Audience Perception On Educational Podcasting In India

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Introduction

Media plays a dominant role in the education of society. While technology was taking its time to settle in the education system, the Covid-19 pandemic forced on making abrupt changes in the same. Suddenly literacy was restricted to screens in an online format. Both students and teachers adapted the technology as a tool to educate. While live online classes became a popular medium, other e-mediums like YouTube and Podcasts gained importance too because of their benefits.

Podcasts are audio-blogging tools recorded to deliver online discussions over a range of popular topics. Podcasting refers to the authoring of or subscription to audio and or video files that can be downloaded and played back on a wide range of mobile devices such as MP3 players and iPods (Dale & Pymm, 2009).

Podcast was developed in the year 2004 when Adam Curry and Dave Winer coded a program that enabled them to download the radio shows. The program they designed was called iPodder which downloaded radio broadcasts to Apple iPods. And hence the term Podcast, a combination of the words iPod and Broadcast was born. The term was mentioned in The Guardian newspaper article by the journalist Ben Hammersley. But never did they know that it'll become the next big thing even though it resembled radio, a fairly outdated medium. But the XML format of RSS feed that was earlier used to navigate through the world of podcasting was restricted to major media gatekeepers. Hence the RSS feed was born.

A decade later, big conglomerates like iHeartMedia and Google spotted the long term opportunity of expansion of the industry so they started acquiring the ownership of podcast platforms. The game revolutionized when in January 2019, Spotify announced its entry in the industry too. This is how the fate of the industry changed. More and more podcasters started budding up and it became the next big thing. Podcasts function via Really Simple Syndication Feed (or, RSS Feed). An RSS feed is an online file that contains all the details about a podcast in standardized, computer-readable format. Hence, we surf, download on demand, or subscribe to a podcast via its unique RSS feed. Podcasts are series of episodes on numerous topics. These episodes get stored in the unique RSS link of the podcast with a podcast hosting company, like Spotify or Google.

Podcasts are a tool that can entertain, inform, counsel, and teach without screen engagement which is a fact that cannot be overlooked as a contributor to the growth of

podcasts. Podcast has outgrown itself in the very last decade, so much so that it has become a dominant media industry. There has been a significant increase in the popularity of podcasts since 2008. Not only the listener base but the number of podcasters has been experiencing a constant hike.

As stated earlier, accepting the buzz of the newest medium, huge media conglomerates have been spending millions of dollars on podcasting. Only recently, Streaming-audio platform Spotify has announced its acquisition of two podcasting companies, each of which sheds some light on Spotify's long-term plan to dominate the podcasting business. The online audio giant is acquiring both Podsights and Chartable. The companies make two of the leading tools related to marketing, advertising, metrics, and analytics for audio content. Podsights is an advertising measurement tool that allows advertisers to see how many people were exposed to their ads, as well as how effective the ads were at driving purchases. Chartable is somewhat similar, but it's aimed at podcast creators, not advertisers. It helps podcasters track audience growth and see what factors are driving that growth. Previously, Spotify had already acquired Paracast, Anchor, and Gimlet. It has also amped up the podcasting experience by adding Spotify Podcast Analytics Dashboard. Another noteworthy development is Google adding playable podcasts on its search options. Apple recently revealed that there are over 2,000,000 existing podcasts on iTunes.

Boom of Podcasting in India

According to a PriceWaterhouseCooper's (PwC) estimate, around 40 million of India's 500 million internet users had ever listened to a podcast as of the year 2018. India's podcast consumption increased by 29.3 percent in the first year of the pandemic as reported by KPMG's Media and Entertainment Report 2020 . With 57.6 million monthly listeners, India is the third largest consumer of podcasts (after the United States and China), according to PwC's Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2020 study, and is expected to reach 17.61 million by 2023.

According to a survey conducted by Spotify and YouGov in the year 2021, 50% of Indians prefer to listen to at least one episode of such a podcast every week. Spotify's podcast hosting tool, Anchor, hosts nearly 40,000 shows from India, with over half of those launched in 2020. Worldwide, over 1 million shows were added on Spotify last year. This highlights how podcast listening is booming in India. According to The Indian Podcast Listener Statistics in 2018, three-fourth (77%) of all Indians who listen to Podcasts do so on their phones while commuting. Few reasons that can be cited as reasons for the sudden spur of popularity of Podcasts in India during pandemic are:

- Listeners' strong appetite for self-help and motivating content.
- Lockdown made people discover and appreciate the young medium.

- A shift in the preference of screens to screen-free streaming.
- Cheaper data penetration in the recent times.
- Spurge of smartphones in the recent times.

Podcast and Education

Many specific educational pedagogical strategies are required to initiat the use of technology in education. Using technology in education have three general functions: to present learning materials, to permit an interaction between learner and text, or to facilitate communication between learners and teachers. These choices must be related to the aims of teaching and learning, not the limits of the technology. In this way, precise criteria are established for determining the effectiveness of a particular platform like podcast (Brabazon, 2006).

The usage of podcasts in education is numerous. Podcasts have brought the renaissance to the world of communication through audio. Besides, the Scottish Council for Educational Technology has proved how audio is a convenient medium to express feelings, attitudes, and atmosphere. Schools in different parts of the world have started using audio plays podcasts to explain literature and concepts to students which have shown remarkable results.

According to Goldman, Podcasts may help in the enhancement of the logical and coherent thinking process in students. Podcasts help in improving the insights over a range of topics and enhance the writing skills too. However, if the teachers are taught to deal with the technology, the benefits manifold the efforts. Podcasting offers teachers and students a mobile education tool that increases the likelihood of student engagement and motivation, feelings of the authenticity of work, collaboration, and student autonomy (Pignato 2010, p.39)

Stephanie Pignato studied the secondary level students and found out that the medium of podcasts suits the age group perfectly well. According to Pignato, incorporating the medium of podcasts in education increases the engagement of students and their motivation to work. It catches the attention of the learners because the mode of communication is mostly audio and visual. This makes the students enjoy the format as they can navigate easily through this medium and pick up on the chapters quicker than the conventional model.

Durbridge emphasized how spoken words have influenced both cognition and motivation. It ends up adding clarity to the lecture. Cebeci and Tekdal found out that after 15 mins into listening to podcasts, the attention and comprehension ability decreases. This is why in the IMPALA Project, most of the audios wind up at 10 mins. The conclusions of the experiment conducted for the research prove that the lecturers have accepted that the

introduction of podcasts in their classrooms brought a positive shift in the perception of the lessons. According to them, podcasts are an effective tool for delivering content, feedbacks, guidelines, etc.

Podcasts are a one-way, non-interactive transmission mode of learning and solitary activity. If m-learning is to transform our educational practices then it needs to foster deep approaches to learning, that is an orientation in the student towards understanding, personal sense-making, and active learning (Dyson and Nataatmadja 2008, p.20). Due to these disadvantages, students do not consider giving the medium a trial. The results of those who used the same, however, comments that it was the best audio learning experience.

Some of the benefits of using podcast in imparting education has also been argued like portability and conivence in the classroom. It can accessed anywhere and anytime by students, opening avenues for flexible learning. In the case of podcasts, even students can produce them on their own. Hence, this participation gives them control over the education that encourages them to learn more and to share more. The options to revise the concepts and make up for missed classes over podcasts is yet another advantage. Harris and Park (2007) suggest that there are multiple characteristics of educational podcasting in institutions of higher learning including Teaching- driven podcasting, Service-driven podcasting, Marketing-driven podcasting, and Technology- driven podcasting (Harris & Park, 2008).

Michael Godsey did a research by introducing the "Serial" podcast in his classroom, he noticed a sudden rise in interest among the students after every episode. Thorough discussions, eager wait for the next lecture, reading while hearing, problem-solving, critical thinking, and storytelling was few of the attributes that showed a hike of interest among the students, and hence the practice was continued for both primary and secondary texts. According to Godsey, "Reading along with listening to podcasts builds up confidence, especially for the younger students. It also prevents spacing out and helps to focus. This often acts like a listening comprehension which is an excellent exercise to hone the command over the language".

What counts as a podcast episode is any or every audio that interests the public. It may be a movie review or an episode on cultural theories. It may be a story episode or even a poetry episode. It may be a discussion on the latest happenings or a debate on a historical myth. Various type of formats of Podcasts can be used in imparting education. Broadly classifying the genres of podcasts, few of them are:

1. **Solo or Monologue:** In this format, a single person, that is the host of the show narrates or speaks about topics of his niche. For example, Mission ISRO, Maha Bharat, and Daily Coach.

2. **Chumcast or Gabfest:** When two or more people converse about topics they are passionate about, ranging anything from history, politics, or even movie reviews. For Example, What's Up Sister, Stuffs You Should Know, and The Desi Crime Podcast.

3. **Interview:** The host interviews celebrities or common people on topics of their expertise and of public interest. For Example, The Joe Roagn Experience, The Ranveer Show, and Ten per cent Happier.

4. **Storytelling:** This format is much like Radio Drama that comprises of a plot, storyline, characters, and dialogues. For example, Serial, Death Lies and Cyanide, and Bhaarat ki Amar Kahaniyaan.

5. **News:** Many news agencies have started their own podcasts to deliver daily news observing the popularity of how people preferring catching up with daily news in audio format. For example, The Daily, BBC News Podcast, and The Print.

6. **Audiobooks:** Audiobooks are narrations of complete texts of books. It is a convenient alternative to the conventional reading. For example, The Audiobooks Podcast, LibreCast, and Worm Audiobook.

Theoretical Framework

As Paivio (1986) has stated that visual stimuli would activate a different part of the brain from the area that the audible stimuli would activate. To understand the relationship between podcasts as a medium of mass communication and education better, three theories namely; Task Based Language Learning Approach, Multimedia Learning Theory, and General Learning Theory have been studied for the purpose of this research.

Introduced by Larsen-Freeman (2000) Task Based Language Learning Approach focusses on learnings while performing a task. Every respondent in this research listens to podcasts (task) to learn something new out of it. So, instead of thinking it as a learning experience, if listeners take it as a task, they may end up with an excellent learning experience.

Multimedia Learning theory was introduced by Richard Mayer and stems from Paivio's Dual-Coding Theory. According to Mayer (2001), when one receives information using verbal and nonverbal stimuli can enhance one's cognition simultaneously rather than by itself. The theory states that audio and visual combined together helps our brains to decode the information in a better way. It fits best for Podcast, hence, when a voice over runs over an image, it avoids cognition overload and helps in a better understanding of the text.

Hence for example, we tend to memorize a picture following text in a book in a much slower rate as compared to a picture listening to the text in the format of an audiobook, this is how the brain works.

The Generative Learning Theory was introduced by Merlin C. Wittrock. According to this theory, a learner must be a generator of knowledge than just a receptor of information. This would happen when he is actively participating in the learning process. This happens when the students connect their prior knowledge with new information generating a relationship between existing knowledge, experiences, and beliefs and newer stimulus. Hence, this theory advocates the idea of creating new content (via podcasts) based on the previous cognition. It insists students to produce their own podcast content in the format of teaching material that will end up improving their learning experience.

Objectives
The research proposes to analyze the following objectives:

- To analyze the Usage and Purpose of listening to Podcasts by Podcast listeners in India.
- To examine the type of skills inculcated through Podcasts.
- To understand the use of podcast as a tool in education/literacy.

Research Methodology

For the purpose of this research, an online survey was constructed to collect primary data from only podcast users in India. The survey comprised of questions highlighting the preferences of podcast listeners in a range of aspects. The questionnaire thus constructed was circulated in different podcast groups on Facebook and WhatsApp to record the data of avid listeners of podcasts. This made it easier to expand the arena of the sample space. Respondents from all age groups participated in the survey.

The Sampling method used in the research is "Voluntary Response" under Non-Probability Sampling. Under Non-Probability Sampling, individuals are selected on a random basis and not every sample has a chance of being selected. Though an easier method, this technique has a high chance of bias that disrupts the conclusion.

Under Volunteer Response, instead of the researcher picking up the participants, as the name suggests, the participants voluntarily contribute to the research. For this research, the questionnaire was posted on several social media podcast groups and people voluntarily participated by filling up the form. The Sample Size chosen to conduct this research was 100. The data was analysed in the form of simple frequency (percentage) method.

Data Analysis

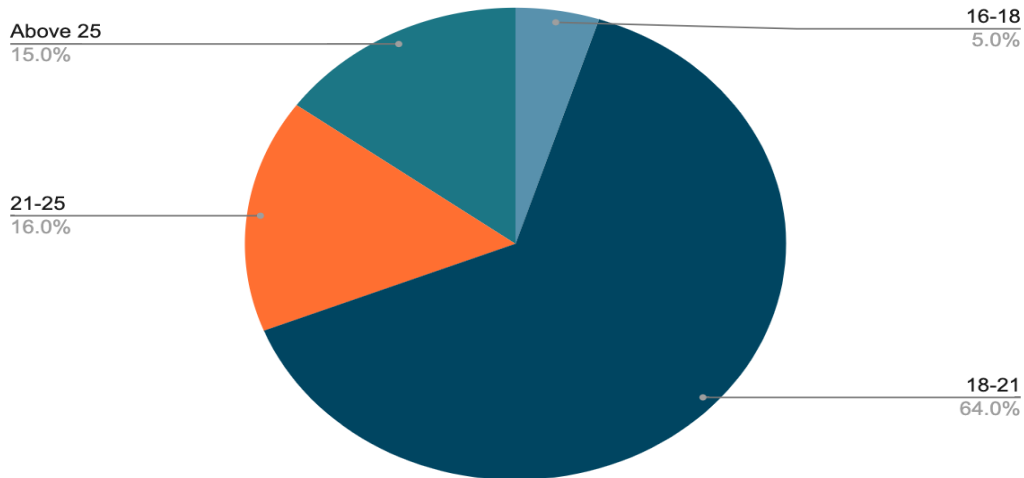1. Age of the Respondents

Age of the Respondents

FIG. 1. Age group of Respondents

The fig. 1. shows the distribution of age groups of all the respondents who participated in the survey. The maximum respondents, that is, 64% of them belonged to the age group of 18-21 years followed by age group 21-25 years and Above 25 years old with 16% and 15% respondents respectively. The least number of respondents were from the age group 16-18 years. Hence, maximum respondents who participated in the survey were either in their college or had just graduated.

2. Podcast listening pattern of respondents
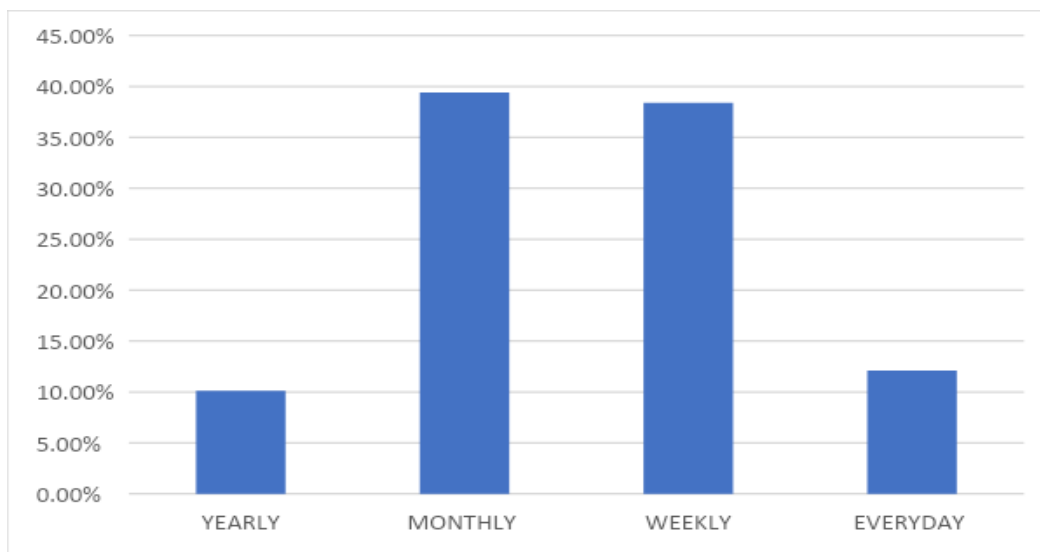
FIG 2. Podcast listening pattern of respondents

In figure 2. Depicts the frequency of listening to a podcast by respondents. The listening pattern are categories as listening on yearly basis, monthly, weekly and everyday. A little less than forty percent of respondents are listening to podcast on a monthly basis. Almost similar percentage of respondents prefer to listen to podcasts on a weekly basis. However, a few percentages of the respondents listen to podcasts daily.

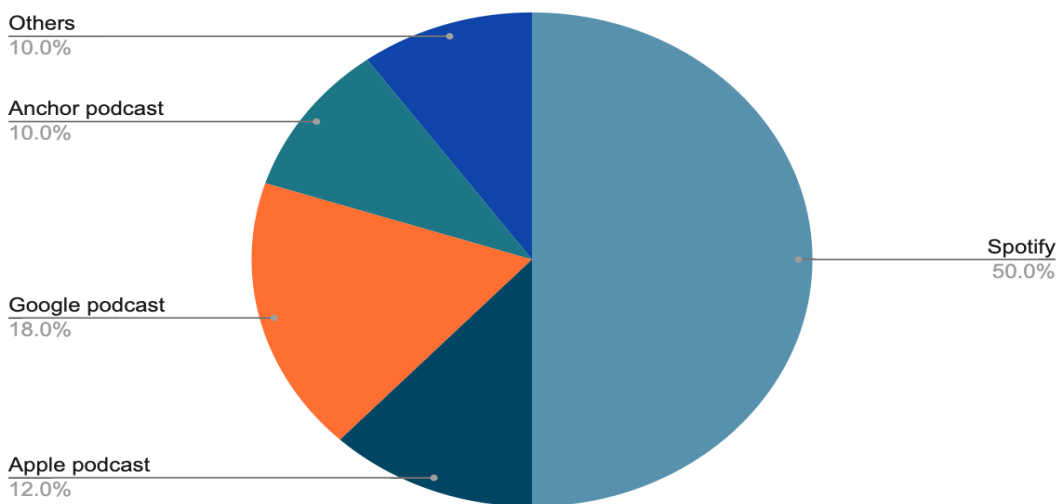3. Preferred Podcast platform of the respondents

FIG 3. Preferred Podcast Platforms

Figure 3. Shows the percentage of preferred Podcasts platforms of the respondents. The major players in podcast are categorized as Spotify podcast, Google podcast, Apple podcast, Anchor podcast and category of others. The results shows that half (50%) of th erespondets prefer Spotify over any other podcast platform. Yet many other popular platforms, compromise of Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts, and Anchor with 18%, 12%, and 10% preferences respectively. However, it is interesting to note that ten percent of the respondents do prefer othe platforms of podcasts like Podbean, Jiosavan, Gaana and Youtube.

4. Purpose of listening a Podcasts

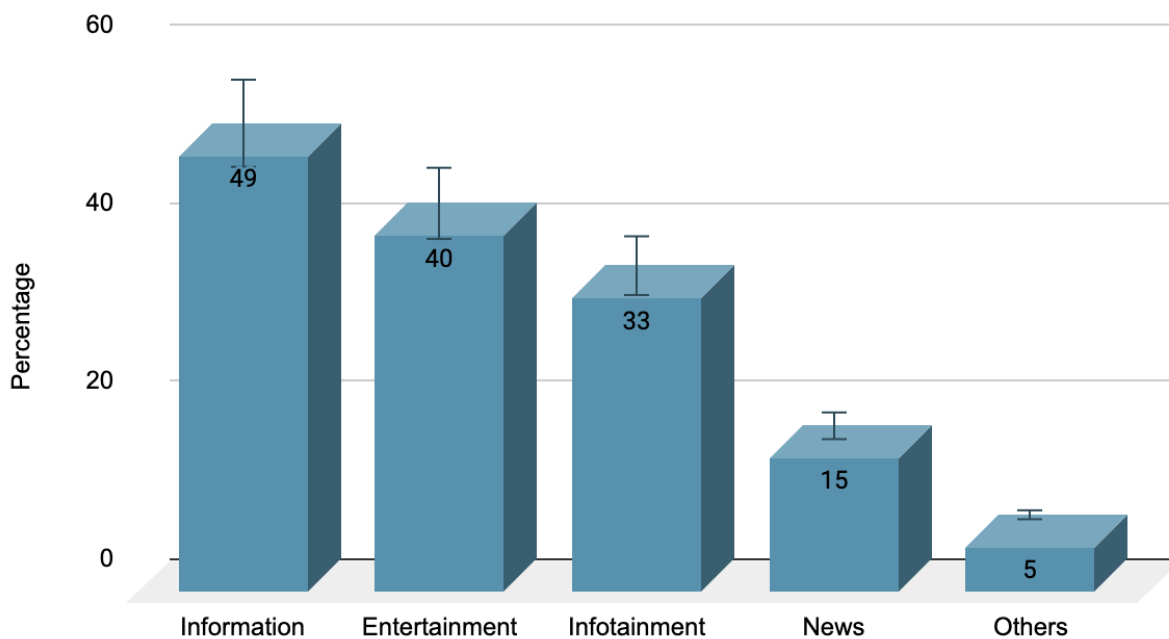## Purpose of Listening to Podcast

FIG 4. PURPOSE OF LISTENING TO A PODCASTS

Fig 4. Measures the respondents purpose of listening to a podcast. The categories are identified as information, entertainment, infotainment, news, religion, business and personal growth. Respondents were allowed to choose multiple categories here. The result depicts that the respondents uses podcasts majorly to gain information (49%) about topics or to entertain (40%) themselves. It is worthy to note that neilgible percentage of respondents listens to podcasts for the other purpose like religion, business and personal growth. However, one-third (33%) of the respondents uses podcast for the purpose of infotainment.

5.   Skills developed with Podcast
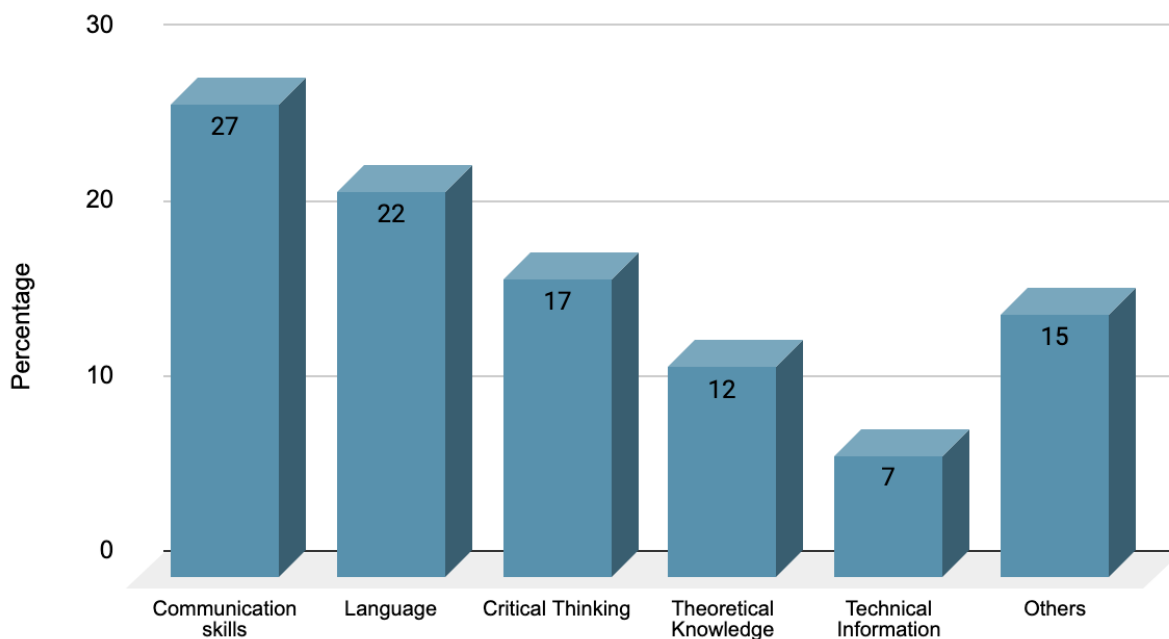
Skills developed with Podcasts

FIG 5. Skills Developed with Podcasts

In figure 5. The bar chart depicts the skills developed after listening to podcasts. These categories of developed skills are identified as communication skills, learning language, critical thinking, theoretical knowledge, technical information and category of 'others'. The result shows that twenty-seven percent of respondents developed communication skills through podcasts. A little less than one-fourth (22%) learnt a new language listening to podcasts. While seventeen percent of them believe that podcasts had improved their critical thinking. However, almost similar percentage of respondents thinks they have gained theoretical knowledge (12%). It is important to note that the category of 'others' (15%) of them has gained concentration power and learned to manage stress.

6. Advantages of using podcast in Literacy/Education

Advantages of using Podcasts in Literacy

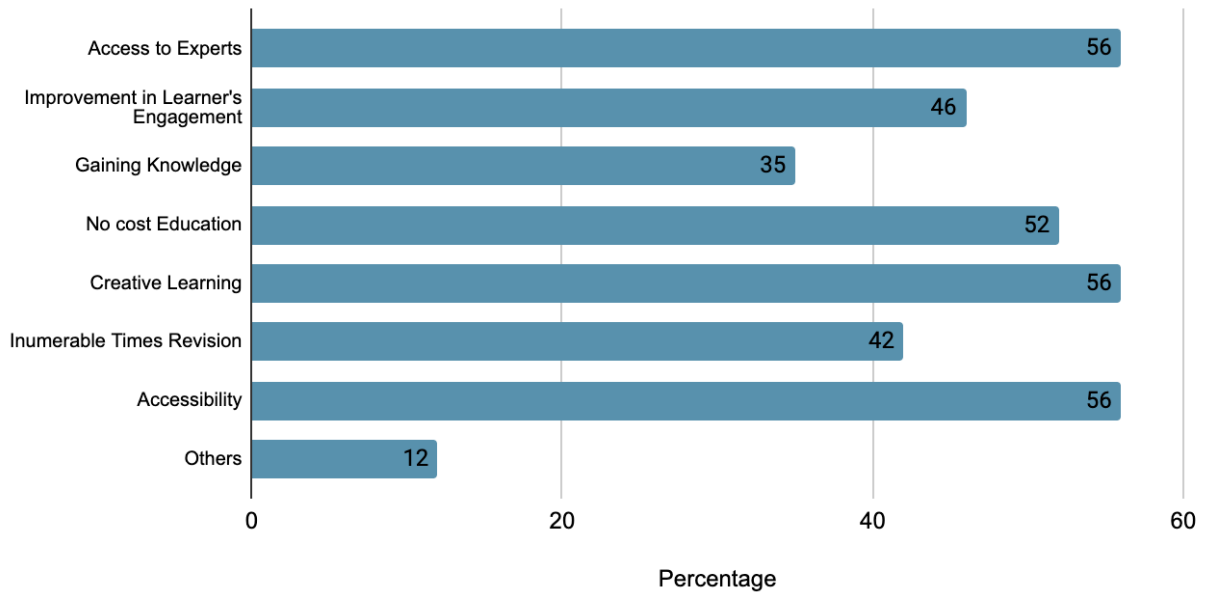| Category	Percentage
Access to Experts	56
Improvement in Learner's Engagement	46
Gaining Knowledge	35
No cost Education	52
Creative Learning	56
Inumerable Times Revision	42
Accessibility	56
Others	12

Percentage

FIG 6. ADVANTAGES OF USING PODCASTS IN LITERACY

In figure 6. The bar chart shows the various advantages of using podcasts in literacy. The categories of advantages are identified as access to experts lectures, improvement in Learner's engagement, gaining knowledge, no cost education, creative learning, inumerable times revision, accessibility and category of 'others'. Respondents were allowed to choose multiple options from the list of categories. The result demonstrates that a little more than fifty percent of respondents has similar opinion about these advantages of podcasts in litearcy i.e., access to experts opinion (56%), free cost education (52%), creative learning (56%), and accessibility (56%). However, improvement in learner's (46%) engagement is also one of the important advantage identified by the respondents.

7. Challenges of using podcast in Literacy/Education

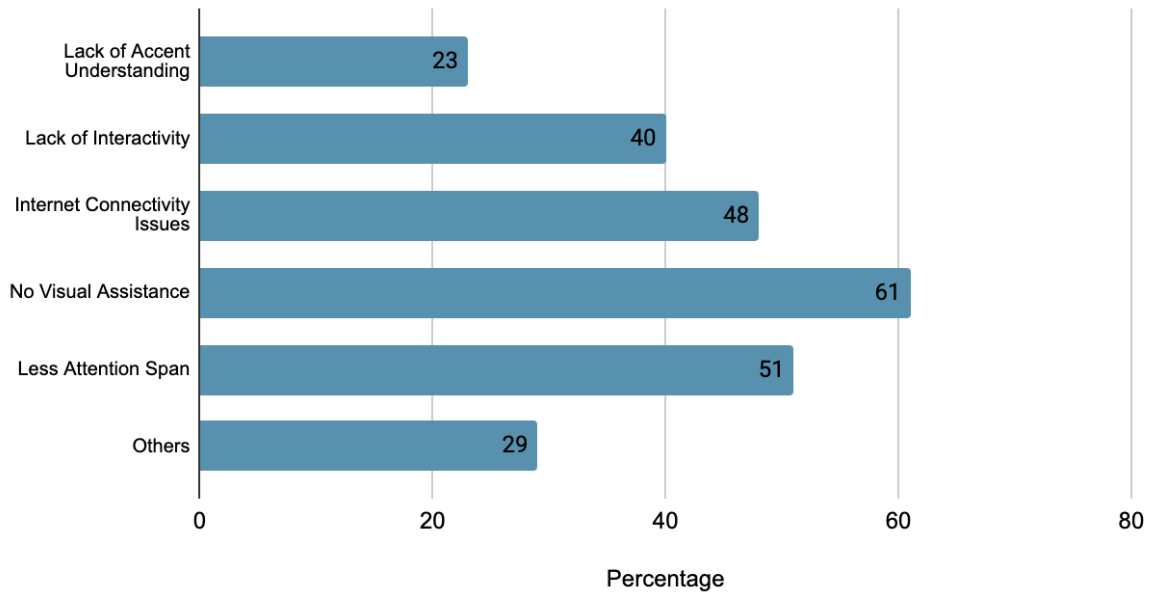## Challenges of using Podcasts in Literacy

FIG 7. Challenges of using Podcasts in Literacy

In figure 7. The bar chart shows the various challenges of using podcasts in literacy. The categories of challenges are identified as lack of accent understanding, lack of interactivity, internet connectivity issues, No visual assistance, less attention span and category of 'others'. Respondents were allowed to choose multiple options from the list of categories. A little less than two-third (61%) of the respondents see no visual assistance of podcast as a challenge to literacy. Almost half of the respondents believes that other major challenges to the podcast is less attention span (51%) and internet connectivity issues (48%). However, a little more than one-third i.e, forty percent of the respondents believes lack of interacitivty as a challenge to use podcast in literacy. Whereas almost one-fourth (23%) of the respondents thinks lack of accent understanding as a challenge to use podcast in literacy.

8. Respondents opinion if podcast to be used for literacy

Should Podcasts be used in Literacy
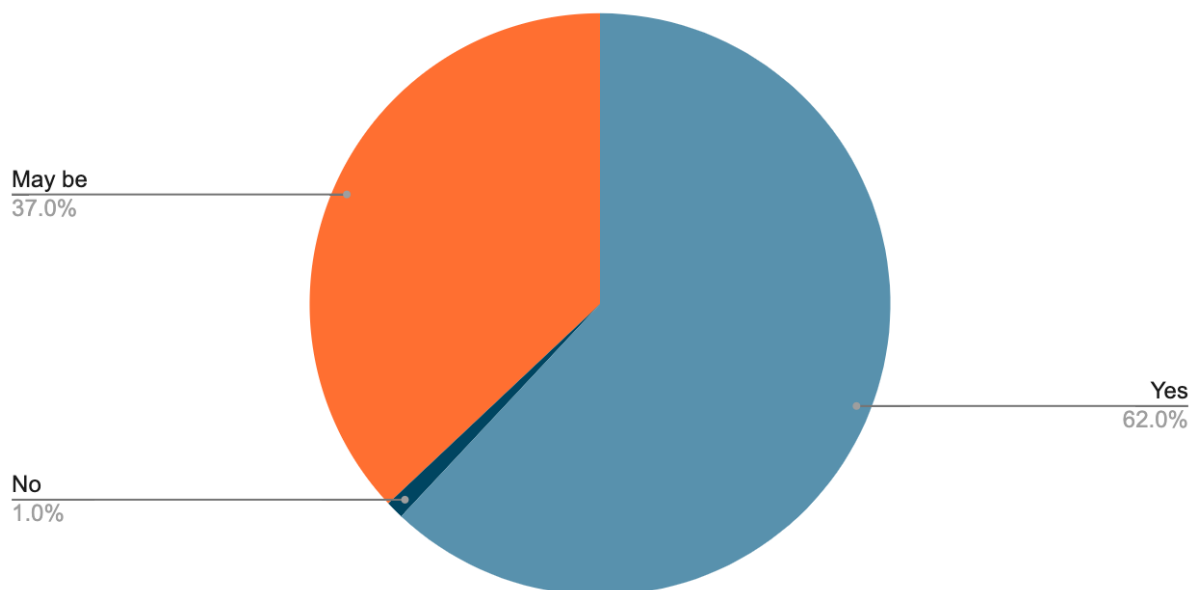
May be
37.0%

No
1.0%

Yes
62.0%

FIG 8. OPINION IF PODCASTS SHOULD BE USED FOR LITERACY

In figure 8. Respondents opinion if podcasts should be used for literacy is measured. A little less tahn two-third (62%) of the respondents are of the opinion that podcasts are appropriate to use for literacy. However, a little more than 0ne third (37%) of the respondents thinks it could be feasible to use podcasts for imparting education. It is important to note that negibile number of respondents disagree to use podcast for literacy.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Worldwide education institutions are investing in technology oriented learning, wherein Podcasts become the newest and most affordable technology. Educational Podcasts can easily be used in Schools and Universities to enhance learning and the students only has to subscribe to a podcast feed. Podcasting is an easily accessible and inexpensive way to create digital content which can be utilised by ever growing young digital natives of primary and elementary school. Podcast can be used to supplement teaching, foster students creativity and engagement.

The popularity of podcasts in this decade is not unknown to the world and hence it should be used to the benefit of the education sector. It now depends on how well the students and teachers coordinate to include it as a part of the curriculum and how much the schools and universities assist in infrastructure development for the same. In this research the data reveals that the majority of the podcast listeners are of the opinion that podcasts should be used as a supplementray tool for imparting education in India too, like used by other countries. A similar study was conducted by Thomas Goldman (2018) that proved

podcasts to be a great source of education. Quoting from the research,"If teachers are teaching with the most up to date textbooks, and students are learning the most up to date information, why should they not be using the most up to date technology?" (Goldman, 2018, p.13).

In this research, majority of the respondents identified certain skills that they learnt while listening to the podcasts like communication skills, language and critical thinking. However, Popova, Kirschner & Joiner (2014) in their research quoted that the podcasts "help bridge the conceptual distance between new and prior knowledge, better understand topics in lectures and stimulate thinking more deeply about the lecture's content and the possible applications of the subjects of the lecture" (Popova, Kirschner & Joiner, 2014, p. 330).

Almost half of the Podcast listeners in this research were listening to the podcast for the purpose of gaining information, mostly weekly or daily. This again proves that the podcasts can be utilized to deliver information related to news or can be used for pedagogical purposes. For pedagogical purposes it can be used for delivering, recording and revising lectures. With the help of podcasting students can be allowed to create their own content with their own podcast enhancing students engagement in the form of discussion, projects and presentations. One of the most important advantage of the educational podcasting is to learn through listening. Podcasts can help the auditory learners or visual impaired to a great extent.

Indeed, the Covid-19 pandemic has turned the tables, especially in the field of education. In a world where online formats of classroom learning are being given preferences, including podcasts in the classroom learning, would amp up the experience. Pedagogical strategies need to be enhanced as per along New Education Policy (NEP 2020) such as adoption of modern technologies like Digital Audio libraries for students. Podcasts in this regard can be used to supplement and improve course work, recording lectures and interviews, organizing image and text files. According to Brabazon (2006), "Audio books, including language dictionaries, allow the development of sonic literacies and broaden the experience of education into diverse sites of life". Professional skills among educators, teachers or Podcasters have to be developed through professional development and training like sonic awareness, delivery, voice modulation, pace, pauses and intonation, volume and pitch and how to use the medium for the education. With online learning is being encouraged during the pandemic, Podcasts can be a perfect alternative to the classroom lectures as an innovative and interactiv tool of learning. Podcasts libraries are going to be the game changer in the field of education.

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