

High Intermediate ESOL Listening/Speaking

Using MP3 Players in the Listening/Speaking ESOL Classroom

Developed by Nissa Hopkins
ESOL Instructor, Seminole Community College

This last term (Summer 2007), in order to expose the students to as much real-world listening practice as possible, we implemented MP3 players into the High Intermediate Listening and Speaking ESOL class. The students were issued high-quality MP3 players which have a myriad of functions and options, including not only the obvious capacity to download audio material, but also programmable radio stations, voice recording, and one gigabyte of memory which the students were free to utilize. The students signed out all the MP3-related materials for the length of the term, and were encouraged to make the most use of them that they could.

In terms of classroom assignments, I created weekly listening comprehension activities which required the students to download podcasts related to classroom and/or textbook topics. Once the students downloaded the material, they were free to listen as little or as much as needed in order to answer the questions fully. I also encouraged students to continue listening to the podcasts—or even downloading unassigned ones—after they had completed the homework in order to get the best benefits of the MP3 player. The sites that I used most frequently for the assignments were:

- <http://eslpod.com/website/index.php>
- <http://voanews.com/specialenglish/>

Both sites have a large collection of free and up-to-date podcasts on a variety of diverse topics, and both are geared toward the English language learner. The level of

the podcasts were anywhere from Low Intermediate to Advanced, depending on the topic and length of the podcast as well as the rate of speech of the speaker.

All in all, the students responded very positively to using the MP3 players and really were engaged in the listening activities. Many students took the initiative to use the players in lab time after class hours, downloading and listening to many different podcasts. Some students even went so far as to save their PowerPoint projects for their group presentations on the players and those students who were absent even recorded their parts of the project and then uploaded them into the PowerPoints!

Additionally, the students reported that they loved the portability and ease of use of the players; they could (and did!) do their homework while walking the dog, cleaning the house, or driving. For my part, I thoroughly enjoyed utilizing the MP3 players in class, and hope to continue doing so in the future. I definitely believe in the benefits of making maximum use of all available technology to better serve the students.

