

Podcasting

One of the most exciting new developments in popular technology involves a merging of traditional media, internet-based networking and personal handheld devices. This phenomenon is commonly known as podcasting. Podcasting is a form of broadcasting that allows virtually anyone to create their own “homegrown” radio station. Not technically limited to the World Wide Web, which is the portion of the internet that is viewed by web browsers such as Mozilla, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Netscape and AOL, podcasts can be accessed in varied ways. Further, podcasts can be automatically transferred or updated to MP3 players such as the Apple iPod. Many traditional new outlets are quite active in podcasting, but there are also many non-traditional sources of information available that can serve as authentic and meaningful content. Podcasting has recently begun to specifically address the needs and interests of the ELL community. In order to make the most of these specific resources, as well as the general media resources, let’s take a look at what podcasting is, how it works, how you can receive it and even how you can get information to become a podcaster yourself.

Getting Started

All that you need is an internet connection and some audio software. While podcasts can be received on conventional computers, the ability to use them with portable MP3 players is even more promising. Using either of the free programs (ipodderx for Mac) and (ipodder.net for Windows) you can easily save, or schedule automated updates of podcast audio to your portable MP3 player. By using one of these programs you can create an archive, or library, of useful audio content for your students. Such files could be stored on CD, DVD or a file server for student access. With microphones on many MP3 players now, students can also interact with a podcast by recording responses, reactions and comments of their own. They may even want to begin their own podcast. Apple computer President Steve Jobs announced that all new releases of the popular (and free) iTunes software would include automatic podcast integration features. This kind of integration into audio programs such as iTunes would make the flexible use of podcasts even easier.

General Podcasting Resources

Nearly every media outlet has some sort of podcast out there. Newsweek, The New York Times and National Public Radio have all been scrambling to get ahead in this new and promising media market. For an up to the minute collection of podcasts, see: [Insert list of media podcasts](#)

ESL/EFL Specific Podcasts

A handful of individuals have begun their own ESL/EFL specific podcasts. While this is rather limited currently, there will certainly be many more to come. In order to stay informed about current ESL/EFL podcasts, it may be useful to refer to the Kelly brothers resource: A collection of ESL podcasts: <http://iteslj.org/links/ESL/Listening/Podcasts/>
Among these, two have received a fair amount of attention recently, The Daily Idiom, (<http://www.englishcaster.com/blogs>), which presents brief introduction to idioms for ESL students, and The Bob and Rob Show (<http://radio.weblogs.com/0143010/>), which provides an entertaining source of material that is linguistically geared toward ESL

and EFL students. These are both interesting resources and may prove quite beneficial for your students.

Podcasting yourself

In fact the next EFL/ESL podcast may be your own! It is actually a lot easier than you might expect to get started podcasting. There are a number of free programs available to record your own audio. Purveoice () and audacity () are both extremely easy to use. Once files are saved in an MP3 format they can be transferred to the Internet for all to utilize. If you have access to a server through your school or your personal internet service provider (ISP), the entire process would cost you nothing. Many people have such access without knowing it; contact your ISP support staff or school technology support staff to find out!