

Creating Digital Voice Journals for Self-Assessment

I. Pedagogical Issues: The purpose of the project is to use technology to give students an opportunity to self-evaluate their speaking skills in a pedagogically-sound way. This assignment was designed for a low-intermediate listening/speaking class, but may be revised to accommodate any level of language proficiency. According to the assignment, students record a conversation or a passage about a given topic. As they listen to the recording, they are required to evaluate their speaking skills in four areas (i.e. pronunciation, intonation, grammar, speech patterns, etc.). For the first recording (pre-test), they rate their skills using a simple rubric (1= needs improvement, 2 = average, 3 = good) and then write specific examples that explain why they gave themselves that score. For the second recording (post-test), they evaluate their skills as “better,” or having “no change,” and are then required to specify one more time why they gave themselves that evaluation.



Objectives: The rationale behind this activity is:

- To give the students an opportunity to hear their own voice (a chance to create awareness and facilitate self-correction).
- To aid the students in improving their English speaking skills.

Outcomes: The results of this activity were that the students:

- Had more speaking practice.
- Recognized their speaking skills and more objectively acknowledged their strengths and weaknesses.
- Had an opportunity to monitor their progress and were more responsible for their own learning.
- Made noticeable improvement on the final exams in the areas that they had practiced in their self-evaluation (i.e. pronunciation, intonation, grammar structures, vocabulary usage).
- Took more interest in the areas where they were required to evaluate themselves (demonstrated through more questions and participation in class).

Future Considerations: Some future applications of this project could be:

- A digital voice journal for the students to keep and refer back to as a measure of progress over an extended period of time.
- A diagnostic tool at the program level for verification of placement.
- A pre-test/post-test tool to determine progress and promotion to the next level.
- Expand assessment areas to including sociolinguistic and functional competencies.
- Model recordings to help students understand, practice, and emulate sample speech.

II. Technical Issues: Teachers should first assess their needs BEFORE deciding on a technical option. Let your objectives dictate your choice, not the other way around. Less is often more.

Hardware: Traditional cassette players or CD players with speed control
MP3 players with built-in audio recording (Sansa Express, Creative Labs Zen V Plus)
Digital Voice Recorders (Olympus analog or digital recorders/mp3 players)

Software: Audacity – audacity.sourceforge.net (free)
Windows Media Player (free with variable speed settings)

Web-based Options:

Gabcast! - <http://www.gabcast.com> (free - \$12/month)
Google Talk – <http://www.google.com/talk/> (free)

Digital Voice Journal

The purpose of these recordings is to help you hear your own speaking skills and try to improve on them by checking your own speech. Listen to your recording and check yourself using the points below. Listen to your first recording and circle the number that best describes your ability in that particular skill. Then, write specific sample sentences of what you said. Finally, rate yourself: **1 = 3+ mistakes. Needs improvement** **2 = Okay, but a couple mistakes** **3 = Good.** For the second recording, circle "Better" or "No Change" to show your feelings and then write specific examples.

Pronunciation: (pp. 83-4,101) * <u>Word Stress (New vocabulary)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct syllables and stress <u>Intonation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice questions: rising on 1st choice and falling on 2nd Ex: Is Salt Lake City in the north  or the south  of Utah? • Rising with each comma (My country has mountains,  valleys , deserts , and rivers.  	First Recording 1 2 3 Date: _____	Comments
	Second Recording Date: _____ Better/ No Change	
Grammar: (pp. 98, 100, 113-4,) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the correct word order • Ask and answer questions about location (Add -ern or -al to directions to make them adjectives: ex. eastern/central) • Ask questions using: How long/How far. . .? 	First Recording 1 2 3	
	Second Recording Better/ No Change	
Vocabulary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the vocabulary on pages 7-9, 42-44, and 82-84 • Using numbers (pg. 78) • Use this scale to grade yourself: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-3 new words = 1 • 4-6 new words = 2 • 7-9 new words = 3 	First Recording 1 2 3	
	Second Recording Better/ No Change	
Restating/Clarifying Ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uh. What I want to say is ____. • In other words, _____. • What I mean to say is _____. • Could you repeat the last part? • What does _____ mean? • Uh. What's the word? Uh . . . 	First Recording 1 2 3	
	Second Recording Better/ No Change	

Page numbers refer to the class textbook, *College Oral Communication 1*. Marsha Chan. 2006