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Connecting Students to the World through Podcasts: Using Podcasts as a Pedagogical Tool for Teaching Global Issues

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Abstract

The rapid growth of SNS has spurred innovative pedagogy, integrating foreign language learning with global communication via technology. This paper introduces a project where Japanese university students learning English create 3-episode podcasts on global issues. Working in groups of 3-4, students select topics under the umbrella term of 'global issues'. Utilizing SNS, news, and research, they produce podcasts lasting 10-60 minutes, inviting classmates from other groups to discuss their chosen issues. This practice then creates a classroom-wide interconnected podcast project where students learn from and teach each other, critically examining their topics through cross-referencing and discussion. These episodes showcase students' understanding of their topics, ability to think critically, and cross-cultural empathy. Through 21st-century technology and classroom collaboration, this practice cultivates globally conscious individuals actively engaged in understanding world cultures and conflicts.

要旨

SNSの急速な成長は、外国語学習とテクノロジーによるグローバルコミュニケーションを統合する革新的な教育学を促進している。 本稿では、英語を学ぶ日本の大学生が地球規模の問題をテーマにした3話構成のポッドキャストを制作するプロジェクトを紹介する。 学生は3〜4人のグループに分かれ、グローバルな問題に関連するトピックを選択します。 SNS、ニュース、リサーチを利用して、10〜60分のポッドキャストを作成し、他のグループを招待して、選択した問題について話し合います。 この実践により、教室全体で相互接続されたポッドキャスト プロジェクトが作成されます。 これらのポッドキャスト番組は、生徒のトピックへの理解、批判的に考える能力、異文化への共感を示している。21世紀のテクノロジーと、教室のコラボレーションを通じて、世界の文化や紛争の理解に積極的に取り組むグローバル意識の高い人材を育成する。

The rise of podcasting as an educational medium provides unique opportunities for engaging learners in authentic communication. In Japan, where English is often learned in isolation from authentic contexts, integrating podcasts into the curriculum offers a bridge to global communication. By creating podcasts on global issues, students actively engage in research, discussion, and production—fostering not only language skills but also intercultural competence. This paper examines the implementation of such a project, evaluating its potential to align technology, language learning, and global issues in education.

Podcasting as a medium for content delivery and discussion has seen remarkable growth, beginning in 2004 when the term was first coined (Cochrane, 2005) and surging in popularity during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic (Grunow, 2021, p.132). The concept of incorporating podcasts into education, particularly language learning, is not entirely new, yet it remains underutilized as a staple in the language classroom. With podcasts being widely accessible, an increasing number of teachers are now creating their own podcasts as supplementary lecture material, providing students with opportunities to review course content outside of the classroom (Heilesen, 2010). By offering students additional listening materials, these podcasts enrich the overall input students receive, which is essential for language acquisition.

Research supports the benefits of podcasting for familiarizing students with course material. Jain and Hashmi (2013) demonstrate that students who regularly listen to course-related podcasts become more acquainted with the content, enhancing their test performance and overall comprehension. However, familiarity alone does not guarantee deep learning. As Kozhevnikova (2019) argues, the quality of language exposure, not just the quantity, is crucial for effective language acquisition. Authentic and semi-authentic materials, which mirror real-world language use, are more conducive to meaningful learning than strictly academic or scripted content. This is where podcasts hold a unique advantage: they offer a window into authentic language use, exposing students to native speakers, diverse dialects, and real-world applications of language. For decades, language educators have sought resources that provide this level of exposure, and podcasts are uniquely suited to meet this demand.

Yet, while listening to podcasts undoubtedly bolsters students' listening skills, it may not alone be sufficient for holistic language development. To transition from receptive to productive language skills, students must have opportunities to actively engage with and

produce language. One common solution is to have students discuss the podcast material, perhaps through questions or summaries. A more innovative approach, however, involves asking students to create their own podcasts. This task not only allows students to process and discuss what they have learned but also requires them to apply their language skills in producing a coherent piece of media. Particularly within content-based language learning (CBLL) and content-language integrated learning (CLIL), podcast creation provides a platform for students to demonstrate subject-matter proficiency, encouraging deeper engagement with the topic and fostering connections with other students' work. By integrating podcasting into language education, educators can address critical global issues, fostering an awareness of global interconnectedness while simultaneously developing linguistic and intercultural communication skills.

While podcasting projects offer immense educational benefits, they are not without challenges. Time management emerges as a significant hurdle, as students must navigate multiple phases—research, scripting, recording, and editing—all of which require careful planning and coordination. Additionally, group dynamics and conflicting schedules can make collaboration difficult, particularly when balancing this project with other coursework. Instructors also face a substantial time investment in providing scaffolding and feedback. However, these challenges are outweighed by the benefits: podcasting fosters critical thinking, digital literacy, and intercultural communication skills while encouraging students to engage deeply with global issues. With proper guidance and clear timelines, the collaborative and creative nature of podcasting can transform these difficulties into meaningful learning opportunities.

The interactive, conversational nature of podcasting—often featuring a host-and-guest format—further enhances its suitability for language learning, especially within intercultural communication courses. In discussing global issues, as is the main focus of this particular use of podcasts in education, students gain experience in articulating perspectives, analyzing complex information, and engaging in meaningful dialogue. The act of creating a podcast fosters critical thinking and presents students with an opportunity to slow down and engage deeply with a subject, as opposed to the rapid consumption of information that characterizes much of today's media environment. By producing a well-considered piece of media, students can showcase both linguistic and analytical skills, bridging knowledge with practice in a tangible way.

Podcasting, due to the ubiquity of smartphones and recording devices, is highly accessible to students, offering them a platform to contribute their voices in meaningful ways. By incorporating podcast projects into the curriculum, students have invaluable opportunities to develop skills that extend well beyond the classroom, including digital literacy, media production, and collaborative work. Heilesen (2010) observes that students often perceive podcasting as a beneficial supplement to their regular studies, enabling them to engage with content in a more flexible and self-directed manner. Furthermore, when embedded in courses addressing global or intercultural topics, podcasting may allow students to personalize their learning by selecting subjects of interest and appropriate level (Howland, et al., 2024). This personalized approach fosters a deeper connection to the material and is particularly valuable in language courses, where students can enhance proficiency by exploring topics that align with their personal or professional goals.

Sergis and Sampson (2019) highlight the effectiveness of project-based and problem-based learning strategies in cultivating deep knowledge acquisition. Podcast development incorporates elements of both approaches. Students must research their chosen topics, organize their findings, and articulate ideas in a manner that is both engaging and informative. This process encourages critical thinking while also promoting communicative competence, digital skills, and subject-specific knowledge. As students transition from consumers of information to active creators, they engage in higher-order thinking, applying their research to create original content that reflects their understanding.

While much of the existing literature on podcasting focuses on teacher-produced content as a supplementary learning tool, this perspective overlooks the transformative potential of student-created podcasts. Shifting the focus to student-led production allows educators to foster a more dynamic and interactive learning experience. By creating their own podcasts, students take ownership of their learning, develop a unique voice, and practice language skills in authentic, purposeful contexts. This method also aligns with content-based language learning (CBLL) and content and language integrated learning (CLIL), as it combines subject matter exploration with language development. Podcasting, in this way, becomes a tool not only for language acquisition but also for empowering students with skills that are increasingly relevant in the digital age.

Comparison With Existing Practices

Intercultural communication is vital in today's interconnected world, requiring the ability to navigate cultural differences with empathy and understanding. Studies emphasize the

importance of exposing students to diverse perspectives (Brunell, 2013; Devran, 2010). Incorporating global issues into language learning fosters this skill, aligning with CBLL and PBL frameworks.

Podcasting as an educational tool has been shown to enhance digital literacy, listening skills, and critical thinking (Heilesen, 2010; Azizi et al., 2022). By engaging students in content creation, it also addresses Bloom's higher-order thinking skills (Collins, 2014). Podcasts provide authentic input and encourage meaningful output, bridging the gap between receptive and productive skills (Kozhevnikova, 2019).

One significant factor negatively influencing student motivation in language learning is the lack of contact with the target language (Doiz et al., 2014). Podcasts provide accessible, authentic, and semi-authentic language input that students can engage with freely, especially as internet access becomes increasingly widespread. Prior to the rise of podcasts, Earp et al. (2006) experimented with student-produced mini-films in a foreign language, yielding varied outcomes, while Frydenberg (2006) and Lazzari (2009) asked students to create summary articles for peer review. These exercises demonstrated that students could creatively step into teaching roles, underscoring their ability to learn through content creation. Building on this, Lee et al. (2008) encouraged senior students to produce podcasts for entry-level students, finding that creative media can be highly effective in peer-to-peer educational settings. However, while such projects foster communication networks among students, they do not inherently address global issues or intercultural communication, two vital areas in today's interconnected world.

Podcasts and Global Issues

In the context of global issues, Brunell's (2013) research highlights a key insight: students become more interested in global citizenship when they are exposed to relevant topics, emphasizing the teacher's role in introducing these themes. Notably, Brunell (2013) found that fewer than 50% of students across various institutions valued discussions about politics or global matters with family, indicating an overall lack of engagement with global issues. This trend may be particularly pronounced in Japan, where history education tends to be generalized, with numerous critiques highlighting the need for improved historical awareness and cultural understanding (Momoki, 2022; Nozaki, 2008). Given this landscape, fostering intercultural communication skills is crucial, as understanding different perspectives is essential in a globalized world (Devran, 2010). For students, this means

recognizing that the interpretation of a message may vary drastically across cultural contexts—a skill that is indispensable in intercultural communication.

The creation of podcasts, particularly when focused on educating peers and researching issues present today, could, therefore, deepen students' engagement with global news. By exploring topics like the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through podcasts, students practice articulating ideas about global challenges in culturally sensitive ways, mirroring the skills required for real-world intercultural exchanges. Fernandez et al. (2009) observed a positive correlation between podcast creation and students' confidence in their learning. Extending this logic to global issues, student-created podcasts may help learners better grasp and retain information on topics they research, preparing them for thoughtful, informed discussions. Heilesen (2010) supports this by noting that reformatting information for communication significantly enhances information retention. Collaborative podcast projects in particular, which may involve speaking in a second language, offer equitable benefits for students of varying abilities, as shown by Lucker et al. (1976), who found that interdependent coursework enables lower-level students to improve without negatively impacting higher-level students.

Effective collaboration in podcast projects goes beyond mere participation; it involves actively engaging with peers' ideas and thoughts (Kuhn, 2015). This engagement requires students not only to respond to what has been said but to contribute insights that address gaps or expand on previous points. Such dynamic interaction aligns well with the goals of an interdependent podcast project, fostering both listening and productive speaking skills. Azizi et al. (2022) affirm the positive impact of podcast creation on student knowledge output, listening comprehension, and speaking ability. Thus, students engaged in collaborative podcast projects are not only practicing intercultural communication but are also building expertise in their chosen topics. By crafting and sharing their insights through podcasts, they solidify their understanding and contribute meaningfully to discussions on global issues, demonstrating the profound impact of active, creative learning.

Teacher approval of topics plays a crucial role in ensuring that the podcasting activity aligns with its intended focus on global issues and intercultural communication. By carefully evaluating and approving students' chosen topics, teachers can guide them away from subjects that are overly localized or conducted primarily in their native language. Instead, teachers can encourage students to explore themes that connect to broader global contexts, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), cross-cultural perspectives,

or international case studies. This approach ensures that the activity moves beyond the realm of technological skill-building and fulfills its purpose of fostering global awareness and intercultural understanding.

Description of the Practice

This project was developed with the premise that students gain a deeper understanding of complex topics by taking on the role of teachers. Implemented in a Japanese university, it targeted students majoring in intercultural communications or English, who possessed varying levels of English proficiency. The primary goal was to engage students with topics related to global issues, intercultural communication, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Given the vast scope of these topics, it would be challenging for an instructor to address them comprehensively in a 15-week semester. To overcome this limitation, the creation of three-episode mini-podcasts allowed students to deeply explore their interests while simultaneously teaching and learning collaboratively.

Each group, composed of three to four students, selected a topic under the umbrella of global issues. Teacher approval of topics ensured alignment with the project's objectives, with students commonly choosing themes such as climate change, gender equality, and poverty. This approach, supported by Lee et al.'s (2008) findings on the educational value of student-generated podcasts, emphasized the benefits of peer-to-peer learning. Although designed for second-language learners, the collaborative and research-driven nature of the activity makes it equally adaptable to native-language contexts.

Overview of the Unit

The project spanned eight to 14 sessions, detailed in Appendix A, and was structured into six phases, as outlined in Table 1. Each podcast episode was approximately 20 minutes long, with durations adjusted to match students' proficiency levels. Collaboration occurred on two levels: within groups, as students worked together to create podcasts, and across groups, through guest appearances and discussions. These interactions simulated intercultural communication on a smaller scale, helping students develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives.

The process was designed to accommodate varying student interests and strengths. Group roles—such as hosts, managers, and engineers—allowed individuals to contribute based on their skills, whether in speaking, organization, or technical work like editing. Accessibility was ensured through tools such as smartphones, laptops, and user-friendly software like

Audacity or GarageBand. This minimized technological barriers while fostering creativity through the integration of music, sound effects, and personalized introductions and outros.

Table 1

Project Workflow for Podcasting Activity

Phase	Description
Introduction to Podcasts	The project began with an exploration of podcasting as a medium, introducing students to its potential for education and storytelling. Examples and discussions helped highlight its relevance to global issues and intercultural communication.
Topic Selection	Groups chose topics aligned with SDGs or other global concerns. Teachers guided the selection process to ensure the topics were both researchable and globally significant.
Research and Planning	Students conducted thorough research, structured their episodes, and outlined potential content such as interviews or discussions. The focus was on critical analysis and connecting their topics to broader global contexts.
Recording and Editing	Students used readily available tools to produce their podcasts. This phase emphasized collaboration, as students combined their research and creative skills to craft engaging episodes.
Peer Review and Feedback	Groups listened to each other's podcasts and provided constructive feedback. This step promoted reflection, critical listening, and further refinement of their work.
Final Reflection	Both students and the instructor reflected on the overall process, discussing the challenges and successes of the activity.

Note. SDGs = Sustainable Development Goals.

Podcasting, implemented as a classroom practice over eight or more sessions, provides teachers with an opportunity to tap into the diverse talents and interests of their students (Fernandez, 2009). This activity is designed to cater to different strengths: students who enjoy speaking can take on hosting roles, those interested in organization can focus on managing tasks, and those with creative inclinations can contribute to the technical or artistic aspects, such as editing and sound design. Framed within podcast terminology,

these roles can be classified as hosts, managers, and engineers. Given that most students today have access to smartphones or computers with built-in recording software, this practice is highly adaptable and easily integrated into modern classrooms.

Students are encouraged to choose topics that interest them, provided they align with the instructor's broader umbrella theme. Through in-depth research, students identify connections between their chosen topics and those of their peers, reinforcing the collaborative and interdisciplinary nature of the activity. Once the research is completed, students develop their podcasts, incorporating personalized introductions, outros, and background music. This creative process not only brings enjoyment to the task but also helps students overcome the initial discomfort of recording and listening to their own voices, creating a supportive and engaging learning environment.

Data Collection Procedures During Practice
While the podcast unit was not initially designed for research purposes, data were collected to better understand how students engaged with the unit, the process of podcast creation, and their learning about global issues. The practice was carried out over two rounds with 10 third year university students participating in the first round and 23 students participating in the second round (*n*=33).

At the beginning of the course, students completed an open-ended survey [Appendix B] detailing their familiarity with podcasts, prior experiences with the medium, and their understanding of podcasts as a tool for cross-cultural communication. Students provided informed consent for their participation to be used for research purposes, with assurances that their consent would have no impact on their grades.

Throughout the unit, students collaborated in groups to research, discuss, and produce three-episode podcasts addressing global issues. These activities aimed to foster critical thinking, intercultural communication, and language development. At the end of the unit, students submitted written reflections capturing their learning processes, emotional responses, and overall perceptions of the project.

All survey questions and reflections were open-ended, allowing students to articulate their thoughts freely. The collected data were analyzed to identify patterns in students' experiences, including their growth in understanding global issues, their ability to articulate

these topics, their intentions to remain informed through podcasts, and the perceived pedagogical value of the podcasting project.

Reflections and Outcomes

Student reflections and the instructor's impressions reveal how podcasts created a collaborative environment for the students and gave them a creative space to learn about global issues at their own pace. Student feedback revealed that researching global topics not only improved their language skills but also deepened their understanding of cultural nuances and worldwide challenges.

Student Reactions

Before beginning this project, most students had little to no familiarity with podcasts or the distinction between podcasts and traditional radio. In-class discussions revealed that only a minority of students were aware of podcasts. Out of 10 students in the first round and 23 in the second round of this activity (*n*=33), only 4 reported listening to podcasts regularly. While the university curriculum includes lessons on podcasts as part of modern media, it is unclear whether students retained this information from earlier courses, particularly as this project was part of a third-year class.

Regardless of their prior level of digital fluency, Campbell (2005) argues that digital skills are meaningful only when students can use them to produce conceptually and critically engaging material. In this project, students demonstrated this ability, as evident in their end-of-semester reflections. They frequently praised their peers' creativity and expressed enjoyment in completing the activity, suggesting that the project successfully fostered digital literacy and collaborative engagement. However, not all reviews of the unit were fully positive. Of the 33 students who completed the project, 6 negative reactions were written in the end-of-unit reflection [Appendix A].

One particularly enthusiastic email from a student stands out. After the entire course had finished, one student asked if continuing the podcast outside of class would be possible, and approval was given. Additionally, some recommendations as to where the student could host this podcast were shared. Other students asked if they could invite guest speakers from outside of the class so that they would be able to discuss their chosen topic with an expert in the field. As long as the discussion could be held in English, this request was met with agreement. While the desire to continue their podcasts is unlikely the opinion of the majority of students, the fact that even one student was keen to continue, and that

a few students were interested in inviting real professionals in their topic indicates that the creation of podcasts left a positive impression and was seen as a useful learning tool.

Impressions From the Instructor's Viewpoint

Given the distinctions between group work and collaborative work as defined by Salomon and Gloverson (1989) and Evans (2020), it was anticipated that students in the course would gravitate toward group work to streamline the task. The instructor even recommended that students divide the planning and production processes into separate tasks, allowing each group member to manage a specific segment independently. However, the students demonstrated a greater appreciation for the collaborative potential of podcasts than the instructor had anticipated. Although students were not explicitly assigned "jobs" or "roles" in the podcast creation process, they naturally assigned tasks among themselves, with individuals volunteering to serve as hosts, contact and coordinate with guest speakers, and manage the music and editing.

This unexpected level of organization and collaboration resembled the dynamics of small companies within each group, surprising the instructor. It became evident that this collaborative approach was crucial to the project's success. Had students opted to divide their work independently, as initially suggested, the intercultural element of the project would likely have been diminished or even lost entirely. Instead, students were required to depend on one another to achieve their collective goals, and they even collaborated across groups for interviews and guest speaker arrangements, fostering a truly collaborative classroom environment.

This collaborative environment allowed students to perceive their work as an interconnected effort, where each component was a building block rather than an isolated piece to be later assembled (Evans, 2020). The resulting podcasts, despite minor errors in English usage and occasional unprofessional audio quality, were highly informative and reflected the students' dedication to producing quality work. The instructor found the experience of listening to these podcasts enlightening; the medium allowed students to effectively share their research and insights, creating a vibrant learning experience for both the students and the instructor. The process highlighted the educational power of podcasts in cultivating both collaborative skills and content engagement in a unique and impactful way. Beyond linguistic proficiency, podcasting encouraged students to critically engage with global issues, developing the empathy and communication skills essential for navigating an increasingly interconnected world.

The use of podcasts as a classroom activity appeared to significantly enhance the depth of student engagement and learning compared to traditional methods. Without this medium, students may have missed the opportunity to engage deeply with their chosen topics and develop the level of expertise necessary for meaningful discussions. Podcasting required students to research extensively, articulate their findings, and present their ideas cohesively, which not only deepened their understanding but also encouraged greater interaction among peers. This process mirrored real-world intercultural communication by fostering collaboration and dialogue in a diverse environment, where students shared insights and built upon each other's work.

The reflective nature of podcasting further contributed to its success. Through creating and listening to podcasts, students engaged in discussions that extended beyond the classroom, demonstrating an awareness of the interconnectedness of global issues. Student reflections revealed how this activity allowed them to explore complex topics at their own pace, while the instructor observed a collaborative and dynamic learning environment that supported creative expression and critical thinking. By requiring students to communicate their findings effectively and invite guest speakers, podcasting created a platform that naturally facilitated intercultural communication skills. In doing so, it provided a valuable framework for students to practice the skills they will need to navigate real-world intercultural exchanges.

Outcomes

Podcasting may improve intercultural skills by providing a platform for students to engage in meaningful, reflective communication about global issues. Through the process of creating podcasts and discussing targeted research, students develop the ability to articulate their perspectives while considering diverse viewpoints and synthesized information. This mirrors real-world intercultural interactions, where understanding and navigating differences in communication styles, values, and contexts are essential. When podcast topics center on global issues, students often research and discuss themes that require them to explore cultural nuances and global contexts. For example, a podcast about climate change may involve examining how it disproportionately affects different regions and communities, fostering empathy and a broader worldview.

<center>Further Considerations</center>

Podcasts are an interesting medium in that they cover a wide range of topics with an even wider range of approaches. Their use in second-language classrooms, therefore, is not limited to solely language learning but expands to content learning and general skill acquisition.

Implications

While this activity can have quite varied results depending on the level and dedication of the students, the number of students who enjoyed and found learning value in the activity indicates that this practice can and should be expanded on for use in other classes. While presentations, essays, and exams are very commonly used to check student knowledge, podcasts can operate in much the same way but with an element of creativity not usually afforded to students. In this way, it can be argued that students may better remember the material they engage with in the creation of podcasts than the material they study just to sit an exam.

Challenges and Alternative Suggestions

Of course, an increase in audible input on global topics that students want to engage in is a dream come true for many educators; however, it is not without its negative sides. For second language learners especially, input alone is known to be insufficient for true mastery of subjects, but for students who struggle to understand the input, creating output may be nearly impossible. Therefore, this practice is limited to students who can operate at a B1 level on the CEFR or higher. Ideally, students would have experience with research and be media literate, otherwise scaffolding for these skills would be necessary before the start of this podcast project.

If the classroom does not allow for technology such as podcasting to be used, it is worth noting that the practice could be completed as a series of panel-style discussions in the classroom. While the research aspects remain much the same, the instructor is then able to input ideas and questions into the discussion. However, students lose the chance to become competent with audio editors and to get the added benefit of listening to their own voices. Language students who listen to their voices can self-correct through the practice of their speaking skills outside of the classroom (Pop, et. al., 2011).

On the teacher's side, there may be some unfamiliarity with the technology required for podcasting that leads to hesitation in implementing this practice. However, speaking from

experience, the students are incredibly used to technology, and they can usually figure technological issues out on their own. Very little instruction beyond what a podcast is and how it should sound is necessary.

Ideally, students who engage in podcast creation in a manner that encourages communication, collaboration, and creativity are students who will be able to go out into the world and engage with it in a way that demonstrates empathy, inquisitiveness, and cross-cultural understanding. In addition, these students will hopefully be able to critically engage with SNS and be adept at 21st-century media skills. If students can continue listening to podcasts, it is hoped that they can also form a mindset that favors continuous learning. Future iterations of this activity could expand the emphasis on intercultural communication by incorporating guest speakers from different cultural backgrounds or requiring students to explore how global issues manifest in various regions.

Lastly, podcasting requires significant time and preparation from both teachers and students. Teachers must provide sufficient scaffolding to ensure that students can manage the technical and research aspects of the project, while students must balance the demands of research, collaboration, and production. Additionally, the extent to which the activity fosters intercultural communication and global awareness may depend on the topics chosen by students and how they interpret their projects' objectives. Despite these challenges, podcasting offers a replicable and adaptable framework that educators can tailor to suit their teaching contexts. By sharing this practice, the paper contributes to ongoing discussions about how innovative uses of technology can promote more engaged and globally conscious learning experiences.

Conclusion

Podcasts have emerged as a powerful medium for communication, bridging audiences worldwide through news, entertainment, and educational content. In a globalized world, equipping students with an understanding of podcasting's value goes beyond language learning; it fosters their development as informed, critical thinkers and global citizens. By engaging in the creation of podcasts, students not only improve their language skills but also deepen their knowledge of relevant topics, gaining valuable experience in researching, analyzing, and presenting complex ideas. This authentic form of media encourages students to take ownership of their learning, developing digital literacy and intercultural competence that are crucial in today's interconnected society. As podcasts continue to flourish, students who embrace this medium will be positioned to contribute thoughtfully

and meaningfully to future societal advancements. Collaborating with peers, including guest speakers or classmates from diverse backgrounds, encourages students to engage in active listening, adapt their communication styles, and appreciate cultural differences. This mirrors the interdependence often required in global and professional settings. By discussing global issues through a podcast format, students learn to frame arguments and ideas in ways that are accessible and relevant to diverse audiences. This skill is critical in intercultural communication, where the clarity and sensitivity of message delivery are paramount. The storytelling and discussion aspects of podcasting require students to present multiple perspectives on an issue. This practice deepens their understanding of others' experiences and encourages critical thinking about how cultural and historical contexts shape viewpoints. Podcasting as a digital medium transcends physical boundaries, allowing students to connect with global audiences and contributors. This reinforces the idea of interconnectedness in today's globalized world and prepares students to navigate the digital landscapes where much intercultural exchange occurs.

Although the findings in this paper are not based on formal research, reflections from students with their permission and reflection from the instructor provide insights into the perceived success of this activity. According to these reflections, students appeared to believe that creating podcasts encouraged collaborative learning and critical engagement with global topics. Many also appreciated the flexibility and creativity that the project allowed, as it gave them space to explore their chosen themes at their own pace. The instructor observed that the collaborative nature of podcasting promoted meaningful discussions and fostered a supportive classroom environment. These reflections suggest that podcasting can be an effective way to enhance students' language skills, critical thinking abilities, and awareness of global issues.

In essence, podcasting serves as a dynamic tool for simulating intercultural communication scenarios, equipping students with the awareness, empathy, and skills to engage effectively in diverse global contexts. Providing students with the skills to create and appreciate podcasts can be seen as an investment in their role as active, informed participants in a globalized world. As the world moves forward and podcasts continue to boom, students who value the authenticity of podcasts will become those who drive society toward the future as well.

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Appendix A
Global Issues-focused Podcast Activity

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1. Objectives

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Learning Objectives

General Objectives	• To create a podcast that deeply explores a chosen niche • To demonstrate proficiency in researching and verbally integrating researched information with the speaker's opinions
Specific Objectives	• To collaborate and problem-solve creatively through intricate and timely group work • To articulate opinions and research to an audience of peers in unscripted use of the L2 • To utilize recording and editing software such as Audacity or Descript • To illustrate meaning and prioritize information through the use of music and sound effects

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2. Activity Context

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Students

Number of students	9 Min. 25 Max.

Do students need to use a second language?	Yes
What is the second language?	English
Level(s) in target language:* * See table at the end of these activities description for reference about these mastery levels.	Intermediate I CEFR B1 I IELTS 3.5-4.5 ITOEIC 500-700

Comments

University-level or upper-high school students may be able to complete this practice, but students with zero exposure to technology may struggle to meet the technological demands of editing a podcast. Other languages and students' native languages may also be used for this practice.

3. Activity Materials & Prep

Activity Duration

Total duration in minutes:	60–90 minutes
How many sessions?	8-14
Any homework?	At the teacher's discretion

Materials

Material	Devices capable of recording and editing, such as smartphones, laptops, or tablets Software: Audacity, GarageBand, or Descript
Material Type:	Digital device
Material Access:	N/A

Set-Up Instructions

1. Initial class: Prepare an introduction to podcasts including examples

4. Activity Description

Sessions	Activity Instructions
Session1	The teacher introduces podcasts, eliciting student responses about what they know. The teacher outlines project expectations and asks students to choose a topic of interest. Teachers may assign groups or allow students to form groups based on shared interests (the latter option may require additional time). Students are given time to begin researching their chosen topics.
Session 2	Students finalize their topics, and each group gives a short presentation to the class. This allows students to identify potential guests for their podcasts. Groups then outline their three episodes and conduct further research as needed.
Session 3	The teacher introduces podcast intros and outros. Students write their own intros and outros, dedicating time to creativity and collaboration. Students also select music for these segments.
Session 4	Students record episode one. This may take the entire class period due to potential re-recording needs. Alternatively, this session may focus on additional research, with an extra session allocated for recording episode one.
Session 5	Students edit episode one and post it to a shared folder (e.g., Google Drive or Padlet). They then listen to other groups' podcasts and write brief reviews.
Session 6	After listening to other groups' podcasts, students may invite guest speakers from other groups. They can choose an interview or co-host conversational format for episode two.
Session 7	Another day is dedicated to recording and editing.
Session 8	The cycle continues until all groups have completed three podcasts. Groups thoroughly discuss their chosen topics and compare similarities and differences with related topics via guest speakers.

5. Additional Information

Student Testimonials

A few common positive themes in student reflections were as follows: "interesting", "different from [previous projects]", "good for [the] future", and "exciting". Although infrequent, negative themes that appeared included "time-consuming," "hard to think of ideas," and "time management with other groups is challenging."

English Mastery Reference Levels

TOEFL	IELTS	TOEIC	Cambridge exam	CEFR Level	Skill level
			Comparison chart of English certificates to European levels		HigherEd me
118-120	9		CPE	C2	
115-117	8.5		CPE	C2	Mastery or proficiency
110-114	8	975-990	CAE / CPE	C2/C1	
102-109	7.5	966-974	CAE	C1	
94-101	7	945-965	CAE	C1	Effective operational proficiency
79-93	6.5	900-960	FCE	C1/B2	
65-78	5.5-6.0	785-940	FCE	B2	Vantage or upper intermediate
53-64	4.5-5	785-795	FCE	B2/B1	
41-52	4	670-780	PET	B1	
35-40	3.5	550-665	PET	B1	Threshold or intermediate
30-34	3	225-545	KET	A2	Waystage or elementary
19-29	2.0-2.5	171 -220		A1	
0-18	1.0 - 1.5	120 -170		A1	Breakthrough or beginner

Source: http://www.higheredme.com/2017/04/11/english-test-comparison/

Appendix B
Pre-unit Survey and Post-unit Reflection

Pre-unit Survey

Section 1: Understanding and Use of Podcasts

1. How familiar are you with podcasts? Answers: Very familiar / Somewhat familiar / Not familiar at all (followed by: *Please explain your answer.*)
2. Have you listened to podcasts before? If yes, how often and what kinds of topics or genres do you listen to?
3. What do you think makes a podcast engaging or effective?
4. Do you see podcasts as a useful way to learn or share information? Why or why not?
5. Have you ever created a podcast or similar media content (e.g., a video or audio recording)? If yes, please describe your experience.

Section 2: Global Issues in Modern Media

1. How often do you follow global issues (e.g., climate change, gender equality, poverty) in the media? What sources (e.g., news, social media, podcasts) do you use?
2. Do you think podcasts can be an effective way to communicate and discuss global issues? Why or why not?
3. In your opinion, what role does media play in raising awareness about global issues?
4. Are there any global issues you feel particularly interested in or passionate about? Why?
5. How, if at all, do you think discussing global issues through media, like podcasts, might contribute to cross-cultural understanding?

Post-unit Reflection

Section 1: Understanding and Use of Podcasts

1. How has your understanding of podcasts changed after completing this unit?
2. What did you learn about creating a podcast that surprised or challenged you?
3. Do you see podcasts differently now as a tool for learning or communication? If so, how?
4. What aspects of creating a podcast (e.g., research, scripting, recording, editing) did you find most rewarding? Which were the most challenging?
5. Do you think you will continue to listen to or create podcasts in the future? Why or why not?

Section 2: Global Issues in Modern Media

1. How, if at all, has this unit changed your understanding of global issues?

2. What did you learn about communicating global issues through podcasts?
3. How did working on a podcast help you engage with and think critically about your chosen global issue?
4. Do you think podcasts are an effective way to share and raise awareness about global issues? Why or why not?
5. How, if at all, did this project impact your perspective on the importance of global issues in today's world?
6. How, if at all, did collaborating with your group and listening to other groups' podcasts influence your understanding of global issues?
7. What emotions, reactions, and/or realizations did you experience while researching, creating, and/or discussing global issues?

Author's Biography

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