

Potentials of Voicospice for EFL/ESP Teaching. A Real Experience from an Indonesian Teacher

by Anisa Putri Cahyani, Joko Nurkamto, Sumardi, Universitas Sebelas Maret

Keywords: voice recording, voicospice, online teaching tool

Abstract: This present article depicts teaching experience applying voicospice to help teaching English in Indonesia. Voicospice is a web-based online voice recorder which in this article is reported beneficial in supporting teaching learning materials, practice, and assessment. From two features provided in Voicospice, teaching ideas can be developed in accordance with the instructional needs. Based on the experience, Voicospice is used for testing, giving feedback, practicing, recording speech, and playing game. It has valuable potentials to support language teachers to develop teaching method.



Dilemma in the use of technology for having benefits and barriers, as reviewed by Appana (2008), sometimes is inevitable for teachers and students. Dawes (2001) noted several reasons why teachers stop using technology in the classroom. Some of them are in accordance with the situation among the teachers in Indonesia. First, technology which is considered helpful for instructional process turns to be a separated additional workload that requires time to get familiar with. Second, there is less interest in technological use and preference for traditional way of teaching and learning. Third, tools or features which are required to support the use of technology can be another problem when the users cannot afford them. These factors close the doors of positive-benefits possibilities of using technology to support instructional process.

Technology actually offers help to attract students and keep them contact with learning materials, because challenges are still there in teaching and learning English, especially in the countries where English is not used as communication tool on a daily basis. English is seen as a supplementary language, which is used limitedly in classroom scope. English teachers often find it hard to help students reach desired proficiency due to the quality of teaching and

learning, mostly in the aspects that actually technology may help such as in material supports, practices (Bhagat, 2012), and assessment (Pop, 2013).

Voicespice can be an alternative tool which has potential for those three things: material supports, practices, and assessment. This web-based tool provides online audio recording service which is free, does not require signups, and is easily applicable for almost everybody. Users just need a computer or smart phone connected to the internet and open the web page www.voicespice.com from their browsers and start recording. Users can simply share the links of their voice recordings for other people to listen. With two main facilities offered that are: voice tag and voice recorder, based on my experience, I think voicespice is recommended for language teachers.

The first feature is voice spice recorder. Unlike common voice recorders tools in phones or computers, this web-based tool can store users' voice which has web link to share the uploaded recordings without spending any storage capacity in users' device, unless they download the audio files. The picture below shows the recording facility. Users can choose between two tabs: record audio (to record their voice then upload it) and text-to-speech (to change texts into voice).



Figure 1. Webpage View of Voicespice Audio Recorder

With this feature, I have done several activities related to English Language Teaching. First, reading aloud test. To cut off testing time, students are to do reading aloud test at home and teachers will receive the webpage links connected to students' audio recording. This activity is also good for pronunciation practice, supporting students' self evaluation and that teachers can check the audio anytime. Second, recorded conversation between students will help

teacher identify students' ability in dialog as well as discover their learning need. Once, I applied this when teaching English for Airport Occupational Purpose when they were practicing situational conversations at the check-in counter. Since the time was limited and I had 13 students, I asked them to practice dialogs in pair while recording it using voicespice. By this, I could do better analysis on their utterances and provide helpful advice for them. Another good thing is that I was not burdened with the use of data storage in my device memory. Related to it, as the third activity, I gave my students online feedback by recording my voice. Doing this immediately after my analysis felt good, because I was feeling there was lesser chance of missing ideas. The last one is that teachers can use voicespice audio recorder for a listening test. Text-to-speech may be worth a try, since text is changed to be audio version by a native speaker of English; however, sometimes it had problems with stress and intonation. Thus, I used to record my voice if I wanted them to listen to stories, problems, or any other audio tasks.

The second feature is voice tag. It is an audio survey which accommodates open discussion. A user, who can be teacher or students, can open a discussion or survey to hear other users' responses or statements. As shown in the picture below, some information related to voice tag needs to be filled out. *Hashtag* is the title, *description* provides direction or instruction, meanwhile *your handle* informs about the survey creator. Then the last part is *questions*, which are customizable, presenting problems that require responses in the form of short question.

The image shows a web browser window with the URL "https://voicispice.com/VoiceTag/CreateVoiceTag.aspx". The page title is "START A GAME OF VOICE TAG!". Below the title, there is a brief instruction: "Create a voice survey or a game of voice tag by simply filling out a set of questions you would like to ask your friends. You can invite as many friends as you like to participate." The form contains several input fields: "Hashtag:" with a placeholder "Enter the game hashtag", "Description:" with a larger text area, and "Your Handle:" with a placeholder "Enter your name or handle". Below these is a section titled "Questions:" which lists four example questions: "1. If you could have unlimited supply of food what would you want?", "2. Are you a listener or a talker?", "3. What would your dream job be?", and "4. What do you keep in the trunk of your car?". Each question has a "Remove" button to its right. At the bottom of the list is a text input field "5. Add your own question" with an "Add" button. At the very bottom of the form are two large buttons: "Create" (orange) and "Cancel" (grey).

Figure 2. Creating a Voice Tag / Survey with Voicespice

Several activities are possible to arrange with this facility. Everyone can open a survey and users can participate by inputting their voice as a response as long as they know the link to the survey. Within the survey, each web browser can only give one voice from a user in one day. Based on my experience, by using voice tag, teachers can manage activities such as: games, debates, discussions, problem solving, public speaking practice, and one-minute talks. I have tried applying voice tag for a problem-solving game. This idea came up when I was thinking about the way to force students to speak without being dependent on a text. They were not confident, which can be seen when I instructed them to give impromptu speech or answer, as they wrote the text first, then simply read it. With this game, I gave them a scenario of a daily life problems to resolve based on their own perspectives. Students will be scored based on their timely response and logical answer. Another experience is that of one-minute talks. The survey contained a simple question, it was more like a beauty pageant questions, for example: *if you were born to be a superhero, what would you do for this world?* The students must upload their 1-minute speech as their survey response. This was done in class, but I believe it will work even outside the class or in distance learning. After the responses were collected, I revealed them all in front of the class. However, students were not patient enough to wait until all responses were collected. They played the earlier audio recordings that are accessible as long as users have the webpage link to the survey.

To wrap up, voicespice has valuable potentials to support language teaching and learning process in the aspects of teaching material, practice, and assessment. Further research and teaching ideas in this domain are very welcome to reach more comprehensive exploration and experience.

Reference:

Appana, S (2008) *A review of benefits and limitations of online learning in the context of the student, the instructor and the tenured faculty*, International Journal on E-Learning, vol.7, no.1, pp.5-22

Bhagat, J. (2012). *Using audio feedback to help students improve their work*. Warrington's Works Research Festival, 2012, at the University of Chester. Unpublished conference presentation. Retrieved from <https://core.ac.uk/download/files/19/9632061.pdf>

Dawes, L (2001) *What stops teachers using new technology?* in M Leask (ed.), *Issues in Teaching using ICT*, Routledge, London.

Pop, A., Dredețianu, M. (2013) *Assessment of Speaking in English for Specific Purposes (Esp) Including a Voice Tool Component*. Editura Universității Petru Maior

Turula, A. (2017) Teaching presence in telecollaboration, Keeping an open mind.

System Vol 64 pg. 21-33 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0346251X16304134>

Voicespice Website. www.voicespice.com

Biodata:

Anisa Putri Cahyani is currently a graduate student who has been teaching English for seven years and still counting. Her passion is teaching English for Higher Education, English for Specific Purposes, and Cross Cultural Understanding. She has been working as English instructor in an Aviation Training Center also at Language Center in a University. Her enthusiasm in English language and western culture allowed her to visit United States of America in 2012 for short course and 2015/2016 for participating in student exchange granted by Department of State.