Tech Tips
by David Parker

Vocaroo—A Free and Easy-to-Use Audio Recording Tool

In past Tech Tools columns, I have shared Internet browser-based tools that include features for recording and sharing video and audio. Nearly all of these tools, from VoiceThread to YouTube, require users to register for a free service with limited features and pay for more advanced features. Requiring students to register for a new service is often a difficult and possibly prohibitive step for teachers, as is paying for a service that will be used by a classroom of students. Fortunately, a recording tool is available that does not require any registration and is totally free.

What Is Vocaroo?

Vocaroo (http://www.vocaroo.com) is a web browser-based audio recording tool that requires minimal set-up: a computer with a Flash-enabled web browser, an Internet connection, and a microphone. With Vocaroo, students are able to record their voice in an audio message and share it with the teacher or classmates easily.

How Does It Work?

To record an audio message, simply hit the "Click to Record" button, click on the "Allow" button to give the tool access to the microphone, and then begin speaking. When the message is finished, hit "Click to Stop." Users can review the recorded message or retry the message before saving the file. To save, choose "Click Here to Save" at the bottom of the tool.

There are many ways to share audio messages recorded on Vocaroo. Users can copy a URL link to the audio file, email the link, and download the audio file in several audio formats. They can post links to popular social media websites, such as Facebook or Google +. They can even link to the file with a QR code, a square graphic pattern similar to a UPC code that can be scanned by mobile devices. Users can also embed the tool into their website, wiki, or blog.

How Do I Use It in (or out of) the Classroom?

This tool is useful for adding an oral element to any assignment. Students can record themselves answering questions or giving an oral reaction to a reading or video. They can give oral summaries of what they listened to, read, or watched. They can record themselves for feedback on pronunciation and intonation. They can give peer feedback on a classmate's work. Even though Vocaroo is a relatively simple tool with few features, it allows students to complete oral assignments at home or in the computer lab when they could previously only complete them in the classroom.

Columnist's note: As this is my final Tech Tools column, I want to express my gratitude for allowing me to share my excitement for technology with the NYS TESOL community. It was a pleasure to get your feedback through the web and discuss new tools and devices at conferences.

Columns editor's note: We at *Idiom* and NYS TESOL would like to thank David for his columns in both *Dialogue* and *Idiom*. His knowledge and writing style have encouraged readers to try new technology, and have helped instructors make choices from the wide range of tech and online options. We wish him all the best in his new life and job in Colorado, where he is now senior teacher at the English Language Center, the intensive English program of the University of Denver.

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