

## **ESL Podcasts: One more resource for PIELL tutors**

Podcasts are simply audio recordings you can download from the internet or iTunes; they do not require an internet connection after the original download, a feature that makes them attractive for tutors working in homes with no internet connection. To my mind, there are three chief reasons to consider adding a podcast to your weekly ESL plans:

- Podcasts, by definition, focus on *spoken* English from a source other than the tutor--in this way, both tutor and student may gauge the student's comprehension objectively
- Return to material again and again to test mastery of specific concepts--as tutors, it is easy for us to undervalue repetition as we either grow tired of a subject or falsely assume the student "has" the idea
- Podcasts allow the tutor a glimpse of how a lesson is prepared and organized--even if you decide a particular lesson is inappropriate for your student, it is possible you can adapt the structure to your particular subject

Though there are many ESL websites offering podcasts running amok over the internet, I have found a handful that seem to me the most useful. Plus, each of these sites already has over 50 different podcasts available, with updates weekly:

**esl-aloud.com** -- I am particularly fond of the "simplicity" of these podcasts; they introduce a subject, such as "Asking Questions," and the rest of the recording follows a format of "call and repeat." The speaker will state a phrase or sentence and then there will be a pause in which the student may then repeat the sentence. \*However, some of the podcasts are *far more* advanced than others; click on "Lesson List" and preview any lesson you are considering using to get an idea of the difficulty level. [apple.com/itunes/podcasts/](http://apple.com/itunes/podcasts/)

**eslpod.com** -- These podcasts consist of a short dialogue, which is initially spoken v-e-r-y slowly (not at native speed), and then again later, at a more natural rate. I like these recordings because a) they introduce small chunks of common idioms, spoken very closely to the way Americans actually talk to one another, and b) the website offers a transcript of each dialogue for the student to follow as the dialogue is read.

[apple.com/itunes/podcasts/](http://apple.com/itunes/podcasts/)

**a4esl.org** -- This website *does not*, in fact, offer podcasts, but that is *the only* thing it is lacking. I had to include this site because it simply offers a wealth of information, either in online flashcard/quiz form or in a downloadable multiple choice/short answer format. Ideally, this is a website you could pass along to your student and then she/he could practice the material outside of your lessons.

### ***What I'd really like you to get from podcasts...***

My real hope in introducing this subject concerns my own realization that I was not including as much *direct listening* to spoken English in my lessons. Podcasts accomplish that task, but they also allow me to see how *someone else* teaches a concept. Coming up with weekly lessons is difficult and it's OK to peer into another classroom to see how they teach a particular element of grammar or how they introduce different phonemes. As much as podcasts help the student, I am just as interested in providing the tutor with a resource that they may either use directly or adapt to fit their student's current level.