Using Ipadio to create webpages with embedded audio

Many language teachers and learners appreciate teaching materials that incorporate both written and spoken language. However, it has always seemed to be a more complex task to create sound files than text files. In recent times a number of attempts have been made to harness digital telephone technology to the purpose. One example is provided by www.ipadio.com.

With Ipadio you can use a landline or mobile phone to record an audio message, just as you might leave a voicemail on an answer phone. This message is then instantaneously rendered as a soundfile on the Internet with its own unique URL. A further feature with messages in English is an automatic transcription, which gives you a written version of the message as well (with a warning attached that there are likely to be some imperfections in the transcription).

In order to make use of this service a user needs to create an account with Ipadio. There is no cost for individual consumers, though Ipadio does also offer a business service. Details are available on the website. When you create an account you need to give Ipadio some details including two telephone numbers you will want to use. In return you get a PIN number to use whenever you call to make a recording. The whole procedure is very simple, and includes a "delete" option if you are not satisfied with your recording.

Here are some examples, created by Gordon Wells. Gordon's collected recordings (his "phlog") are available on the Ipadio site itself:

http://www.ipadio.com/phlogs.asp?section=2&phlog=17959&itemtype=phlog

If you click on "more" in any of the phonecasts listed you get additional information, including an English transcription in some cases. There is also space for comments. For example:

http://www.ipadio.com/phlogs/GordonWells/2010/02/19/Gordons-phlog-Talking-to-Archie-Campbell

It should be noted that the transcription in the above phonecast has been tidied up, using the edit function. Here is an example of unedited machine transcription:

http://www.ipadio.com/phlogs/GordonWells/2010/02/09/Gordons-phlog-3rd-phonecast

In a language teaching context care obviously needs to be exercised with this facility – but even correcting the mistakes could be a learning experience!

Sound quality is also an important issue, and dependent to a large extent on the quality of the telephone connection. However, it should be noted that, in addition to the phonecast function, there is a "traditional" MP3 upload option as well. So, if you have pre-recorded soundfiles on your computer already you can still use these with Ipadio.

Lastly, there is also a valuable cross-posting function which enables you to upload or embed your phonecasts to other Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter, or any blogs you may run. This is particularly useful for language teachers, as it enables you to create your own multimedia web-based materials in a format of your own choosing.

For example, Gordon has started incorporating both audio (Ipadio) and video (YouTube) in the Island Voices project blog http://guthan.wordpress.com. This is a Wordpress platform, and has been created to record project progress, disseminate news, and encourage interaction with learners and teachers. (Creating a Wordpress account is a similarly painless process as with Ipadio.) In two recent posts Gordon has highlighted and previewed one of the topics for the new series of Island Voices videos.

In the first he interviewed a participant in Gaelic and English, using his telephone. This blog post about the interviews includes embedded links to both phonecasts:

http://guthan.wordpress.com/2010/02/19/local-language-teacher/

The following month he created another blog post, this time embedding the video.

http://guthan.wordpress.com/2010/03/24/buain-na-monadh-peatcutting/

Any or all of these webpages can, of course, also be linked to Wordlink and Multidict to allow instant online dictionary access. Possible language learning uses are immediately evident.

To sum up, Ipadio offers a valuable additional audio functionality in any language teacher's repertoire of materials creation tools. When it is teamed up with other web-based programs and platforms, such as Wordpress, YouTube, and/or Wordlink/Multidict, the potential is there for some very powerful multimedia work to be realised.