“Impact of podcasting on student motivation in the online learning environment” is a research article by Bolliger, Supanakorn, and Boggs that address the issues of the impact podcasting has on students in online learning situations. The authors state that in a growing area such as online learning it is important that as instructors we rethink our current ways of teaching that at one point were deemed adequate in order to further increase motivation and learning. The authors address this need through a study on the use of podcasting in online education. The article address the some unique benefits including; being more personal, providing options for the student (Reading book, listening to podcast or both), ability for multitasking (can listen to podcast while doing other tasks such as cooking, cleaning etc.), and the ability for learning to happen anytime and anyplace. Other researchers cited by the authors have found that students state that podcast proceed a sense of social presence that is often lost in the online learning environment. In this study the authors looked for the answer to 5 questions:

i. How motivated are students by the use of podcasting in online courses?
ii. Are there differences in the four factors that measure students motivation based on gender, class standing, and prior experience with online courses and/or podcast?
iii. What do users like about podcasts?
iv. What suggestions for improvement do users have?
v. Are there relationships between the four factors measured by Instructional Materials Motivation Survey(IMMS)? (Bolliger, 2010)

The study determined the answers to these questions by using 302 undergraduate and graduate students with varying majors enrolled in 14 online courses in nine program areas in the 2008-2009 academic year at a public research university in the western united states through the use of iTunes University. The different instructors for the courses used podcasting for various reasoning including; sharing introductions, lectures, and other information from the course. Data was collected from 63% (191 students, primarily female) of the total students through the use of the Instructional Motivation survey submitted to students in the last third of the semester, so that students would have time to have interacted with the use of podcast in their classes and to have an informed opinion about their use in online learning. The study found that overall students were motivated by the integration of podcast into their course(s). Many students reported that the use of podcast motivated the students, although the authors do note that most of these students were new to online learning and they believe that this result could be skewed by the “newness effect.” The information in the podcast was deemed important and relevant by the majority of the students. They also found individual differences for the effect of podcasting on online learning. For example they found that females reported a higher level of attention also they found that the motivation of seniors was significantly lower than that of the graduate students. One surprising individual finding that the study was that they found that students with a medium amount of experience in online learning (between six to ten successfully completed courses) had significantly higher confidence levels than those students who had completed eleven or more courses.

This study overall was well done. The study had some limitations such as the globalization of results due to the research study all being done at one research university in the western United States. As such it the results cannot be globalized without further research to show that the results are constant in other areas. One positive point related
the structure of the research design is that the incorporated many different courses, programs, majors, and levels into the study which allows the information to be transferable to many different programs. This is an important aspect as several research studies have focused on teacher education courses where the results may differ from those students not as closely tied to education. The research study was set up in a clear and concise format although the authors at several points repeated sentences with subtle difference in the wording. This makes the article not flow as well for a reader attempting to pull out the important information due to the interruption in the movement of the article. This article all in all leads the reader to understand the importance and potential impact that podcasting could have in an online learning course. From this article there was significant evidence to show the positive impact podcasting had not only in general but in specific cases such as the level of the class, gender of the students, and time spent with online learning and/or podcasting.