

## **Tech Tip of the Month – Eleanor Leyden**

### **Podcasting: Portfolios and Pronunciation**

**Tip links: see end of explanation**

(on next page/separate document)

Podcasting, an increasingly popular way to create MP3 and MP4 audio files, allows foreign language teachers and students to record, and broadcast a variety of materials on the web. In the article "Podcasting in the Language Classroom" in the October 27<sup>th</sup> issue of The Language Educator (volume 2, issue 5), authors Joseph Magedanz and Katherine M. Miller provide source sites (listed below), technical how to's and a wealth of teaching ideas for those new to podcasts. We would like to recommend two uses apart from the plethora of those listed in the article:

#### ***1) using podcasts to improve pronunciation.***

If you don't have a language lab and software for technical pronunciation you can create a fast and flexible practice method for groups or individuals in the computer lab. Using a free program such as Audacity (cited below), the teacher records or provides a commercial pronunciation segment and posts it to a student access file. Students can then access the file, listen and record their own file. They can toggle back and forth between their recording and the teacher or commercial sample to refine their listening and pronunciation. They can re-record their own speech until they are satisfied with the result then save the final recording in MP3 format and put it in a computer file "drop box" for the teacher to review with each student later. Another quick way to attend to pronunciation is to provide the sample live. With students in the computer lab, the teacher pronounces the phoneme, word or phrase, the students listen and record and then the teacher repeats again so students can confirm. Teacher and students have the flexibility to repeat this process as needed. This provides focused practice and instant feedback .

#### ***2) creating electronic audio portfolios.***

If you are interested in providing ongoing proof of oral proficiency then podcasting allows you to build an audio portfolio over time. One idea is to scaffold a task to show progress over time. Set a basic speaking task, for example to show proficiency in using the passé composé, " what did you do yesterday or last week?" and have students make a benchmark recording. Provide subsequent practice sessions in which students prepare speaking notes to target vocabulary and structures and then save their best recording. Finally, give a test in which student record a similar task, for example, " what did you do during the last vacation?" without any supporting speaking notes. Students can save assignments labeled as Benchmark, Guided Practice, Final Task. An oral proficiency rubric of your choice and to suit the objectives of your course level can be used to chart progress. Teachers and students can grade each assignment per the rubric and then teachers can conference with each student to listen to their assignments.

Students can save podcasts in personal files or on USB drives and incorporate them into electronic portfolios as evidence of their oral proficiency. As students move from middle to high school or transfer between school districts their file can be helpful in assessing future placement.

**What You Will Need to Podcast:** A computer with headphones and microphone, speakers for teacher/student conference sessions, a podcast service or free downloaded podcast software, a shared computer file on your main server which has read only access for students, a shared computer file on your main server which has a locked "dropbox" which has submit only access for students to post their assignments, a helpful IT professional in your school or district to help you set up the initial project.

Podcast Sources cited from "Podcasting in the Classroom", Joseph Magedanz, The Language Educator, October 2007, Volume 2 Issue 5 pp 49-50:

[www.boxpopuli.com](http://www.boxpopuli.com)

[www.clickcaster.com](http://www.clickcaster.com)

[www.apple.com/itunesu](http://www.apple.com/itunesu)

[www.podomatic.com](http://www.podomatic.com)

[www.snapkast.com](http://www.snapkast.com)

[www.audacity.com.sourceforge.net](http://www.audacity.com.sourceforge.net) (this last program requires that you download a separate conversion library, lame.encl, as Audacity does not own the rights to that program)