An audio recorder is one of the important tools that should be used in every lesson for new English learners who are blind or have low vision. Every new student who does not have an audio recorder in good working condition should be given one when she or he enters the program. Teachers and students should be sure to make audio recordings of important parts of lessons, which students can then be given to listen to between lessons for review.

Starting out

At the first teaching session you should check to be sure that the student has an audio recorder/playback device, that it is in good working condition, and that the student knows how to use it to record and play back audio recordings.

If the student does not have an audio recorder in good working condition, you should make sure that this is rectified.

If the student does not know how to use the audio recorder to record and play back audio recordings, you should be the person in charge of recording during lessons until she or he is able to learn these skills. You should also help your student learn the use of the audio recorder through some direct demonstrations of the process.

Using the Audio Recorder helps learning

When students are beginning English learners, the audio recorder is a vital tool for providing them with reviews of oral explanations and pronunciations of new material between lessons. When parts of lesson sessions are recorded, students can listen over and over to their teachers’ voices along with their own voices speaking letters, words, phrases and sentences in English that they learned during the lesson.

Students can also be reminded of the meanings of what is being studied by their own recorded voices explaining meanings in their first language long before they can take notes or read effectively in English. This availability of models of oral English produced by familiar voices in recognizable and remembered contexts helps students to significantly speed up the improvement of their English pronunciation and verbal expression.

Audio recordings prepared by teachers and students together during lesson sessions are much more understandable to students, and much more effective learning tools than either recordings prepared commercially and containing strangers’ voices, or even recordings prepared by teachers by themselves between sessions.
Jointly made audio recordings are much more understandable for students because they can easily remember and understand the context in which the joint recordings were made. They can also most easily understand the English pronunciation and emphasis of their teachers' voices because they are used to listening to and copying their teachers' verbal expressions. The face-to-face context of the recordings done during teaching sessions also offers students continuous opportunities to request that teachers slow down their rate of speech, so that students can better understand what is being said in English.

All three factors contribute to making audio recordings produced by students and teachers together during sessions the best material for students' audio review between sessions.

Recording parts of lessons is not just important for helping beginning students. It is also important to record parts of lessons when teaching intermediate and advanced new English learners.

It is crucial for teachers to continuously provide audio models for intermediate and advanced students to review between lessons because it is not possible for students to develop understandable English pronunciation and expression simply by referring to written material and sounding out words phoneme by phoneme. They need to develop a range of knowledge and strategies to associate the various patterns and spellings of words with their sounds and meanings in the context of comprehensible communication.

The availability of models of oral English produced by familiar voices in recognizable contexts also helps intermediate and advanced students to improve their English pronunciation and verbal expression more quickly than they would be able to do without it.

Intermediate and advanced students also greatly benefit from having audio recordings made during teaching sessions because these recordings provide unlimited access to reviews of oral explanations of meaning that they worked on with their teachers and came to understand during the sessions.

Students at all levels learn more quickly and more thoroughly when they are able to review lessons through listening and speaking as well as reading and writing, and to work on all four aspects of English language development as often as they want between sessions. ** This is true for students learning English literacy with standard size print, large print or braille.

In their book, ESL/EFL Teaching: Principles for Success, Yvonne S. Freeman and David E. Freeman ** (1998, p. 16), discuss the value of recording material as it is worked on in lessons to encourage learning of oral communication and reading proficiency.

When teaching new English learners or proficient English speakers to use braille as their literacy tool, the use of the audio recorder is just as important. In "Strategies and
Resources for Teaching Braille to Adults," (online document accessed January 22, 2011), (a fact sheet available on the American Foundation for the Blind's web site) use of an audio recorder during lessons is also recommended to help students remember what they learned. The recordings can support practicing reading in the new literacy medium between lessons.

Steps to follow in using the audio recorder during teaching sessions

Every lesson with beginning, intermediate or advanced new English learners should include some audio recording.

**A. With beginning English learners:**

**Recording oral English learned during lessons**

1. Before recording anything, the teacher should introduce English words, phrases and sentences by speaking them along with the help of demonstrations with concrete objects and actions, and with the assistance of an interpreter who speaks the student’s first language if necessary.

2. The teacher should begin by voicing the oral language to be learned. The teacher should be careful to speak slowly and articulate words, phrases and sentences clearly, without losing natural rhythm, emphasis and expression.

3. The teacher should check with the student to find out if the rate is too fast or unclear for her or him. If the student indicates that it is, the teacher should slow down and try articulating more clearly.

4. The teacher should encourage the student to copy what the teacher says. With new words, phrases and sentences, if the student is hesitant or is having difficulty, the teacher merely repeats slowly and clearly until the student is able to approximate the English pronunciation, rhythm and emphasis. The teacher does not directly correct the student's pronunciation unless the student's pronunciation is too imprecise to be understood by proficient English users, even with great effort. Fine-tuning can come later, when the student is more confident about speaking the language.

5. The teacher supports the student in repeating what the teacher says until he or she is comfortable enough for both of them to record the new English phrase or sentence with an audio recorder.

6. Then, the audio recorder is turned on, and the teacher first says the newly mastered English phrase or sentence so that the student can hear the pronunciation, rhythm, emphasis and expression of the language to be copied. The teacher should be careful to speak slowly and articulate words, phrases and sentences clearly, without losing natural rhythm, emphasis and expression.
7. After the recording of the phrase or sentence is made, the teacher should check with the student to find out if the rate is too fast or unclear for her or him. If the student indicates that it is, the teacher should slow down and try articulating more clearly.

8. Then the teacher invites the student to repeat the phrase or sentence in English for the recording.

9. The teacher then invites the student to interpret and explain what has been said in her or his first language for the recording, so that it can be understood when the recording is reviewed every day between lessons. If the student is a beginning English learner and a language interpreter is present, the interpreter can provide the explanation for the recording. If an interpreter is not present, even the beginning student should be encouraged to guess the meaning of the English words, phrases or sentences to the best of her or his ability. In the context of the activities of the lesson, this understanding will most likely be close enough for the time being.

Beginning reading material should be created during the lesson by the teacher from the recorded oral practice.

10. First the teacher and student listen to the recording together.

11. As they are reviewing the recording, the teacher writes down in large print or braille the same phrases or sentences that have been recorded.

12. Then the student can practice listening to the recordings while reading what has been written down for her or for him.

* It is important for teachers to model writing down new material before asking students to write it. This gives new English learners the opportunity to think about and become comfortable with new words, phrases and sentences before struggling over how to write them down. Being able to read the model before writing lowers anxiety about lack of knowledge or about making mistakes, eliminates the time students would spend struggling with letter-by-letter dictation, and increases speed of learning.

* The above procedure should be repeated with the other spoken English phrases and sentences to be learned periodically throughout every lesson.

**Recording new reading material learned during lessons**

It is important for teachers to model reading new material out loud before asking students to read it. This gives new English learners the opportunity to think about and become comfortable with new words, phrases and sentences before struggling over how to pronounce them. Being able to hear the model before reading lowers anxiety about lack of knowledge or about making mistakes, eliminates the time students would spend struggling with letter by letter sounding out of new material, and increases speed of learning.
1. The teacher should begin by introducing written English words, phrases and sentences with the help of demonstrations with concrete objects and actions, and with the assistance of an interpreter who speaks the student's first language if necessary.

2. The teacher reads the new material out loud so that the student can hear and absorb the pronunciation, rhythm, emphasis and expression of the language. The teacher should be careful to speak slowly and articulate words, phrases and sentences clearly, without losing natural rhythm, emphasis and expression.

3. The teacher should check with the student to find out if the rate is too fast or unclear for her or him. If the student indicates that it is, the teacher should slow down and try articulating more clearly.

4. After the teacher completes the first reading, the student is encouraged to read along with the teacher and copy what the teacher says. With new words, phrases and sentences, when the student hesitates, the teacher merely repeats slowly and clearly until the student is able to approximate the English pronunciation, rhythm and emphasis. The teacher does not directly correct the student's pronunciation unless the student's pronunciation is too imprecise to be understood by proficient English users. Fine-tuning can come later, when the student is more confident about speaking the language.

5. The teacher then supports the student in reading out loud the same phrase or sentence that the teacher has read, until she or he is comfortable enough for both of them to record the new English phrase or sentence with an audio recorder.

6. Then, the audio recorder is turned on, and the teacher first reads out the newly mastered English phrase or sentence. The teacher should be careful to speak slowly and articulate words, phrases and sentences clearly, without losing natural rhythm, emphasis and expression.

7. The teacher should check with the student to find out if the rate is too fast or unclear for her or him. If the student indicates that it is, the teacher should slow down and try articulating more clearly.

8. Then the teacher invites the student to read the phrase or sentence out loud in English for the audio recording.

9. Then the teacher invites the student to interpret and explain what has been read in her or his first language for the recording, so that it can be understood when the audio recording is reviewed every day between lessons. If the student is a beginning English learner and a language interpreter is present, the interpreter can provide the explanation for the recording. If an interpreter is not present, even the beginning student should be encouraged to guess the meaning of the English words, phrases or
sentences to the best of her or his ability. In the context of the activities of the lesson, this understanding will most likely be close enough for the time being.

10. Then the student can listen to the recordings while reading what has been written down for her or him.

**B. With intermediate and advanced English learners:**

**Recording oral English learned during lessons**

1. Before recording anything, teachers should help students with new oral English words, phrases and sentences through demonstrations with concrete objects and actions, including gestures that the student can hear and feel, and possibly see up close, and with small dramatizations and the use of analogies, as much as possible. The assistance of an interpreter who speaks the student's first language is usually no longer necessary.

The teacher should attempt to explain the meaning of new material using simplified English in addition to the demonstrations with concrete objects and gestures that the student can hear and feel, and possibly see up close. The student should be encouraged to guess what is meant, and to verify her or his guesses by expressing them in her or his own words, using simplified English. Bilingual dictionaries may also be helpful, but, they can sometimes be confusing because of the multiple definitions offered. Electronic bilingual dictionaries may also be more difficult for students who are blind or have low vision because of the distraction of going through the steps for operating them, and the lack of written reference for the blind student. In addition, the teacher should keep in mind that new vocabulary learned through direct bodily engagement is usually more memorable than verbal or written definitions.

2. The teacher should begin by voicing the oral language to be learned, rather than insisting that the student do so first. The teacher should be careful to speak slowly and articulate words, phrases and sentences clearly, without losing natural rhythm, emphasis and expression.

3. The teacher should check with the student to find out if the rate is too fast or unclear for her or him. If the student indicates that it is, the teacher should slow down and try articulating more clearly.

4. The teacher encourages the student to copy what the teacher says. With new words, phrases and sentences, if the student is hesitant or is having difficulty, the teacher merely repeats slowly and clearly until the student is able to approximate the English pronunciation, rhythm and emphasis. The teacher does not directly correct the student's pronunciation unless the student's pronunciation is too imprecise to be understood by proficient English users. Fine-tuning can come later, when the student has become more proficient and comfortable in communicating in English.
5. The teacher supports the student in repeating what the teacher says until he or she is comfortable enough for both of them to record the new English phrase or sentence with an audio recorder.

6. Then, the audio recorder is turned on, and the teacher first says the newly mastered English phrase or sentence so that the student can hear the pronunciation, rhythm, emphasis and expression of the language to be copied. The teacher should be careful to speak slowly and articulate words, phrases and sentences clearly, without losing natural rhythm, emphasis and expression.

7. The teacher should check with the student to find out if the rate is too fast or unclear for her or him. If the student indicates that it is, the teacher should slow down and try articulating more clearly.

8. Then the teacher invites the student to repeat the phrase or sentence in English for the recording.

9. Then, the teacher invites the student to interpret and explain what has been said in her or his first language for the recording, so that it can be understood when the recording is reviewed every day between lessons. The student should be encouraged to guess the meaning of the English words, phrases or sentences to the best of her or his ability. In the context of the activities of the lesson, this understanding will most likely be close enough for the time being.

10. Immediately after new phrases and sentences are practiced and recorded, the teacher writes down in large print or braille the same phrases or sentences that have been practiced and recorded.

* Intermediate and advanced new English learners benefit greatly from teachers modeling writing of the oral practice that occurs during lessons. Teachers should first model writing down new material before asking students to write it. This gives students the opportunity to think about and become comfortable with new words, phrases and sentences before struggling over how to write them down. Being able to read the model before writing lowers anxiety about lack of knowledge or about making mistakes, eliminates the time students would spend struggling with letter-by-letter dictation, and increases speed of learning.

11. The teacher helps the student to practice reading the new material that she or he has written down. The teacher also encourages the student to later listen to the recordings while reading what has been written down.

* The above procedure should be repeated with the other spoken English phrases and sentences to be learned periodically throughout every lesson.

**Recording new reading material learned during lessons**
When students are intermediate or advanced English learners, it is still important for teachers to model reading new material out loud before asking students to read it. This gives students a guide for the standard English pronunciation, rhythm and emphasis they should be working toward. Such models are important because it is not possible for students to develop understandable English pronunciation and expression simply by sounding out words phoneme by phoneme. They need to develop a range of knowledge and strategies to associate the various patterns and spellings of words with their sounds and meanings in the context of comprehensible communication.

When teachers read new material out loud before asking students to read, they encourage the development of audio memory guides that are important for creating functional habits of English oral communications as well as for reading.

Listening to the teachers' models helps students listen to their own verbal productions in a way that encourages self-correction based on what they learn to expect to hear.

If students are given the opportunity to concentrate on listening to the models of spoken English before having to worry about how to produce the standard pronunciation, rhythm and emphasis of new material, they can put all of their energies into learning to associate the sounds of the spoken English words, phrases and sentences with the meanings and patterns of the written forms.

Being able to hear the model before reading lowers anxiety about lack of knowledge or about making mistakes, eliminates the time students would spend struggling with letter by letter sounding out of new material, and increases speed of learning.

1. The teacher introduces the subject of the reading, and the teacher and student discuss what prior knowledge the student has about the subject. When possible, the discussion should be augmented by demonstrations with concrete objects and actions, including dramatizations and analogies.

2. The teacher then reads the new material out loud so that the student can hear and absorb the pronunciation, rhythm, emphasis and expression of the language. The teacher should be careful to speak slowly and articulate words, phrases and sentences clearly, without losing natural rhythm, emphasis and expression.

3. The teacher should check with the student to find out if the rate is too fast or unclear for her or him. If the student indicates that it is, the teacher should slow down and try articulating more clearly.

4. After the teacher completes the first reading, the student is encouraged to read the new material in its entirety. When the student has difficulty pronouncing a word or phrase, the teacher merely repeats slowly and clearly until the student is able to approximate the English pronunciation, rhythm and emphasis. The teacher does not directly correct the student's pronunciation unless the student's pronunciation is too
imprecise to be understood by proficient English users. Fine-tuning can come later, when the student is more confident about speaking the language.

5. The teacher then makes an audio recording of the entire new text for the student to review between lessons, along with the written material.

The teacher should be careful to speak slowly and articulate words, phrases and sentences clearly, without losing natural rhythm, emphasis and expression.

6. The teacher should check with the student to find out if the rate is too fast or unclear for her or him. If the student indicates that it is, the teacher should slow down and try articulating more clearly.

7. Then, the teacher invites the student to interpret and explain what has been read in her or his first language for the audio recording, so that it can be understood when the recording is reviewed every day between lessons. The assistance of an interpreter who speaks the student's first language is usually no longer necessary. The teacher should attempt to explain the meaning of new material using simplified English in addition to the concrete demonstrations. The student should be encouraged to guess what is meant, and to verify her or his guesses by expressing them in her or his own words, using simplified English. Bilingual dictionaries may also be helpful, but, they can sometimes be confusing because of the multiple definitions offered. And, new vocabulary learned through direct bodily engagement is usually more memorable than verbal or written definitions.

8. Then the student can listen to the audio recordings between lessons while reading the material.

**References**


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