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USING PODCASTS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH

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Annotation

The article reveals the tools and means of producing creative and communicative classroom environment with the help of podcasts. The paper focuses on the application of podcasts for teaching and learning English. It defines the main steps and instructions in the process of preparing your work with podcasts. The author provides some examples of podcast activities which can be used at English lessons.

Key words: podcast, IT applications, communicative approach, classroom activities.

A modern classroom could be hardly imagined without IT and applications which can be easily created, managed and organized for the purposes of learning and using a foreign language in communication. Nowadays both a teacher and a student have become not only active participants but also creators of learning process and materials. Podcasts are one of the effective tools schooling can turn to. So, a podcast is a group of audio files freely available to everyone with access to the Internet, which are organized under a common theme by an author []. As a listener, you can search for podcasts that interest you or your students on a wide array of topics, e.g. EFL, sports, politics, travel, cooking and music. A podcast could be compared to a radio show one can listen to anytime on the computer, with new episodes available as soon as they are published. So, every time the authors of the podcast post a new episode, you receive it automatically on the computer. To listen to a podcast, a place to store is necessary such iTunes, a free audio playback program where to store all digital music, movies and podcasts [iTunes].
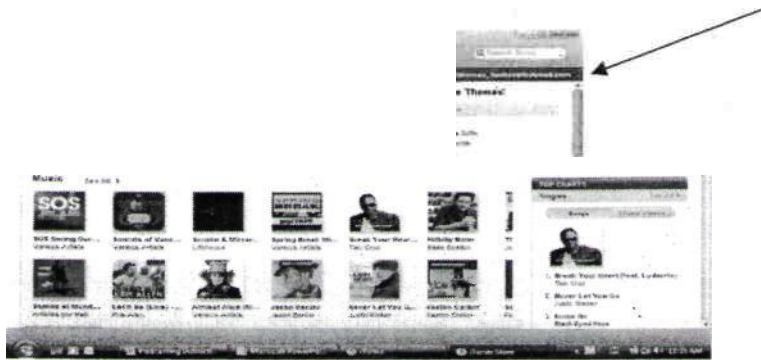
Definitely a number of interesting activities could be created for the sake of interactive and interesting learning environment in a classroom. Podcasts could be applied not only the same ways as audio or video files retrieved from the Web but also used as active instrument for individual or group activities as well as a tool for global communication. A podcast is something students can create and post online. Anything could become a potential topic for it. They could interview people at university or in town, produce dramas with monthly episodes, begin a weekly school news program, or host music programs just to name a few examples. Thus, podcasts are valuable tools for teaching students how to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences including native speakers and for different purposes.

The first step to be taken while preparing your work with podcasts is managing the technical side of the issue. So, in this paper we reveal the preliminary work finding and applying podcasts.

Both a teacher and students can find Podcasts on iTunes employing a free application to subscribe to podcasts and store all digital music [http://www.apple.com/itunes/download/]. In iTunes, click on iTunes Store (on the left side of the screen). Although there are many things you could buy using the iTunes Store.

Such instructions could be given to students while familiarizing them with the principles of using podcasts.

1. Almost at the top of the page, there is a line of tabs

3. On the 'Podcasts' tap, there is a small triangle to the right of the word. Click once to see the scroll down menu.

4. Pick a topic you would like to explore, and click on it.

5. The Top podcasts in the topic once chosen are on the right (click on Top Podcasts) to see them all with descriptions.

6. Click on any podcast you find interesting, then click on 'Subscribe'. Go back to your iTunes program, and open 'Podcasts'. Now you can listen to your selection.

A teacher should pick out some podcasts for students to listen to before producing their own. It is advisable to search through the educational podcasts on a site like iTunes selecting some appropriate material from the list of Podcasts Suitable for Educators, Schools and Colleges.

The next option of work with podcasts is creating students' and teachers' pieces of audio files. Such activities bring some sort of novelty into your English teaching. This process is easy to manage but still it needs some knowledge and technical skills, besides students should be prepared for a new sort of activities. To get started producing podcasts, a program to record voice is necessary, a program to help create a file the Internet can read (an .xml or .rss file), and server space to store some files. To do it right it is useful to apply several links:

I.   A simple application to record voice and save as an mp3 file, which is the best audio format for creating a podcast [http://audacitv.sourceforge.net/].

II.   A   program   builds   the   .xml   file   and   is   easy   to   use [http://docs.qoogle.com/View?docID=dckq7sxz 3023zwvndfi&revision= latest];

III.   One of the many places to search for podcasts [http://www.podcastalley.com/];

IV.   Some tips for teachers [http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~nshelley/resources.html];

V. A step-by-step tutorial to create your first podcast [http://radio.about.eom/od/podcastinl/a/aa030805a.htm];

When technical issues are clear it is important to give the students clear instructions on the kinds of podcasts that they will produce, theme for their production. Brainstorming several possible episodes can become a preparatory activity for the class.

After that have students gather notes and create scripts for their podcast episodes. Students can use any writing resources appropriate for their work. For instance, producing arguments for or against a local issue in the news. At this stage it is crucial to gather and organize their ideas.

The next stage is recording students' podcasts using the available equipment. It is usually best to record in short sections so that mistakes are easier to fix. Once the scripts have been recorded, the files could be transferred to the computer for editing and posting them online. Thus, a wide range of listeners can evaluate your students' work and creativity.

Podcast Actvities

Creating an .xml file for podcasting and registering can become a special activity for students. Teacher can ask the students to analyze a podcast and summarize the information about it. While doing that the students can fill in the suggested table.

An example:

Podcast Information

Name of podcast:	Biographies
Subtitle of podcast:	A podcast of teenagers
Author:	Olha Sushkevych
Copyright:	2016
Image link:	optional
Description:	This podcast is for EFL the students to hear about the lives of other teenagers.
Owner:	Olha Sushkevych
Email of owner:	Olha.sushkevych@gmail.com

Episode Information

Name of 1st episode:	An introduction to the teenager biography
Subtitle of 1st episode:	A brief description of the youth's problems
Author:	Olha Sushkevych
Size (in bytes):	299702
Duration (00:00:00):	**00:01:19**
URL (where the file can be found online):	www./podcasting/workshop/
File type: (mp3, etc)	mp3

Summary (description of contents):	This first episode details how the project was created.
Keywords:	teenager, biographies
Publication date:	Sat, 16 Sept 2016 14:30:00 GMT

1)   Report to the class

Description: In this activity, students find and listen to a podcast on a topic they are interested in (from Podcast Alley, iTunes or a similar site). In class, they describe (orally or in writing) what they heard from the podcast and make a recommendation to the other students whether they should listen to it or not. If students have their own blogs, they could write a mini-review of the podcast on a blog post, and attach the link to it.

2)   The   Podcast   Newspaper   Report   (from   CALPER [http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/index.php])

Activity Objectives: In this activity students create podcasts reporting on the goings-on in their school or university, in English. The podcasts can be posted to a potentially authentic audience, not just other students but speakers of English who may be interested in the school. The purpose of the activity is for students to practice production and integrate their language study with community participation.

Description: In this activity, students work in small groups or pairs to develop podcasts about activities in their school or university. These can focus on academics, sports, visual and performing arts, research, etc., whatever they think might be interesting to an audience of expert/native speakers of the language of study. The project can be a large final project that everyone completes at once, or groups can complete their podcasts at staggered times through the semester as a series.

Teacher Instructions

1. Explain the project to the students. Discuss the project, the steps involved, the schedule, and what should be reported on. Put students into groups and have each choose a topic.

2. Make sure students are familiar with the logistics of podcast production; this might be done in the lab period when the project is introduced.

3. As a class, analyze the structure of podcasts, for example an opener, introductions, headlines, etc., by listening to currently available podcasts. Discuss group roles, for example producer, reader, and technical advisor. If needed as an intermediate step, create a single podcast together, with groups of students working on the individual segments.

4. Have groups write out their podcasts and send them to you and/or peers for reviewing and editing. More advanced students can just provide outlines. This can be done on a wiki or collaborative document.

5. Present the podcasts to the class when they are finished or as a final presentation. To promote accountability and participation, have students evaluate each others' products, or even take a

quiz on the material.

Other activities

As it was mentioned above, anything you can do on the radio you can do in a podcast. As you listen to podcasts, think of how you could get your students to produce similar shows.

RESOURCES

ITunes. – online: http://www.apple.com/itunes/download/

Audacity. – online: http://audacitv.sourceforge.net/

Calper. - http://calper.la.psu.edu/cmc/index.php

Podcasalley. - http://www.podcastalley.com/

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