

## Pozzobon, Claudia

\* La Prof. Pozzobon es Profesora - Investigadora de la Escuela de Idiomas Modernos, Facultad de Humanidades y Educación, Universidad de Los Andes, Mérida, Venezuela.

### Abstract

This section looks at useful on-line resources for foreign language teachers and learners. Your contribution may include a review of a particular website used in class or any other link that you consider useful for FL tutors' professional development. If you would like to contribute to the Web@glance section, please submit your review to Dr. Teadira Pérez at teadira@ula.ve

## Podcast & Literature

### Resumen

El propósito de esta sección consiste en revisar recursos en línea destinados a la enseñanza / aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras. Su contribución puede incluir una revisión de materiales basados en la Web utilizados por docentes en su aula de clase u otro enlace o página Web que pueda contribuir con el desarrollo profesional de

los docentes de lenguas extranjeras. Si desea contribuir con esta sesión por favor envíe su contribución al siguiente e-mail: teadira@ula.ve

In this volume, Claudia Pozzobon looks at Podcasts & Literature by reviewing her blog *A Poem a Day* (<http://gianduia.podbean.com>), a Podcast blog for her foreign language students.

Nowadays, thanks to the Internet and its multiple resources, students can count with a vaster amount of input resources and foreign language teachers possess a wider number of materials to integrate to the class, and to provide the students with more tools to make their learning richer than ten or even five years ago. The web provides resources that, if they are well used, can be of tremendous help in foreign language learning, giving students the possibility of more language contact without having to leave their hometowns. Among these resources, we find Podcasts.

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), is “the search for and study of applications on the computer in language teaching and learning” (Levy, 1997) and is currently being used with more frequency between teachers of foreign languages. Fotos and Brown (2004) explain how CALL has been divided in seven general types of activities: writing (word processing, text analysis), communicating (e-mail exchanges, written discussions, real-time chat), the use of multimedia (courseware presented in CD-Rom or online format), the use of web searches for information, concordancing and referencing (corpus usage, online dictionaries), distance learning, and finally test taking.

CALL has had an enormously fast development in the past years, and new multimedia tools that can be of great use in the classroom are being created and improved every day. The development of electronic materials for language teaching has proven to be of great help in second and foreign language teaching: to Derewianka, using computers to develop lower level skills such as sound out words, thereby decreasing

their capacity to focus on meaning, teachers are freed up to assist with those aspects of reading that benefit more from human interaction, such as interpretation and critique (2003). Podcasts are a relatively new multimedia tool, developed in the last years, originally with the purpose of giving listeners the opportunity of enjoying their favourite shows without a time or schedule limitation. There is no doubt of the positive sides of including Podcasts in the classroom or regular plan of the course.

A Podcast can be described as a regular audio or video program accessible via the Internet, which can be downloaded to the computer or a personal player, making it available to be listened or viewed whenever the user wants.

Podcasts can be found on several websites such as the BBC, on specialized software such as Apple's iTunes, or can be created by oneself, as the teachers, or we can even ask students to create their own Podcasts to share with the rest of the class. According to Stanley (2005), there are three types of Podcasts: Authentic, Teacher and Student Podcasts.

- **Authentic Podcasts:** Podcasts that are not aimed at ELT students can often be a rich source of listening. Most of these will only be suitable for use with higher level students, but others, are made by non native speakers of English and their short length makes them ideal for use with classes.
- **Teacher Podcasts:** Produced by teachers, often for their own classes, these Podcasts are usually aimed at helping students learn by producing listening content that is not available elsewhere, or that gives a local flavour.

- Student Podcasts: Produced by students, but often with teacher help, students can listen to these and experience not only the cultural aspects and also hear about the lives and interests of other students from around the world. English Conversations, for example is a Podcast largely made by students for students.

This means that teachers can create their own Podcasts and have the students listen to what they have prepared, outside the classroom thus saving valuable class time. With this tool, the teacher can make sure that at least for a period of time the students are listening to authentic material that is appropriate to their language level, but also beneficial and appropriate to attain the specific objectives of the course.

Also, according to Dudeney and Hockly (2007), Podcasts have two main uses: learners can listen to Podcasts or they can create their own. This means that Podcasts are not limited to students passively listening, they can actively participate in creating their own Podcast, and taking the most of it during their language learning. These authors also point out their increasing use in education, given that some professors record their lectures and publish them in university websites for those students who didn't make it to the lesson.

When it comes to free web resources, there are only a few web sites that offer the possibility of free podcasting. Most Podcast services charge for disk usage and storage, and Podcasts use a lot of memory, considering they require audio files as well as text. Regular free blog services are not the best choice for podcasting, given that

most of them do not offer the possibility of adding audio files to the entries. These features are only available for paid accounts.

Podbean (<http://www.podbean.com/>) is one of the sites that offers the possibility of creating, listening, and subscribing to Podcasts for free. Podbean.com is a great resource for teachers who want to create their own podcasts and include them in their class. The site is easy to use and very accessible; to open an account and make use of it is as easy as having your own blog, no special software knowledge is required. Registration is free, and once you give basic data you can start podcasting. The site allows users to promote their Podcasts on the sites, or on special software such as Apple's iTunes. Also, other users can leave comments on each Podcast entry, if they wish to do so. This feature can be very helpful in promoting classroom interaction among students, who can share ideas and opinions on their Podcasts.

Another advantage of podbean.com is that it allows you to subscribe to other Podcasts hosted by them, which will appear automatically on your Podcast page. This means that users can collect all their favourite Podcasts in one place. Podbean.com counts with hundreds of very interesting educational Podcasts, organized by topic, such as religion, business, education, sports, among others. Some of these are:

- English as a Second Language Podcast
- Just Vocabulary
- ESL Aloud
- French for Beginners or
- Better at English - Learn English - EFL ESL Podcast!

The only disadvantage Podbean.com presents, from my viewpoint, is the 100MB restricted Disk Usage, which limits the number of Podcasts one is allowed to post. However, the site offers the possibility of upgrading to a paid account, which offers extra benefits for a low price, such as unmetered bandwidth, or unlimited permanent Disk Space with monthly 100MB growth rate, for example. Apart from that, this site can become a great tool in the foreign language classroom at no extra cost for the teacher or the students.

Foreign language teachers can include Podcasts to reinforce listening and reading practice, or even as part of the evaluation. Podcasts present the opportunity to provide a variety of choices, to make learning activities different from what is common to students.

*A Poem a Day* (<http://gianduia.podbean.com>), my Podcast blog, was created with the purpose of giving students extra listening practice when it comes to poetry, especially related to rhythm and pronunciation. Also, to provide students with trustful resources for finding information about literature and authors they can use in research and in the class.

In the case of my poetry Podcast, my students use it as extra practice as a support for their poetry evaluation. They can leave comments on each entry, suggest poems they'd like to listen to, or even post links to their own Podcasts. Some students have pointed out how this Podcast has helped them with my class, especially in preparation for oral examinations, others commented on the big help the blog represented when starting to study poetry in English for the first time, "by presenting different poems

in a way we can enjoy, at home, without the pressure of the classroom" (Student 1, personal interview, January 2009). "I enjoyed reading and listening the poems at the same time, I feel I understand faster this way" (Student 2, personal interview, January 2009). Some other students commented how the Podcast helped them overcome their fear of poetry: "I thought poetry in English was very difficult, or impossible to understand, [with poets] using old language that is not used anymore..." (Student 3, personal interview, January 2009).

In other areas, Podcasts are a great opportunity to reinforce certain phonetic aspects, improve listening comprehension, and learn cultural aspects, among others. The possible topics and learning objectives are endless. Podcasts can even be used together with another CALL tool, such as a webquest, a wiki, or a blog, to strengthen students' motivation and make learning more fun. All the teacher needs is to have the course objectives very clear and to dedicate a bit of time to developing the multimedia tools that are more appropriate to his/her particular course. By including a Podcast in the class, the foreign language professor will be able to offer his/her students more opportunities for foreign language practice outside of the classroom, which is something not all the students have access to, at least not all the time.

## OTHER LITERARY PODCASTS

**Free Audiobook of the Month Podcast** (<http://www.learnoutloud.com/Podcast-Directory/Literature/American-Classics/Free-Audiobook-of-the-Month-Podcast/18209>)

**Stories to Go Podcast** (<http://www.learnoutloud.com/Podcast-Directory/Literature/Short-Stories/Stories-to-Go-Podcast/7288>)

**The Poets.org Poetcast** (<http://www.poets.org/stream/poetcast.xml>)

White, M., y Campbell A. (2009). *English conversations*. [On-line]. Recuperado el 20 de marzo 2009, en <http://englishconversations.org/>

E-mail: cpozzobon@ula.ve

## References

Dudeney, G., y Hockly, N. (2007). *How to teach English with technology*. Essex, England: Pearson Longman Limited.

Fotos, S., y Browne, C. (2004). The development of CALL and current options. En S. Fotos y C. Browne (Eds.), *New perspectives on CALL second language classrooms* (pp. 3-14). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Levy, M. (1997). *Computer-assisted language learning: Context and conceptualization*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Stanley, G. (2005). *Podcasting for ELT*. British Council, BBC. [On-line]. Recuperado el 20 de marzo 2009, en <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/podcasting-elt>

Tomlinson, B. (2003). *Developing materials for language teachers*. London: Continuum.