BOOK REVIEW

Lemerond, S., & Rourks, L.C., *Digital Voices: Podcasting in the Creative Writing Classroom.* **Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023, 193 pp., Rs. 1,680, ISBN 9781350253339**

Reviewed by Anjana Krishna S.

Digital Voices: Podcasting in the Creative Writing Classroom by Saul Lemerond and Leigh Camacho Rourks discusses the possibility of incorporating podcasting as a remedy for many problems that apply to traditional creative writing classrooms. Even though the notion of using podcasts for language learners is not new, this book focuses on students and teachers of underrepresented groups; Leigh Camacho Rourks is a Cuban American who struggles with writing expression due to a learning disability, and Lemerond is dyslexic and has taught a diverse student population during his career as a teacher. The experiences of Rourk and Lemerond add a unique perspective to the book, as they understand firsthand the challenges underrepresented groups face. By focusing on podcasting as a tool for creative expression, the authors aim to provide a more inclusive and accessible approach to creative writing that can benefit learners with diverse backgrounds and abilities. This point is significant because inclusive learning is vital for promoting diversity and representation in educational settings. This nine-chapter volume features contributions from Tadros, Hazelwood, and Johnstun, an afterword by Rourks and Lemerond and an introduction by Lemerond.

This book examines how multi-modal learning approaches help diversify the kinds of voices we frequently encounter. The authors highlight that podcasts can provide a platform for marginalized voices, allowing for a more accessible and inclusive form of learning. The authors discuss how podcasts can enhance critical thinking skills and promote active learning through their interactive and immersive nature, contributing to their effectiveness as a multi-modal learning tool. By presenting the narratives of marginalized individuals, the book shows how podcasting can help bridge the gap between different cultures and backgrounds, fostering understanding and empathy among listeners.

The first chapter outlines the history of podcasts, tracing its roots to the audio media and early days of broadcasting; then argues how the 'golden age' of radio could never have provided the chances that podcasting provides its listeners and artists in the current age. Podcasting distinguishes itself from traditional media due to the freedom and liberty it offers to the creators and the listeners. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on students' voices being heard and how diverse and creative perspectives are shared. The primary focus of these chapters is to help students make connections between the material they learn and themselves. Students will also be able to connect with their classmates and the variety of perspectives of other writers on a creative level after this foundation (or scaffolding) is established. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss how podcasting can be used in learning poetry and fiction and how these can be a form of self-expression for students. The authors explain how students can retain and embrace their identities through multi-modal learning experiences. Additionally, the authors offer numerous practical strategies for inspiring students to reflect and think through the production of podcasts.

In Chapter 6, Hazelwood tries to deconstruct the practices of the traditional workshop model. The new model of integrating podcasts is an antithesis to the traditional models to silence students. The podcast is incorporated into Hazelwood's innovative workshop paradigm, allowing students to discuss the plans for their work in depth, engage in discussions with peers, and get valuable feedback. According to the author, podcasts democratise voices, allowing anyone to rise above their oppression and disabilities to express their mind. Podcasts help creative non-fiction writers explore their narratives as they become both writer and reader, speaker and listener, during the editing process, thereby increasing their agency.

Chapter 7, by Johnstun, examines the writer-interview podcast model, in which learners are exposed to diverse artists to help them see that concerns of art and creation have never been uniform or standardized. This chapter shares his experience of conducting interviews via podcasts and provides sample scripts to guide readers. Chapters 8 and 9 address the common concerns of students regarding podcasting. Chapter 8 elaborates on how the podcaster can build their theory of audience so that pedagogical approaches can be formed accordingly. The chapter discusses the idea of expanding the audience outside the classroom.

Chapter 9 addresses the digital divide, the fundamental impediment to reaching a larger audience. After discussing learners' challenges, particularly throughout the pandemic, Rourks explores many avenues via which podcasting might be made accessible to learners, especially black learners who experience digital inequality. Rourks states that although podcasting faces cultural hegemony, major platforms like Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts influence audience discovery. There is a rapid growth in African Americans listening to podcasts, which puts pressure on content creators to prioritize the narratives and voices of black people. Thus, the author asserts in the concluding remarks that digital inequality should not be a barrier to utilizing digital narrative and poetics as pedagogical tools. To foster educational opportunities, it is recommended that educators prioritize the facilitation of digital creative writing and the promotion of podcasting to foster a creative renaissance, especially among student communities that have been historically underrepresented.

This book examines how podcasting can be a valuable tool for addressing the challenges in creative classrooms, particularly for the marginalized and people with disabilities who lack a voice. The authors point to the frequently encountered issues in traditional creative classrooms and propose a multi-modal approach to address these obstacles. According to the authors, podcasting allows learners to share their unique perspectives and experiences, providing a voice and promoting inclusivity in education. By presenting the narratives of marginalized individuals, the book shows how podcasting can help bridge the gap between different cultures and backgrounds, fostering understanding and empathy among listeners.

The use of podcasts as an instructional tool has been previously examined in detail by other scholars (Salmon & Edirisingha, 2009; Wang, 2011). Nevertheless, after the pandemic, there has been a substantial increase in young individuals engaging with podcasts, necessitating a comprehensive analysis of the various perspectives on using podcasts in educational settings.

Democratising the classroom space using podcasts is the crucial component of this book, and the authors employ podcasts as a suitable instrument due to the multitude of possibilities they provide as an instructional medium. The book presents a novel concept involving

podcasts to empower marginalized individuals, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic. Although the authors discuss the versatility of podcasts as a pedagogical tool, they still need to explore further classroom strategies incorporating podcasts. It would be more beneficial to the readers, who are learners and teachers, if the authors could include more sample activities through which podcasts can be incorporated into creative classrooms. The authors have tried to present some examples at the end of each chapter, like *Write a letter in response to today's reading or podcast, addressed to the author of the work or the author being interviewed* (Rourks, Chapter 2, p. 40) or the metacognition assignment *Who are you, the writer? Who do you want to be?* (Rourks, Chapter 3, p. 53); however, these samples are insufficient to implement podcasting in all phases of the creative writing process. Hence, it is recommended that more research be conducted to investigate the potential applications outlined in the literature on integrating podcasts within educational settings. Researching how podcasting affects students' motivation, engagement, and writing skills may also provide teachers with valuable insights for enhancing their lesson plans.

However, this book guides literacy professionals to incorporate podcasting for creative writing practices in their classrooms. This method promotes diversity and inclusiveness in the classroom and fosters a deeper appreciation and understanding of diverse experiences and points of view.

Additionally, Rourk's and Lemerond's approach, using multi-modal practices to give the marginalized more agency in creative classrooms, can effectively empower students and encourage their creativity. In that regard, this book has the potential to inspire future research in the field of podcasting and its role in education.

References

Salmon, G., & Edirisingha, P. (2009). *Podcasting for learning in Universities*. McGraw-Hill Education.

Wang, Y. (2011). *Academic podcasting and mobile assisted language learning*. IGI Global.

Anjana Krishna. S is pursuing her PhD from the Department of Humanities & Social. Sciences, National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli. Her research interests are Second Language Learning, IELTS, Podcasting, Speaking and Motivation.

anjanakrishna.nitt@gmail.com