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The JALTCALL podcast model for academic outreach in computer-assisted language learning (CALL)

iD Anthony Brian Gallagher

Meijo University, Japan
briang@meijo-u.ac.jp

iD Geoffrey Carr

Asahikawa City University, Japan
g.carr@live.asahikawa-u.ac.jp

iD Robert Remmerswaal

Sojo University, Japan
robertr@m.sojo-u.ac.jp

iD Luc Gougeon

Sojo University, Japan
lgougeon@m.sojo-u.ac.jp

iD Robert Dykes

Sojo University, Japan
rdykes@m.sojo-u.ac.jp

This article examines the operational framework, strategic successes, and emergent challenges of the JALTCALL Podcast, an academic-focused audio production spearheaded by a team of six hosts from the Japan Association for Language Teaching Computer-Assisted Language Learning (JALTCALL) Special Interest Group (SIG). Based on a presentation at the Tokyo University of Science, this analysis details the podcast's mission, its comprehensive Podcast production structure, its five-stage workflow, and the technologies used. Preliminary results from the first six months are discussed, demonstrating the viability of podcasting as a flexible and accessible platform for academic dissemination, alongside critical insights for future iterations, particularly concerning audience engagement and social media presence. The JALTCALL Podcast serves as a robust case study for academic bodies seeking to translate specialized knowledge into an accessible, dynamic digital format.

Introduction and mission

The landscape of academic communication is undergoing a profound transformation, moving beyond traditional journals and conference proceedings to embrace more dynamic and accessible digital media (Fox et al., 2021; Strauss et al., 2024). The JALTCALL Podcast represents a deliberate strategic effort by the JALTCALL SIG to leverage this shift. With the core mission to “inform, communicate, and grow within the fast-changing world of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (JALTCALL, n.d.)”, the podcast aims to bridge the gap between cutting-edge research and the broader community of language educators, researchers, and practitioners.

The multidisciplinary nature of CALL, which encompasses linguistics, computer science, pedagogy, and design, demands a communication channel that can convey complex topics with immediacy and practical relevance. Established by a diverse team of five hosts – Brian Gallagher, Geoff Carr, Robert Remmerswaal, Luc Gougeon, and Robert Dykes – the podcast is positioned as a timely, community-driven resource. This collective hosting model ensures a breadth of expertise and varied perspectives, enriching the content and mitigating the production burden on any single individual, a common pitfall in volunteer-driven academic projects. This model underscores a commitment to fostering a vibrant ecosystem for knowledge exchange, which is critical for growth in a field characterized by rapid technological evolution.

The JALTCALL Podcast Production Framework

The JALTCALL Podcast Production Framework was designed through the lens of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK). TPCK emphasizes that effective use of technology requires the dynamic integration of three domains: technology, pedagogy, and content (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Meaningful digital-media work emerges not from isolated technical skill but from understanding how these domains interact in authentic educational contexts. In the context of podcast production, this means aligning the technical systems (recording, post-production, distribution) with pedagogically sound communication strategies and content choices that serve clear educational purposes. The PODCAST framework maps each component, including production logistics, content creation, audience engagement, and editorial standards, onto the interwoven TPCK domains. This alignment ensures that both technical decisions and creative practices reinforce pedagogical intent (see Table 1).

Production and logistics (P, D)

P stands for Production, Post-production, Promotion, and Platform. This segment addresses the core logistical phases of any media project: the initial recording (Production), the technical refinement (Post-production), the dissemination strategy (Promotion), and the hosting architecture (Platform). D further details the technical and strategic distribution, encompassing Distribution, the internal Dynamics of the team, the target Demographics, and the overarching editorial Direction. These

elements ensure a technically sound product that reaches the intended audience effectively and maintains a consistent editorial vision.

Content and outreach (O, C, A)

The O component focuses on the quality and reach of the content: Original Content, Outreach, and Optimization. Original Content is paramount for establishing academic credibility and unique value in a crowded media space. Outreach is crucial for expanding the network, while Optimization ensures discoverability through search engine and platform algorithms. This links directly to C, which focuses on collaboration: Co-hosting, Collaborating, and Call to Action. The co-hosting model is a key feature, and external collaboration with experts (e.g., from JALT, EuroCALL) adds authority. A clear Call to Action at the close of each episode is vital for converting listeners into engaged community members. Finally, A addresses the critical feedback and market intelligence loop: Audience, Analytics, and Advertising. Understanding the Audience via Analytics informs both content strategy and the potential for non-intrusive Advertising or sponsorship to ensure sustainability.

Editorial and technical standards (S, T)

The final components address the quality of the listening experience and the discoverability of the product. S covers the creative and technical execution: Scripting, Sound, Storytelling, and Sponsorship. Scripting is essential for maintaining academic precision, even in an informal medium, while professional-grade Sound quality is a non-negotiable factor for listener retention. Effective Storytelling translates complex research into engaging narratives. Lastly, T focuses on the structural metadata and rhetorical elements: Themes, Tagging, Timestamps, Tone, and Transcription. Consistent Themes establish content categories, while Tagging and Timestamps aid navigation and platform-based discoverability. The academic yet approachable Tone must be carefully managed, and Transcription is a crucial element for accessibility, search engine optimization (SEO), and scholarly citation.

Table 1. Summary of the PODCAST framework

Letter	Meaning	Key elements
P	Production	Production, Post-production, Promotion, Platform
O	Outreach	Original content, Outreach, Optimization
D	Distribution	Distribution, Dynamics, Demographics, Direction
C	Collaboration	Co-hosting, Collaborating, Call to action
A	Audience	Audience, Analytics, Advertising
S	Standards of execution	Scripting, Sound, Storytelling, Sponsorship
T	Technical structure	Themes, Tagging, Timestamps, Tone, Transcription

The five-stage step-by-step workflow

The operation of the JALTCALL Podcast is structured around a streamlined, cyclical five-stage workflow designed to maintain a regular release schedule and facilitate iterative improvement. This formal process transforms the collective ideas of a distributed team into a final, polished product.

1. Planning & scripting

This is the foundational stage, where content ideas are vetted against the mission and emerging CALL themes. The use of Shared Google Docs (n.d.) for real-time collaboration is a core enabling technology here, allowing the geographically dispersed host team to co-author episode outlines, discussion points, and interview questions asynchronously. This stage also includes guest identification, scheduling, and logistical preparation.

2. Recording

The technical execution relies on a flexible tech stack to accommodate various host and guest locations. Tools such as Zoom (n.d.) and Riverside (n.d.) are used for high-quality remote recording, leveraging their ability to capture clean, separate audio tracks for post-production. Audacity (n.d.) and simple Sound Recorder applications serve as backup or local recording options, ensuring minimal data loss.

3. Editing & producing

Post-production involves technical cleanup, mixing, and the creation of episode assets (e.g., intro/outro music, sound effects). The process is crucial for ensuring the professional sound quality required by the podcast format. The editors integrate the raw audio into a cohesive narrative, managing the flow to enhance storytelling and ensure a consistent tone.

4. Releasing

With a commitment to a regular release schedule (2nd & 4th Mondays each month), this stage involves uploading the final audio file to the primary platform SoundCloud (n.d.) and embracing the RSS feed, which automatically distributes the content to aggregators (e.g., Apple Podcasts (n.d.); Spotify (n.d.)). Simultaneously, the episode is published to the dedicated website (jaltcall.org/podcast) and often repurposed for the YouTube platform to maximize reach and cater to diverse user preferences.

5. Reflecting & iterating

This stage closes the loop, focusing on continuous quality improvement. The team reviews analytics from various platforms and critically assesses internal processes (e.g., the efficiency of the Basecamp project management system). This reflection

feeds directly into the planning of the next cycle, ensuring that “the next podcast should be our best yet” (JALTCALL, n.d.).



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Strategies for success and technical architecture

The long-term viability of the podcast hinges on several key strategic pillars and a robust technical infrastructure.

Strategic enablers

The use of shared Google Docs (n.d.) and Basecamp (n.d.) for project management proved essential for a large, volunteer-based team. Basecamp, in particular, centralizes communication, file sharing, and task assignment, mitigating the logistical friction often associated with distributed academic collaborations. The strategy of inviting expert guests from JALT, EuroCALL, and beyond has been a significant factor in enhancing the podcast’s scholarly authority and its global outreach. Crucially, content curation driven by feedback and research ensures that the podcast remains relevant to the evolving needs of the CALL community, preventing the content from becoming insular or stagnant. The committed regular release schedule has been fundamental to building listener expectation and platform recognition.

Tech stack for dissemination

The core technical architecture is designed for efficiency and broad accessibility. The combination of SoundCloud (as the RSS feed generator) and YouTube (for video and discoverability) provides a dual-platform approach that caters to both dedicated podcast listeners and those who prefer video or search-based content. The dedicated website, jaltcall.org/podcast, serves as the canonical archive and point of access. Promotion is handled through a multi-channel social media strategy utilizing Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. While LinkedIn targets professional and academic audiences, the other platforms aim for broader engagement, a necessary component for the stated need to improve social media interaction.

Results, lessons, and future trajectory

After six months of operation, the JALTCALL Podcast has demonstrated initial success, alongside clear areas for strategic development. Preliminary results indicate promising engagement for the podcast. To date, the series has accumulated 741 total plays, establishing a solid baseline of interest within its specialized academic niche. Its reach spans 15 countries, underscoring both the international scope of the initiative and the effectiveness of its distribution strategy. Listener feedback has been positive but limited, highlighting the need to formalize mechanisms for collecting and analyzing audience responses. Notably, interview episodes have emerged as the most popular format, confirming that conversations with external experts significantly enhance engagement and perceived value.

The first half-year yielded actionable lessons that will shape future production cycles:

1. **Flexibility and Accessibility:** Podcasts have been a flexible, accessible platform for academic outreach, overcoming geographical barriers and offering a convenient medium for busy academics and practitioners. Our experience is in line with the review done by Persohn and Branson (2025).
2. **Process is Paramount:** The robust planning and collaboration tools were essential for maintaining momentum and quality control.
3. **The Engagement Gap:** Two primary areas require immediate strategic refinement:

Social media engagement needs improvement: The current promotional efforts are not translating into desired levels of interaction or community building on platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

The audience feedback loop should be strengthened: A more systematic mechanism is required to move beyond informal feedback and incorporate data-driven content decisions.

Conclusion and future trajectory

The podcast has successfully moved beyond its conceptual stage to establish itself as a recognized channel for CALL scholarship. By adhering to a rigorous workflow, leveraging collaborative technologies, and maintaining a high standard of content, the podcast has met its initial mission objectives. The team's forward-looking goal, "Our goal is simple: our next podcast should be our best yet", underscores a commitment to iterative improvement in the spirit of Japanese *kaizen* (JALTCALL, n.d.). Our future efforts will focus on translating the content's high intrinsic value into greater external visibility and community engagement, particularly through an enhanced social media strategy and the formalization of an audience feedback mechanism. Future research should include the results of audience feedback and perceptions, once that mechanism is in place. The JALTCALL Podcast stands as a scalable, successful model for academic organizations seeking to innovate their communication strategies in the digital age. The future of the podcast and its role among Japan's CALL practitioners warrants exploration over the next few years.

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Author biodata

Anthony Brian Gallagher researches the Student User Experience (SUX), improving student writing using virtual learning environments, and computer-assisted language learning. With a focus on quality assurance, he helps others improve their own teaching and course quality by regularly presenting at conferences and holding workshops for independent groups in the Pacific region.

Geoffrey Carr is an Associate Professor at Asahikawa City University, where he has taught since 1999. He teaches CLIL literature and PBL seminars. He established ACU's online internship and journaling programs and chairs the university's international committee. His research interests are iterative feedback methodologies and hybrid assessment strategies. He is the program chair for the JALTCALL SIG in Japan and active in other JALT roles.

Luc Gougeon works at Sojo University. He holds an MA in Comparative Literature and is active in the JALT CALL SIG. He is interested in computational thinking and maker education.

Robert Remmerswaal holds a PhD in English Education and a Master's degree in Educational Technology. His research focuses on virtual exchanges, willingness to communicate, and motivation. He is an active member of NanKyu JALT and the JALT CALL SIG, contributing to professional development and initiatives that enhance technology in language learning.

Robert Dykes teaches at Sojo University, Kumamoto, and has volunteered with JALT since 2016, serving in over 20 roles, including chairing the CUE, CALL, SUTLF, and PanSIG conferences. A two-time Best of JALT winner, his research has spanned motivation, anxiety, CMC, and Minecraft, with a current focus on AI in language learning.