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## **1. Introduction**

With the proliferation of new technological advances, paved the way for the rise of podcasting. Derived from the combination of the words ‘iPod’ and ‘Broadcasting’, podcasts are a form of audio media that is usually available in mp3 and can be played over a variety of different mediums such as through mobile phones or stereos, not just limited to the iPod (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Podcasts generally boast a wide variety of genres, from covering things like self-help guides to comedy dialogues to language learning ones, there is likely to be a podcast for almost every topic imaginable (Heilesen, 2010). Furthermore, as media and technology has progressed, podcasts have now become easily accessible (Rosell-Aguilar, 2013). One such example of the increased accessibility is, instead of having to download the mp3 file, users can opt instead to stream it via streaming websites such as Spotify or Apple Music.

For the purpose of this assignment, I will be looking exclusively at language learning podcasts; the podcasts created with the intention of teaching its listeners a new language. As seen in figure 1.1 the variety of these language learning podcasts are close to endless. This is because podcasts offer a wide variety of information, basically offering language learning materials free of charge (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). This, coupled with a podcast’s ability to replicate a classroom without actually being in a classroom, language learning could be greatly revolutionised (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007).

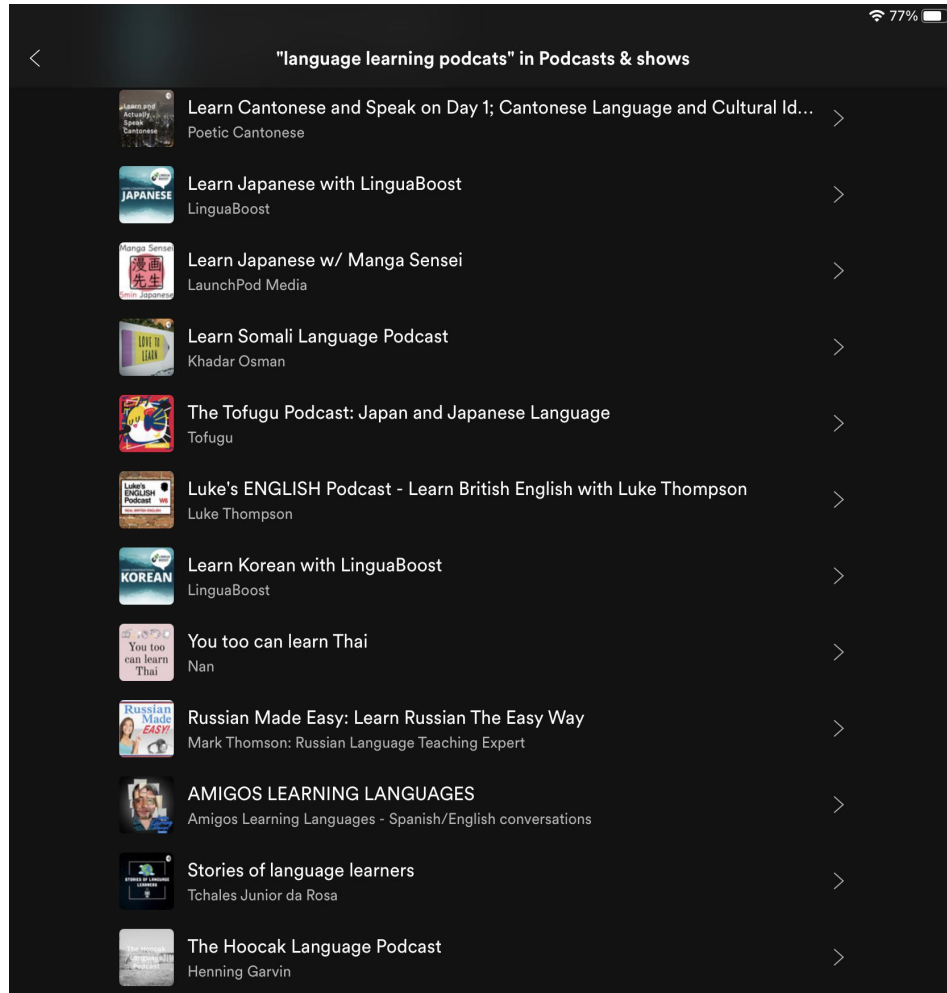


Figure 1.1 the types of language learning podcasts that are available on Spotify

## 2. Properties

Traditionally speaking, podcasts have only ever existed as an audio medium, but as technology has advanced, so has podcasts. With regards to language learning podcasts, it has always followed one of the two formats; firstly, a lecture style sort of podcast that involves a grammar teacher monologuing about the structure of the language (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). The second format involves a scripted dialogue between a native speaker of the language and another person who is posing as the learner of the language (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Presently, with the technological advances, these language learning podcasts all have websites that now offer transcriptions of their episodes, images that could have helped support their point, translations that aid in learning and even videos of them filming the podcast episodes (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007).

Since podcasts have now evolved past merely speakers and listeners to readers and even potential watchers, the properties of a podcast are no longer as straightforward. Below, in table 2.1, I have analysed the communicative properties (speaking, listening, reading and watching) of these language learning podcasts as per The Cambridge encyclopedia of English Language, on the differences between speech and text (Crystal, 2006).

Speech like	Text like	Speakers	Listeners	Transcripts and translations	Videos
Time-bound	Space-bound	time-bound	Space-bound	Space-bound	Space-bound
Spontaneous	Contrived	Contrived	Contrived	Contrived	Contrived
Face-to-Face	Visually decontextualized	Visually decontextualized	Visually decontextualized	Visually decontextualized	Visually decontextualized
Loosely structured	Elaborately structured	Elaborately structured	Elaborately structured	Elaborately structured	Elaborately structured
Socially interactive	Factually communicative	Factually communicative	Factually communicative	Factually communicative	Factually communicative
Immediately revisable	Repeatedly revisable	Repeatedly revisable	Repeatedly revisable	Repeatedly revisable	Repeatedly revisable
Prosodically rich	Graphically rich	Prosodically and graphically rich	Prosodically rich	Graphically rich	Prosodically and graphically rich

Table 2.1 the properties of a podcast as compared to speech and text properties

As seen in the table above, the communicative properties of a modern day podcast encapsulates mostly text-like qualities.

### Speakers

From the perspective of the people hosting or producing these language learning podcasts, it is more likely to be time-bound because they would likely want to emulate the effects of actually

teaching their listeners and hence would choose to keep their speech dynamic. This is especially prevalent if the podcast follows the latter method of dialogue between a native and non-native speaker. It would generally be contrived and factually communicative because the ultimate goal of the language learning podcast would be to actually teach its listeners the language, hence some form of quality control would be necessary. So the more accurate and the more scripted, the better. With scripting, the quality of it being ‘repeatedly revisable’ would also follow because scripted work can be modified frequently before it actually has to be recorded. Lastly, as the host of the show would likely read off a script, making it graphically rich, but there could be moments of improvisation which also contribute to this aspect of podcasting to be prosodically rich.

### **Listeners**

Unlike the speakers, the listeners of the podcasts are instead space-bound because they are limited by the device they are choosing to listen to the podcast on. Furthermore, they follow the similar qualities being contrived, visually decontextualized, elaborately structured, factually communicative, repeatedly revisable and prosodically rich because from the angle of the receiver, these are factors that are controlled by the producers of the podcast, hence forcing the output aspect of podcasting to also possess these properties.

### **Transcripts, translations and videos**

Since newer podcasts have also moved to websites where they are able to display their translations and transcriptions, they hence make way for readers of their published work. Figure 2.2 displays the webpage of ‘Easy Stories in English’, an English-teaching podcast on Spotify that has displayed all their transcribed work in chronological order for easy toggling. Since transcripts and translations are basically text bound by a screen, they hence carry purely by text-like qualities of communication. Additionally, many podcasts are now watchable because producers may choose to film their recording process to have that additional visual aid for their listeners. Figure 2.3 shows the video series that the ‘Learn Japanese Pod’ has available on their website that is basically the video version of their audio podcasts with added subtitles and images for their listeners. Though the videos also have similar qualities to that of the other podcast features, the main difference is that videos are both prosodically and graphically rich,

hence adding that extra communicative feature for the listener that the other properties did not previously have.

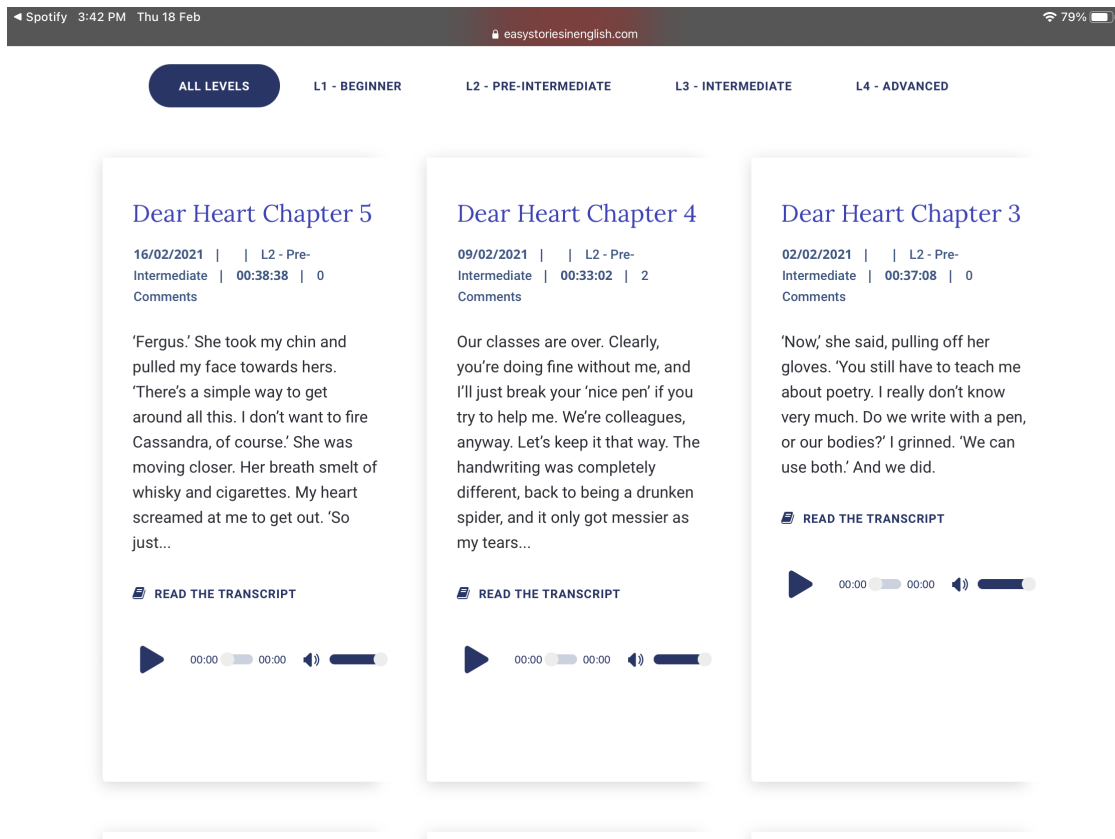


Figure 2.2 Easy Stories in English's transcribed podcast episodes on their website








1:50 AM Fri 19 Feb learnjapanesepod.com 30%	
	<a href="#">Learn Japanese Pod Video 1: How to introduce yourself in Japanese</a>   In this video, we learn some basic useful greetings in Japanese.
	<a href="#">Learn Japanese Pod Video 2: Useful daily phrases you use a lot in Japanese</a>   In this lesson, you will learn some must-know daily phrases in Japanese
	<a href="#">Learn Japanese Pod Video 3: Phrases for leaving your house - itte kimasu</a>   “Itte-kimasu” is perhaps one of the most used phrases in Japanese and you should definitely learn it! Check out the video to see what it means.
	<a href="#">Learn Japanese Pod Video 4: Phrases for when you get home - Tadaima - Okaeri nasai</a>   In this video you will learn some great phrases used everyday in Japan when returning home
	<a href="#">Learn Japanese Pod Video 5: How to apologize in Japanese</a>   As they say in Japan, if it's your fault, apologize, and if it isn't, apologize. Check out how to apologize in Japanese.
	<a href="#">Learn Japanese Pod Video 6: Useful Japanese phrases for restaurants in Japan 1</a>   In this video you'll learn how to get seats on your arrival at a restaurant
	<a href="#">Learn Japanese Pod Video 7: Useful Japanese phrases for restaurants in Japan 2</a>   In this video you'll learn how to order drinks in Japanese at a restaurant after being shown to

Figure 2.3 Learn Japanese Pod's videos

### 3. Effects on language acquisition

At the end of the day, no matter how technologically advanced language learning podcasts can be, the main purpose of these podcasts is still to teach a language to non-native speakers. With the ability to allow its listeners to control the speed of the audio and the number of times they can play it back, these podcasts are definitely indisposible learning tools to those wishing to acquire another language (Rahmi & Katal, 2012). Moreover, they help their listeners not just understand the structure of the new language but also the culture in which it belongs because these podcasts are also likely to teach the colloquial forms of this language, fuelling a deeper connection between language and listener (Rahmi & Katal, 2012). For example, as seen in figure 3.1, Learn Dialect SG has a series of their own podcasts that teach Hokkien, Cantonese and Teochew as spoken in Singapore. These forms are by no means traditional forms of spoken Hokkien, Cantonese and Teochew, but they do instead offer its learners a better understanding of how these spoken varieties have been affected by Singapore's culture. Additionally, because of the extensive amount of planning and research that goes into planning each episode, a podcast is a favourable method to learn language because it already condenses the vast amounts of

information available on a language into informative and easily understood terms (Rosell-Aguilar, 2013). This benefit, coupled with the fact that accessing podcasts for learning is an independent decision, makes language learning by podcast really appealing because listeners are in control of their own lesson times (Heilesen, 2010). These factors all contribute to the overwhelmingly favourable view of using podcasts for language acquisition (Heilesen, 2010).

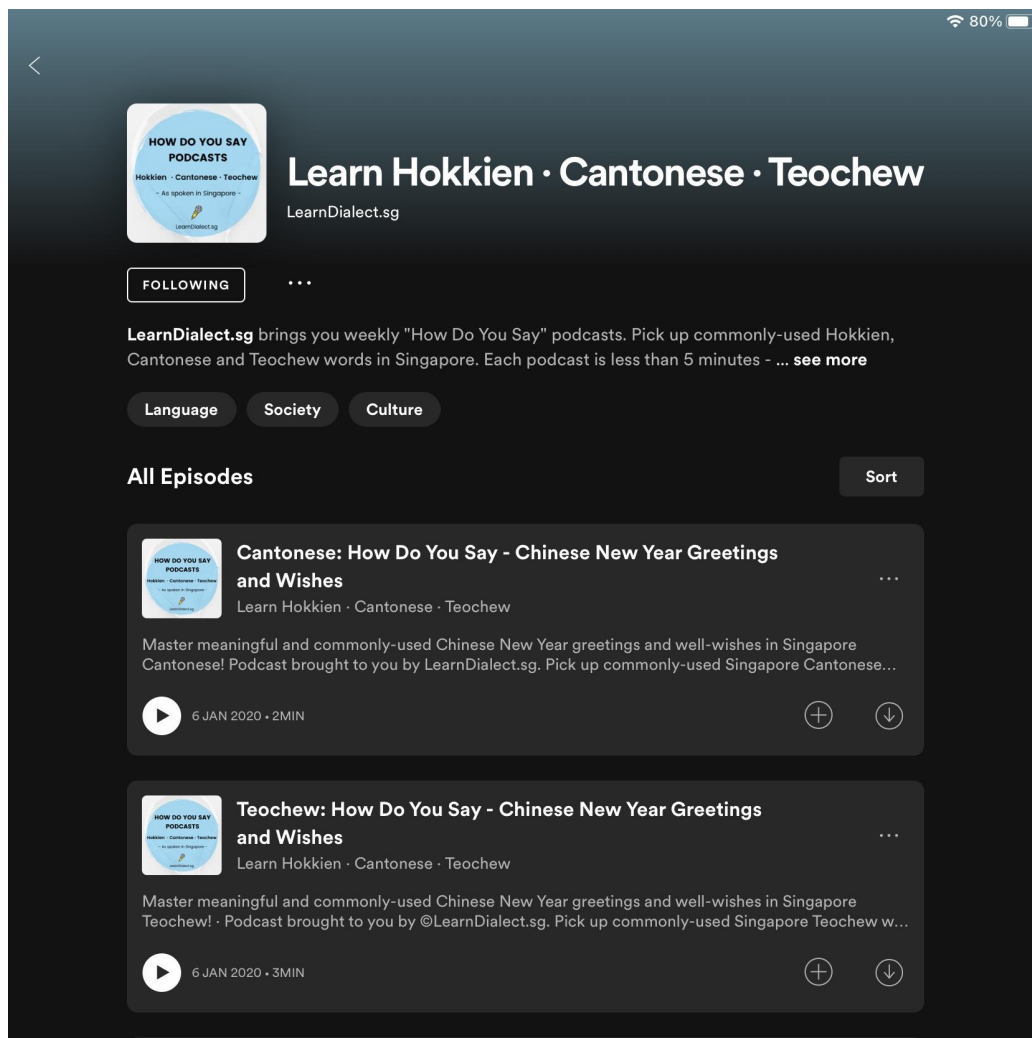


Figure 3.1 Learn Dialect SG's podcast

However, with its various advantages in language learning, there also comes its various challenges that ultimately question the effectiveness these podcasts actually have on its listeners to carry out its purpose. The most major limitation that these language learning podcasts have is interaction (Rosell-Aguilar, 2013). This is an important factor in language learning because it

signifies the transfer of knowledge from the classroom (in this case audio file) to society (Allwright, 1984). Without interaction, it could be argued that the language learning podcasts are only good for passive knowledge of the language and its listener could potentially never reach a native-like fluency. In addition to the lack of interaction that podcasts have, another detriment that podcasts have is the independence it offers (Rahmi & Katal, 2012). Although mentioned earlier that this could be a potential advantage, there is no denying that podcasts rely heavily on its listeners to be listening effectively (Rahmi & Katal, 2012). In short, the detriment of independence is that there is too much of it. The listeners may not have the discipline to consistently upkeep with the episodes or the work they may have to put in after listening in order to fully grasp the language. This hence defeats the purpose of teaching language because the student would not have consistently learnt enough to be confident in the language.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Despite its various limitations, there is no denying that language learning podcasts could really transform language learning across the world. Now no longer bound to just being an audio medium, it has now become increasingly accessible for anybody to use. This is not only an effective way to ensure the survivability of a language, but it also helps to spread the culture of a community across the world. All in all, the new communicative properties of language learning podcasts will continue to revolutionize the way we acquire language, impacting the way we communicate.



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