



Using Audio Quizzes to Assess Student Learning in an Online Asynchronous Summer Podcasting Course

Chad Whittle
Georgia College & State University

Teaching online courses can be both rewarding and challenging. The format allows for positives including allowing students to continue coursework during the summer months when they are away from campus and provides more flexibility for faculty and student schedules. However, some challenges do remain when teaching online courses. The format of online learning can make engagement and assessment difficult since students are not present with the instructor on campus. Assessment methods including discussion boards can become monotonous for students and multiple-choice tests may be easy for faculty to grade and students to complete but does pose a risk as students could simply use their notes when completing them online or memorize the answers rather than genuinely learn the material.

To better assess student learning, students in a summer 2025 online asynchronous intro to podcasting course completed audio quizzes. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) was used as a framework for this assessment method because like UDL states, this format would provide “a flexible test administration vehicle that provides students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding and skills according to the particular learning goals associated with the assessment (Rose, 2000, p. 47).” Unlike multiple-choice quizzes, students with this structure would have to explain what they have learned instead of simply selecting the correct answer. In addition, recording

their answers would provide them an opportunity to gain more audio production experience using a microphone and further develop their communication skills by learning how to share their thoughts in a professional setting.

Course and Assessment Method Overview

The course was a four-week June term course, and the required text for the course was “Podcasting 101: A Complete Reference Guide to All Things Podcasting” by Teddy Burch. The first three weeks of class covered three chapters from the book per week, with chapter ten being taught in the fourth week of class. The rest of the fourth week was reserved for them to work on their final project for the course, which was to produce a podcast episode on a topic of their choice. On days when there was no lecture, students had other chapter-related assignments.

Each week, the 11 enrolled students had one audio quiz consisting of five questions that related to the chapter lectures covered that week. They were required to speak for 3–5 minutes on each quiz. I selected 3–5 minutes because most of the students have never produced a podcast. I know from my own experience podcasting and from teaching prior sections of the class, that less is more for them. Starting them out on short audio clips allows them to learn how to produce podcasts better than requiring long runtimes which usually ends up with less quality work as they

are overwhelmed at trying to fill the time.

Grading Rubric Categories

For the quizzes, a rubric was used to grade their efforts. The rubric categories included:

1. Content Accuracy: Their responses contained accurate information, and they showed a good understanding of the material.
2. Clarity and Organization: Meaning their responses to all questions were well-structured, clear, and easy to understand.
3. Verbal Communication: Their speech was clear with good tone, pacing, and pronunciation.
4. Effort and Completion: All responses were complete and thoughtful.
5. Technical Quality: The audio was clear, professional, and contained no distractions or background noise. Since this course was a class on audio, I felt a category on the audio quality of their work was necessary for the quizzes.

Student Feedback to Quizzes

On the final audio quiz, the last question was used to gather their feedback on the experience:

“After completing a semester of audio quizzes, what is your opinion of using this format as an assessment tool to assess students’ understanding of the topics covered in this course as opposed to traditional methods such as a multiple-choice quiz?”

The following student responses were published with permission from the students.

Madelyn: “I was personally a really big fan of the audio quizzes. I think that one of the biggest things that a lot of students, especially me in the beginning, face is just realizing that we have to learn how to speak publicly, whether it’s in front of a class or into a microphone. Or into a camera, or however that may be. I think that this is a really great way to just get confidence in yourself and in your voice. And it makes me feel like I know the information that I’m talking about much more than if I were just answering a multiple-choice quiz.”

They felt they could share more of what they learned and think through their responses by explaining them instead of simply selecting an option on a multiple-choice test.

Devin: “I honestly enjoyed this more than a

multiple-choice quiz because I feel like I can explain myself better, and I can explain the answers better, than just clicking on a multiple-choice quiz. I feel like it takes more thought to actually talk and say the answer, and you learn it better when you have to read it and then say it back into a mic and then turn it in.”

Shaw said he really enjoyed the audio quizzes and thought it was more interactive and a good way of applying the knowledge of what they were learning in a way similar to what they were learning about. He liked that it allowed him to use his own voice and feel more casual and speak how he would in a conversation with someone, versus when he is editing a paper and making sure his writing makes sense.

One student felt she learned more from the audio quizzes than from multiple choice tests.

Whitney: “I think the audio quizzes is a great idea because it makes you practice speaking in front of a mic, even though I prefer regular multiple choice quizzes, I started to like the audio quizzes because you actually learn from them, I had to research the questions and I believe saying the answer out loud makes the information stick in your head and you actually learn from them. It’s a lot easier just to Google the questions in a multiple-choice quiz rather than having to explain your answer. It’s almost like a presentation you have to practice for, but you also understand the material, so I think it’s worth it, and I do recommend you keep doing this for future semesters.”

Cara said she enjoyed the audio quizzes because it allowed her to show more of her personality. However, she suggested making them longer (4-7 minutes) because she felt rushed and would always be over the time limit and have to restart her recording to try and meet the time requirement.

The students overall seemed to enjoy the experience of using audio quizzes in class. The purpose of the audio quizzes was achieved as many students felt they were able to learn more by having to explain their answers instead of simply selecting a correct answer on a multiple-choice quiz. The class also felt they gained public speaking experience and production experience which are both important skills for audio-based students to have. It appears the audio quizzes were more engaging to students than other methods of assessment and they liked the hands-on interactive element the quizzes provided by allowing

them to speak in their own voice and put into practice the podcasting production concepts they learned in class. This is information that could be useful in other media classes.

Students seemed to like variety in their assessments and having the assignments tied to course content they are learning. Other courses in audio should consider similar assessments as making quizzes more interactive seemed to be more engaging and interesting to students. However, the usefulness of audio quizzes would depend on the course and how they are implemented. For some courses, audio quizzes would not be the best assessment tool, but for an online course, especially an audio course, it is useful.

In the future, to improve the audio quizzes' effectiveness, I plan to add more questions and require more depth to their answers to assess them better. In addition, I will require students to produce audio quizzes more like a podcast instead of simply recording their answers, so they can gain more production experience through the process: better audio quality, more engaging audio with sound effects, sound bites, intro/outro. While requiring more audio elements in their submissions will make the process longer for the students, I think giving them more experience editing and creating would benefit them more and help further their skills. Experimenting with audio quizzes during the podcasting course was a very positive experience for the students. If you decide to use audio quizzes in a class, I hope it is as rewarding for your students as using this assessment method were for mine.

References

- Burch, T. (2023). *Podcasting 101: A complete reference guide to all things podcasting*. Kendall Hunt Publishing.
- Rose, D. (2000). Universal design for learning. *Journal of Special Education Technology*, 15(4), 47-51.

Chad Whittle is an assistant professor of communication at Georgia College & State University. Dr. Whittle is the faculty advisor for the Georgia College Podcasting Club. email: Benjamin.Whittle@GCSU.edu

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