



3C Media
Journal of Community, Citizen's and Third Sector
Media and Communication

ISSN 1832 – 6161
Issue 3

December 2007

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Broadcasting as Curriculum: Podcasting as a Publication Option in High School

Kerrie Mackey-Smith

Abstract

This article introduces a case study concerned with student engagement by exploring a speaking and listening multimodal literacy option in the classroom.

Introduction

The lack of engagement many students demonstrate in subjects concerned with humanities and literacy has become a concern for many teachers. At Alloway High School¹ my colleagues told me I was not alone in my concern about the passivity students display toward any sense of achieving and/or engaging with a range of humanities subjects. This is a particularly worrying trend because as Kress (1995: 94) says, in his discussion on curriculum for the future ‘views’ of English (as a subject), English provides students with, *‘the means of seeing ourselves as the makers of our means of making meaning, and through this giving children the possibility of seeing themselves as the makers of their fortune’* (emphasis in original). While Kress, here, is focused on the subject of English this is the case in many subjects concerned with making meaning and/or exploring issues of humanity. As educators we want to be engaged in learning that encourages students to construct their futures and fortunes.

The normal classroom, one teacher to thirty students, teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, became an accepted model in a largely patriarchal and authoritarian system of the industrial era (Connell 1993). The world has moved on, modernising at an increasingly rapid rate. With this comes a rapid increase in social and media technologies pervading our student’s lives. As a result our student’s social identities are becoming increasingly connected to these information technologies in our society (Green 1995). This has implications for how (pedagogy) and what (curriculum) we present to students in our classrooms.

Some students without the support of extended family cope with issues such as: working to help support themselves or their families; becoming carers within the family; dealing with death or family upheaval. We then ask these students, who live chaotic, complex, technology rich lives, to engage in an interface to learning that is born of a model designed for the world as it was in the industrial era. It is little wonder that some students find the way we teach boring, with little relevance to them, and overly textual (Smyth & Hattam 2004). This can lead to overt or passive resistance and a lack of engagement.

There is little doubt that many students don’t engage with the sort of literacy learning offered in classrooms. Learning is being impeded by an education system that still measures literacy, in this multimodal world, primarily by what is written (text). Within the ‘new’ literacies world there is a need for students to learn how to converse – have conversations around issues that affect their worlds and to tell their stories. Relevance may be brought to the learning, for students, by drawing on their lifeworlds and social

¹ As required by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of South Australia the identity of the school and that of any individual has been changed.

identities and increasing the modality of text production (Green 1995; New London Group 2000).

The leadership team at Alloway High School (AHS) recognises the need to try and cross the cultural divide growing between classroom practice and students (Green 1995). AHS supports curriculum options that will engage students and that explore ways to bring relevancy and meaning for the students to their classroom learning. It was here I was able to integrate my previous life in media with my new life in education. AHS leadership approved, in 2004, a new curriculum offering for the school – radio broadcasting. This subject was implemented and delivered in partnership with Radio Adelaide² as a Vocational Training in Education³ (VTE) in schools' option. The success we were having with this radio broadcasting, with some students not generally engaged with the traditional subjects, led to the question - how can we incorporate some of the approaches to broadcasting across the curriculum generally?

At AHS we were using broadcasting as a 'vehicle' to engage students in an unstructured, problem solving, technology rich, literacy building learning experience. Broadcasting for radio requires developing organisational, planning, scripting, audio editing, mixing and audience knowledge, ethical understanding (around language), oral, media and presentation skills (Crisell 1994; Radio Adelaide 2004). Broadcasting, because of its high technology nature, required working with students in smaller groups; increasing the mentor role of the teacher while students work toward developing their performative voice and technical skills.

The subsequent publishing of students' work as a podcast, via Really Simple Syndication⁴ (RSS) feed, we (AHS leadership and I) felt had implications for the valuing of students' work. Being published either on a school site or on an internationally accessed site makes the students' work more visible, rather than just visible to the teacher. It also gives the students work connectivity to the world beyond school. Current conversations in educational research in Australia, for example *Productive Pedagogies, Assessment and Performance*, supports the valuing of authentic student production with a focus on youth culture and connectivity to the real world (Hayes et al. 2006).

A slice of the multi (new) literacies discussions

The New London Group (2000: 9) looks at the debates around new and emerging literacies and talks of our students' future as 'multilayered lifeworlds' where the 'proliferation of communication channels and media supports and extends cultural and subcultural diversity'. To be able to express oneself in a community is a social action. We need to build into our textually rich classrooms more alternatives that suit their multilayered lifeworld. This means examining the curricula that frame our classroom practices.

Kress' (2000) work is useful here, as he poses the question - is the curriculum looking forward into the future? Kress' response is to draw attention to semiotics. His discussions assert that current curriculum, rather than embracing new language, values

² Radio Adelaide is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) recognised by the Australian National Training Authority to deliver broadcasting (radio) training.

³ A course delivered in high school that meets the Australian Quality Frameworks (AQF) for the requirements of competencies recognised as contributing toward a Technical Certificate and/or Diploma.

⁴ Really Simple Syndication is the technology that allows the subscription to podcasts for 'streaming' from their host site to your computer.

the more formal language (signs and symbols) and places a lesser value on emerging language. In our students' futures they will incorporate emerging language. Classroom learning might consider providing students with a means to evaluate how structure and function within society give that language power.

I suggest that the presently existing curriculum still assumes that it is educating young people into older dispositions, whereas the coming era demands an education for instability. ... That then leaves the task to establish as securely as one might what the outlines of the future are likely to be like, in order to begin to think about the shape of a curriculum for the future. What remains constant is the fundamental aim of all serious education; to provide those skills, knowledges, aptitudes and dispositions which would allow the young who are experiencing that curriculum to lead productive lives in the societies of their adult periods (Kress 2000: 133).

Media is a conductor of powerful connotations and denotations of meaning in our society; radio broadcasting is one part of this. Students engaging with learning the construction of radio broadcasting might not only find a voice for their own future, but an understanding of how to deconstruct in order to reconstruct the meanings in various media; thereby, skilling themselves with some important aptitudes for their adult lives.

Green (1992) discusses the changing nature of our society, what constitutes literacy in these times and the implications for learning, with evidence that teachers are feeling frustrated and a little lost about how to tackle the learning divide between students' lifeworlds and the classroom.

Teachers and adults feel toward young people ... increasingly alienated, in the classical sense, young people are also increasingly alien, alienated others, differently-motivated, - designed and – constructed ... a widening gulf between the generations which was, moreover, significantly associated with technological transformations of the Lifeworld, particularly those organised around new realisations of media information and communications (Green 1992: 16).

Digitisation has come swiftly and there is no doubt our students are mastering it. Green's (1992: 1) paper addresses 'the complex and changing relationship between living and learning in contemporary media culture, within a critical assessment of the project of postmodern education'. This is pertinent, but teachers I talk to can feel overwhelmed by the learning gap and their everyday teaching pressures give them little time to contemplate change. They want less debate and simple, practical tools that can be implemented in the classroom.

Just as the relationships of different text types (and literacies) are culturally set, so are the views of what constitutes a meaningful text. Some teachers face resistance from their colleagues or the culture of individual schools if the curriculum does not look like traditional text. Rather than looking at what has been, in the past, constituted by institutions as suitable text, we need to look at our students' futures to make these judgments. Krist (2005: 14) uses Lemke to make these points:

How can teachers transform their classrooms into ones where these boundaries are crossed regularly and where "people make meaning across multiple media, multiple attentional foci, multiple sites, and multiple time scales?" (Lemke 2004).

Indeed, Lemke suggests that rather than asking the question, How do people learn?, we should be asking the question, How do we learn more about how people use space and place, time and pace in activity and learning?

This leads us into thinking about the resistance that can come about when teachers present 'new' curricula into the classroom. Lankshear, Snyder & Green (2000: 12) explore the in practice resistances and opportunities for developing new technologies and therefore new texts in the classroom.

Our purpose is to learn from the real instances of real practices to better understand the challenges presented to education by the rapid introduction of new technologies into classrooms, and how to take account of those challenges.

The authors were particularly interested in 'how organisations like schools can effectively change their dominant culture ... central to the English teacher's ambivalence was the question: Is multi media really English?' (13). If students are becoming switched off to the highly textualised and old interface to learning, perhaps mixing it up and trying to bring relevance to the how - pedagogy - and what - the curriculum - to their lives outside school, for some students, might help to switch them back onto finding ways of expressing their own futures.

Gee (2000: 185) discusses what students will need to be skilled and knowledgeable for social success in a capital (capitalist) future. He calls it '*sociotechnical designing*, that is: designing products and services so that they create or speak to a specific consumer identity and values (niches)' (emphasis in original). This social success discussion brings back into focus the connotative, denotative power of language used in socially set formats for function of language, of which broadcasting is one form.

The highest and most important form of sociotechnical designing involves designing *new workplaces* and *new workers*. New workplaces are designed to leverage knowledge from workers' day to day practices. In the new capitalism, thanks to changing technology and the pace of innovation, the knowledge 'front line' workers gain in ongoing practice as they flexibly adapt to new circumstances is more valuable than explicit knowledge based on theories and past practices, both of which go out of date too quickly (Gee 2000: 185, emphasis in original).

Here Gee links social success with vocational learning. Broadcasting allows students to engage with literacy learning and texts that are based on a vocational, problem solving, multi modal, technology rich, aural/oral mix. This might constitute one mix ideal for a literacy learning experience that looks to the students' future. Podcasting, as an extension of radio broadcasting, gives classrooms a publication option that allows for curriculum generated conversations by students to have local community or global connectivity.

Productive Pedagogies, Assessment and Performance (Hayes et al. 2006) explores the consistent elements that occur in a successful and rich learning experience for students in today's classroom. This research into successful learning was carried out in over one thousand Australian schools. The themes and assertions of the research resonated with me, as I could see strong connections between the authors' suggested professional practices within the classroom and where podcasting might contribute to classroom practice, supporting a range of authentic, student centered outcomes across the curriculum. This research located as important 'four dimensions' of qualities in the most effective learning

tasks the authors call 'productive pedagogies'. These four dimensions are listed as: 'intellectual quality, connectedness, supportive classroom environment and working with and valuing difference' (Hayes et al. 2006: 21-25).

Hayes et al. suggest that 'productive pedagogies' helps facilitate the 'productive performance' of students engaged in work of intellectual quality. This, according to the authors, might include activities that can demonstrate students' ability in metalanguage, higher order thinking and elaborated communication.

Metalanguage refers to teaching where there were high levels of talk about talk and writing, about how written and spoken texts work, about specific technical vocabulary and words (vocabulary), about how sentences work or do not work (syntax/grammar), about meanings structures and text (semantics/genre), and about how discourses and ideologies work in speech and writing (Hayes et al. 2006: 44).

Podcasting, with its formats for function that are based in the semantically rich broadcasting 'norms', is an ideal vehicle for generating classroom discussion on how written or spoken language are going to work. Students can debate the strengths and weaknesses of certain language for audiences and explore if meanings change given, for example, the age of the intended audience. This may become a classroom exploration into the connotative, denotative nature of language and enter into the productive pedagogies area of higher-order thinking.

Higher-order thinking occurs when students manipulate information and ideas in ways that transform their meaning and implications. This transformation occurs when students combine facts and ideas in order to synthesise, generalise, explain hypothesise or arrive at some conclusion or interpretation (Hayes et al. 2006: 149).

Preparation and organisation for any successful broadcast requires research, even if it is primarily driven by an interest in a style of music. If there is nothing new to be offered to the audience other than a play list of songs, it is just that. Radio broadcasting offers its audience something informative, interesting or entertaining (Radio Adelaide 2004). Even at its most basic, to have a successful broadcast facts and ideas need to be combined, scripted and recorded to purvey generalist or synthesised information. Broadcasting at its most elaborate can be theatre of the mind: entertaining, educational, humorous, dramatic, informing, or all or some of these things.

Elaborated communication is present in student's performance when the response to an assessment item demonstrates a coherent communication of ideas, concepts, arguments and/or explanations. This form of communication is rich in detail, qualifications and argument (Hayes et al. 2006: 149).

Whether simple or elaborate students could use broadcast formatted podcasts as a publication option to demonstrate a coherent communication of ideas and arguments. Podcasting which is intended for world-wide-web publication gives students an international platform. This is a potential publishing arena for students' work where the production is only restrained by the limits of creativity and vision of the constructor(s) of the message(s).

RadioWaves is a United Kingdom (UK) podcasting initiative that publishes students work on the world-wide-web, with demonstrated successful outcomes. They claim part of their success with engaging students is due to the industry links (radio broadcasting) of the formats students are being asked to engage with. This is supported by the subsequent *Evaluation of the RadioWaves Project* (Comerford Boyes 2003: 4) which found the RadioWaves project targeted with a high level of success, 'young people from the most disadvantaged wards in Leeds...disaffected young people aged 14-16 in or out of school'. The results of this project were positive and hopeful:

All those interviewed reported the RadioWaves project as being extremely successful in the case of individual pupils, some of whom seem to have been utterly transformed by the project. It has been shown to be powerful in the case of pupil groups, especially in terms of altering dynamics and providing a meaningful and alternative learning situation. Finally the RadioWaves project has been shown to have the potential of being able to contribute to school culture in such a way that doors and eyes may be open to future possibilities (Comerford Boyes 2003: 29).

The RadioWaves project in the UK is using broadcasting as a curriculum and podcasting as a publishing option. In my research I wanted to explore this option in an Australian middle school classroom context but rather than focusing on the most disadvantaged, disaffected young people I wanted to ascertain the responses to this type of literacy option in a 'normal' middle school class of students with their teacher(s).

Hattam (2004) is engaged, in South Australia, in a project that explores specifically the re-designing of classroom practice in middle school years. He says:

The need for innovation is especially urgent in the middle years, when many students begin to self-select out of schooling ... The focus of these (Hattam et al.) projects will be redesigning curriculum and pedagogical practice that demands high intellectual challenge from students in a way that engages young people's lifeworlds and the concerns of their communities (Hattam 2004).

Radio broadcasting (radio) reflects the concerns of the community, in the time in which it is set. Broadcasting puts the student and their concerns at the centre of the learning and lets them tell their stories connecting their lifeworlds to the classroom.

Introducing the Research

This research asks: how can we, in a multimodal, multiliteracy environment using broadcasting, extended by publishing as podcasting, switch on students to voice their means of making their own futures?

This research was implemented using qualitative research methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) as a case study. The case study had 'critical' (Stake 2003) impetus in the following ways: firstly, this study had sensitivity to the power relationships of the individuals within the case (Kemmis & Carr 1983); secondly, the research examines a publishing option for students that has the scope to advance a more socially just approach to the classroom; thirdly, I worked with teachers during the research process, supporting them as mentor and researcher in the process of developing the podcasts - working together in a spirit of collegiate, polyvocal, co-investigation. These elements give the research design 'reciprocity' (Lather 1991).

In this research I was concerned with the *aural* (listening)/*oral* (speaking) information and communications technologies (ICT) based broadcasting/podcasting formats that might offer a real alternative to text based learning in the classroom. I acknowledge adding text and pictures to podcasting has exciting future applications for the classroom creating vidcasts, vodcasts and digital story books (Meng 2005), but these elements are not considered in this study.

Historically podcasting was developed to stream broadcasting programs for consumer consumption on iPods, giving iPod users a choice between downloading songs from the internet, or entire radio programs, for later consumption (Plummer 2006). Just as these downloads can be an ongoing subscription to programs produced as a series or as a single segment, students and teachers have the flexibility to produce a podcast to be serialised or as a one-off.

It is the broadcasting history of podcasting with its own formats for function, which are industry developed norms and practices that give podcasting its strengths in the classroom as a learning tool. Like teaching narrative, there are frameworks to guide your learners through the genre of narrative: story introduction, complication and resolution; supported by topic sentences, punctuation and paragraphs. Broadcasting has its own structures particular to its genre: information, news, music and anecdote; supported by scripting (punctuated for breath), hooks, catchlines and annunciation considerations, to guide your learners through the preparation required to achieve a successful audio recording.

Introducing Alloway High School

The research that is discussed in this paper was carried out at Alloway High School (AHS). It is a year eight to year twelve high school with approximately six hundred, mixed ability, culturally diverse students. Of these students approximately ten percent identify with being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and approximately thirty five percent hold School Cards⁵, with approximately seven percent of students on Negotiated Education Plans⁶ (NEP) for recognised learning difficulties.

The class⁷ that participated in this research was in the middle school at AHS. These students were in a normal class pattern, on current lines and were not selected specifically for the research. Students attended their normal classes and were offered an alternative publishing option, podcasting, for a topic they would normally have responded to in written text. Students who were unwilling to participate in the research would have had an alternative method of responding to the tasks set by their class teacher – Matt (pseudonym). However, in this class all students chose to participate.

Case Study: Podcasting - a publication option for a year nine Science class.

⁵ School Card is means tested and can provide financial assistance for school fees of students that attend public schools in Australia. It is administered by the Department of Education and Children's Services (DEC's) (www.decs.sa.gov.au).

⁶ If a student has a disability, as described by the current DECS Eligibility Criteria (Intellectual, Communication and Language, Vision, hearing, Physical) the school will develop and implement a negotiated education plan (NEP). This plan sets out the background information, strengths and needs of the student and the learning goals (www.decs.sa.gov.au).

⁷ The research was conducted over two classes, a year eight English class and a year nine Science class. However the length and scope of this paper only allows for the research outcomes of one of the classes to be discussed.

Matt's year nine Science class comprised twenty-four students of mixed ability representative of Alloway High School's diverse student body, including: four students from a Non English Speaking Background (NESB), three students on NEP's, two students who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, with a gender balance of fourteen girls and ten boys.

Matt and I had a clear understanding about what my role was to be in his classroom. I was researcher and mentor instructing in broadcasting formats and audio editing. I was to be withdrawing from the mentor role as the class' broadcasting skills increased and the need for mentoring lessened, to become increasingly the researcher/observer in the classroom. Matt had the responsibility for the class: keeping the roll, class task development, assessment criteria and behaviour management.

Matt gave very clear descriptions for student learning tasks. Matt asked the class to educate, inform or advertise a new science, for example nanotechnology, forensics, biotechnology or medical science for an action research project. These class tasks gave the students specific functions for their production in terms of language construction that suited producing segments of radio broadcasting.

In my role as mentor of broadcasting formats and audio editing I gave direct instruction on how to audio edit and introduced the students and teacher to *Audacity* – an audio editing program. In subsequent classes I helped to troubleshoot the audio editing for Matt and the students. I supported the teacher in the instruction of broadcasting format, including scripting options, annunciation, pace and timing. I also supported the teacher in the saving of students' work in an mp3 format to be published later on the AHS intranet.⁸

All students engaged and recorded own voice, tried effects, higher and lower pitch, click tracks, pinching, do/undo, delete, fade in or out, white noise. This class generally willing to do audio editing in so much as that all students are having a go and seemed to have fun with it. Engaged teacher as well ... Two students (one who plays a musical instrument and one who according to the teacher has trouble with reading) asked if they could get the program to use at home – want to use in 'homelife' has relevance to them specifically. Teacher said: 'that was great ... the class enjoyed that' (Matt 2006). Teacher also expressed that he enjoyed using the audio editing program and said: 'using the audio editing is easier than I expected' (Matt 2006) (My Journal 2006).

Prior to the project I had anticipated that the developing of ideas and scripts for the publication of the podcasts would happen in the classroom, but most of the work, including idea development, occurred in the computer suites. In the computer suites students had access to the internet where they could visit and revisit sites for project research or listen to podcasts chosen for the purpose of modelling the medium. Modelling was a very important aspect of scaffolding the students into the task, so that they could hear how they might perform this new publishing option.

⁸ The interest in the podcasting project has seen the development of a podcast dedicated area on the AHS internet that also has support material for teachers wishing to implement this type of literacy option in their classes. At the time of the research students work was posted to the intranet which has local access and students could take their work home on disc (CD).

Once we heard the examples of students working across the world with definite application to 'year 9 science action research project' it (podcasting) became more tangible for students ... Excellent tool for a variety of assessment tasks... Students liked the ability to download and listen to music. The podcast from the U.S. – girl with the difficult life from the schools web site (RadioWaves) displayed very clearly the unique power of this program... All the students were engaged with the different examples (Matt's Journal 2006).

As part of this modeling process students listened to podcasts from a variety of international and local sites, and also watched and listened to how the students studying radio broadcasting at AHS developed their programs. A Welsh student in Matt's class was excited to hear some podcasts in Gaelic and she translated one for the class. In this lesson I also played the podcast *What Changed my Life?* (RadioWaves 2006), one girl's personal story of her own journey from self-harming to finding joy in the world. I turned it off three minutes into the podcast (the podcast duration was six minutes); I nearly got lynched – students *had* to hear the end.

Students were moved by *What Changed my Life?* ... I think a little surprised at how the audio got them in ... and how they felt more connected listening to her voice, than if they had read her story (student discussion in the lesson) ... I felt this was a powerful demonstration of the power of the spoken language for the class ... (My Journal 2006).

Students identified with the voices in different podcasts and made assumptions about the identities based on their voices and topics; 'He sounds young to be in year eight ... Is year eight there (Wales) the same as here?' (My Journal 2006). The response to podcasts by students in Matt's class showed that an aural/oral medium can create debate and awareness about similarities and differences between communities. The students' response to *What Changed my Life?* (RadioWaves 2006); the need to hear the whole story, the ensuing discussion about her issues and students saying her voice was more powerful than if they had read the story, are examples of this. The students listened to what other young people had to say, and spent time talking about what they said and how they said it.

We moved on from the modelling and once students had planned their podcast ideas and used broadcast formats to script or cue their work we started on the audio recording and editing. The students worked mostly in pairs or in small groups on their projects. As the teacher and students became more familiar with audio editing and broadcasting formats the need for my instruction decreased. Matt was increasingly able to help students, and students helped other students, with their audio projects, allowing me to become more the researcher/observer in the class. During this stage of the project the AHS information technology (IT) team were generous in their commitment to solving technology glitches encountered by the class, as a result of the implementation of audio editing across an entire computer suite.

It is a challenge for this class – researching new-sciences, using web-based resources and transferring to the new publishing option of podcasting ... This class is doing a really great job of assimilating all these things together ... most of the barriers to success here come from figuring out some of the physical aspects of the technology (some IT glitches associated with inaugural attempt at this) ... The class continues to be positive and fun to work with (My Journal 2006).

One of the projects, developed by two of the girls, was on dyslexia. The primary resource for their research came from one of the girls, who is dyslexic. She used the podcasting opportunity to educate this class about her condition. She felt dyslexia and how it affected her in class was misunderstood. In this podcast she was interviewed and answered candid questions which she had designed, about the diagnosis and implications of her dyslexia. These students planned, scripted, eloquently performed, recorded and edited an oral performance. This product not only educated her peers but gave this student an ideal platform, which she controlled, to express and connect herself to the class.

Most students in Matt's class finished their project with two groups having a partially completed audio product at the end of the study. Finished student audio projects included: an advertisement for a forensic science open day, a mock interview with a sports drug cheat, a mini-documentary style discussion on the role of the Sporting Drugs Association in Australia, a radio style comedy routine titled 'The Problem with Robots', and a personal account of a student's experience with dyslexia. These were published in mp3 format on the AHS intranet and students took copies home on compact disc to share with family.

This whole process has taken longer than expected, but has been rewarding ... It is good to see the final products close to fruition (My Journal 2006).

Some groups very diligent at producing a draft program ... other groups clearly losing interest from computer problems ... Some groups will produce a quality product ... others I don't think will finish the task ... Good team building skills and the pressure of the deadline (end of project) has made many (students) work harder (Matt's Journal 2006).

Before and after the podcast/broadcast experience I conducted interviews with the teachers involved in the research. These interviews were not to ascertain set responses, but to anticipate barriers and to get a sense of what was expected or unexpected, and then to reflect on the story of the case study as it unfolded. There were discussions between the teachers and the students about the positives and negatives of the podcasting experience/process. We decided that the teacher, without me present, should lead some of these discussions as my personal investment in the podcasting might cause students to feel obligated to reflect in an overly positive way. Again this was not to ascertain set responses, but to get at the story of the case. A sampling of the students' completed work was used to look at the literate practices embedded in the production of the audio edited work.

The material in the completed projects was all original work and students were not individually or otherwise identified. Some students developed character names for their podcast. It was a consideration of the school, as well as the study, to take care when publishing to the internet, that individual students not be identified.

Journaling was used as a method of data collection. The analysis of the journals has tried to be mindful of the methodologies underpinning the case study, and has set out to determine, by the teacher and researcher observations, cause and effect of podcasting for the bounded experience of the class; to be descriptive, polyvocal and have sensitivity to the relationships between participants.

In the post interviews we discussed where the teachers saw the future for podcasting within their curriculum area and what sort of assessment criteria they might use if they had to develop an assessment matrix for this kind of literacy learning or text type in the classroom. Some of the elements the teachers thought of as potentially valuable literacy practices that could be fore-grounded in tasks for assessment are: format for function (advertise, inform, entertain); voice performance (tone, pace, breath, audibility and enunciation); listening; speaking; language suitability; scripting; collaboration; planning and evidence of audience knowledge. Students could also be assessed on the more technical aspects of IT practice; for example, use of the internet to research, integration of IT processes and programs and audio editing proficiency.

Summary Comments

The story that unfolded in Matt's Science class was that students can assimilate an audio-edited, multimodal publication option into the classroom with some support and the *working* resources to facilitate this.

The research shows that in the process of creating the audio publications students enjoy working with sound and music. Matt discussed with the students what they did and did not like about the podcasting experience. All of the students in Matt's class said they would like to do more audio editing and use sound as part of class tasks and publishing options. Student comments included:

it was fun; listening for different sound effects was cool; I liked being able to put music in; listening to the podcasts (RadioWaves) helped give me ideas; I would do it again; it was really frustrating when we couldn't get some of the sound effects⁹; it was crap when the microphones took ages to get working and computers sometimes made it hard instead of easy (Matt's Journal 2006).

In this study there are some good examples of students using this medium to connect locally (for example the dyslexic student connecting to her class) and globally (for example the Welsh student translating the Gaelic podcast, and the general class connection to *What Changed my Life?*); bringing the world outside into the classroom.

While students were meeting the requirements of the tasks set by their teacher, the podcasting experience provided the opportunity for a lot of talk about talk. Students practiced their audios before recording them and asked for feedback from peers or the teacher. This aspect of podcasting addresses, *Productive Pedagogies, Productive Assessments*' (Hayes et al. 2006) important learning area of metalanguage. In Matt's Science class, students were taking research information about science and organising that information to be synthesised and reproduced as an audio product. These kinds of text production require the learning area of higher-order thinking as defined by Hayes et al.

Students involved in the research project in Matt's class used the broadcasting formats as a way to discuss usage of language for specific purposes or niches. For example, students could understand and discuss the differences in format of presenting their research material as information as opposed to advertising. Their science research task combined with the podcasting option gave students an opportunity to discuss how media constructs messages for consumers of that media – a literacy experience with the

⁹ The Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) IT filters made it difficult to access some sound effect web pages. The school has since purchased a sound effect library.

potential for students to be engaging with literacies and texts that prepare them for their social and working futures (Gee 2000).

Conclusions

This study showed podcasting's vocational link with broadcasting to be valuable for the teacher in the scaffolding of students, to prepare for their audio performance in readiness to edit and produce a final product. The students in Matt's Science class found broadcasting formats to be helpful in the preparation and planning of the construction of their podcast text.

The study showed that mixing up the literacy tasks - speaking, listening, reading, writing and using technology and sound - increased student engagement. This study showed that some students who were reluctant writers engaged with the writing tasks in preparing podcasts. The inference drawn from this was that the students concentrated on producing a successful (digital) audio product and were not put off by the planning and scripting needed to facilitate this. The process of the production, the mixing up of the texts in the construction of the podcasts slipped writing 'under the radar'. The research demonstrated that podcasting had the potential to contribute to students' literacy learning in the classroom in the following ways: as a viable alternative to written text that foregrounds students' speaking and listening; as a way of engaging some students that do not engage well with tasks that foreground writing; an approach that supports collaborative work in the classroom; and the teacher and students said they enjoyed the podcasting experience because there was a lot of talk about talk, sound and music.

Students during the study were observed generally as: engaged during the research and enjoying the 'drive the vehicle' aspect of literacy learning: juggling scripts, sound effects, microphones, headphones and the audio editing. For some students this way of working may be more representative of their increasing connectedness to the social technologies pervading their lifeworlds. This has positive implications for literacy learning at a time when curriculum and pedagogy practices are being examined to find ways to bridge the cultural divide between students and teachers (Green 1992) and also finding ways to connect school to students' lifeworlds (New London Group 2000).

For teachers to successfully offer podcasting as a publication option in the classroom this study makes the following recommendations: that the physical resources – audio editing programs, computers, microphones, internet/intranet space – are available to teachers in good working order. Most frustrations encountered throughout the study could be related to technology glitches and; as was the case at AHS, that the leadership team of the school support teachers wishing to implement multimodal or new technology literacies into their classroom practice.

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