Educational Podcasting

Listen to Communicate Better

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Podcasting is a medium I enjoy; I am an avid listener myself. I love the freedom of being able to do other things, like riding the metro or cleaning the house, while listening to someone telling me their stories. It's like I'm sitting in on an intimate conversation about exciting topics in a privileged way.

According to the Media Technology Monitor (2020), podcasts have one of the highest engagement rates of any digital media. Nearly 75% of podcast subscribers listen to the content until the end and stay engaged for up to 36 minutes at a time—impressive enough to catch the interest of a college teacher!

The idea of doing an educational podcast had been on my mind for a while. I was thinking about it for my transtibial prosthetics course. It's a fourth-session course in the Orthotics and Prosthetics program at Collège Montmorency; the only course I teach in this program. But how do you include a podcast in an educational setting? And more fundamentally, is it advisable to do so?

With these questions in mind, I came across a reference text by Temperman and De Lièvre (2009), in which these authors consider the podcast as a tool with significant potential for learning (p. 5). This finding confirms the usefulness of the podcast in a pedagogical setting and strengthened my idea of integrating it into my course. That said, the more I learned about the topic, the more questions I had! How do I make sure my podcast is pedagogically aligned? How do I translate this idea into concrete learning, and ultimately, how do I measure the attainment of the competency with this activity? And, just as importantly, how do you make a podcast?

Producing a podcast, whether educational or not, is a bit like undertaking a construction project, with all the creativity, planning, human and material resources, coordination and objectives it requires. The analogy may seem trite, but that's exactly what it is! A podcast is a pedagogical media construction that has its own codes, languages, production stages and… challenges!

Starting point of the project

An extrinsic motivational factor pushed me to set up this educational activity: the public health situation, because of which everything turned virtual. Since I had begun the process of thinking about including a podcast into my transtibial prosthetics course, I quickly targeted one of the competencies of this course: "Communiquer avec les patients en milieu clinique" ("Communicating with patients in a clinical setting," Ed.) (Collège Montmorency, 2014). I foresaw that attaining this competency, which is already difficult to pin down in normal circumstances, would be even more laborious to implement remotely. I would no longer have the chance to set up simulations and role-playing exercises as easily in a theoretical class context, even before the students put the communication concepts into practice with amputee patients. Therefore, my choice of content for the podcast was based on attaining this one competency.

However, my literature review was disappointing: there was nothing on this topic in the field of prosthetics, and more broadly, there was nothing on communication with patients, either. I therefore transposed the general

notions of scripting an educational podcast, based on the considerations of, among others, Temperman and De Lièvre (2009), to my teaching context and undertook the design of my first episode. Although this text is a bit dated, the scripting steps presented in it still apply. In fact, all the more recent texts I have consulted refer to Temperman and De Lièvre.

I approached the integration of my educational podcast in two phases: design and implementation.

Design

In light of my research, it became clear to me that learning from the podcast would be done autonomously by the students; i.e., they would have to extract the important notions themselves while listening, and the application of these notions would be done in a complementary fashion, during laboratories with amputees and in the context of a competency report.

In order to effectively design my educational activity, I adapted the model presented in Temperman and De Lièvre (2009).

Needs analysis

The analysis was done ahead of time, during the reflection on the attainment of the competency "Communicating with patients in a clinical setting"(Collège Montmorency, 2014). Students already have prior knowledge on communication from courses in previous sessions. I adapted the terminology used in the interviews accordingly and more importantly, I adapted the content covered in a prosthetics context.

Content structuring

The content was based on a single competency, which made it easier to structure the content to be covered in the episodes, particularly with regard to the learning objectives. The goals of the activity are to allow students to become aware of the challenges of communicating with an amputee.

More generally, the interviews were designed to allow the students to understand the challenges and subtleties of effective, responsive and respectful communication, including:

a) the attitude of the prosthetist toward the patient;

b) the quality and importance of the prosthetist's listening skills;

c) building a climate of trust;

d) establishing respectful and polite communication;

e) ensuring the patient is satisfied (with their prosthesis, the interaction, the delays, etc.);

f) the information given in connection with a new prosthesis (maintenance, use and guarantees).

Choice of communication and language codes

The choice of people to talk to was dictated by the themes I wanted to address. I am fortunate to have many contacts in the field, which allowed me to cover the targeted themes. I also enlisted the help of people outside the field, such as an ethicist-philosopher to talk about reasonable accommodation, a medical archivist to discuss confidentiality, and a neuropsychologist

to shed light on the mechanisms of pain and how its perception influences the patient. I wanted the tone of the podcast to be that of a conversation between colleagues: accessible and friendly. My target audience is composed of second-year students, not experts! My questions were always given to my interviewees in advance, and they had the opportunity to adapt them before the interview and prepare their answers. However, I explained to everyone that I did not want a formal interview: I wanted the tone to be casual and personal.

Integration into a learning environment

Since this is a new educational activity for my students, I clearly explained the usefulness of the podcast. I linked this audio format to the objectives of the transtibial prosthetics course through a video tutorial (Prezi) in which I explain to my students the relevance of this media, and, more importantly, how to use it, so they will be able to apply it to the patients they meet in the lab at the end of the session. In this video, I also take the opportunity to explain the instructions for the competency report and the evaluation grid.

Implementation

Once the design complete, it's time to make the podcast. There are technical aspects to master and minimal equipment to have on hand. Dr. Alireza Jalali, Associate Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Ottawa, gives some good tips for producing an educational podcast. The design advice is similar to that of the authors listed above, but Jalali specifies some implementation elements, which I have adapted to my production context.

Source: Gene Jeter

Production

I had a computer and an external USB microphone at my disposal, which did the job just fine. My interviewees needed a computer, or even a smartphone, and a pair of headphones with a built-in mic. I used the Anchor website to record my episodes. It's possible, with a smartphone, to record two people on the same audio track when you can't do the interview face to face. The recordings were done from home, because for both me and my interviewees, it was easier to find common availabilities in the evening or early morning. The published episodes are 45 to 60 minutes long, but the actual recording takes 75 to 90 minutes, depending on the loquaciousness of the interviewee and unexpected interruptions (like the dog barking because the doorbell rang!). I also experienced some technical difficulties during the recording of some episodes, caused by an unstable Internet connection and a less than optimal environment, since the recordings were done from home. I compensated with audio editing, but the quality of some recordings is not optimal.

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Post-production

I used a video editing program, Garage Band, which allowed me to edit the audio quite easily. The audio editing took me a while and I had to get familiar with the software. Fortunately, the learning curve was fairly quick. I had to cut some passages that were less relevant to the angle of the interview, for example, when the conversation went off on a tangent (without, however, distorting the points made). I also had to cut segments in which either my question was unclear or my interviewee wanted to repeat their answer.

Broadcasting

I used the Anchor site to host my podcast simply because it's the one my college uses to stream our director

general's podcasts! It's a site that allows for free streaming and also generates a direct link for listening. Since mine is an educational podcast, I chose not to broadcast it via public sites, though Anchor allows it.

I recorded all but one of the episodes before the session started because one interviewee was not available beforehand, but we found a common availability in the first weeks of the session. The episodes were all made available to the students at the same time, allowing them to listen to the episodes at their own pace. I wanted to make the students autonomous in managing their time so they could maximize the use of this pedagogical tool. In addition, there is no specific order to the episodes; although they

Source: Dayvison Oliveira

are numbered, students can listen to them in a random order and still attain the competency.

Evaluation

I wanted to design an evaluation activity that was consistent with the learning objectives of the podcast and, to this end, I opted for a competency report. Learners have the choice of presenting it in writing or in speaking. This report promotes metacognition and helps each student target key learning. In addition, an evaluation was also organized during the end-of-session labs with amputees, allowing students to put into practice the learning achieved through the podcast.

Findings

The students enjoyed using this educational medium because of its ease of use and versatility, especially in terms of when and where they could listen. The quality of the competency reports was very good. Indeed, most of the students established coherent links between the theory (the episodes) and the practice. A few mentioned that they had listened several times to the episodes that had resonated with them more. Some had told their friends or family about the episodes because they enjoyed the content so much! In general, the students found the topics relevant and the speakers interesting; some told me that they were surprised to hear a philosopher, but that his ideas were very useful in a clinical context.

This type of instructional design was very stimulating and motivating for me. What's more, with the use of the podcast, I quickly perceived advantages concerning the development of communication skills. I found that there is a natural complementarity, particularly due to the fact that the interviews are audio-based, and the topics discussed are about communication! The podcast has allowed me to link communication-related content more concretely to practice with real patients. I have seen a marked improvement in attaining this competency, which, as I mentioned at the outset, was difficult to acquire. The students made more connections between theory and practice, and most importantly, they demonstrated to me that they had grasped the subtleties of communication with amputee patients.

Despite the success of this podcast and the pleasure taken in its implementation, the work required is colossal, both for the design and the production. Even though recruiting the speakers was fairly easy, finding common availability was sometimes difficult. Fortunately, I intend to use this medium again in the transtibial prosthetics course; the episodes are already produced, only the activity remains to be improved. In fact, two main areas of improvement have been targeted: pedagogical and technical aspects.

Pedagogical improvements

Putting the concepts discussed in the episodes more into context. This would allow the students to better internalize what they learn by listening to the episodes, in order to apply it concretely in the laboratory with patients.

Defining more precisely the nature of the task to be completed by the students. This would avoid evaluations that are too broad or too simplistic.

Offering complementary tools. This would help to better target what needs to be learned. An active listening tool or even a discussion forum (on Moodle, for example) would be beneficial to facilitate preparing the report and

encourage diligence throughout the session. Several students admitted to me that they had listened to the episodes a few days before the assignment was due. For the second iteration, I developed a very simple tool to allow students to keep track of the highlights of each episode. Now they have to use this tool in three stages: before, during and after listening to the episode. The students do not have to show me the completed tools, but they will use them to write their report properly. **Figure 1** shows the tool I implemented during the second iteration of the podcast.

Figure 1

Active Listening Tool

Topic of the episode:

BEFORE
What do you know, and what would you like to know about this topic?

DURING
Write personal notes or keywords:

AFTER
Have you been able to answer your initial questions after listening to the podcast?

If yes, write the answers:

After listening to the episode, briefly summarize the salient facts or the elements that stood out to you the most (use the notes you have taken while listening):

Technical improvements

Opting for an optimal recording environment. I experienced problems with bandwidth and unstable internet (or related issues) that created a delay between my questions and the answers of some interviewees, sometimes causing the two voices to overlap. This technical challenge was quite difficult to compensate for with audio editing and compromised the quality of some episodes.

Choosing the right time to record. Even if I found a time when the house was quiet, there were interruptions because I recorded the podcast from home rather than in a studio.

In conclusion, I consider that I am assessing this adventure positively. I like to try new things in my classes, and even if it's not always a success on the first attempt, I analyze the results, adjust and try again. Because, without perseverance, nothing comes to fruition!

To listen to the "Parlons prothèse avec MC" ("Let's Talk Prosthetics with MC," Ed.) podcast: anchor.fm/marie-claude-bastien ▬

> I liked the podcast experience so much that I produced another one in a completely different context: "Enseignement et apprentissage au collégial" ("Teaching and learning at the college level," Ed.), at the Université de Sherbrooke (PERFORMA) in the winter 2021 term.
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> To listen to the "Parlons pédagogie avec MC" ("Let's Talk Pedagogy with MC," Ed.) podcast: anchor.fm/mc-bastien

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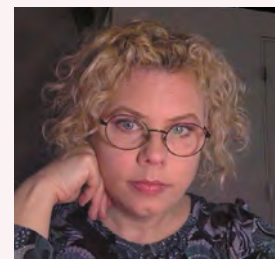
Marie-Claude Bastien has been a teacher and coordinator of the Orthotics and Prosthetics program at Collège Montmorency since 2004. She has been a lecturer at the Université de Sherbrooke (PERFORMA) since 2013 and holds a master's degree in College Teaching obtained in 2019. She graduated from Collège Montmorency in Orthotics and Prosthetics 25 years ago and has been working as a prosthetist with amputee patients while teaching in the technical program, thus pursuing her two passions.

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