in-service teachers who were studying part-time in a teacher education program. According to the surveys, perceived ease of use was the sole and dominant determinant in predicting intention to use technology (Yuen & Ma, 2008). In addition, self-efficacy, or knowledge and confidence with the technology was a significant factor to perceived ease and use.

Like Yuen and Ma, Marks (2009) was interested in teacher's perceptions towards technology. Similarly, the pre-service teachers surveyed by Marks self reported that they were reluctant to use technology either because they felt that they had very little experience with the medium or lacked creative ideas on how to embed it in instruction. The idea that the pre-service

teachers, who ranged in age from 19-21 years old, had little experience with technology came as a shock to Marks. However, Marks (2009) observed that when the pre-service individuals were given exposure to the technology medium it did not take long for them to figure it out.

Often times teachers falsely assume that the students they work with are more technologically savvy than themselves. This idea may cause these individuals to shy away from using technology because of lack of confidence in their ability (Middleton, 2009). It should be noted that not all students are comfortable with technology and they become learners just like their teachers. In fact, Hackbarth (2004) created a computer generated survey developed around student's comfort level with technology and distributed it to third and fourth grade students in New York City. Based upon the feedback from the students, Hackbarth (2004) suggested that there is a digital divide between boys and girls, rich and poor and black and whites with females of color claiming that they had no computer skills. Lastly, feel of losing the teacher status to that of facilitator has caused some teachers to be reluctant to include technology (Levin & Madmany, 2006).

With mention to teacher perspectives, it would be unfair and inaccurate to claim that there are no teachers who are using technology in the classroom. Like Yuen and Ma (2008) and Marks (2009), Gorder (2008) claimed that effective technology integration is the result of teacher competence within the medium. Moreover, successful integration was determined on the teacher's ability to know how and why to include meaningful technology and their ability to reshape instructional technology activities to meet students needs (Gorder, 2008). According to Gorder's research, teachers in grades nine through twelve make up the majority of the teachers who integrate technology. With that being said, blogs, weblogs, podcast, Wikipedia, web-based collaboration programs and internet and video conferencing are seldom included in what is being

represented as teachers using technology (Gorder, 2008). Instead, technology for professional productivity (online gradebooks, email) and lesson delivery instruction (Powerpoint) is what is being utilized.

Levin and Wadmany (2006) noted that teacher's view of learning with technology impacted student views. The approach the teacher took on technology directly impacted their students approach. If a teacher that felt that technology purely served a mechanical purpose their students usually felt the same way. Moreover, if the teacher viewed technology as having an intellectual role, students often saw technology as serving an intellectual role (Levin & Wadmany, 2006). It is imperative to understand the important role that technology has in our lives and it stands to reason that our society will continue to depend on technology in the future. It is the responsibility of the educators to introduce our children to new literacy practices with the use of technology. Knowing that perceived ease and experience with technology is the number one deciding factor whether technology becomes used in the class (Yuen & Ma, 2008), it is imperative that teachers are offered the professional development that they need, based on the technology readily available to them. Moreover, with the term "professional development" needs to mean more than just having a technology professional come into the school for day. That method of professional development has proven ineffective with teachers and has little impact on future utilization (Hansen, 2008). Instead, the professional development needs to be on going, thus giving teachers the opportunity to apply new knowledge in the classroom. Teachers also need to be given the time to reflect and share with peers about successes and failures in the application. In addition to ongoing professional development, giving teachers additional planning time to work with peers and experiment with technology has proven affective in technology integration (Marks, 2009). Learning a new technology can initially be

time consuming (Brown & Green, 2007) and allowing teachers adequate planning time to get acquainted with the technology increases the likelihood of that teacher trying out the technology in the classroom.

Benefits of New Technologies

When educators decide to incorporate technology in meaningful ways, there are many benefits to be had. Kemker, Barron & Harmes are an example of one group of researchers that noted potential benefits of thoughtful technology integration. Kemker et al. (2007) investigated the integration of laptop computers in a 4th/5th grade at-risk classroom over a two year period. Results from the study indicated that the combination of authentic teaching instruction and technology integration were the determining factors that allowed for increased academic achievement on behalf of the students. An implication of this study is that computers can be used to help at-risk students. This is just one example of potential benefits of technology integration.

As new technologies emerge, new literacies develop as a response to the technology (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). According to Lankshear and Knobel (2007), new literacies can be defined as “socially recognized ways of generating, communicating and negotiating meaningful content through the medium of encoded texts” (p. 224). With the advent of computers, interacting with encoded text is an important aspect of being literate. Encoded text requires literacy users to develop new literacy skills such as reading non-linear material, as well as, being able to judge the authenticity of a website (Baron, 1999). In addition, computer technology has created different facets of literacy such as global literacy, which is the ability to work in collaboration with others to solve common problems while viewing issues from a different perspective (Cohen & Cowen, 2008). Visual literacy is another new literacy that has come

about with changes in technology. Visual literacy refers to the ability to view, interpret, design and create visual representation of information (Cohen & Cowen, 2008). When teachers do not embrace contemporary literacy and texts, they are excluding significant student knowledge from the learning environment (Ryan, Scott & Walsh, 2010). Gardner (1999) advocated that intelligence should not be reduced to a single construct. Gardner claimed that human beings possess eight different types of intelligence including linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic. Using multimodal forms of communication increases the likelihood that a teacher is tapping in to all of their students needs. Current technology offers that benefit to those who employ it in the classroom setting.

Podcasting is one type of technology that has gained popularity in recent years. Podcasting refers to the authoring of or subscription to audio and or video files that can be downloaded and played back on a wide range of mobile devices (Dale & Pymm, 2009). Devices that can play podcasts include computers, mobile phones, iPods and MP3 players. Podcasts can take the form of audio files, vodcast (a mix of video and audio files) or enhanced podcasts that include audio and additional media like still images (Cooper, Dale & Spencer, 2009). When used in creative and engaging ways, podcasting can offer teachers and students a plethora of benefits that include, but are not limited to, engaging and motivating instruction, global collaboration, multimodal communication and mobile learning (Barone & Wright, 2008; Cooper, Dale and Spencer, 2009; Lee, 2009; Vess, 2006; Bauleke & Herrmann, 2010; O'Bryan and Hegelheimer, 2007; Keengwe, Pearson & Smart, 2009; Cooper, Dale & Spencer, 2009; Lee, 2009; Davis and McGrail, 2009; Lord, 2008; Middleton, 2009). In my study, I will verify that podcasting can engage and motivate students while promoting peer collaboration. Moreover, my research confirms existing research that podcasting appeals to multiple intelligences. Although

podcasting is usually seen in college settings as a way to record lectures (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007) podcasting can be used with any age of learners and for a variety of purposes.

Davis and McGrail (2009) documented using podcasting to teach proof revising with elementary students. In this fifth grade classroom, the teacher incorporated the use of blogs and podcasting into her writing instruction. The teacher noted that when it came time to teach her children to proof-read their writing they seemed to be confused at what that task entailed. Through class discussion, the teacher discovered that many students considered revision to mean a quick reread of their writing without taking into consideration if a reader would understand it (Davis & McGrail, 2009). Moreover, making small mechanical errors also constituted as proof-revising. Through the utilization of podcasting, the teacher was able to successfully teach proof-revision. The teacher would record a podcast audio file of her reading the student's writing piece. Students would then reflect on the reading and analyze where the reader seemed confused. The podcast was then linked to the blog for other students to analyze. Through this process, students not only used self-monitoring habits and critical thinking skills to analyze a piece of writing but understood the complexity and the value of proof-revising (Davis & McGrail, 2009). One student reported saying, "I thought I had no errors until I heard the podcast that had mistakes" (pg. 526).

Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) investigated how digital storytelling could be used to help struggling writers in the primary and secondary levels. Digital storytelling is a multimedia text that includes both traditional and new literacies and gives writers a chance to experience technological, visual, media (evaluate and create messages in written and oral language, graphics, moving images, audio and music) and information literacies (Sylvester & Greenidge,

2009). Digital texts can be created and shared through the use of podcasting and offers the benefits of giving struggling writers confidence in their writing ability (seeing themselves as writers) and an increased motivation to write knowing that their writing has an audience (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009).

Students who have engaged in podcasting activities have given podcasting positive feedback when it is used as a blended approach to learning (Cooper, Dale & Spencer, 2009). Podcasts that included complementary and supplemental material were reviewed positively by students, but podcasts that were used to replace lectures and personal communication were resisted by students (Cooper, Dale & Spencer, 2009). Feeling a sense of collaboration was common among feedback given from students to researchers about their podcast experience. Working with groups to produce podcasts gave students a sense of collaboration. Moreover, having the ability to access, learn from and analyze other student's podcasts also gave students a sense of collaboration (Keengwe, Pearson & Smart, 2009). In some experiences, collaboration with podcasting extended into global literacy instruction. Crawford (2007) studied an adult online Masters course where students used and created a series of six podcasts entitled Education and Technology. The weekly podcasts discussed different aspects of technology and were able to be shared with interested parties all around the globe (Crawford, 2007). Moreover, the students were able to receive feedback from the interested parties and that provided a communication outlet with people they would have never gotten a chance to talk to otherwise. In addition, by integrating the podcasts with a mixture of audio, video and other images, students claimed to enjoy the different modes of communication (Crawford, 2007).

Another example of podcasts being used to instill a sense of collaboration was researched by Lee (2009). Lee (2009) investigated a graduate seminar where American students

created and shared blogs and podcasts with Spanish students discussing issues that affect people their age. Once again, students were interacting with students across the globe. Moreover, students saw value in the task they were engaged in and appreciated the different viewpoints because it enhanced their knowledge of how they viewed cross-cultural learning (Lee, 2009).

In addition to fostering collaborative learning environments, many students reported increase engagement and motivation when working with the medium. Self-reported surveys from an undergraduate Spanish phonetics class indicated to Lord (2008) that the task of creating and analyzing podcasts not only increase their awareness of correct Spanish pronunciation, but actively engaged them because they could see the value in what they were accomplishing. Similarly, data reported by Levin and Wadmany (2006), Cooper Dale and Spencer (2009), and Vess (2006) show similar results. Subjects from each of the above named studies reported feeling engaged and motivated because the podcasts supported student centered learning where students were not only accessing but creating the podcasts (Cooper, Dale & Spencer, 2009; Levin & Wadmany, 2006). Motivation and engagement was also increased because students had to leisure to interact with the media on their own time and in their own space (Cooper, Dale & Spencer, 2009; Vess, 2006). Because podcasts enable on demand media, students have the choice to listen to it when and where they choose. Some students can choose to listen to it from the computer at their home or in the library while other students may choose to download it to their iPod and listen to it while on the go. This freedom created a time-shifted learning engagement that students seem to positively respond to (Cooper, Dale & Spencer, 2009). Students appreciate given choice in their learning and the mobility of podcasts lends itself to do just that.

In addition to appealing to multiple intelligences and fostering collaboration and motivation, podcasting has applicable uses for second language and English language users. Lord (2008) conducted research in an undergraduate Spanish phonetics class. The teacher of the class was interested in having the students employ correct pronunciation, something that is usually difficult for students to pick up on. By having the students listen to authentic podcasts, in addition to creating and analyzing student podcasts for correct pronunciation, students improved their pronunciation (as determined by pre and post tests using recordings). Once again, in addition to improving participants Spanish speaking skills, students reported sharpening their critical thinking skills while valuing the activity as being authentic (Lord, 2008). This study can have implications for foreign language classes and English language learners where podcasting can provide them with samples of real speech and authentic reading material (Thorne and Payne, 2005). Moreover, podcasting can prove to be a good supplemental source for the textbook in foreign language classes. Building on this information, teachers can foster vocabulary instruction through the use of podcasting as well. Borgia (2009) observed two fifth grade teachers who utilized this method and both classes saw an increase in their student's vocabulary and word consciousness.

Researchers have documented other noted benefits of podcast use in classroom. Podcasting can breathe life into adult online courses (Brown, Brown, Mae, Luterbach, Sugar and Vinciguerra, (2009). Usually online courses lack a sense of teacher presence. However, being able to hear a teacher's voice was rated positively by students in Brown et al. (2009) research. In addition to providing personalized instruction, podcasting can be used cross-curriculum to introduce subject matter, provide remediation, act as a video library (i.e. science equipment tutorials) and extend class time (Jarvis & Dickie, 2010).

Lastly, as stated previously, podcasting can utilize a mixture of video and audio files. As students have different intelligences and preferred learning styles certain mediums work better with certain students. Cihak, Fahrenkrog, Ayres & Smith (2010) studied the benefits that video podcasting (vodcasts) had on students with autism. Many times students with autism respond positively to visual stimulation. Cihak et al. (2010) observed four elementary autistic students over a two year period. Cihak et al. (2010) observed how the utilization of video modeling procedures through use of the video iPod improved student targeted behaviors as opposed to when video modeling was not used. Like this study, vodcasting may be beneficial for other behavior and learning situations.

Anytime someone chooses to work with technology they run the risk of encountering technical difficulties and podcasting is no different. At first, one may spend extra time becoming acquainted with the media, however, the benefits of using it far out way the challenges. Research has suggested that possible benefits of podcasting include that the medium is portable, attractive (in terms of design), motivating, easy accessible, valuable for the money (it's free) and can create authentic and collaborative learning environments (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). In addition, it has the potential to be used for distance, self-paced, remediation and advanced learning. The ability to use the technology as a way to feature guest speakers and other global collaborators allow it to offer a rich learning environment (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Lastly, podcasting can contribute to the learning process in many ways such as assisting auditory learners, provide an outlet for material review, assist non-native speakers, provide feedback to learners, allow instructors to review training or lectures and allow for the distribution for supplementary resources (Rosell-Auilar, 2007).

As we continue to proceed into the twenty-first century, student proficiency in technology based literacy becomes increasingly important. Although technology in schools has become readily available, some teachers are still hesitant to incorporate technology into instruction due to lack of knowledge and experience with the technology medium. Teachers who have chosen to integrate authentic instruction with technology have noted potential benefits such as increased student motivation, engagement and collaboration (to name a few). Podcasting is one type of technology that teachers can utilize in their classroom. Podcasting can be incorporated into instruction in a variety of ways and offers teachers and students the luxury of being an interactive mobile communication tool.

Method

Context

Research for this study occurred at one of the participants, Elizabeth's, home. Elizabeth (pseudonym) lives in a suburb in western New York with her mother father and older sister. Elizabeth has lived in the two-story home for more than sixteen years. Although there are many individuals that live on Elizabeth's street, the majority of the neighborhood is of an older generation than Elizabeth. However, the location of the residence is near the high school that Elizabeth attends and is within close distance from many of her good friends. Elizabeth is one of the two participants taking place in the study.

Participants

Elizabeth is sixteen years and eight months old and she is a Caucasian female. Elizabeth is a social individual who enjoys hanging out with friends, watching movies, and being involved

in sports such as dance, lacrosse, track and field and soccer. Elizabeth is the youngest of four children and is currently a junior in high school. Elizabeth's mother states that Elizabeth has the academic ability to do very well in school but often lacks the drive to achieve her full potential. Elizabeth is an average to high achieving student. On her last report card, issued approximately two weeks ago, she received an "A" in U.S. History, an "A" in pre-calculus, an "A" in Anatomy and a "B" in English class.

Rose (pseudonym) is the other participant in the study and is a Caucasian female. Rose is fourteen years and three months old and is a freshman in high school. Rose does not attend the same school as Elizabeth. Rose is a high achieving student in most content areas but struggles with English Language Arts. On Rose's last report card, she received an "A" in all content areas and a "C" in English Language Arts. Rose enjoys cheerleading, hanging out with friends and shopping. Rose lives at home with her mother and older sister. Rose also has an older brother who no longer lives at the house. Occasionally, Rose will visit with her father and see her four other half siblings. Although Rose does not see her father everyday, she was daily contact him via telephone.

Researcher Stance

I worked in a small group setting with Elizabeth and Rose. I am a certified elementary teacher with certifications in both early childhood education (birth through grade two) and elementary education (grade one through grade six). I am in my fifth year of teaching. I began my career in education teaching English Language Arts and Social Studies in a small rural school outside of Charlotte, North Carolina. After two years of teaching in North Carolina, I relocated to Rochester, New York where I have been working as a substitute teacher. As a substitute teacher, I have worked with a wide range of students. I have been in kindergarten

classrooms, senior high school classrooms and everything in between. For the past year, I have been a long-term substitute teacher in a suburban school located in western New York. In addition to teaching, I am currently perusing a Master's Degree in Literacy Education from St. John Fisher College.

During this research study, I was an active participant observer. An active participant observer is one who is actively involved in the teaching process and observes the outcome of their teaching (Mills, 2011). Although I am not either of the participant's high school teacher, the lessons that took place, as part of this study, were conducted in a tutoring atmosphere where I was the one conducting the teaching and evaluating the effectiveness. Being in the role of an active participant observer has implications on the research I am collecting. One implication is that an active participant observer can become so fully immersed in what they are doing that they fail to record observations in a systematic way (Mills, 2011). According to Mills (2011) this can be a major disadvantage because careful note taking is an essential part of being an accurate observer.

Method

During this study, I utilized podcasting instruction in a few ways and analyzed the benefits and drawbacks of each implementation. The usefulness of podcasting, as an additional communication resource to enhance teaching instruction was analyzed. During this portion of the study, the participants viewed two types of podcasts. The topic of both podcasts was on space. Although neither participant is currently learning about space, a neutral topic was chosen for a reason. Both girls had learned about space in previous years of their education and so could draw on how their own educational experience on how they were delivered instruction and if the podcasting technique would have benefited them if it had been utilized. One of the podcasts was

an audio podcast and one was a vodcast (a podcast that included visuals). Both girls viewed the podcasts together and were interviewed about the podcasting experience together in a recorded group setting. Additional information about the podcasting experience and its usefulness as a supplemental form of information was analyzed through the use of a student post survey.

In addition, the participants self-created a podcast for the purpose of peer revising. Both girls began by writing a brief one page autobiography. Next, Elizabeth and Rose switched papers and recorded a podcast of them reading the other ones paper. After that, Elizabeth and Rose listened to the playback of the podcast and analyzed what they heard (example, did the reader sound confused at any part?). Finally, each girl revised their paper, based on what they heard in the podcast, and record the finalized version that was shared. I observed the creation of the podcast and the revision experience. Additional information about the podcast experience was obtained through student feedback via student interviews and surveys. Both podcasting lessons took place on the same day and took about three hours to complete in full.

Quality and Credibility of Research

In conducting research, it is important to ensure the quality and credibility of the study. Mills (2011) defines credibility as the ability of the researcher to not only understand that complexities may arise during a study, but to be able to deal with these difficult patterns. To help insure the credibility of my study, I debriefed with critical colleagues about my approach to the study and the results obtained.

Triangulation was obtained in this study. Triangulation is when the researcher utilizes different data collection methods in order to cross-check the data that is accumulated during the study (Mills, 2011). I cross-checked my data by observing and writing down anecdotal notes of my observations, distributing pre and post student surveys and conducting small group

discussions and interviews. I also analyzed artifacts such as a student-created podcast and writing samples.

During this study, I ensured transferability of my research. Transferability is defined by Mills (2011) as understanding, by the researcher, that study results cannot be used to generalize to larger groups of people. I understand the data collected during my study is specific to the study at hand. Although I used the data to draw on comparisons that may be used in other contexts, no generalizations will be made. Dependability was obtained in my study. Dependability refers to the stability of the data gathered (Mills, 2011). Utilizing triangulation is one way that I accounted for dependability. Another way I ensured dependability is by consulting with critical colleagues about my data.

Lastly, I ensured confirmability of my research. Confirmability can be defined as the neutrality or objectivity of the data that is collected. Once again, utilizing the triangulation approach accounted for my data as having confirmability because all data was cross-checked. By cross checking data, you are verifying its validity by comparing it to parallel or supplementary data taken from different data sources each using a different method of collection.

Informed Consent and Protecting the Right of the Participant

Before beginning my research study, I obtained two forms of informed consent. Because I was working with minors, I obtained a parental consent form. In addition, each minor signed an assent form, agreeing to take part in the study. Moreover, before any consent forms were signed both participants and parents were informed of their rights, risks and were made aware that at no time would their identities be revealed. In order to protect the participant's identity, pseudonyms were used.

Data Collection

The purpose of the research is to investigate the potential benefits that podcasting has in the classroom setting. Data collection involved a student pre and post surveys and audio recorded interviews. Written artifacts and student created podcasts were used as forms of data collection.

The pre-survey (Appendix B) was used as a tool to gather background information about the participant and was used utilized by the researcher as a way to gain greater insight into the educational background of these students. The student post survey (Appendix B) was used to obtain information on student perspective on perceived motivation and interest level associated with the podcast activities, as well as, the benefits and disadvantages of this approach to literacy instruction. Small group discussion and student interviews were audio recorded and allowed for more in-depth student expression about the activity. Anecdotal notes, from formal observations taken by the researcher, were used as assessment data as were the student generated podcasts.

Data Analysis

Data from the student post- survey and student interviews (Appendix C) were categorized based on perceived student advantages and disadvantages of podcasting. Student answers were sorted and organized by similar responses. A category was created and assigned to represent the group of similar responses. Category titles were then created based on the essential idea represented in the response. For example, a student response of “I enjoyed working on the podcast” was given a category title of increased engagement. Observations by the researcher, through use of anecdotal notes, was compared and contrasted to student responses. Lastly, student generated podcasts were used to assess accessibility and ease of incorporating the medium into daily literacy instruction.

Findings and Discussion

A few themes emerged after careful analysis and cross examination of the data collected from my research. The themes of increased engagement, peer collaboration, strengthening of student writing, and podcasting providing a tool for multimodal communication were prevalent in the data collected and can be used to support the benefits of podcasting in the classroom.

Increased Engagement

One of the major themes that emerged from my research was increased motivation to work with the podcasts. This theme became evident when reviewing student surveys, interview questions and through classroom observation. Moreover, the theme is in support of the literature reviewed earlier by researchers such as Gardner (2009), Crawford (2007), Bauleke & Herrmann (2010), Lord (2008) and Vess (2006).

The study began by having the participants listen to two types of instructional podcasts. One of the podcasts was purely audio-based, while the other one had audio and visual components (vodcast). It observed that during the audio podcast both participants, Elizabeth and Rose, appeared to be engaged while listening to the information being delivered. The girls would laugh at the appropriate times, and although there was nothing visually stimulating to look at, both girls refrained from off task behaviors such as doodling on paper or looking out the window. Later, during the interview session, Elizabeth commented that the audio podcast kept her attention and made her interested in the information that was delivered because it had catchy music to accompany the information. Similar to the podcasting experience, both girls seemed to be engaged while viewing the instructional vodcast. The researcher noted that both girls viewed the vodcast in its entirety. Once again, unengaged signs of behavior such as talking to peers, doodling, and looking out the window and were not observed. When interviewed about the vodcast experience, Rose stated, “We got to see examples of what they were talking about,

like pictures, and it was more interesting.” Rose also commented that teachers “Should use these because it is not boring, they’re actually fun to listen to and still educational” (personal interview, October 29, 2010). In response, Elizabeth added, “Yeah, it is definitely a step up from textbooks” (personal interview, October 29, 2010). Rose then stated, “Yeah, when we are just reading we are not really interested in the book so we just skim through it and don’t pay attention. I definitely listened more” (personal interview, October 29, 2010). Based on the participants responses to the audio and video podcasting experience, one may interpret that podcasting delivers more engaging instruction as compared to more traditional forms of delivery. One may hypothesize that podcasting is engaging for students because it more closely mimics at home literacy practices that involve computers and other technologies. Similar results were found in the research conducted by Crawford (2007) where participants noted that podcasting tapped into both visual and audio literacies and that their interest was enhanced due to those features. Like Crawford (2007), Bauleke & Herrmann (2010) observed increased engagement with students who interacted with podcasts. Like my research, Bauleke & Hermann (2010) noted that disruptive and other off task behaviors were absent from observation when students were engaging in podcasting activities.

In addition to viewing and listening to a podcast, students engaged in the activity of creating a student podcast for the purpose of peer reviewing their writing. It was observed that students seemed to be engaged in the task. Both Elizabeth and Rose asked the researcher, on more than one occasion, if they could rerecord their podcast until the podcast was just the way they liked it. It can be presumed that if the participants were disengaged they could care less about the quality of their finished product. However, this was not the case, both girls wanted perfection knowing that it was going to be listened to by a real audience. Vess (2006) noted

similar behaviors in her research. Vess's research also involved students creating podcasts. According to her observations, students rerecorded their presentations until they were perfect. When asked the purpose for doing so, participants mentioned it was the sense of having a real audience which led them to do that. Lord (2008) research subjects also reported seeing value in what they did when using podcasts as a source of instruction.

In addition to the researcher's observation and student interview feedback, the survey feedback also supported the theme of increased engagement. The chart below shows the scale and participant answers to some sample podcast statements (Appendix A).

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	Strongly agree

Question	Elizabeth's Response	Rose's Response
I found podcasting to have educational benefits.	4	4
I found podcasting to have negative drawbacks.	2	2
Podcasting helped me to understand information presented in the lesson better.	4	4
Creating a podcast was fun.	3	4
I would like to use podcasting again	4	4

An answer of one stood for strongly disagree, an answer of two meant that they disagreed with the statement, three was a neutral opinion, four denoted that the girls agreed with the statement and five signified a strong agreement with the statement. Both girls agreed (four) with the statement, *podcasting helped me to understand the information presented in the lesson better*. One can interpret that listening and viewing the podcast was engaging and thus helped them to

learn the informational material better. In addition, Rose rated the statement, *creating a podcast was fun* as four. One might think that the word fun could be synonymous with engaging and therefore, the podcasting experience may have been an engaging activity. Furthermore, both girls agreed, four, that they *would like to use podcasting again*. If the podcasting experience was not engaging, we may have seen the participants rate this statement it at a much lower level. Lastly, on the short answer portion of the survey Rose stated that the, “benefits to using podcasting is they were not boring. They actually draw you in. Reading and learning out of books is boring” (personal survey, October 29, 2010). This statement supports Bauleke and Herrmann (2010) that the way teachers are delivering instruction for their students is ineffective in the technology inundated world in which they live in. Rose felt the podcasting experience was more exciting than the traditional approach to literacy, read this book and answer these questions. Rose may feel unengaged with these types of literacy activities because they do not support her outside of school digital literacy experiences and practices. It is possible that the podcasting experience is more aligned with her home literacy practices and, therefore, felt more engaged by this experience. While viewing the vodcast Rose noted, “This is like a YouTube video” (personal survey, October 29, 2010).

Increased Peer Collaboration

In addition to measuring student engagement, I set out to determine if podcasting could foster authentic peer collaboration. The second activity, creating a podcast for the purpose of peer revising, was designed to measure that. Furthermore, this portion of the task was incorporated to see if the technology tool of podcasting could not only be used as a medium for student collaboration, but be seen and valued as such by the participants. The data from my

research confirms the notion that if technology is used in a manner where collaboration is purposeful, students will see value and see it as such.

As a researcher, I could visibly observe that the participants worked together to create an edited and polished piece of writing. However, observation alone could not tell me if the participants felt that they were engaging in authentic collaboration. According to the interviews, it was apparent that they found the podcasting technology as a useful tool to promote student interaction and collaboration. After engaging in the lesson, both participants were asked about the benefits of using podcasting. Elizabeth responded, “I thought the benefit was working with other people than, uh, just by yourself” (personal interview, October 29, 2010). Student survey results back up this data. Both participants rated the statement, *Podcasting offers a good way to work with peers* as a five, meaning they strongly agree with the statement. To back up the scale portion of the survey, Elizabeth reiterated in her short answer portion that one of the benefits of podcasting is “working with others” (Student survey, October 29, 2010). The participant’s responses, in addition to the researcher’s observations, suggest that technology can be a useful tool to promote peer collaboration. My research supports Keengwe et al. (2009) who found that the process of creating and publishing a podcast gives learners an increased sense of learning community. Similarly, O’Bryan and Hegelheimer (2007) found that when students worked in conjunction to create podcasts they claimed to feel a sense of authentic collaboration with their peers.

This podcasting lesson allows teachers to take an activity that is usually done on one’s own, editing a piece of writing, and turn it in to a collaborative effort. The collaboration aspect of this lesson not only provided students with an authentic collaboration activity, polishing a

piece of writing that can be heard by an audience, but also forced them to strengthen their writing.

Strengthening of Writing Skills

Another theme to emerge from my data is that podcasting can be used as a tool to strengthen student writing skills. My data is in support of the findings by Davis & McGrail (2009). Like Davis and McGrail (2009), I used podcasting as tool to promote peer revision. Initially, students wrote a short autobiography, switched papers and recorded, via podcast, themselves reading their peer's work. While observing the participants listening to their peer's podcast of their story, I noticed that both participants were jotting down notes of what they were hearing. Rose wrote down in her notes *be more detailed, make longer, instead of using "on" put "in", change to "stop"* (student writing artifact, October 29, 2010). Elizabeth noted, *use connection words, smoother transitions into next sentences, change up word "also"* (student writing artifact, October 29, 2010). Participants used these notes when revising their piece of writing. Based on observation, one may extrapolate that hearing the audio from the podcast may have helped the participants hear editing mistakes that they failed to notice when reading their writing over by themselves.

The above ideas were strengthened with the data collected through the personal interviews. By conducting student interviews, I learned that both participants found that listening to someone else orally read their paper aloud helped them to pick up on mistakes that they missed when revising on their own. Rose mentioned that the podcast "made me hear what I needed to work on, like being more detailed" (personal interview, October 29, 2010). Elizabeth stated that the podcasting experience "helped me to hear that my sentences needed to flow together more" (personal interview, October 29, 2010). Moreover, podcasting provided students

with a motivator to work harder on their writing pieces because they knew they would be heard by an audience. Rose mentioned, “I worked harder because I knew it would be heard” (personal interview, October 29, 2010). On the student survey, both students strongly agreed (five) that podcasting helped them to revise their writing, making it better. Used in this manner, one may say that podcasting may be a helpful tool helping students gain self-monitoring writing habits. Similar to my student responses, Davis and McGrail (2009) reported that using podcasting as a writing tool helped students to hear the mistakes in their writing. These findings are in support of Gardner (1999) and his multiple intelligence theories. It is possible that for some children to pick up on the mistakes in their writing they need to hear it in addition to seeing it on paper. Integrating podcasting and other technologies into literacy learning gives teachers the advantage of incorporating different venues of communication to support literacy learning, therefore, enhancing the chance that they will reach more learners in the process.

A Multimodal Communication Tool

Lastly, using podcasting as a means of supporting and providing a multimodal form of communication was another recurring theme that emerged from my data. Like me, Crawford (2007) also found that podcasting can be used to tap into different literacies because of its multimodal communication approach. A podcast can contain different components depending on the type of podcast being accessed. Some podcasts are completely audio-based, denying the viewer of any visual stimulation. Other podcasts provide users with a mixture of audio and visual texts, while other podcasts are a mixture of audio and still images. Depending on the type of podcast being utilized, different components of the technology may be more useful to individuals based on literacy preferences or predominant intelligences.

As stated previously, participants viewed two types of podcasts. One podcast appealed to one's audio sense and the other was more visually stimulating. According to my observations, both student participants seemed to be engaged while watching the two podcasts. In addition, what was said in the student interviews and what was written in the surveys not only supported the observation but gave evidence to this theme.

Rose mentioned in her student interview the benefits of the audio and video podcast. When asked about the audio podcast Rose stated, "I thought it was beneficial because they also had music on it so it wasn't just the straight talking the whole time, we got interested in it" (personal interview, October 29, 2010). Benefits of the vodcast included, "We got to see pictures of what they were talking about which helped" (personal interview, October 29, 2010). Moreover, when asked about the preference on instructional delivery, Rose responded, "I liked the vodcast because we got to see examples of what they were talking about" (personal interview, October 29, 2010) Like Rose, Elizabeth also mentioned, "the vodcast went more into detail to help with your understanding" (personal interview, October 29, 2010). Moreover, in the short answer portion of the survey Elizabeth mentioned that a benefit of using podcasting is that it offers students a "new way to learn information" (personal survey, October 29, 2010). Although both students seemed to prefer the vodcast because of the visual elements, it is possible that students who are more auditory learners may have benefited more from the audio-based podcast as presented by Gardner, (1999). Knowing that students learn in many different ways, podcasting offers a way for teachers to deliver instruction that appeals to auditory and visual learners.

Implications

The findings of my research suggest several implications for teachers. First, podcasting is a technology that could and should be used with a wide spectrum of students, ranging from the primary grades to adult learners. Its mobility offers users flexibility in obtaining, creating and distributing the podcast files. Podcasting, when integrated into teacher instruction, lends itself to be an engaging method of instructional delivery. Lastly, when used meaningfully, podcasting can promote collaboration and authentic learning experiences.

One benefit of podcasting is that it is a mobile learning tool. The podcasts utilized in this research were accessed from the participants' homes. However, the same instruction tools accessed from a home computer could be used on a school computer or library computer and so on. To allow for greater mobility, a podcast accessed from a computer could be downloaded to an MP3 player and listened to while on the go. During my research, the student-created podcasts were converted to an iTunes file and could have been listened to at the students' leisure and in a learning environment that they preferred. The podcasting mobile learning component not only benefits students, but teachers as well. Teachers could provide their students with lecture notes, homework examples, and enrichment opportunities in the form of a podcast. Students who were absent from school could easily obtain the information they missed. Students needing constant reinforcement or clarification on a homework problem could consult the podcast that the teacher posted. Overall, the mobility of the technology gives student's some autonomy in their learning.

Another benefit of podcasting is that it provides students with an engaging outlet of instruction. Students can be exposed to a variety of different podcasts that stimulate different senses while still engaging in meaningful learning tasks. Interweaving technology and instruction will help to close the gap between the literacy experiences students are partaking in at

home and what they are engaging in school (Davidson, 2009). Moreover, student engagement can increase when students take part in building their own podcast. Authenticity of work is also recognized when podcasts are viewed by real audiences, such as in the peer revising lesson.

Student collaboration can also be achieved through use the use of podcasting. As seen in my research, collaboration can take the form of two students working collaboratively to share information, but it does not need to stop there. Classrooms can communicate with other classrooms within the school same school, community or state. There is even a possibility of students becoming podcasting pen pals with students in other countries, much like what was seen in the research of Lee (2009) where the American students communicated with Spanish students via podcast to discuss issues affecting teens. In this way, podcasting extends the possibilities for teachers to incorporate global literacy in their classroom. As one can see, there are many reasons why teachers should consider incorporating podcasting into their instruction.

Conclusions

Three months ago I set out to determine if there were benefits to incorporating podcasting into the literacy classroom. Relying on the sociocultural theory and New Literacy studies, I learned that literacy learning is social in nature and that society's attitude towards what it means to be a literate individual has changed over time. Moreover, I analyzed the impact that new technologies had on literacy's changing facets. Although society's attitudes towards literacy have changed, schools have done little to change their instruction in order to support these literacies (Yuen & Ma, 2008). I believe that podcasting could be incorporated into teacher's instruction in order to satisfy twenty-first century literacy skills. To support my claim, I have researched several scholarly, researched based articles. The articles I have read provided insight into the struggles that teachers are facing as technology becomes more predominant in our

everyday lives. Teachers are noticing that it is becoming more difficult, in recent years, to engage and motivate students because the literacy activities they are engaging in outside of school are not being recognized in inside the classroom (Bauleke & Herrman, 2010; Davidson, 2009). Although teachers may like to tap into these technologies, and in many cases, even have the resources to do so (Zhao et al., 2006) their lack of familiarity with the medium and fear of not knowing how to create meaningful lessons with the technology prevent them from doing so (Marks, 2009). However, when teachers are given the time to explore technology and are allowed to meet with colleagues to discuss lesson plan options, the benefits of using technology are insurmountable. Podcasting offers teachers and students a mobile education tool that increases the likelihood of student engagement and motivation, feelings of authenticity of work, collaboration and student autonomy. Although one may have to deal with the occasional technology glitch when working with this medium, the benefits far surpass the challenges.

Even though my findings supported much of what I read, there are some things in my study I would have liked to have done differently. If I could have been given the approval, I would have preferred to have conducted the research in my sixth grade classroom. I would have preferred this because it would have provided me with a larger sample of data to draw on. I work with twenty-six students daily. If I could have used my classroom students as research subjects, the research sample would have included input from twenty-six participants instead of the two I interacted with. Had I been able to work with my class I would not have had the time constraints that I had, which was a limitation to my study. Working with my class would have increased the intensity of the observations from one long day of interacting with participants to many weeks of interaction. Had I not been under strict time constraints, I would have liked to explore this topic in more depth, utilizing and analyzing more podcasting activities.

My study also leaves me with some unanswered questions. First of all, my research participants were two high school students. Having stated that, I am left wondering if the results from that sample size can be representative of students in that age group in general. If I had a greater sample population would I have received the same results? Furthermore, having worked with only the secondary population of students, I question if primary students would find this technology as beneficial as secondary students. If not, what can be done so that the medium is appropriate for their age level, needs and interests?

Although my research with podcasting was brief, the results have amplified my belief that podcasting is a wonderful tool to add to one's educational toolbox. When educators incorporate podcasting into their instruction in meaningful ways, they can increase student engagement and motivation to learn. Furthermore, podcasting can foster a collaborative learning environment where students feel a sense of community and purpose for what they are doing. Lastly, podcasting lends itself as a multimodal form of communication. Because podcasts can be either audio or visually enhanced, it increases the chance of connecting with more learners. I have personally started to incorporate the podcasting technology into my own classroom, and I know I will continue to do so. Although it may take some time at first to become familiar with the technology, I have found it is very easy to navigate. Lastly, the students seem to enjoy it and they pick up on it quickly as well.

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Appendix A

Survey

Please rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 5.

1-strongly disagree 2-disagree 3-neutral 4-agree 5-strongly agree

___ I found podcasting to have educational benefits.

___ I found using podcasting to have negative drawbacks.

___ I found creating a podcast to be easy.

___ Podcasting helped me to understand information presented in the lesson better.

___ Creating a podcast was fun.

___ Podcasting offers a good way to work with peers.

___ I can see uses for podcasting in school.

___ I found there was a purpose to what I was doing when I used podcasting.

___ I would like to use podcasting again.

Short Answer

1. Please describe the benefits and challenges of using podcasting, if any.

Appendix B

Pre-Survey

Date _____

Grade Level _____

1. What are you currently learning about in school? Please list all subject areas.

2. How do your teachers usually deliver instruction?

3. What is the most effective strategy that your teachers use to deliver instruction? Why do you find this effective?

4. What is the least effective strategy your teachers use to deliver instruction? Why do you find this to ineffective?

5. What is your strongest school subject?

6. What subject would you like to do better in? Is there anything you are currently struggling with?

Appendix C

Personal Interview Questions

Podcast/Vodcast Interview

1. How do teachers usually deliver instruction?
2. You listened to an audio podcast. Did you find any benefits to listening to it?
3. You viewed a vodcast. Did you find any benefits to viewing it?
4. Do you think that there are any educational benefits to using these forms of technology in the classroom?
5. Do you think there are drawbacks to using these technologies in the classroom?

Student Produced Podcast/Peer Revising Interview

1. Can you tell me the goal of the podcasting lesson?
2. Did you find the technology help to improve the goal? How?
3. Did you find there to be benefits to creating a podcast for the lesson?
4. Were there drawbacks to using the podcast?
5. Have you had any other experiences with podcasting?
6. Would you like to see podcasting used in school? How so and why?
7. Was creating and using a podcast easy?