What's All the Hype About MP3 Players?

This handout, divided into three parts, discusses classroom activities that can be done using electronic devices. Although MP3 players are becoming popular media devices, teachers often struggle with how to maximize their potential as teaching and learning tools. At TESOL 2009, the presenters discussed simple ways that teachers can create engaging activities that blend technology and learning from a sound, pedagogical perspective.

1. **Teachers should determine their needs FIRST:**
   Too often, schools purchase technology before they evaluate what is needed in the classroom, sometimes in order to look high tech. Just because you CAN buy the latest gadget doesn't mean you should. Talk to teachers and include them in the decision-making process.

2. **Most MP3 Players were never designed for language learning:**
   Most MP3 players are designed to do one thing well, that is, play audio files. Some include basic recording features with simple built-in microphone, and others have FM recording; however, these features have limited functionality and have often been thrown in to give the player a “feature-laden” feel. Also, check www.anythingbutipod.com.

3. **Digital voice recorders provide greater recording and playback features:**
   Many voice recorders have up to 8 fast and slow playback settings, plus the ability to bookmark and repeat parts of the audio for focused review. Some good choices are Olympus DS-30/40 and Olympus VN-5200P. Check www.buy.com for reviews. You can use audacity.sourceforge.net to edit your files.

4. **Create pedagogically-sound activities that are specific and have clear, measurable outcomes.**

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**Sample Grammar Speaking Test**

Digital voice recorders are excellent tools for accessing students' language skills. Here is one idea:

Imagine some friends stayed in your apartment when you were gone. When you came home, this is what you found. Describe four things you saw and make four guesses about what had been happening the night before you came home. Please use the digital recorder to record your answer. You will have 1 minute to give your answer.

*This example shows testing of the past perfect progressive; however, any grammar point can be assessed using this model.*

[Use a picture of a room that has the following items scattered over the floor: pizza box with leftover pizza; used cups, plates, and napkins; half-full bottles of soda; popcorn kernels; candy wrappers; DVD covers; music CDs; other such items. There should also be a big-screen TV and couches.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Scoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary and Ideas</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student can discuss the topics using words and expressions to explain the situations and accomplish the tasks completely.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Competence</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student finishes the tasks completely.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar (Variety and Accuracy of Structures)</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student uses a variety of target grammar structures accurately to explain his/her ideas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensibility</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student can be understood by other English speakers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definition of Scores (Mastery of Target Structures)**

0 = No Response  1 = Limited Mastery of  2 = Moderate Mastery  3 = Extensive Mastery
After the students have completed their recording, they are given the following worksheet for their voice journal:

**Voice Journal Entry**

You will use the grammar speaking test as part of your Voice Journal. This will help you to self-evaluate and correct your own speaking.

1. Write a transcript of your one-minute recording.

2. Please write two examples of things you said correctly. Use numbers in the transcript to help you identify examples.

3. Please write two examples of grammar mistakes you made and then make corrections.

4. Please write two things that you can do during the next week to improve your spoken grammar skills. [BE SPECIFIC]

The grammar speaking test becomes part of their voice journal which can be used in conjunction with a pronunciation/speaking course.

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**The Use of Digital Recording in a Monologue Assignment**

**Course:** High Intermediate Listening/Speaking Course, “Dramatically Speaking.” The course is designed to help students improve their fluency in English through drama, monologues, and role playing.

**Preparation:** Students have studied and practiced the use of stress, intonation, linking, rhythm, etc. As a class, we have studied a film monologue and examined the use of the above to express the emotion of the character.

**Assignment:** Students are required to select a short movie monologue using the following website:

- [http://www.whysanity.net/monos/](http://www.whysanity.net/monos/)

1. They mark it up for stress, intonation, linking, etc. If they want, they can watch the movie or view the scene on youtube.com.

2. They record their monologue digitally and e-mail the MP3 file to the instructor and hand in their marked up text. The instructor listens to the recordings and add comments to the text. Students are encouraged to re-listen to the recording focusing on the instructor’s comments and then memorize the monologues for performance.

3. Students perform the monologues in class during which they are digitally recorded. The recordings are used to evaluate their performances using the following rubric:

   - Communication (use of stress, intonation to show emotions, meaning) (4)
   - Naturalness (rhythm, fluency, speed) (2)
   - Technical (use of body language, volume, pronunciation) (2)
   - Memorization (2)
Pictures From the Poster Session
What’s All the Hype About MP3 Players
TESOL 2009, Denver

Korrin and George interacting with attendees.

From Left to Right: Randall Davis, George Plautz, and Korrin Ebira