PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT OF SPEAKING WITH SOUNDCLOUD
AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT
CONDUCTED AT FUNDING BY

QUINCY ASIAN RESOURCES

first literacy

ROB SHEPPARD
ISSUES OF ASSESSING SPOKEN LANGUAGE

• grammar of spoken English incompletely codified
• inverse relationship between reliability and authenticity
• issues related to interacting with technology
• scoring validity
WHAT MAKES A PORTFOLIO A PORTFOLIO?

Portfolios are “purposeful collections of students’ work that tell the story of their achievements, skills, efforts, abilities, and contributions to a particular class” (Brown and Hudson, 1998, p. 164).

Others (e.g. O’Malley and Valdez-Pierce, 1996) stress the importance of student involvement in the selection of portfolio entries.
PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

- authenticity/content validity
- contextualized performance
- increased motivation
- positive backwash
- increased student agency/empowerment
CHALLENGES SPECIFIC TO OUR CONTEXT

• use of TABE at higher levels
• student goals related to speaking
FEATURES OF SOUND CLOUD

• simple interface

• accessible from anyplace with a web connection

• mobile apps

• **timed comments**
ENVISIONING A SPEAKING PORTFOLIO

- Students and teachers have checklist of speaking objectives for the course.

- Teachers design speaking tasks aligned with speaking objectives.

- Groups record and upload tasks to class account.

- As homework, students listen to and comment on their own and peers recordings from their own accounts. Comments are specific and focused on aspects of the language.

- In the second half of the course, students begin to collect samples of their work, embedding recordings in a blog, including typed account of their own progress. This blog is the final product.
THE EXTENT AND LIMITS OF THE PILOT PROJECT

• **not** a test of spoken portfolios; a test of the viability of SoundCloud as a platform for such portfolios

• recording and commenting, but no compiling of a proper portfolio

• one semester (15 weeks)

• anonymous questionnaires at end of project
ACTIVITIES UNDER THE GRANT

- purchased iPads and SoundCloud premium
- trained teachers on iPads
- trained teachers on SoundCloud
- worked with teachers to develop classroom objectives and activities for this project
- met periodically to discuss progress and setbacks
DATA COLLECTION METHODS

- pre-semester tech survey
- post-semester questionnaire to students
- post-semester questionnaire to teachers
- SoundCloud reports
- triangulation across methods when possible
"I was so nervous !!!"

"I should said 'when I was single.'"

"B— speaks very eloquently."

"Same to me, I came to here by myself and I don't know what the people said to me too."
WHAT WE MEAN BY SPECIFIC AND LANGUAGE-FOCUSED

“Here I said for but I should have used to.”

“Consonant sounds at the ends of words are difficult for me, but here I did a good job pronouncing first”
Comments by Type Over Time

First Half of Semester
- Other: 30%
- Language-Focused: 4%
- Response to Content: 30%
- Praise: 35%

Second Half of Semester
- Other: 3%
- Language-Focused: 19%
- Response to Content: 38%
- Praise: 41%
### RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>% per response</th>
<th>ESOL 2</th>
<th>ESOL 3</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>2/3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Using SoundCloud made me speak more English in class.</td>
<td>0% 0% 17% 33% 50% 83%</td>
<td>4.18 0.87</td>
<td>4.57 0.53</td>
<td>4.33 0.77</td>
<td>18% 7.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Using SoundCloud improved my English.</td>
<td>0% 0% 17% 50% 33% 83%</td>
<td>4.09 0.70</td>
<td>4.29 0.76</td>
<td>4.17 0.71</td>
<td>17% 3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I understand why we are using SoundCloud in class.</td>
<td>0% 6% 11% 39% 44% 83%</td>
<td>4.09 1.04</td>
<td>4.43 0.53</td>
<td>4.22 0.88</td>
<td>21% 6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel good about recording my speaking on SoundCloud.</td>
<td>0% 6% 33% 33% 28% 61%</td>
<td>3.73 1.01</td>
<td>4.00 0.82</td>
<td>3.83 0.92</td>
<td>24% 5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I feel good about listening to my speaking on SoundCloud.</td>
<td>0% 0% 28% 56% 17% 72%</td>
<td>4.00 0.77</td>
<td>3.71 0.49</td>
<td>3.89 0.68</td>
<td>17% 5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I feel good about commenting on my speaking on SoundCloud.</td>
<td>0% 0% 33% 44% 22% 67%</td>
<td>3.82 0.75</td>
<td>4.00 0.82</td>
<td>3.89 0.76</td>
<td>20% 3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I feel good about listening to other students’ speaking on SoundCloud.</td>
<td>0% 0% 22% 33% 44% 78%</td>
<td>4.27 0.79</td>
<td>4.14 0.90</td>
<td>4.22 0.81</td>
<td>19% 2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel good about commenting on other students’ speaking on SoundCloud.</td>
<td>0% 0% 17% 61% 22% 83%</td>
<td>4.09 0.54</td>
<td>4.00 0.82</td>
<td>4.06 0.64</td>
<td>16% 1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I want to use SoundCloud in class in the future.</td>
<td>0% 6% 33% 22% 39% 61%</td>
<td>4.00 1.10</td>
<td>3.86 0.90</td>
<td>3.94 1.00</td>
<td>25% 2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I want to learn more words and phrases to comment on SoundCloud.</td>
<td>0% 0% 28% 33% 39% 72%</td>
<td>4.27 0.79</td>
<td>3.86 0.90</td>
<td>4.11 0.83</td>
<td>20% 8.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. It is better to make SoundCloud comments in class than at home.</td>
<td>0% 6% 33% 28% 33% 61%</td>
<td>3.91 1.04</td>
<td>3.86 0.90</td>
<td>3.89 0.96</td>
<td>25% 1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. How many times per week did you listen to your recordings at home?</td>
<td>7 6 3 2</td>
<td>0.64 0.92</td>
<td>1.57 0.98</td>
<td>1.00 1.00</td>
<td>18.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How many times per week did you make comments on recordings at home?</td>
<td>8 6 1 1</td>
<td>0.82 0.98</td>
<td>1.71 2.36</td>
<td>1.17 1.17</td>
<td>17.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Do you have any ideas to improve this project?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
<td>0.882:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 respondents (1 response = 5.5%)
SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

• 83% of students agreed or strongly agreed that
  • using SoundCloud improved their English
  • using SoundCloud made them speak more in class
  • they felt good about listening to and commenting on other students’ recordings
TECH RECOMMENDATIONS

- as much tech training, practice, and support to staff as early as possible and ongoing
- train in stages: hardware, operating system, specific apps, specific functions
- make tech available on-site after hours (with staff support if possible)
- assume nothing about tech familiarity; conduct questionnaires
**PEDAGOGICAL AND LOGISTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Clearly communicate the structure and breadth of the project to staff and students; reiterate several times in the early stages.

- Be prepared to change course slightly.

- Consider scalability at the outset (Which elements are desired-not-required?)

- We don’t want to be prescriptive about commenting, but students do need guidance; language-focused comments do not come naturally to students.

- Be prepared to provide more scaffolding than you think will be necessary.

- Practice commenting in class, and possibly separate from SoundCloud.
REFERENCES


Questions or feedback welcome:

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Special thanks to

**first literacy**

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