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Using Podcasts as an Educational Tool in Research Methods and Intro to Psychology

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Using Podcasts as an Educational Tool in Psychology Courses

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Introduction
Incorporating technology into the class room provide a number of benefits to instructors and students. One way of incorporating technology into the classroom is through the use of a podcast. Podcasts are a form of media that are distributed through the internet and downloaded to a computer or MP3 player for playback at the users leisure. Studies have shown that students and lecturers hold positive perceptions towards integrating podcasts into the classroom (Sutton-Brady, Scott, Taylor, Carabatta, & Clark, 2009). Using podcasts allow instructors to record required information for students which allows classroom discussion to be more focused on the students needs and hands on demonstrations (O’Bannon, Lubke, Beard, & Brit, 2011). Instructors are also able to cut down on time spent reiterating information to many students by directing students to the podcasts. Students can benefit from podcasts in a variety of ways by allowing repeated listening, listening at their convenience, and listening on the go. These benefits could translate into greater student achievement and better test scores for the students.

This study investigates the use of podcasts as an education tool in two undergraduate psychology courses at the University of North Georgia. The current study expected that students exposed to a podcast would score better on a test than when the students were not exposed to the information. To understand the relationship between podcast and learning students were given a 10 question pretest followed by a podcast on the same topic. After exposure to the podcast students were then given a posttest to assess their learning gains after listening to the podcast. Multiple podcasts were used to gather data: (1) using GIL for research, (2) types of validity and problems with validity, (3) carryover and counterbalancing in research, and (4) ethics in research. The podcasts included a multimedia screencast and audio presentations.

Methods
Participants
Participants were students enrolled in either an undergraduate psychology research methods (RM) or quantitative methods (QM) class. Response rates varied for each podcast and each class; for using GIL for research (RM N=10, QM N=9), carryover and counterbalancing in research (RM N=3, QM N=7), and ethics in research (RM N=6, QM N=6).

Podcast
Podcasts were constructed by students over multiple topics in research: using GIL for research, types of validity and problems with validity, carryover and counterbalancing in research, and ethics in research. Episode run times ranged from 10 minutes to 20 minutes. Audio and multimedia presentations were used to convey the information to the students. Podcast were recorded and hosted by students who were not enrolled in the classes that were used as participants in the study. The episodes maintained a conversational tone to allow for a more enjoyable listening experience for the participants.

Pretest and Posttest
Pretest consisted of 10 true/false and multiple choice questions about the topic covered by the podcast and were distributed before the students were exposed to the information in class. After the recorded participants listened to the podcast then took the posttest, which consisted of 10 true/false and multiple choice questions about the topic covered by the podcast.

Results
A significant difference was found in scores for GIL pretest (M=6.7333, SD=7.98981) and posttest (M=6.0667, SD=9.61115) (t(14)=4.000). There was no significant difference for carryover pretest (M=5.4444, SD=2.18518) and posttest (M=6.4444, SD=1.66667) (t(8)=1.54, p=.172). A significant difference was found in scores for ethics pretest (M=5.9, SD=1.96921) and posttest (M=8.7, SD=9.49668) (t(9)=5.486, p=.001). A significant difference was found in scores for validity pretest (M=5.9231, SD=1.49786) and posttest (M=8.6154, SD=1.36875) (t(12)=5.733, p=.001).

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There was also no significant difference in validity pretest scores for RM (M=6.3333, SD=1.96383) and posttest scores for students who did not listen to the podcast (M=7.1667, SD=1.60268) (t)=7.822, p<.000. There was no significant difference in ethics pretest scores for RM (M=6.7778, SD=6.6667) and QM (M=6.6667, SD=1.03280) (t)=13.5, p<.000. There was no significant difference in carryover pretest scores for RM (M=6.3333, SD=1.52753) and QM (M=4.5, SD=2.23907) (t)=-68, p=.380. There was no significant difference in ethics pretest scores for RM (M=5.1667, SD=1.72240) and QM (M=6.3333, SD=1.96383) (t)=1.993, p=.05.

There was no significant difference in validity pretest scores between RM (M=6.4, SD=6.1111) and QM (M=4.6111, SD=2.02759) (t)=14, p=.886.

Conclusion & Discussion
The current study shows that podcasts can be helpful for students who are attempting to learn material for their courses. Podcasts provide students with the ability to listen at their convenience and even take more complete notes. The expansion of technology into the classroom still needs to be studied more, but learning can occur when students listen to podcasts. Podcasts allow for instructors to dedicate time spent in lecture for hands on demonstrations, personalized discussions, and more one-on-one time to answer student questions. The ease of creating podcast materials encourages this medium to be inserted into the classroom. There are barriers to incorporating podcasts into the classroom some examples are: students unfamiliarity with technology, students improper use of the material, and technical support from the university (Gribbins, 2008). Some of these barriers can be overcome by properly training the students in how to use the podcast to their full potential.

References

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